

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to you and all colleagues, who are here, and folks in the gallery; those watching from other locations.

This is Mental Health Week. Along with other ways to recognize it, it is the 100th anniversary in 2018, of the Canadian Mental Health Association. We have with us in the gallery today, Matt Younker, who is the current president; Judy Hughes, past-president, Shelley Muzika, and others, who maybe joining from the CMHA.

The slogan for Mental Health Week is; #GETLOUD about what mental health really is. Most of us are wearing the green ribbons to mark Mental Health Week. I think that was a test of our eye-hand coordination to get those, kind of, attached in the right way. I certainly want to welcome everyone in the gallery and those from afar, who do the great work of mental health in our province.

That takes me to this being National Nursing Week, and an opportunity for all Islanders and those of us here to recognize nearly 2,000 nurses in our province for their commitment to patient care and for the caring profession that they are.

Yesterday, Rebecca Doiron, who is an operating room nurse at the QEH was recognized with the Marjorie E. Vessey Award for outstanding nursing service. I want to congratulate Rebecca on that award. She would be my first cousin, and one of nine first cousins, who are nurses. I was noting that Rebecca was honouring her mother in accepting that award.

This is also Emergency Preparedness Week. I want to recognize the paramedics that are in the gallery and the folks that are here and those who will be joining, who are with emergency measures; Tanya Mullally, Denise Bustard and Major George Williams are here in the gallery.

There are many others with us in the gallery today, but I want to recognize Russell Hambly, who is here. Eddie Lund, who was at a meeting with me, last night, out in your neck of the woods, Mr. Speaker, and also to recognize Joe Byrne, the Leader of the PEI New Democratic Party.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd also like to say how wonderful it is to be back here for another week. And also to recognize Mental Health Week this week, but in my thinking and thought process, I think we need to make sure that mental health is forefront every week, not just one week of the year.

I applaud the mental health association and all health care professionals that work in the field to help those that may be suffering from a mental health issue.

I'd also, of course, like to recognize National Nursing Week, as the Premier said, there are over 2,000 nurses that are working here to support Islanders. I had the opportunity when I was out visiting my mom yesterday out at Beach Grove Home, there were a lot more cars than normally around the facility, and I was curious as to what was going on.

When I went in, I discovered that there was a large group of nurses in the auditorium and they were doing some professional development. It was an honour for me just to pop in and say hello to all those health care professionals and thank them for their service that they do every day.

We also have Mona O'Shea here in the gallery, who is, of course, the president of the Nurses Union. I know she's a strong advocate for the nursing industry here on PEI.

Last, but not least, I'd also like to send a huge shout-out to the first responders, not only the ones, the individuals, that have joined us in the gallery this morning, but there was a very, very well-attended press

conference this morning. I know there are many other individuals that we'd like to be here. Hopefully, they'll get the message about the proceedings today and they'll understand that the tremendous support that they do have within the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Good afternoon to you and everybody here in the House, all my colleagues, and also everybody who's joining us in the gallery today; I particularly want to make mention of Leah-Jane Hayward and Joe Byrne from the New Democratic Party of Prince Edward Island. Also to Jamie Larkin who's sitting beside them who's vying for the mayorship of Charlottetown.

I would like to mention special mention, too, of the first responders who are with us today and there are many medical things being celebrated this week. It, of course, is Mental Health Week and we'll have a chance to expand and say a little bit more on that later on, following a ministerial statement. This is also National Nurses Week, as my friends have already mentioned.

On Saturday there was a really lovely and well-attended rally in front of this building for National Midwives Day. Many of my colleagues were present for that and the Minister of Health and Wellness made an important announcement. I thank him for that here in the House today.

There are also some educational things being celebrated this week. This is Teacher Appreciation Day today and I had an opportunity just yesterday to witness firsthand the work, and the dedication, and the skill, and love of the teachers of this province during Music Monday. I had an opportunity to visit Westwood Primary School in Cornwall, saw a lovely concert, met some wonderful young Islanders, and I was, as always, so impressed with the teachers who were there.

I also want, before I sit down, to offer congratulations to a couple of people at University of Prince Edward Island. The physics and engineering schools there won a bid to have a satellite taken up to space. They get a free ride on a satellite and they've produced a thing which is about the same size as a toaster. It's called SpudNik and it will be orbiting our Earth – about three hundred and fifty kilometers or so up there and able to take pictures of sufficient resolution that they'll be able to tell the effectiveness of pesticides and herbicides that they're using on the crops here on Prince Edward Island. Just an astonishing feat, so I offer them congratulations.

I also want to offer my congratulations to Kate McKenna, the author of *No Choice*, a book that was launched on Saturday night here in town and there was a great crowd there and special thanks to the many, many women who came before Kate who made such a profound change to our lives here on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to welcome everybody back here today, especially coming back on such a nice, sunny day. It's great to see all our nurses here and it's a great profession and our first responders, they're just wonderful professions. I'd also like to particularly welcome Eddie back today. Eddie's a regular here and Lorne Yeo. It's good to see our new politicians here too: Joe Byrne and Jamie Larkin. It's good both of you are here and see how the whole thing unfolds. Also I see we have Graham Miner and Graham and his people do great work out at highway safety. It's good to see him here today.

Anyway, it's just going to be a wonderful day and I wish everybody well for the rest of the day and hope our farmers and our fishers and everybody are safe out there on such a wonderful day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: I want to deviate just outside the doors for a minute and say hello, especially, to Austin Gaudet. Austin Gaudet is a World War II vet – lives in Borden-Carleton, that area – that turned 101 today, so all the best to Austin. Thanks very much for all your things you've done in the community in the past.

I'd also like to just give a shout out to all the people I saw on the highways this weekend in the Borden-Carleton area and out through Kinkora cleaning the ditches. You did a fantastic job and thanks very much to the 4-H.

I'd like to say hello to Doug MacEwen for a second, Graham Miner, Jamie Larkin, Kevin Clory; good to see you Lorne and Eddie here and also all our nurses, first responders, union representatives, and people from the public sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much.

It certainly is a pleasure to rise and welcome all to the public gallery today. We, of course, have a very full gallery today. It's great to see everybody in. The first responders, it's great to have you in with us today.

But as was mentioned, this week, like most weeks is a very busy week under the health portfolio. This week we celebrate Mental Health Week and it's great to have some individuals from the PEI division of Canadian Mental Health Association with us today. The Premier already referenced them: Matt Younker, Shelley Muzika, and Lori Morris are with us today.

But, I want to draw special attention to one of the members, the past president at the provincial division, Judy Hughes who is not only serving in that role, she is of course my sister and she serves a very valuable role with me in my political endeavour, so it's really great to have Judy in the House today, as well as the other representatives and they will be fully recognized a little bit later.

But, I also, too, want to draw some attention to Mona O'Shea, president of the nurse's union, and this is Nurse's Week on Prince Edward Island. I've had the opportunity to spend some time with her the latter part of last week, yesterday as well, and I look forward to getting together a little bit later in the week as well, Mona. So, it's good to see you here today as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and watch everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald through television or Internet, and of course everyone who is here in the public gallery today. You've been welcomed by many already, but especially it being Mental Health Week, I wanted to point out that we do have Jamie Larkin and Kevin Clory and they had a fundraiser on the weekend for Lennon Recovery House, which of course is in District 18 in Rustico, and they raised \$320, which was a good sum. Thank you for that.

I wanted to remind the House that this May 11th at the Cymbria Lion's Club there's another big fundraiser for Lennon Recovery House. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and at 7:30 p.m. is when the auction starts. After that, live music by a band called Party Mix. You might even see me at the mic, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome back to all my colleagues in the Legislature, to everyone from the health profession that are here in the gallery today. Eddie Lund, we had a great dinner Saturday night in New Glasgow, but I also want to welcome, and I'll recognize him a little bit later, the members from the Gold Wing Road Riders Association that are here today, and everyone watching at home.

I really enjoyed attending a commemorative service for the Battle of the Atlantic on

Sunday morning in Kensington at the Kensington Memorial Gardens. I was especially struck by all the young people that were there and the reservists that were participating and the great event that it was, and what a beautiful area that the Kensington area has done to have a memorial wall in honour of our fallen veterans. I just want to say how proud and how honoured I was to be able to attend there. I know the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Green Party were also there, but I want to congratulate everyone for putting that event together.

Thank you.

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to see everyone in the gallery on this beautiful almost summer-like day. I would like to welcome all of the EMS personnel and all the nurses that are here, and union leaders, and I want to thank the nurses for their professionalism and dedication, and have a nice nurse week.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd like to rise and welcome Russell Hambly to the gallery, and in addition, Tanya Mullally and Denise Bustard, and Major George Williams who will be more involved in a statement that I'll give in a little bit.

I'd also just like to briefly recognize Stacy Thain and Natalie McNeil who received the highest recognitions from the Prime Minister's Office. They're both teachers – at the end of last week, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Statements by Members

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

Marion Buote and Thelma McInnis

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the Town of Tignish said goodbye to two valued, strong and admired women.

Marion Buote, without a doubt, was one of the most respected ladies I have had the opportunity to know. She was a true matriarch of the Buote family including her children: Joan, Bruce, Linda, Kenny, Gerald, Mary, Annie, Eleanor and David, along with 45 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. She was always available to give sound advice and was never scared to roll up her sleeves to get the job done.

She and her late husband, Gerry owned and operated several businesses in the area.

Undoubtedly, she was the backbone to their success. She appreciated hard work with a straightforward, direct and honest approach. She was very captivating and an engaging conversationalist.

Thelma McInnis was my neighbour for over 45 years. She and her late husband Alfred raised 11 children; Darlene, John, Bernie, Janet, Paulette, Elaine, Michael, James, Ronnie, Keith and Louanne. She was blessed with 27 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

Thelma supported her husband in the fishing industry and she ensured that her family was well taken care of with good home cooking, a clean house and most importantly, that their home was full of love and laughter. Thelma always had an open door policy and held court over the McInnis family every Sunday morning after Mass.

She was never too quick to judge anyone and was so admired by each and every member of her community and family. She embodied the saying 'respect is earned, not given'. It must have been a gratifying feeling for Thelma knowing that she was so deeply loved.

I want to pass along my condolences to both families and I know that they will celebrate the lives of these two remarkable women each and every day.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

PTSD and Island Workers

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This morning our caucus has an opportunity to join together with CUPE, the PEI Federation of Labour, the PEI Health Coalition and the PEI Nurses Union to outline the urgent need to proclaim Bill 102.

Bill 102, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act* passed third reading on December 20th, 2017, with unanimous consent. Unfortunately, the bill has been sitting on the Premier's desk and has yet to be proclaimed, which means it cannot be enacted.

The government's new bill would have those suffering from PTSD wait months to be diagnosed and treated. The new bill was written up by bureaucrats with no consultation with any direct representing of Island workers.

This has left our workers in jeopardy. Those who suffer PTSD cannot wait any longer for help and support they need. Narrowing the scope of those, who can diagnose is simply a way for the Workers Compensation Board and government to limit the amount of claims and save money.

It is a shame that money is being put ahead of the health and wellness of our first responders and all workers on Prince Edward Island. This should not be about who gets credit for what it is about the immediate need to proclaim the bill that has already received Royal Assent and get the help to those who need it so urgently.

Our caucus is calling on the government to do the right thing and put all Islanders first. Let's proclaim Bill 102 and get this done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Island Roads

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today and really discuss the state of our Island roadways. First of all, I want to thank our road supervisors; our road crews, the department of transportation staff; the road builders association for the work they do each year in the building and maintenance of our roads.

Our Island roads are arguably the most important infrastructure we have. It is how Islanders get back and forth to work each day and how our goods are shipped to market. They sustain our economy.

Being some of the most important infrastructure we have, I would suggest that road maintenance should be of utmost priority to government. We often discuss a plan, but we don't seem to have much of a plan when it comes to our Island roads. We don't know who is consulted. There seems to be no record of complaints keep that are made on certain roads.

Often roads that common sense would tell anyone need to be repaved or fixed are left to languish for years and it's Islanders that suffer. Sometimes, the quality of shale used is sub-par and only adds to the problems years down the road when the roads start deteriorating.

Every year, roads are resurfaced across the province, but we are never told how many or why certain roads are chosen. If there is a plan, why not share it with Islanders? Let's put it out there and let's talk about it.

We know there is at least one plan, based on the questions from the Member from West Royalty-Springvale a couple of weeks ago. That plan was to ensure Liberal-held districts received extra paving. Well I guess it's good to know there's at least one plan.

Our roads are integral to our economy and to get Islanders from point A to point B. Government should also make it their priority. Please give the frontline workers, who work so hard to build and maintain our roads the resources they need to be successful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

As, I believe, you're aware, last Friday, I was out touring the Island speaking with teachers. I understand there were a number of questions relevant to my department, so I have some answers today.

In respect of capital repairs to schools, as I've said, in this House, before we have \$2 million a year for the next five years of our \$50 million capital plan allocated to capital repairs in schools.

Tenders have gone out, or have been awarded recently for boiler stack replacement at KISH; a boiler stack replacement at Glen Stewart primary; replacement of two boilers and a boiler stack at St. Jean elementary; a partial roof replacement at St. Jean elementary; a partial roof replacement at Greenfield; a partial roof replacement at Mt. Stewart Consolidated; a partial roof replacement at Hernewood intermediate; and replacement of boilers and a stack replacement at West Kent Elementary.

In addition, tenders will be awarded this spring for capital projects in schools including; oil tank replacements at Bloomfield Elementary and St. Louis Elementary and roof repairs at Belfast Consolidated, which is to be done this summer.

These are all part of our overall plan and their priorities as previously indicated that are set by the Public Schools Branch. I see the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira grunting over there. The roof that he had indicated earlier was looked at and that issue, I gather, has been remedied. The roof should be good to go in their new school there, for a number of years to come.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Bill No. 102, which passed unanimously by the House in December, would enable a PTSD diagnosis to be made by psychiatrists, psychologists or family physicians. Government's PTSD bill, now before the House, would prevent family physicians from making a PTSD diagnosis.

PTSD diagnosis and family physicians

Question to the Premier: Who advised government to disallow family physicians from making a PTSD diagnosis under your bill?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, at about the time I became Premier, I had meetings with CUPE representatives and first responders, who, at the time, brought forward this issue. There was a policy introduced in 2016, which, indeed, does see that work done by psychologists and psychiatrists.

I was pleased when this matter was on the floor on Friday to hear that 90% of the cases that have come forward under that policy have, indeed, received a positive response and are receiving services and resources through the Workers Compensation Board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I guess I'll have to speak a little slower because the Premier didn't, obviously, hear the question when I asked him: Who advised government not to allow family physicians to diagnosis PTSD.

Other provinces do allow family physicians to make PTSD diagnosis along with psychologists and psychiatrists. In fact, Bill No. 102 included all three groups of health professionals and every MLA in this House voted to allow these health professionals to make a PTSD diagnosis. Now, government says they don't support that.

Question to the Premier: What changed between Christmas and Easter to change your mind about the ability of family physicians to make a PTSD diagnosis?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question about the consultation is the Workers Compensation Board, an independent body that has been in place for over a century in this province that, indeed, brought forward the policy that I mentioned in 2016. We heard that 90% of those who come forward have received support and had a proper diagnosis. Indeed, we heard that with the network of psychologists and psychiatrists that are in place that there could be a response on the order of 35 days. I'd have to say, as Premier, or as an Islander, I was proud to hear that and to hear and to know that we're talking about an approach that will put Prince Edward Island in the top two or three provinces in this country for dealing with traumatic injuries on the job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I want to remind the government members, and particularly the Premier, that this is Mental Health Week. We only have to speak to anyone suffering a mental health issue out there in the community to come to the realization that the availability to see a psychologist or a psychiatrist, particularly a psychiatrist, is not within 35 days. It's, in some cases, it's six months. It could be a year.

If fewer health professionals are allowed to make a PTSD diagnosis then it stands to reason that fewer cases of PTSD will be diagnosed for Island workers living with it. Of course, that allows the costs to be lowered to government and WCB.

Limited scope of PTSD diagnosis

Question to the Premier: Was the decision to limit the scope of PTSD diagnosis just a way to contain costs?

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

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

Just to initially answer the question: absolutely not. The bill was expanded to take in all workers on PEI. It was expanded to traumatic experiences. It was felt, the bill that the opposition brought forward was a good bill. I commend you for that. We appreciate the work you did on that. We just felt as a government we needed to take it further.

As the Premier had indicated, there was policies put in place in 2016, and we just wanted to solidify that into legislation.

Might I add, as I indicated on Friday, there were three cases for PTSD and two of them have been looked after since December. There has been no slow down in diagnosis or in help for these people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We know for a fact that our province has big shortages in psychologists and psychiatrists. In fact, many people call it a crisis here on PEI.

We also know that extended delays in diagnosis and treatment for PTSD can have devastating, and in fact, sometimes deadly health consequences for people suffering from it.

Mental health support for Island workers

Question to the Premier: If we have qualified health care professionals willing to help diagnose PTSD then why would your government want to put more road blocks in place of Island workers, who desperately need mental health supports?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly here on Prince Edward Island we are extremely fortunate to have 225 wonderful physicians practicing on our province. Of the 225, they all have different levels of training and experience and work that they do. Obviously, some of those 225 are our family physicians. Some of those individuals do have specialized training for PTSD.

However, not everybody, not all of those wish or choose to practice in that area and those that do, often refer to those specialists of psychologists or psychiatrists just to verify that the treatments they are having are the correct ones and in some cases, immediately will refer to those other levels, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

More than four months ago this Legislature unanimously voted to approve Bill No. 102, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*. I will add a bill that included every worker on PEI. Don't say our bill didn't and yours did.

Proclaiming of Bill No. 102

Question to the workforce minister: When will your government do the right thing for Island workers and proclaim Bill No. 102 and bring it into effect?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As indicated before, with some consultation we felt that the bill needed to be amended. We will look after this and bring our bill forward before the final days of this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill gives Workers Compensation Board coverage to Island workers with a confirmed diagnosis of PTSD. All requires to become law is the Cabinet to proclaim it and follow through on their vote in the House.

Question for the workforce minister: Why are you persisting in trying to reinvent the wheel with your own bill when the House has already passed a bill?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker.

As I had indicated before, we felt the bill needed to be expanded and that's what we did.

I would like to read a little article here with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. It's from the National Institute of Mental Health and it being Mental Health Awareness Week, it describes what PTSD is and it also says a doctor who has experience helping people with mental illnesses, such as a psychiatrist or a psychologist can diagnose PTSD.

That's why our government felt to enshrine us in legislation that we did it right by the appropriate professionals diagnosing the disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what PTSD is. I imagine everybody in this gallery can tell you what PTSD is. The government voted on Bill 102 in December and then waited for months before you tabled your bill.

Consultation with groups re: PTSD and bill

Question to the workforce minister: Why didn't you consult with first responders, nurses, union groups when you were writing your own bill in secret this winter?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd indicated before, the PTSD was covered under policy and the hon. member from across had consulted with the unions – we knew that. We were enhancing this bill and that's what we have done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 102 already passed the House with broad support in December. It supported all workers in PEI. It also allowed physicians to come into the picture who could diagnose PTSD. The Premier and the minister voted for it. First responders and unions welcome this step to protect workers with Bill 102.

Question to the workforce minister: Why are you so determined to take steps backwards?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very unfortunate that the minister opposite wants to make those types of comments: take steps backward. We are trying to go forward and ensure that all Islanders are protected from traumatic disorders, be it PTSD or any traumatic disorder they may come into.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today our whole caucus attended a news conference with first responders and unions upset over this government's shenanigans with delaying making coverage available to all Island workers.

Limiting coverage for PTSD

Question to the workforce minister: If the people who would benefit from the law feel like you're stalling and limiting coverage, how do you justify these ongoing delays?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated prior, our numbers are showing us that there has been no one refused attention to this matter and since December, there were three cases forward and two of them have been approved and one is still being looked at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They're always talking about their numbers. First responders and unions have been lobbying government on this issue for years, hoping to see some positive change. What they've found instead is a government that strings along first responders – and that's what they've done – and all Island workers, only responding with the bare minimum efforts when the political pressure becomes too great to dodge.

Question to the workforce minister: Why do you think you're right and first responders, nurses, and other workers are wrong?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We don't feel we're right and anyone is wrong. As I indicated earlier, over and over, we are worried about all Islanders and we appreciate the work of first responders and nurses and everyone in the medical profession. Anything we can do, we need to do it right. We introduced this bill the first day of this sitting, so we've been working on it and as I indicated, we will bring this bill to a vote before the session finishes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we've been told that hundreds of people immigrated to PEI claiming residency at the same motel in Sherwood.

Immigrants claiming residency at motel

Question to the minister of economic development: Why does your government have no safeguards in place to prevent this sort of shadiness?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We heard of this investigation as well that the hon. member is talking about and it's a federal issue. Border services are investigating. It is based on the program that was in 2008. We've evolved that program over a number of years and actually, in 2008, the Auditor General reviewed the program and made recommendations and we implemented all of those changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well your seat mate there, dynamite, was at the helm during this time, so he could probably fill you in on how this happened.

Question to the minister again: Did any of these immigrants ever actually live on Prince Edward Island, or was it just on paper?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an ongoing investigation and we're continuing to find out more as border services are investigating. We know that our immigration program continues to evolve. We make it better all the time and we have a new expression of interest model that we have implemented and it continues to get better as we learn more, as we continue to grow the population here in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So every time we turn around this government is taking the immigration program and making all Islanders look like fools, basically, by the way that they are abusing it. We have hundred of immigrants claiming to live in the exact same hotel. Six hundred immigrants living in a 45 room motel in Sherwood, if that's even possible. That's something that I would think, should be caught by your staff because you guys administer the program.

Government verification of immigrant residency

Question to the minister: How does your government verify the residency of immigrants?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department does have a handle on it. Seventeen of those residents that are being investigated were actually coming to PEI, the rest are going somewhere else in Canada.

So, it doesn't have anything to do with our program. There were 17 that were our clients here in PEI and we continue to evolve the immigration program and we're really happy that it's continuing to grow the population in PEI and we're happy to continue with that program, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm actually quite stunned. Out of, probably, 600 people that claimed residency in one motel, 17 of them were actually ever planning on coming here, which leaves 583 that weren't going to come here at all. They were never going to –

Question to the minister: Do you think it's normal to allow our immigration program to be used in such a manner?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think the hon. member is listening to me. Seventeen of those are our immigrants that were coming to PEI that were our clients, the rest are going somewhere else in Canada.

Maybe it's actually a good tourism number for us, because they're coming to PEI – it doesn't have anything to do with our immigration program – 17 of those are coming to PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, it seems like he's got an incredible tourism program operating over there using our immigration program – where somehow 583 people who claimed that that's where they lived – so they claimed that's where they lived – were never going to come here, according to him, they never had any plan. Only 17 of the 600 people who claimed to live in one motel room in Sherwood actually planned to come here – 583 didn't.

IID and immigrant numbers

Question to the minister: How did that number not raise the eyebrows of the people in IID?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, 17 of those were applications to PEI, the rest didn't come through PEI. I don't know why the hon. member thinks that we would be reviewing the applications across all of Canada, we are looking after the ones in PEI and there were 17 applications and the rest of them came to somewhere else in Canada, so I don't know.

The member can continue to talk about those numbers being part of the PEI program. They weren't. They're not at all.

The investigation is a federal piece, and they are trying to find out and it happened to be a PEI address.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, 600 people claimed one single address in Sherwood, but we shouldn't be worried about it because 583 of them were never planning on coming here. But, they lived here because that was part of the whole scheme that was going on over there. People are going to jail. Two people were arrested. It's serious enough that people are going to jail over it.

Question to the minister: Are you confident – if your government confident that this is the only single case of this happening here in Prince Edward Island?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, if the member's math is correct and 583 people made an application to come to Canada and happened to use an address in PEI that has nothing to do with our department; 17 of those made application to PEI. The 583 did not make application to PEI and we wouldn't have any knowledge of those applications that are through the rest of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: You know what happened to Allan Campbell.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite perplexed by the approach that the government is taking on this. People were arrested over this. From what I'm hearing, there's more coming; so I mean you can run and hide from it here today if you want. You're talking about it being an in and out program where 600 people claimed that that's where they live, but only 17 of them

ever wanted to come here. Now I know where you got your million night-stay number, because you're basically trying to cheat the immigration system right here in Prince Edward Island. It's embarrassing is what it is.

Investing in immigration

Question to the minister: Is your government truly truly serious about investing in immigrants and bringing them here to Prince Edward Island or are you simply using it to fund your out-of-control spending?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we're very happy with the results we're getting through immigration and it's growing our population. So, I know the hon. member is trying to convince me, which it's not working, that 583 of those were applications to PEI. They were not. They're not applications to PEI. 17 of those –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – were made to PEI.

We understand those. We monitor the applications, the 17 that we have. The Auditor General had reviewed our program in 2008, had made recommendations. We implemented those changes. So, those 583 were not applications to PEI and we would have no knowledge of those coming to PEI. It was an address they used for an application going to a difference province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As was recently noted by the Member from Souris-Elmira, the new \$2.5 million Rural Growth Initiative replaces the \$5 million Island Communities Fund that this government failed to renew back in 2015. Despite being a larger pool of money, that former program had some problems associated with it as well, of course. We all remember the former minister using that

program to fund projects in urban areas like the million dollars that were spent on the event grounds just down the road here in Charlottetown.

Rural Growth Initiative funding urban areas

A question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Will the new Rural Growth Initiative also be used to fund projects in urban areas?

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

Mr. Myers: Ronnie MacKinley's parking lot (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Green Party for finally showing an interest in rural Prince Edward Island.

Of course any projects that are province-wide in scope will be looked at and entertained. Facilities and projects that rural Islanders use will certainly be looked at and reviewed for funding.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

The new program criteria do indeed state that activities, and I quote: Which are not targeted at rural areas – end quote, are ineligible. But, defining rural is not straight forward and by some people's definitions, even Charlottetown might be considered rural.

Definition of 'rural'

A question to the minister: How do you define rural?

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

Mr. Murphy: I think a simple way to define it would be not urban, but that being said, there are things – programs and projects that are located in different parts of the province that are used by all Islanders, rural and urban, so I guess that being said – I guess my previous answer would be what I would have to go by.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Let's remind ourselves this is a Rural Growth Initiative. Although there's no mention of sustainability in the program criteria, the website also says that the program is going to expire in March 2019. In order to create sustainable rural communities, we need sustained commitment from this provincial government.

Duration of Rural Growth Initiative

A question to the minister: Is there Rural Growth Initiative a one-year program that will be cancelled next year? Or, is this a permanent commitment?

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) election coming.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This initiative is to support the work of our Regional Economic Advisory Councils, which we're serious about growing rural Prince Edward Island and it would certainly be a Cabinet decision, but I'm fairly confident that if I'm there I'm going to be fighting to keep this program funded and all the good work that it's going to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

My colleague from Charlottetown-Parkdale raised issues earlier in this sitting with the long-term sustainability of project funding

for NGOs that government partners with to deliver programs and services. The new Rural Growth Initiative also appears to be project-based funding, and I didn't get an answer as to whether this is going to be sustained multi-year, consistent, long-term funding from the minister.

Now only that, but the Rural Growth Initiative only funds up to 50% of projects, requiring community groups to raise the rest from other sources.

Community groups and funding for projects

A question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Where do you expect community groups to find the other 50% of the funds required to make these projects happen?

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Even the Community Development Fund has long been used as a leverage tool to leverage money from federal governments and other sources, such as ACOA, and we do want to get buy-in from communities by them having some skin in the game as well. We fund these projects. We don't own the projects. We fund them and the projects belong to the groups and organizations that propose the projects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Assuming, minister, that they can indeed raise these additional funds from federal or other sources as you suggested, community groups applying for this fund must also contribute 10% of the total cash for these projects while they still carry on paying for their ongoing operations.

A question to the minister: Are you concerned about the capacity of community groups to come up with their 10% portion of project funds?

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

Ms. Biggar: Look at Chase the Ace.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, these funding formulas have been in place for many years and there have been many great projects carried out right across the province with our previous Island Community Fund and communities have a way of raising their funds. They have gas tax money and volunteer organizations. I know different communities support and help fund different organizations like area development corporations.

I know up in my district there, the Alberton Area Development Corporation, receives some funding from the town and they're able to leverage money from ACOA, and they always seem to get their projects done, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

Of course municipalities have all kinds of ways they can raise that money through accessing gas tax or a number of other programs, but the pressure is particularly problematic in unincorporated areas where there's no municipality that can collect those taxes or raise the additional funds.

Unincorporated areas and access to fund

How will the minister ensure that unincorporated communities can also take full advantage of this new fund?

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I stated earlier there are corporation bodies right across the province. Alberton Area Development Corporation. O'Leary has one, Tignish has Tignish Initiatives. These bodies take in more than just the

municipal communities. They also touch out into the unincorporated areas and they're all part of the same organization.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

Later on this summer the province is going to responsible for selling cannabis after the federal government makes this legal. We'll have some outlets or whatever. There are a lot of questions, concerns about how that's going to happen.

Rollout of cannabis legalization

I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance could give us a quick review of exactly how that's going to roll out across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During this sitting, actually of the Legislative Assembly, the PEI Cannabis Control Act and the PEI Cannabis Management Corporation Act are expected to be debated.

At this time the Crown corp. and Cannabis PEI will be created to take on a responsibility of distribution and sales of recreational cannabis. We do have a retail model. It's been in the media about the store – the four locations of the stores. Also, we're dealing with an e-commerce platform as we presently speak.

The next phase of this will be actually hiring the staff and moving the project forward based on the timelines, when the timelines are available from the federal government.

Thank you.

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

Qualifications to work at cannabis outlet

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

That feeds into my second question because I've been approached wondering how one would go about getting a job at working at one of these things? What would the qualifications be, and how many employees do you feel we will need across the province?

Mr. LaVie: Looking for a job?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) retired.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) retired (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last number of months, the PEI LCC has been dealing with union and public sector employees, the Public Service Commission to determine the workforce requirements. I believe the number is somewhere around 50 persons that will be hired, cannabis positions. There will be different levels of those positions. As we are doing e-commerce plus retail sales at storefront; almost all the positions will be unionized. The staff will be in accordance with the collective agreement presently in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Another question I've been asked has to do with the fact that we are going to have the outlets to sell the product, it may also be sold on street corner. We're going to be allowed to grow it at home. If one is found to be in possession of product how does one determine if it's sold at the outlet, grown in their own home with the four plants they're allowed, or, perhaps, purchased off the street corner, because, apparently, it's not decriminalized, as yet.

Determining purchase of cannabis

How would we determine where that is coming from?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: All products sold through government stores will be sealed, obviously, and packaged. It will be no different than medication served over the counter at a drug store. The sale of cannabis outside of licenced government stores will remain illegal.

It will be identification through trying to minimize the illegal sales of cannabis on the street corners. There are other facets on where you can have cannabis; the age; transportation; there are all kinds of other identities in there that will help minimize the possibilities of contraband cannabis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have constituents that would like an update on dead stock removal.

Removal of dead stock from farms

To the minister of agriculture: Would the minister explain how dead stock is removed from farms across the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Very good question. The PEI department of agriculture has an arrangement with the dairy producers of PEI, as well as the PEI cattlemen's producers. They have a contract with Maritime Pet Foods to make sure that all dead stock are picked up and removed from the farm within 48 hours. Then, they do the processing on that carcass. They ship the unused products to Quebec for rendering.

Our government is happy to partner with these two particular organizations. We contribute about \$350,000 to this cause.

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

Cost of dead stock removal

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What farmers are eligible to participate in this service and how much does it cost individual farmers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: As I had mentioned earlier, our department has an arrangement with the dairy farmers of PEI, as well as the cattlemen's association. They work out an arrangement with our producers, in particular, it's a check-off based situation with the dairy farmers. The beef farmers have a, sort of, a prorated system where they pay so much. Once they go over their allotted amount per farm they pay \$100 per animal.

Anybody that happens to have a horse or sheep or pig, or some of those things, I guess pigs are actually composted, but they work out an arrangement directly with Maritime Pet Foods, Mr. Speaker.

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

Measures of dead stock removal procedure

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What measures are in place to ensure producers use the service and are there additional steps that can be taken to eliminate this problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, our department actually has regulations that prohibit the livestock from actually being buried on farm or disposed of in an improper manner. The reasons for that being that there are issues that would be of concern from a contamination of our water system, as well as the potential of attracting coyotes and

other vermin. That's why we want all livestock that have passed away to be removed within 48 hours.

We feel that this is an appropriate measure to take place under this circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, Islanders are no strangers to limited capacity and long waits at walk-in clinics. Seeing an opportunity, a local IT firm developed a service called Skip the Waiting Room that allowed residents to book an appointment online.

Skip the Waiting Room service

Question to the minister of health: How widely is this service used in the Island health care system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This skip the waiting line was an app that was developed by an Island company. I believe they're currently at one Island clinic, but there are several other clinics that use alternate methods of forming waitlists by coming in and signing on you're then, you can then leave the building, at least you'll know you're in the queue for that facility.

As well, ERs, across the province also provide the same type of walk-in service, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This service has proven very popular with over 6,000 Islanders using the service in 2017 at the downtown walk-in clinic in Charlottetown; one location. Maybe it's a money problem. Maybe that's why it's not being expanded to more locations.

Monthly cost for Skip the Waiting Room

A question to the finance minister: How much is the monthly cost to operate this service at a clinic?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd have to find that question out and take it back to the House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my understanding is we're talking about, in the order of, a couple of hundred dollars a month to operate the service at a walk-in clinic. I understand that Skip the Waiting Room is being used in Ontario and Alberta with over 1,200 walk-in clinics across Canada. Maybe this is a way we could really help our rural areas in this province.

More implementation of Skip the Waiting Room

Question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Why has this service not been implemented more widely across the Island health system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The department and the government of the day worked very closely with this company as they were working to develop this program. This program has been well-utilized. The way it works is that there are a number of places where people can add their name to a waiting period. Some are provided early on, but there are others, who can walk in and add their names to the list, as well.

This is a very valuable tool that we had earlier discussion on the floor of the House about possible expansions. We continue to look at that; if this is a program that can be expanded upon.

They did receive some funding early on. I think that has run its course now. They are a private business trying to do private work on

Prince Edward Island. We're supportive of that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear the health minister say he is supportive of this. He should be. It seems strange that a locally-developed technology has greater take-up off of PEI than on Prince Edward Island. This is a service that was developed using a grant of \$25,000 from Innovation PEI in January, 2015.

A question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: What's the roadblock to using this service more widely on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously these walk-in clinics all across Prince Edward Island provide wonderful and valuable service for Islanders that need this health care when they need it. Most of the doctors that run these facilities are fee-for-service doctors. They are private businesses; they run their own entities; they provide their own staff; they provide their own services and that's up to – we can check into see if that's something that doctors are looking at developing more in their clinics all across the Island, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This isn't a decision made by doctors; this is a decision made by clinics. This is something that has to be driven from the top. We need leadership from this government. This is a solution that can be put in place very quickly and we found out on the floor that we're waiting, potentially, years for a big Cadillac solution to come into place that's going to potentially cost hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars.

So in the meantime, for example at the once-a-week Friday clinic in Hunter River, patients hoping to get one of the 12 spots line up outside at the door starting at 7:00 a.m. or earlier just to keep their spot in line. These are seniors, these are young parents, people who are ill and in the winter they're waiting out there in the freezing cold just to keep their spot in line.

Pilot project of Skip the Waiting Room

This is a question to the Premier: Will you commit to piloting the Skip the Waiting Room at clinics across rural PEI as soon as possible?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, we work very closely with this company that's designing this business. Obviously, Islanders need a walk-in service when they need it. Last year alone 90,000 people were seen at Island ERs all across our hospital facilities on Prince Edward Island. I don't have the data for these private companies, but I do need to say, these are private businesses by doctors that run these clinics fee-for-service. They determine what services they use and as I said earlier in the House, this is a discussion that we can continue on with this company to see if there's possibilities for them to expand in Island clinics because there is a need for people to be able to register for these clinics, whether it's walk-in, or whether it's online, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your final question.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're getting two different stories. During budget estimates, the story was: We're not going to implement this Island-based system of Skip the Waiting Room; we're going to wait and we're going to put in a solution that integrates with the broader information systems of the province.

Here today, now we're finding out, in fact, it's the clinics themselves that have to make the decision. But here we have a locally-developed technology. It's Islanders doing

what this government says they want to encourage: a made-in-PEI solution. It's something that can be put in place quickly. It's something that will be effective; it'll keep Islanders out of the cold.

I just want to ask the minister of health: Will you commit to taking this technology that this government has invested in and implementing it right away at clinics like Hunter River?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make it clear to the hon. member; the discussion that we were having on the floor of the Legislature last week was in regards to emergency medical records in regards to the systems used by pharmacies all across Prince Edward Island so that we have a fully-integrated system.

This can be part of a fully-integrated system with our skip the wait in line, but it doesn't necessarily need to be. This is something that could be stand-alone. We will continue to have those conversations, but this is a discussion that will be ongoing, as it was said on the floor of the Legislature last week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

National Mental Health Week

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This week is National Mental Health Week, an opportunity for us to talk about the importance of good mental health and where people can turn for help when they are in need.

Today I'd like to welcome in to the gallery some of our partners in mental health care in PEI. From the Canadian Mental Health Association we have joining us today: their President of their Board, Matt Younker; their past-president, Judy Hughes; the Director of Finance, Administration and

Corporate Services, Shelley Muzika; and their Communications Coordinator, Lori Morris. Welcome to each and every one of you today.

[Applause]

The Canadian Mental Health Association is celebrating its 100th Anniversary this year – a huge congratulations to this outstanding organization. As part of the year-long celebrations, the CMHA will be recognizing National Mental Health Week with the theme #GETLOUD about what mental health really is. A series of recognition events will be happening all week here in PEI such as Wear Green Day, Kindness Day, and Move for Mental Health walks will be happening right across the province.

One in five Canadians lives with mental health problems, mental illnesses, or addictions. Everyone deserves to feel well. Our government continues to invest and focus much of our efforts on strengthening mental health services for Islanders. In government's balanced Budget, we are increasing the health budget by \$32 million dollars. This will help to sustain and build on our province's health system, which includes mental health and will sustain our dedicated health professionals in communities across the Island.

Mental health supports will be added to assist Islanders of all ages, including: student well-being teams which will expand to three more families of public schools in this fall; the Island's post-secondary institutions will receive additional funding for mental health supports; a new mobile mental health response team will be designed to provide acute mental health support 24/7; and new frontline positions will be added to Prince County and Hillsborough hospitals; work will advance on the new mental health campus to replace the Hillsborough Hospital as well; new housing supports will be provided for Islanders with mental health challenges, in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association; a new doctorate of psychology program will help educate and retain psychologists in the province; and mental health supports will be added to the Disability Support Program.

As a province we now have a robust mental health and addiction strategy and action plan. We will continue to work and invest in strengthening mental health supports for Islanders, from now and well into the future.

Our government understands the toll mental health can have on individuals and indeed, their entire family and I encourage anyone struggling to reach out for support. Talk to your doctor; a nurse practitioner; a counselor; or drop into one of our free, accessible walk-in clinics; or call our toll-free Island Help Line at 1-800-218-2885.

No one should suffer in silence; our professionals are there to help.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the minister for the statement. I'd like to welcome all the people from industry here today and thank you for all your hard work and lobbying.

The minister just said: our robust mental health system and I would caution him extremely – extreme caution when he talks about our robust system because I talk to the people every day, you talk to people every day, we see our peer helping groups online – they do not think that we have a robust mental health system and nowhere close to it right now. We've got a lot of good people doing a lot of hard work, but we have ministers that keep asking for more time, more time, well, we've had years.

We need a system that starts learning from our mistakes. We know we're going to make those mistakes, but we have to learn from them every time it happens. These school core service teams and the mental health walk in clinics, they're going to be a help. That's good news announcements, but we can't forget that we have to deal with our severe mental health issues as well.

We talked about it here on the floor of estimates about our core staff, the core lobbyists – they see the severe problems every day and we know that incidents of mental health keep increasing, keep

increasing, keep increasing, but the staffing for that doesn't. So, some of these announcements are great for the long-term, but our staffing right now is not keeping pace.

One good thing is, because of this – our system is overwhelmed and in a way that can be a good thing because people are willing to talk, people are willing to seek treatment and help, but that's where we need resources. These announcements are good for the long-term – they have to happen, but we need core funding for them. We know that there are ER shifts that are lacking psychiatric coverage right now. This week – a perfect opportunity to announce our suicide prevention strategy. Where is the mobile crisis unit update? What about the mental health campus update? We just keep hearing about it. Let's see the work; let's get it out there; let's start having meetings about it.

I'd like to thank all of those hard workers in our mental health field. We do hear a lot of stress; we do hear a lot of focus on it from us here in opposition, from advocates, no doubt the minister hears it from his own department. So, it's tough to work in that field. It takes a certain very special type of person to work in that field, to deal with the caseload, and we are so very thankful for that. I love the theme of the week and I encourage everyone to reach out to those in that field and thank them for the service.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I welcome the minister's announcement and I, too, want to welcome the health care workers who are with us today who perform such important duties here on Prince Edward Island.

We've come a long way, not just here on Prince Edward Island, but globally we've come a long way in how we approach and how we understand mental health issues – both in terms of the stigma, which is slowly but surely starting to go away. Also the way that we treat mental health is just much more

humane now than it was before and more effective.

We also recognize – it's a recognition now that when we talk about health – health care system – we're not just talking about – it's not just purely a physical notion. We're talking about our whole being – our whole body – and that mental wellbeing is fundamental to living a full, and a meaningful, and a content life.

For me, there are three very distinct and separate aspects when it comes to government responsibility in mental health. The first one of those is dealing with the acute, serious, sudden onset problems that are becoming sadly, increasingly common here. Psychotic incidents, people with suicidal ideation – those times when government has to have the resources ready and available to deal with those acute crises because people's lives are at risk at that moment in time. We still have a long way to go there. We are making steps in some of the things that my friend from Morell-Mermaid suggested and the minister – are starting to help, but we have a long – there are still gaps there and we need the suicide strategy and I look forward to seeing that. That's the first thing – is the acute problems.

Secondly, those who do recover from an acute problem or who have chronic mental health problems, we need to have services and resources in place in order that those people can get well and stay well. That's access to counseling, that's exercise, it's diet, it's group therapy – there are all sorts of things that we could be doing and instituting here and the government has a role in to make sure that those people can get well and stay well and we're way short. In that regard, we're really falling short. I think the campus which is coming is going to be an enormously important and valuable tool in that box, but it's a ways off.

The third thing – and this is a bit more nebulous, but it's about that government, I think, has a responsibility to create a community that fosters wellbeing in everything that we do. We presented a motion on this side of the House last week called health in all policies and that, of course, would include mental health. I look at taxpayers' dollars basically as a community fund that the government is the

body that overlooks that fund and spends it in a way that builds community, whether that be in health care, or education, or infrastructure, or justice, or whatever the department. I think government has a responsibility to fund all of these programs and all of those three aspects of mental health.

We have made steps and I want to acknowledge that and I appreciate all of the work that this minister and his predecessor has done, but we have a duty as government to foster wellbeing for all Islanders in all that we do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Motorcycle Safety Month

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's finally spring on Prince Edward Island. One of the joys Islanders look forward to is that they can once again start riding their motorcycles on our provincial highways. However, there are many safety challenges when motorcycles share the roads with cars and trucks. That is why May is Motorcycle Safety Month.

During this month, we encourage all motorists, whether they travel on two, three, or four wheels to remember to share the road safely. It is important to remember, also, that the use of cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited while driving. A moment of distraction can be deadly.

Reagh Sherren, David Faithfull, Lorne Owen from the Gold Wing Road Riders Association, Graham Miner and Doug McEwan from my department have joined us here today in the gallery, and I'd like to welcome them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: The association has been a valuable partner with us in the production of updated motorcycle safety pamphlets again, this year. I have brought a few copies today, which I will tabling later. Anyone looking for additional copies can find them at Access PEI right across our province.

This Saturday, the association will also be having information stops on Malpeque Road near the West Royalty Industrial Park and on St. Peters Road near M&M Furniture. Please be on the lookout for the association as they share important safety information to Islanders.

Government remains committed to protecting the safety of all highway users. We continue to take steps to improve the level of safety for motorcycle riders.

On our road to zero strategy: zero impaired driving incidents, zero injuries, zero collisions; looks to reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities on our Island road network. It is built upon the four E's: education, engineering, enforcement and effective legislation.

Campaigns such as; leave the phone alone, the construction of roundabouts and our updated motorcycle safety pamphlets are just a few examples of my department's continual work to achieve our goals in the road to zero strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to agree with everything the minister said on this. Motorcycle safety is a high priority and I don't think we should only limit it to motorcycles on the highways, but also dirt bikes.

Something I see is make sure that if you're operating a dirt bike in the fields, make sure you operate it on a trail, make sure it's licenced, make sure you're wearing a helmet. I think we have to continue that on both sides.

I was actually quite surprised the other day, I – and we talk about cell phones and they're a great distraction and everybody is doing it. I don't think there's anybody in this place, this House, that has not, probably, texted going down the road, or answered a call or whatever. We need to really be careful when we're doing that. Motorcycles are small vehicles and it wouldn't take a second to hit

a motorcycle or not see a motorcycle coming.

I was very surprised the other day to see an actual motorcycle guy going down the road using a cell phone. I please warn them: don't do that.

We need to give motorcycles room. We need to take a second look at intersections. Motorcycles have increased across the Island. We see it all the time out there enjoying our countryside. Please give them room. Treat them with respect. Make sure that we make sure that they're safe, also.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I welcome the announcement from the minister. Thank you so much. We all are fully aware of the vulnerability of those who are not inside the safety shell of a car when they're out on the road, whether you be on a bicycle or a motorcycle or some other thing, which is not a car.

Because of that it is every car driver's responsibility to be vigilant at all times and be aware and never forget that when you're driving a car you're in control of potentially a deadly weapon. Particularly at this time of year when there are more people out on the roads, who are not protected by the shell of a car.

I look forward to a safe and enjoyable biking season here on Prince Edward Island and making big strides toward our road to zero.

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

Emergency Preparedness Week

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

It's my pleasure to rise and more formally introduce Tanya Mullally, who is our provincial emergency management coordinator, and Denise Bustard, who is our public safety officer, and Major George Williams, who is the provincial liaison officer with the Canadian Armed Forces.

This week is Emergency Preparedness Week, and especially in light of the flood emergency currently happening in New Brunswick, it's important to remind Islanders that a few simple steps can help them protect themselves.

In a natural disaster or other emergency, messages may come through emergency responders, local radio and television, government website and social media channels. Emergency messages can also come directly to Islanders' compatible mobile devices from PEI Emergency Measures Organization.

In fact, the first test alert on mobile devices will take tomorrow, May 9th, at approximately 1:55 p.m. During the test, compatible mobile devices will automatically sound an alarm and display a message.

Les messages d'urgence peuvent être envoyés directement aux appareils mobile compatibles des Insulaires par l'Organisation des Mesures d'Urgence.

Emergency messages may be sent directly to Islanders' compatible mobile devices by PEI Emergency Measures Organization.

Le premier test d'alerte aura lieu mercredi prochain, le 9 mai à 13 h 55.

The first test alert will take place next Wednesday, May 9th, at 1:55 p.m.

Les alertes peuvent être envoyées en français et en anglais.

Alerts can be sent in French and in English.

In this case the message will indicate that this is just a test. If your device makes a sound that you're not used to hearing, don't panic.

In a real emergency, the message will advise of the steps you should take immediately to protect yourself from an unexpected life-threatening situation. When Islanders get any emergency message, it is important that they're ready to act on the advice of emergency responders.

Get prepared in advance by making an

emergency plan, assembling an emergency preparedness kit, and learning more about how you may be affected by the risks we face here on Prince Edward Island, including hurricanes and extreme weather.

Taking a few simple steps to prepare your family for emergencies will not only keep you safe, but it also helps emergency workers focus on people with the most urgent needs during difficult situations. Take some time this Emergency Preparedness Week to think about how you can be better prepared for emergencies.

More preparedness tips are available at www.princeedwardisland.ca/preparedness or through our social media at @PEIPublicSafety.

I would like to add that our thoughts are with our neighbours in New Brunswick as they continue to deal with historic flooding. We are grateful to all the emergency workers and volunteers helping to provide important services. We are watching the situation closely. We have offered our support through our PEI Emergency Measures Organization. We will continue to do so as the situation unfolds.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Something I have been very abreast of over close to thirty-some years is the need for communications.

It's something I learned at a very young age when I started first in the cadets, then into the military, then into the police role and so on. Communications is key and the more information that we can shove out to the public is very important. This is a step forward.

One thing I was quite surprised to learn though that this system is a good thing, but it only is going to reach compatible devices. I hope the technology comes into play some day when it will reach all cell phones out there. That's one thing this system is going to have a little bit of a hindrance with is it only affects compatible devices.

It's good to know that this system will override settings on your phone. That you will get an alert by vibration. You won't get a noise alert. But still it has capability of overriding and putting a vibration into you so that the person can receive the message.

I think all we have to do is look at the Province of New Brunswick and what they've seen over there in the last two to three weeks with flooding, is that these disasters can come onto us very fast. We need to update the public as quickly as possible on all information that's relevant so that they can take measures in place to protect themselves and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Emergency Preparedness Week is a way to really highlight the importance of being prepared. We talk a lot about the importance of having things like emergency kits. There are not many people often get around to doing them. They're absolutely critical.

We saw, more recently, with the emergencies in New Brunswick is often in crisis, you see people rushing around the house trying to remember where their passports are or medications or things like pet supplies. Having that emergency kit put together is actually one of the things that can make a difference of a safe and calm evacuation in the event of an emergency whatever that may be.

One of the other things to think about, as well, is as my colleague mentioned that not all people have a cell phone or a compatible cell phone. Being mindful of your neighbours, particularly seniors or people who maybe don't have access to the same kind of communications is also part of our emergency preparedness. By taking care of others in our community, we can also make sure that none are left behind, whether that be seniors or people who have limited capacity or those who just don't have the means to be contacted through the system.

The final note is that the City of Charlottetown also has an emergency preparedness network and they'll be testing theirs on the 10th of May, but you must sign up through their website which you can get to through the main page, Charlottetown.ca.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the document I referred to on post-traumatic stress disorder by the National Institute of Mental Health, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, 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 leave of the House, I beg leave to table brochures that the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy have partnered on with the motorcycle awareness program, and I move, seconded by the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the said documents be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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 take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Hon. members, we're on page 102 and I think the first section was read and carried at the top, so we're at Human Resources section.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Chair: Thank you. We'll allow her to get set up.

Good afternoon. Could you state your name and your position for the record?

Denise Lewis Fleming CEO: Denise Lewis Fleming, interim chief executive officer of Health PEI.

Chair: Welcome.

Hon. members, I'll read the section and then I'll open the floor for questions.

Chair: Thanks.

Hon. members, the minister is bringing back some answers to questions that were asked

at the committee of the whole and he'll be tabling some documents.

Human Resources

General

“Appropriations provided for provision of leadership, assistance and support to all divisions within Health PEI in the areas of human resource policy and planning, staffing, labour relations and occupational health and safety. The Division supports the operation of the Board of Health PEI. The Division also provides payroll services, French language services and integrated disability management.” Administration: 41,800. Equipment: 3,900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 4,000. Professional Services: 768,500. Salaries: 3,313,800. Travel and Training: 92,900. Grants: 865,000.

Total General: 5,089,900.

Total Human Resources: 5,089,900.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Quality and Safety

General

“Appropriations provided for provision of leadership, assistance and support for all divisions within Health PEI in the areas of quality improvement, risk management, patient safety and clinical and research ethics.” Administration: 97,100. Equipment: 1,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 19,500. Professional Services: 7,000. Salaries: 1,349,800. Travel and Training: 22,900.

Total General: 1,498,100.

Total Quality and Safety: 1,498,100.

Total Health PEI: 696,005,900.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Denise Lewis Fleming CEO: Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Denise.

Chair: Hon. members, the next budget that we will be discussing will be Health & Wellness.

Hon. members, we're going to start with the Department of Health and Wellness. You can find that on page 88.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: We'll allow him to set up.

Please introduce yourself and your title for the record.

Kevin Barnes Director: Kevin Barnes, director of health policy and programs with the Department of Health and Wellness.

Chair: Welcome back.

Minister, do you have an opening statement, or do you have handouts before you (Indistinct) –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, we will be providing our handouts. We'll get them flowing out here.

Obviously, everyone realizes that the portfolio that I am minister of is split into two, Health PEI and then the department. Kevin will provide explanations for the actual department, which is not as large as Health PEI, but still nonetheless is very important and Kevin will do a great job of leading us through the technical pieces of it.

Chair: Documents to be tabled, Kevin?

Kevin Barnes Director: Yes.

Chair: Great, thanks.

Hon. members, as in other budgets, we all know the routine. I'll read the section and then open the floor for discussion.

Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office

Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office

“Appropriations provided for the administration of the Minister's and the

Deputy Minister's offices." Administration: 22,700. Equipment: 1,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 8,000. Salaries: 310,800. Travel and Training: 25,200.

Total Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office: 368,200.

Total Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office: 368,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Health and Policy Programs

Health and Policy Programs

"Appropriations provided to support the Department in carrying out its corporate management responsibilities in the areas of planning and evaluation, health policy development and analysis, and legislation." Administration: 39,200. Equipment: 5,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 38,200. Professional Services: 216,400. Salaries: 1,227,900. Travel and Training: 56,800. Grants: 1,775,600.

Total Health Policy and Programs: 3,359,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Community Care Facility and Private Nursing Home Inspection

I'm going to call on the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to do this section.

Chair (Perry): Community Care Facility and Private Nursing Home Inspection

"Appropriations provided for the inspection and licensing of Community Care Facilities and Private Nursing Homes in Prince Edward Island pursuant to the *Community Care Facilities and Nursing Homes Act*." Administration: 8,200. Equipment: 1,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 2,900. Professional Services: 10,000. Salaries: 426,500. Travel and Training: 19,300.

Total Community Care Facility and Private Nursing Home Inspection: 468,100.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Chair (Casey): Health Recruitment and Retention

"Appropriations provided for workforce planning, and recruitment and retention strategies for physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals." Administration: 22,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 53,600. Professional Services: 25,000. Salaries: 418,800. Travel and Training: 18,700. Grants: 1,416,500.

Total Health Recruitment and Retention: 1,954,800.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I won't go back into the long details of health recruitment and retention, but I'm curious if there has been any follow-up to the talk of private recruiters and if there's any more clarification on that as far as the simple ask of: We're doing it, we say we're doing it well, what's the harm in letting private people do the same job and if they come up with something good, they come up with something good? If not –

Mr. Mitchell: That conversation, we've had it on several occasions now. Kevin will help you out here, but our recruitment and retention team, they're always out talking and I do believe they interact with these private companies or private head hunters to do the same job, as well as physicians that come from other areas to reach out to their network as well.

Kevin – I'll just refer to him to affirm that our recruitment and retention team do actually reach out to private companies that (Indistinct)

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah, we do on occasion and for specific vacancies engage private recruitment firms and that's typically done on a contingency basis. So, we are seeking, for example, psychiatry and we may ask – there are a couple of firms that I know of that we use on a regular basis and that we would contract with them to source psychiatrists, for example, for us.

Again, if there is a successful hire through that process, there's a contingency fee paid and on occasion we have had that, and we

do have a small budget for that in the current year. But, as I say, we also use staff resources, certainly, as well to do that exercise.

To answer your question, hon. member, we do use those firms from time to time.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm just wondering how many physician vacancies there are currently and how that compares with previous years. Are we heading in the right direction, basically?

Mr. Mitchell: Currently, we have a vacancy of 11.1 full-time equivalency physicians on Prince Edward Island, that's pretty accurate?

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: 11.1.

So, in relation to past times, I think we're in pretty good shape. Kevin can affirm that we have been up significantly more than that in the past.

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: We're making good grounds and not to preempt any announcements, but we are very close with, I'd say, at least two, I think, physicians in the near future that are very happy about the possibility of working on PEI. The dotted line is not signed, but we're working very closely with these individuals to entice them to live, work and raise families here on Prince Edward Island so we're doing well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Of those 11 positions, we're talking general practitioners here, right?

Kevin Barnes Director: No.

Mr. Mitchell: No.

So, here's what we have, hon. member.

We are looking for one for emergency medicine at the QEH, a family physician with emergency medicine at the Western Hospital, a family physician East Prince

health primary care network, a family physician for West Prince health primary care network, an anesthetist for Summerside, a gastroenterologist internist for Charlottetown, an internist general in Summerside and a medical oncologist or hematologist; I am assuming that's for anywhere on the Island where it's required, and as well, we're also looking for two psychiatrists.

This, however, does not include the occurrence of just this week where Dr. Giordani has indicated that he will (Indistinct) his practice.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I was trying to keep track as you were going through that list, minister, and it seems to me that the vast majority of them are specialists, not general practitioners. Is that correct?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, 50% probably, close to?

Kevin Barnes Director: On the list there are, I believe it is three family physicians and the rest would be specialty positions.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Do I take it from that that as far as the department is concerned; we're only short three family physicians across the whole Island?

Kevin Barnes Director: We're currently recruiting for those positions. We do have temporary or locum arrangements for some others, but those would be the positions that would be sort of truly vacant with nobody in them at this point in time.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It was my understanding that we have a much greater need than that. The waiting list to see a family doctor is what? 10,000 – I know that's a contentious number, but it's a lot; certainly far more than three new physicians could ever accommodate in their practices.

You mentioned, Kevin that this includes – or does not include places where you have a locum in place. Can you tell us how many general physicians' offices you're not counting that have a locum in place?

Kevin Barnes Director: I would have to bring that back, hon. member, in terms of having an accurate number of that number.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Is it typical for the vacancies – and I'm talking here about family physicians – obviously the specialists are urban-centered, but for family physicians; do the vacancies tend to be predominantly rural? Or is it a mix?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, Kevin can go ahead.

I think, as of late, we've had two rural doctors that decided to retire so that's kind of been our pressure point at the moment, but Kevin can allude to that if it's mostly rural or urban. I think it's probably –

Kevin Barnes Director: It does tend to be probably more the rural, smaller centres of the Island and I think what we're finding, certainly, in family practice is an interest with family practitioners to be in a setting where there are other colleagues around. So, as those centres get smaller, there are fewer colleagues to share a call, consult with, those types of things – and those tend to be limitations in terms of interest in those areas.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And I can certainly identify with that as a young, new dentist. Working by yourself can be a very daunting prospect and I spent all of my working career in rural areas and it was only laterally that I became comfortable with that – it's not really isolation, but that inability to have somebody else in the shoulder who might be working in the same office as you. And I'm assuming that a lot of the new recruits that we're getting will be either new graduates or younger doctors. So what are we doing to make it more comfortable for them to move to these rural settings and are you working along with rural and regional development, for example, in order to do that?

Mr. Mitchell: I think the key for – I'll say newer doctors, primarily – is working in collaborative settings where they have other doctors they can rely on. They have other – whether diabetes nurse for things of that nature, physiotherapists that they can rely on as well. Those collaborative processes seem to be the most – new doctors would have an appetite resonating, too.

Having said that now, there are the odd one that comes out that want to be fully on their

own. You reference the patient registry and obviously we're looking in the vicinity of 9,300 to maybe 9,400 this week, but we've got to keep in mind that's less than 10% of Island residents. That means over 90% of Island residents have a doctor, are getting care when they need to on a day-to-day basis, or a weekly basis, or a monthly basis – whatever they need.

When new doctors come on stream, if they're in the collaborative process and can take on their normal panel size of up to 1,500 – with, perhaps, some NPs associated taking up to 700 there – that's how to make inroads on here, but right now we're looking for whatever – whether it's somebody that wants to work in a collaborative process or stand-alone fee-for-service office. We're not closing any doors or limiting any discussions with anybody. But we do know collaborative processes work well. If a doctor goes on vacation, one of their colleagues picks up the workload from that week – vice versa for them in the following week. It's a really good system and ones that we have to grow bigger and more of, I think.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The move, in many jurisdictions, is away from funneling all patients through the medical doctor and including collaborative colleagues in primary health care facilities – nurse practitioners is the one that everybody thinks of, but there are other health care professionals that can take some of the stress, some of the strain off the medical doctors. I'm wondering whether – in Nova Scotia, this is something that there's been a lot of talk about – is there any plan here to expand or even have a pilot project for a primary health care centre in rural Prince Edward Island where you have those different people working to their full scope of practice so the doctor is not the lynchpin of the whole thing.

Mr. Mitchell: If you're talking rural Prince Edward Island, we have examples now. Kings County, for instance, they're working under (Indistinct) – I believe some in Alberton is working – so we do have it established. We want to be supportive of that because, you're right, you can walk in through the door and you don't see the doctor, you see those other professionals to get your needs met that particular day. You don't always have to see the doctor. They

work and they work well. Those that are in those systems are – you can't sing the praises enough about it, right?

We look for opportunities; if they don't exist today to even try to guide people down that path, I think that's how we're going to have our most success and how most people will have their health care needs met in the future. It will be through a collaborative process. You might see this nurse practitioner today; you might see that physiotherapist tomorrow; you might see somebody doing speech pathology. That's the goal – I shouldn't say that's the goal, obviously there's needs for other – we do need acute care treatment when somebody's sick (Indistinct) where they walk into a clinic and get the service they need too. It's about a balance. It's about balancing the whole system.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'd like to talk for a minute about nurse practitioners specifically because – well let me just ask the question: Are nurse practitioners able on Prince Edward Island to work independent of a family physician?

Mr. Mitchell: Currently, they are not. Kevin can –

Kevin Barnes Director: That's correct. Currently they're not, although the department is working through the process of bringing nurses and nurse practitioners under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and through that process – and I think you'll see that later in the session – through that process we will be introducing regulations which will change that requirement, essentially, and work more closely with other jurisdictions in terms of having access to a family physician, but not necessarily setting out a specific requirement for collaborating practice, or collaborating environment.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm really happy to hear that and this is the same legislation that would allow midwives –

Mr. Mitchell: No, they fit under a different –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: This is the regulated, not registered?

Kevin Barnes Director: This is the regulated, yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So we know where the registered health professions act stands – it's about to be proclaimed, and we need a registrar, and then the various bodies can come forward. Where are we with the *Regulated Health Professions Act*?

Kevin Barnes Director: The *Regulated Health Professions Act* has been enforced for a number of years. We have brought in various professions under that act already and are being regulated in that fashion. Off the top of my head, hon. member, certainly the first profession in was pharmacy and pharmacy technician, so they're currently under that regime. We have brought in the dietitians, I believe, LPNs –

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Kevin Barnes Director: – is in there, and I am going to say physiotherapists and that's off the top of my head, so we are moving through various professions and bringing in under that framework.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Do you have a sort of timeframe whereby nurse practitioners will be able to work independently here on PEI?

Kevin Barnes Director: Well that, as I say, will sort of coincide, essentially, with the bringing of the nursing profession under the *Regulated Health Professions Act*. That will be certainly in the very near term – within the next few months. As I say, expect you'll see the legislative amendments in this particular session and the regulations to follow in the very near future, hon. member.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So you mentioned that LPNs are already licensed under this or regulated under this. You're saying that the nurse practitioners and the nurses will be dealt with together in one set of regulations.

Kevin Barnes Director: Yes, that's correct. That profession will have a college under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* that will regulate the practice of registered nursing as well as nurse practitioners. There'll be separate registries within that,

but essentially there will be a single college that will –

Mr. Mitchell: It will look similar to college of physicians at the end of the day when it rolls out.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Thank you for being patient, Chair, with me.

Back to my own district and as you well know, minister, we've had many chats about the loss of the doctor in the South Shore region. How much is the department actually allocating specifically to recruit the physician for the South Shore region, or is that not how it works?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, when I was asked on the floor of the House last week about Dr. Giordani, I had no previous knowledge of that, so since that we've had conversations with Dr. Giordani. We do understand that for personal reasons he will be leaving in August – August, at some point then. Now we are aware of that, so we're recruiting to fill that position.

Obviously, when you're recruiting – West Prince has been a primary concern as of late – but when you're recruiting and a doctor would be willing to go fill one position rather than another, certainly we don't say: Oh, no, it has to be here or there. So that's an equal part of the process now – trying to identify a physician to replace Dr. Giordani. Where that would be, we do not know at this point in time; if it's a fee-for-service doctor, as long as they work within their region, that's yet to be determined where they would like to be. Perhaps it could be back in Crapaud. We don't know.

So, in the meantime, I've had the opportunity and I appreciated the opportunity to meet with the representatives from the community of Crapaud. We had a really great discussion moving forward and they understand that it's work in progress. Obviously, we are looking to recruit, but as well, very encouragingly, they're looking to recruit.

They have some connections in the medical field in other provinces. By all means we'll work together; if they do find somebody to come to some solution that works for

everybody. Obviously, if they recruit a doctor that wants to work in the region, but still not in Crapaud, they're still receptive to that as a possibility.

Everything is working in our favour as far as we know now that Dr. Giordani is leaving. We know that we have a position to fill. At the end of the day, it could very well be back in Crapaud. We don't know that for certain yet. The community will still work on it. We'll work on it equal – an equal amount and try to get that good solution.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I, too, want to applaud the work of the South Shore Health and Wellness group that have really stepped forward to work alongside your department to try and make this happen.

Are they aware, minister, or did the discussion come up in the meeting last week that nurse practitioners will be imminently regulated and able to work independently on PEI?

Mr. Mitchell: They may not be fully aware. I don't know that that came up in the conversation. They do know that we're looking as a potential solution; nurse practitioners being part of that, as well. They are aware of that now.

We didn't really get down to acts and whose professions are being regulated. That remains as work ongoing. It's hard to say which will come first. You know what I mean?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Final question, Chair.

Kevin mentioned, you used the term months before the nurses will be under this act. Can I push you to say that before the end of this calendar year that it will be done?

Kevin Barnes Director: I think that's fair to say, absolutely.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Health Care Innovation Working Group
Secretariat

“Appropriations provided for administration of the Health Care Innovation Working Group Secretariat established by the Council of the Federation to provide administrative and logistical support. Prince Edward Island was responsible for the administration of the Secretariat until the conclusion of the Working Group’s current mandate. Appropriations were fully-offset by revenue from provincial/territorial contributions.”

Total Health Policy and Programs

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Chief Public Health Office

“Appropriations provided for administration of the *Public Health Act*, supervision of provincial health programs, immunization programs, disease surveillance and communicable disease control.”

Administration: 28,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,288,500. Professional Services: 25,100. Salaries: 1,142,500. Travel and Training: 33,700. Grants: 1,600.

Total Chief Public Health Office: 2,519,500.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Population Health Assessment and Surveillance

“Appropriations provided for monitoring and reporting on health status and trends in the Province. The unit supports evidence-based decision-making and promotes continuous improvement by generating, analyzing and interpreting information.”

Administration: 4,300. Equipment: 2,400. Materials, Supplies and Services: 600. Professional Services: 16,300. Salaries: 330,400. Travel and Training: 2,100.

Total Population Health Assessment and Surveillance: 356,100.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The chief public health officer in her report, I think it was 2016, where she was addressing the social determinants of health; a really comprehensive, really well done report.

I’m just wondering what the department has done in order to address recommendations in that report.

Kevin Barnes Director: In terms of the work of the chief public health officer and her recommendations, certainly one of the areas where there has been a focus is on, I guess, improving or focusing on essentially wellness-related initiatives.

At a departmental level there is an increased focus. We have introduced a program, wellness grants, essentially, which are designed to get at the social determinants of health rather than a response-type of activity being more proactive in nature.

Certainly, we’ve done some work with respect to development of low-risk drinking guidelines, which again addresses the issue of alcohol consumption. From a social determinants perspective, we’re focused on that.

As we go forward with the current year, we’ll be focusing on education and wellness in the area of the use of cannabis. As we focus going forward we’ll be looking at some population health work in that area.

A number of individual additions.

Mr. Mitchell: Correct me if I’m wrong, too, Kevin, but I think that’s also where that relationship between education and agriculture spun out for that healthy eating program in the schools, as well, last year. That was part of those recommendations, as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: For me, this is really important and the next section, as well; health promotion, a really important part of the budget. That’s not reflected in the bottom line that you see there.

I think all of those grants that you mentioned there Kevin, important though they are, I think they total about \$40,000 for the whole province and out of a health budget of – we’re over \$600 million now, close to –

Kevin Barnes Director: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – yes. It’s such a tiny amount.

Since the chief public health officer's report was, it was a very compelling piece of work; I'm wondering whether you have a plan to expand the promotion of wellness and these preventive measures that you were just talking about to put money into them.

Mr. Mitchell: Actually, there was some discussion held this week with Dr. Morrison and Dr. Sabapathy in that regard to develop some kind of planning going forward, as well.

We can bring back if some work has gone on, which I'm sure it has, we can bring back some of those, I'll say, plans for the future if they're available. (Indistinct) what we can, some kind of a draft form.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Minister, are we tracking suicides now?

Mr. Mitchell: Obviously, we're working on the suicide strategy, which is near in completion. I believe, I don't – it's hard to say. Kevin just –

Kevin Barnes Director: Can you repeat the question. Sorry, I didn't –

Mr. Mitchell: Tracking suicides –

Mr. MacEwen: Are we tracking suicides in the province?

Kevin Barnes Director: Actually, the coroner, who is under justice and public safety does an annual report. In that report, from my understanding tracks causes of suspicious death and suicide would be tracked within the context of that report. We do rely on the Chief Coroner's Office for the reporting of those statistics on a year-to-year basis.

Mr. MacEwen: But we don't break it down by suicide, though right? It's lumped in with a larger group –

Kevin Barnes Director: No, well, and correct me if I'm wrong, hon. member, I do believe that report does identify different causes of death. I do believe it does highlight suicide as being –

Mr. Mitchell: Some confirmed, I believe.

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah, I think –

Mr. Mitchell: Some –

Kevin Barnes Director: – that that's right.

Mr. MacEwen: True (Indistinct)

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall that section carry? Carried.

Health Promotion

“Appropriations provided for support to health and wellness of Islanders and to promote a pro-active process to enable Islanders to increase control over and to improve their health. The unit is responsible for implementing the provincial Wellness Strategy within the Department, across Government and in partnership with non-Government organizations and communities.” Administration: 5,700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 118,500. Professional Services: 112,900. Salaries: 321,800. Travel and Training: 5,800. Grants: 216,500.

Total Health Promotion: 781,200.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Again, I'd just like to point out that that figure, 781,000 is about 0.1% of the health budget.

Again, I appreciate what's being done here. I'm wondering whether you have an update on the implementation of the Wellness Strategy, where we are with that?

Mr. Mitchell: You know, I think what would be fair to say, there is a fair bit of work going on, but we're on the back end of that, as well.

I think what I'd like to do is I'll bring back

some information in regards to what the focus is now and what it would be in the future to kind of lay out a roadmap of where the department's going. Obviously, it's a big focus for our people in that department. They take their role very seriously for public health.

If that's fair with you –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, sure.

Mr. Mitchell: – I'd rather take back that kind of a draft back to you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, minister.

I'm good, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Environmental Health Services

“Appropriations provided for services to educate, consult and inspect under the *Public Health Act* in areas such as food protection, accommodations, institutional facilities and slaughterhouses. Inspection services also includes enforcement under the *Tobacco and Electronic Smoking Device Sales and Access Act* and *Smoke-Free Places Act*. Administration: 16,100. Equipment: 800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 30,500. Professional Services: 41,800. Salaries: 751,900. Travel and Training: 54,400.

Total Environmental Health Services:
895,500.

Total Chief Public Health Officer:
4,522,300.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

With the imminent legalization of cannabis here, I'm wondering whether there will be any impact at all on the acts that are smoking; *Smoke-free Places Act*, and the access act. The acts that would be surrounding smoking.

Mr. Mitchell: There is, hon. member. That would be presented later on when we bring the cannabis piece forward for more discussion.

Obviously, smoke-free places is an item that pertains to tobacco, marijuana or –

Kevin Barnes Director: Vaping.

Mr. Mitchell: – vaping. Yeah, I couldn't think of the term.

It has influences in all those. Those are things that will be addressed –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: – as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'll just wait for that, then.

Thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity

“Appropriations provided for development, implementation, delivery and monitoring of programs and services in the areas of sport, recreation and physical activity.”
Administration: 8,800. Equipment: 2,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 23,900. Professional Services: 174,200. Salaries: 421,800. Travel and Training: 35,300. Grants: 3,072,800.

Total Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity: 3,738,900.

Total Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity: 3,738,900.

Total Department of Health and Wellness:
14,441,400.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I'm looking at the grants for sport, recreation and physical activity.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Under miscellaneous, there's a line \$10,000 going to Mullache Sports for the Island Storm contract. I'm curious what that is. Everything else seems to kind of

make sense. I'm just trying to figure that out.

Kevin Barnes Director: There is a sponsorship for contribution that's made through sport and recreation to support the Island Storm and its operations here on PEI.

Mr. Trivers: Mullache Sports is the company that –

Kevin Barnes Director: The corporate –

Mr. Trivers: – owns the Island Storm?

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Along the lines of the Leader of the Third Party, I'm looking at this section as a whole, especially sport and recreation and physical activity and health promotion. One of the things, one of my constituents is passionate about is ringette, for example.

He noticed that they have to do significant extra fundraising because they have to pay HST on facility rentals.

I was wondering if you've given any consideration to giving back the tax, at least the provincial portion of HST on facility rentals. It's just an additional cost to almost every sport that has to rent a facility. That means they have to do extra fundraising. It's a little bit of a barrier to playing that sport and doing that recreation for physical activity and being healthier.

Mr. Mitchell: Obviously, as minister responsible I certainly do encourage Islanders to be active, to get healthy, to remain healthy.

Although, I don't have the control over taxation, that falls under the Minister of Finance, obviously, I think that's an important question to have. I think it's probably it's one that we're going to have soon on the floor of the Legislature as well.

I'm open to that suggestion. Whether it be ringette, whether it be hockey, whether it be wrestling. Obviously, there's good reasons for Islanders to remain healthy. It keeps them out of hospitals. It keeps them off of medications that are required. I think that's

something that's very worthy of taking a look at collectively.

Mr. Trivers: There's a couple of different ways to implement that. I mean, we talk about taking the provincial portion of the HST off facility rentals. You could just increase the grant line to the various different minor sports organizations in an equivalent amount to approximately what they're paying. That would be an easier way, potentially, to do it because everything just continues the way it is. They just get more money to offset that.

Would that be something you would be interested in considering?

Mr. Mitchell: I'd be interested in looking at all options when it comes to making Islanders more healthy and more sports oriented; whatever it takes. I'm looking at all options.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) Liberals (Indistinct) wedge it in.

Mr. Trivers: You're a great proponent of sports. I know that. I see you out and about at the arenas in your area and across the Island.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) wedge issue (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: When do you think you might actually have something like that implemented?

Mr. Mitchell: I think that would be a collective discussion, obviously. It's something that we can bring up at other tables, as well.

I think it's something that's worthy of discussion right here on the floor of the Legislature to give that broad look at it. No matter – you're right; I'm very passionate about sport on PEI. In regards to portfolios, every minister needs to have one part of their portfolio that's a fun piece. This is my fun piece, right?

I get to go out and talk lots of young athletes across PEI, who are passionate. They're really good at the sports they're developing

in. When you mention – when you look at grants there and one of our grant increases in regards to the Canada Games, which we are out working very hard on ensuring they come to Prince Edward Island so that our young athletes have a place to own the podium, as they say, and excel in their sport.

This is one that I'm very passionate about myself. Discussions like that, I'm open to, but I think that's a broader discussion. I think we have opportunities right here; maybe this summer, if we're still in here to have good conversations about that.

I'm open to that.

Mr. Trivers: I look forward to the motion you bring to the floor, thanks.

Mr. LaVie: You know you're not going to be here.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Minister, I noticed that the grants here have gone up by \$1 million and it looks to me like that that's in the provincial organizational sport thing here. I'm not quite sure what that covers.

Mr. Mitchell: The increase, hon. member, overall, Kevin can break it down. It is in relationship to the Canada Games the work, the lead-up work that's requirement to make the bid and seal the deal for PEI.

That came to us, I'll say, late last year for the opportunity, so obviously we had to inject some more dollars there. There's a fair bit of work involved in making everything come to be. That's the big part of that million bucks.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: Unless you have got something to break –

Kevin Barnes Director: No, exactly, minister –

Chair: The hon. Leader –

Kevin Barnes Director: Sure.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm looking and maybe it's not on here, but in the provincial organizational sport section there, the only Canada Games Council bid fee that I see is \$60,000. Obviously it's much more than that.

Kevin Barnes Director: I think, the difference being, hon. member, those would be grants that were paid out in the past year. As we move into the new fiscal year, we were really readying for and ramping up for Canada Games. We'll see those payments go out in the year ahead. That's, as I say, the reason for the budgetary increase looking ahead is we'll have monies relative to completion of the bid. Presuming a successful award of the bid then starting to plan for the games; establishing the host society and really actively working towards and funding the other work that goes into hosting the Canada Games.

It's kind of looking at past data and the budget is reflecting what's out there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Did you have any sense as to when we'll find out whether we've been successful in winning that bid?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, we know when that'll be. Is that this fall?

Kevin Barnes Director: It's this fall. It's October –

Mr. Mitchell: September, October, yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

The million dollars that's budgeted this year is simply to make the bid?

Kevin Barnes Director: No. The large portion of that is presuming that the bid will be successfully awarded.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: All right.

Kevin Barnes Director: I believe there are costs roughly, hon. member, about \$185,000. There is a committee working on the preparation of the bid. There are fees associated with submission of the bid to the

Canada Games council and those monies would go into that process.

We presume – we're optimistic that PEI will be awarded, and upon award there really is a process then that's a fulsome sort of planning and preparation process. The line share of that money would be to fund the early days of that process.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate your clarification that the line share of that 80% – more than 80% – is if we get it.

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: If we can get it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Do you have any sense of how much, if we are successful in the bid, that's just what will be costing this year – how much it will cost the province to host the Canada Games if we are indeed – the whole cost?

Mr. Mitchell: I think we have an indicator of that.

Kevin Barnes Director: We do.

Overall – and I think there are a few variables that will go into that – but on a rough order of magnitude, we expect the cost to be somewhere in the \$35 million to \$40 million range, in 2023 dollars.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Kevin Barnes Director: There are components that go into that from a federal contribution and I know that formula is up for review following the next games. That will influence how much the province has to pay out for its own contribution. We're hopeful that the federal contribution will go up.

There's also, in hosting the games, the gate receipts, the ticket sales, all of those types of things which is a bit of a variable, and there's a capital campaign that goes with that as well. There are a number of pieces that the cost may shift one way or the other. But, in a rough order of magnitude, hon. member, we're sure looking into that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Kevin, that 35 to \$40 million, is that the provincial share or the overall?

Kevin Barnes Director: That would be –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That would be the provincial share of a much bigger expense?

Kevin Barnes Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Of course, we don't know what the revenues will be. I get that, and there will be a revenue stream coming.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, well absolutely.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know there will be significant dollars coming into the province if we do win this, but I'm wondering how much. You mentioned capital expenses there, Kevin. Presumably we don't have all the facilities required to host the Canada Games as we sit here now, so do you have a sense of how much we're going to have to outlay in capital expenditures to create the infrastructure that would be required?

Kevin Barnes Director: I don't have an exact number.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, it's probably not broken down as well. We know that there are some sports that we won't be able to have venues (Indistinct). Obviously, the downhill skiing will be a challenge, even short track –

Kevin Barnes Director: Speed skating.

Mr. Mitchell: – speed skating is a challenge. But, they're not far away from here where they are available to do.

So, some of the other infrastructure, of course, there's infrastructure associated with housing that we'll have to deal with there. We don't really have a good, firm breakdown of all of that, but we know the first – step one is to get the games and then to develop better costing mechanisms. Not that there's – there's lots of work going on and we have a really great group that are leading the charge for this with a ton of experience as well.

We're hoping that as we move down the road here a little bit, we'll all have a better picture of what it will look like (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Final question on this: Has there been any analysis done on the cost benefit of previous host provinces or cities who have hosted the games? Did they come ahead?

Kevin Barnes Director: Actually, there has been analysis done and I think that's typically been done by the Canada Games council, but in essence there is usually a multiplier of two-and-a-half to three-times in terms of the economic benefit back from hosting a Canada Games. So that's the model that the Canada Games council has advised us and what we're sort of – what we understand from the experience of other jurisdictions.

There really is a multiplier effect in the economy from hosting the games.

Mr. Mitchell: It's also my understanding – although Kevin says is accurate, when we think about past Canada Games, even the ones that were held here or other jurisdictions, there were always significant legacy pieces – that's changing now. It's a lot less as far legacy pieces. That puts a little different look on things now than it did even back in –

Chair: 1991.

Mr. Mitchell: – 1991, for sure, when we were able to get the new civic centre. I mean, those are things that we got to look at and look at realistically. But, there's still tremendous economic spinoff when you talk about this age group of athletes; moms, dads, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, uncles, aunts – everybody comes, right? So, tremendous potential for Prince Edward Island in a time of year that's a little bit constrained, so it's very important to look at.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Great, thank you, minister.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm just wondering: Has Gordon McNeilly received any grants this year or previously?

Mr. Mitchell: Gord McNeilly?

Kevin Barnes Director: There's nothing in the current year, and I'd have to go back and look. I know at points in time in some of the work that Gordon did from a – I forget the name of the organization – there may have been miscellaneous grants in the past, small amounts, but I don't have that number with me.

Chair: Kensington-Malpeque, do you have another question?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, just a follow-up of that.

You mentioned there possibly smaller grants in previous years, so that would be through the wellness grant that –

Kevin Barnes Director: goPEI! I think, the program, and potentially the wellness program. I'm not sure, hon. member. I'd have to bring that back; certainly nothing in the 2017-2018 year.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the total Department of Health and Wellness carry? Carried.

Thank you, minister.

Thanks, Kevin; nice to see you.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much.

Chair: You're welcome.

Hon. members, we're now moving on to economic development and tourism, so we'll allow the minister to come to the table.

Hon. members, we're going to start with Economic Development and Tourism and we're on page 42.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Could you please introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Shannon Burke Director: Shannon Burke, Director of Finance.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Hon. members, as in other budgets, I'll read the section and then I'll open the floor for discussion.

We're on page 42, Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

General Administration

Corporation Management

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Minister's and Deputy Minister's offices; trade negotiations and policy; records management; and staff development.” Administration: 20,000. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 13,100. Professional Services: 30,000. Salaries: 936,700. Travel and Training: 43,500.

Total Corporation Management: 1,047,800.

Total General Administration: 1,047,800.

Total Department of Economic Development and Tourism: 1,047,800.

Before I go to the questions, I have the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale on my list. Minister, do you have an opening statement that you want to give? And could you also explain about your handouts?

Mr. Palmer: Sure.

I don't really have a lot of explanation to go at the front end of this other than – we work in partnership with private sector in communities to create economic growth and enhance and support tourism in the province. Earlier today we had emailed out copies of the handout, so I believe everybody has those.

Chair: Thank you.

I have a question from Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

It's a general question given that Finance PEI, which is a Crown corporation of economic development and tourism is not included in the estimates document. I recognize it is a Crown corporation, but is there any way that we can get a breakdown of the activities under Finance PEI as part of the budget process?

Mr. Palmer: There is a report that's created for Finance PEI and IIDI every year which are public.

Ms. Bell: Right. So not in terms of planned expenditures, though. It's the report that follows on from the activities in here, rather than in the estimates document?

Mr. Palmer: Correct.

Ms. Bell: So, minister, how is that reflected in terms of the allocated expenditures?

Mr. Palmer: There is no government money that goes to Finance PEI or IIDI, so the expenditures are all the pieces that we're talking about today. So there are no expenditures ongoing from government.

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct) provincial operating budget.

Mr. Palmer: Operating.

So there's that ongoing piece, is what we're talking about with these, so there's an operating grant to finance.

Shannon Burke Director: No. Finance PEI doesn't receive an operating grant.

Mr. Palmer: Or IIDI?

Shannon Burke Director: Nor does IIDI.

Mr. Palmer: So neither one of them receive any funding from the province for operations.

Ms. Bell: So to qualify if they (Indistinct) don't receive any operating grants then the

staff that work there are not government employees?

Mr. Palmer: I don't know what the classification is. They're not part of the collective agreement. They're employees of the Crowns. So there's two Crown – I believe is at Finance PEI and IIDI so the employees are employees of those Crown corporations.

Ms. Bell: You do bring revenue from those back into government operations? Is that correct, minister – because you've spoken about that previously?

Mr. Palmer: They do work and they're self-sustained, so they're inside. For example, Finance PEI has loans out and they administer those loans, charge interest on those loans, and so they make revenue inside the Crown corporation and they keep that for ongoing funding and operations, which will – some of that profit goes back into the overall pool of funding that they can lend out.

Ms. Bell: This is now my final question.

So to clarify: Minister, when you've spoken about revenue – that they're revenue generating – that revenue remains with those Crown corporations, it doesn't come back into government coffers?

Mr. Palmer: That's correct.

Ms. Bell: Great. Thank you, minister.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm just curious how many loans were wrote off in your department last year as well as so far this year.

Mr. Palmer: There's no loans in any of these, member.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: I think what they're trying to say is the question you're asking is not in this section.

Mr. MacKay: Yes, but can I get –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

So minister, last year, the previous minister, which I give him credit, he disclosed about \$18 million dollars of loan write-offs. What department would that fall under, or where would you find it, I guess? If it's not in this section, where could I find it?

Mr. Palmer: So member, those will be made public, but they're not part of the expenditures of the province, which is what we're talking about here today. As a disclosure piece from Finance PEI and IIDI, any write-offs that fit the criteria are disclosed from there, but that isn't ongoing government money of any of those write-offs; that would be inside the Crown corporation. That is not part of general expenses, which is really what we're talking about today is the operations and the expenditures of the province of PEI and Finance PEI and IIDI are separate Crown corporations that are self-sustained.

Mr. MacKay: Final question, minister. I appreciate that. When could we expect to see the disclosure on that? Is there a timeframe when that's going to come out?

Shannon Burke Director: I believe at the very latest it would be when the annual report comes out. They're not certain what the obligation is prior to that or how the process for making that public.

Mr. Palmer: I could find that out – that timeline – and let you know, but it is disclosed every year.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Thank you, Chair. I'm good.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the total Department of Economic Development and Tourism carry? Carried.

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, we're moving on to Innovation PEI which is on page 44.

Corporation Management

“Appropriations provided for administration of the Corporation.” Administration: 240,500. Equipment: 6,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 34,000. Professional Services: 50,000. Salaries: 1,021,500. Travel and Training: 46,000.

Total Corporation Management: 1,398,000.

Total Corporation Management: 1,398,000.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

There's been some significant increases in (Indistinct) administration line, but particularly in the salaries line. Could you expand on where that has come from, please?

Shannon Burke Director: So you're looking budget to budget?

Ms. Bell: There's the forecast to estimate and then budget to budget. Yes. So there's about a \$100,000 increase budget to budget.

Mr. MacEwen: That's new staff at the Sherwood Motel.

Shannon Burke Director: In the forecast –

Chair: Not helpful.

Shannon Burke Director: – we had a retirement during the year –

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Shannon Burke Director: We also had a staff member who was on parental leave during the year who will be returning. And we also had – our deputy minister is performing the duties of both the CEO and the deputy minister, so we had some savings related to that.

Ms. Bell: Right.

Shannon Burke Director: And budget to budget we have our cost of living increases, which would be contract-based. Then we also have a position that we've advertised for for a chief sales officer, which we haven't filled yet.

Ms. Bell: Thank you for clarifying that and for raising the thing around the, kind of a, double duty for the deputy minister and the CEO. Does that create any potential conflict for and with those roles in terms of having overall operation for the department, but then also that day-to-day fiscal management?

Mr. Palmer: We don't find that there's any operational conflicts; it seems to work well because we have the same person that's doing both of those, so it's really kind of meshed together quite nicely. If there was any kind of issue with it, it's more around time because they're very active. So that's the only kind of constraint that we'd have and we continue to work our way through that.

Ms. Bell: Great.

Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Business Development

Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors

“Appropriations provided for leading the attraction of new businesses and business partners to the Province which complement the provincial economy. In particular, firms are targeted in the aerospace, advanced marine technologies, information technology, bioscience and select manufacturing sectors.” Salaries: 1,465,900. Travel and Training: 107,500.

Total Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors: 1,573,400.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Minister, how long have these sectors been the priority for this department?

Mr. Palmer: I don't know the history. Do you know how long they have been?

Shannon Burke Director: It's been a while.

Mr. Palmer: I would think 2007, 2008.

Ms. Bell: So emerging perhaps isn't quite there anymore if we're doing it 11, 12 years in. I'm just wondering sort of where we've got some significant investment, particularly where bio-food, biotech is appearing now as actually its own entire section rather than an emerging sector, whether there's any thought about reviewing and revising the strategic sectors.

Mr. Palmer: I think that's something, member, that we're always doing, trying to identify what the unique attributes of PEI are and how we can grow the economy here based on some of the strategic assets that we have in PEI, of those being physical infrastructure and with people as well. We're always doing the scan, I guess, to understand where the growth possibly could be, and how we can bring some of that growth here to PEI.

Ms. Bell: Minister, about that –

Chair: The Premier has an intervention to that. Is that okay?

Ms. Bell: Oh, sure.

Premier MacLauchlan: Two to three years ago we added marine technology as of more less an offshoot of aerospace. While it hasn't perhaps taken on the precise definition of an emerging sector, it's certainly become a growth area in advanced manufacturing and we've seen all of that and we could also identify.

While it wasn't done in the same move going back to the whole innovation strategy, the cultural action plan is clearly in the same spirit of what's being asked here. So we are indeed identifying and moving in areas where we find strengths and potential growth.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Premier, for that.

The addition of the marine sector has been significant, that combination with Aspin Kemp and some of the other great players in that industry. It's also – you mentioned the cultural plan which we see in a new section, which is fantastic. I'm wondering, though, minister, if you could sort of share your thoughts on where we have a clear biotech support and collaboration around that we have a food sort of focus, but IT doesn't necessarily have a strong focus in terms of there being a sector council or an NGO that kind of provides that kind of community-based support.

Has there been any thought about that in your department of how to strengthen and support broader context of IT rather than particularly just gaming?

Mr. Palmer: I know there was a sector council in IT a number of years ago; actually, I was a part of that back in my IT days –

Ms. Bell: Me too.

Mr. Palmer: – so I know there was some organization around that, but the industry has kind of continued to grow even without that. I'm not really sure why that sector council, why the sector I guess didn't feel a need for it any longer; but if we do hear that from the sector that they need some kind of extra organization and support, I think that's something we'd be really interested in because we want to continue to grow the economy of PEI, of course, and that's a really good sector for us to be involved in.

Ms. Bell: Perhaps when we get to the section later on about that, where those organizations are funded, we can see sort of what the comparison looks like. There is definitely some strong funding from the department for some of those other councils, but I'll leave it there for now.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Culture Development and Growth Fund

“Appropriations provided for the Culture Development and Growth Fund.” Salaries: 103,400. Grants: 1,353,900.

Total Culture Development and Growth Fund: 1,457,300.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I know you had one staff person assigned to this on a part-time or like partway through the year last year and they've done great work already on this file, and obviously there's a big jump in this. Can you advise whether that department, that section is going to grow with more internal support as well as external support given the scope of the plan they've got to implement?

Mr. Palmer: The employee there is fulltime –

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Mr. Palmer: – and as we have workload coming in that we're not able to handle we can certainly look at that, because we know culture's really important. We have additional investments into that side of the business from the grants and community development project funds and those kind of things.

As demand dictates, we'll add folks to that as kind of the demand suggests that we should. As projects are happening and we're not able to respond the way we should respond, we'll add more people.

Ms. Bell: Yeah. The cultural action plan, minister, is well overdue and it's a really great initiative and I really want to commend the department for recognizing the impact and value of the cultural sector.

That plan is a very ambitious one. There is a significant amount of actual functional work in there as well as sort of project pieces. This is quite a small business line, all things considered, for the scope of the work that's in there. One of the considerations is about that sustainability of that. Is there a future plan to think about setting up that secretariat

that was identified in the plan sooner rather than later?

Mr. Palmer: We don't have that in the budget for this upcoming year, which is what this document is, but certainly as the business evolves, that side of it will continue to grow it. We know how important culture is.

If I take one of the small examples – or I guess not a small example, it's a big example – of our success that we had East Coast Music Awards (Indistinct). It's terrific. So we understand kind of the economic impact of some of those things, and we know this is a good spot for it and we can make investments in those and certainly have a return for it, so we'll continue to do that.

Ms. Bell: Last question, Chair, thank you.

The cultural, the secretariat was identified as a really immediate action, so if you're in your second year, it'd be great to see that coming forward.

The other part around that, minister, is you mentioned about the economic impact. A lot of the economic impact right now sits outside your department. It sits with those NGOs, so doing work like Music PEI, who are primarily responsible for some that great support and success that those musicians have enjoyed. As we've heard me mention before, that sort of coordination of some of that NGO support, is that going to come under the umbrella eventually of this aspect of your department?

Mr. Palmer: I think once we get to a point where we've identified what those strategic assets need to be or how we can strengthen that, then we'll find the best place for those at the time. It would be premature for me to kind of tell you what the plan on that would be when we don't really fully understand it at this stage.

This is a significant investment and we've just started to do that, so we need to see where the response comes from in the cultural community and which parts of those are working well and which ones not so well and we'll address that with resources or make an adjustment to some of these items as we go forward to find out what's working

and what isn't and how we can continue to support those.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Minister. That's super.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Global Trade Services

"Appropriations provided for development of trade and export opportunities for Island businesses." Salaries: 520,700. Travel and Training: 51,000.

Total Global Trade Services: 571,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Business Development and Innovation

"Appropriations provided for delivery of information and assistance to businesses in Prince Edward Island. Specifically, assisting in the start up, expansion and diversification of Island businesses, and ensuring the long-term success of these companies." Salaries: 715,600. Travel and Training: 22,000.

Total Business Development and Innovation: 737,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Programs

"Appropriations provided for development of business." P.E.I. Tax Incentives: 24,900,000. Business Expansion and Product Development: 12,120,400. Trade and Export Development: 1,000,000.

Total Programs: 38,020,400.

Total Business Development: 42,360,400.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

If we start looking at the grants and our capital assistance grants, it was – and perhaps you can correct me, it was my understanding that the capital on this was

\$10,000 was the max, but there is a grant in here for 24,000. It's an exception for the Center for Aquaculture Technologies, I think. Could you just advise what the general scope is for that program?

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: We'll take a look at that to see if that was put into the wrong category, if it was above that.

Ms. Bell: Sure.

Mr. Palmer: Because you're right, it's at 25%, so we'll look and see if it's into the right category or not.

Ms. Bell: So if I may be not recalling this correctly, but (Indistinct) says you do 25% of capital expenditures up to a maximum of \$10,000?

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah. It's up to \$40,000 –

Ms. Bell: Up to (Indistinct)

Shannon Burke Director: – (Indistinct) expenditure with 25% –

Ms. Bell: Twenty-five per cent being covered on it.

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: And it's a reimbursement.

Are there any other conditions that are set around the access to this grant; for example, alignments with those strategic sectors?

Mr. Palmer: The applicants for this support – I'll just read you some of the characteristics of this support – are manufacturers, processors and providers of exportable services.

Ms. Bell: So if somebody is investing in a business located in PEI which is not yet exporting, then they are not eligible for this program. Am I correct?

Mr. Palmer: In this program (Indistinct) –

Correct. If you're engaged in retail and services of business to business or business

to consumer are not eligible for this assistance.

Ms. Bell: Sorry. I'm sorry, I –

Chair: Hon. members, we're having difficulty hearing the minister and the questions asked. I don't mind if you take your questions outside.

Mr. Palmer: I'll be louder.

Chair: Minister, could you repeat that?

Mr. Palmer: Sure.

Applicants engaged in retailing and services to businesses or consumers are not eligible for that assistance.

But there is a new program that we have that was available online yesterday which is a small business incentive grant which was released in this budget which is available to quite a number of businesses across PEI and it is a 15% – so you could get, the business could get a grant of \$3,750 back.

Ms. Bell: That's great.

So my next question is on the development fund grants, and it's your largest section and I promise I'm not going to ask on every line, but I do have a couple of big questions in here.

My main thing around the development grants is the development funds, there's four pages of those and they total almost \$13 million and they come under the heading of small business grants, but there's a couple of things in here that I wanted to ask about, Chair, which are around – there's a large amount of these that are actually organizational funding.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Chair: What is your question?

Ms. Bell: Sorry. I had a couple of questions about – there were two things. One of them is where some of the major organizational funding that occurred you talked about earlier, about bioscience, about Startup Zone, LaunchPad, Junior Achievement, Chamber of Commerce and so on, their funding lines appear in here.

So I'm wondering about whether it'd be – minister, has your department considered about qualifying the difference between organizational support and small business grants? Because they're not the same thing; and \$12 million is a great amount of money, don't get me wrong, but there's a large amount of different activity happening in this section.

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Can I get clarification on your question?

Ms. Bell: Sure. I'll give you a couple of examples.

Mr. Palmer: Okay, great.

Ms. Bell: For instance, the Mi'kmaq Confederacy, their four-year economic development agreement for \$250,000. You have Mill River in here for \$4 million. You have \$928,800 to LaunchPad across the province. You have \$288,000 for operational grants to the Startup Zone, and \$72,000 to Chambers of Commerce.

Those are not small business grants. Those are grants for operational funding or funding agreements to organizations whether they're non-profits or businesses in the province.

Mr. Palmer: Okay.

Ms. Bell: So it's a fantastic amount of money, Minister, but it's not necessarily a good representation of how we're funding and supporting small businesses in the province.

Mr. Palmer: Right. Okay, I see your point. So we can have a different classification of that inside of those so that we can kind of separate them out. I assume – I don't know if that's a coding thing on our end, if it's – because it would still kind of fall under the same category –

Ms. Bell: Sure.

Mr. Palmer: – but we could separate those out and maybe have a clearer picture of that, which I guess is the –

Shannon Burke Director: We'd have to do a (Indistinct) –

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Shannon Burke Director: – at this point. We're not set up to do –

Ms. Bell: Sure.

Shannon Burke Director: – that at this point, but it's something that we can look to do in the future. Right now we could do it manually, maybe.

Ms. Bell: Yeah, yeah. Spreadsheets.

I would really appreciate that, minister, because I am a huge supporter of small business, as are you, and I think it's be really important to tell an accurate story. Some of this is I'm also a huge supporter of non-profits, and in here are some fantastic supports but it's very, very challenging to go through page by page or spreadsheet by spreadsheet and identify the difference.

Mr. Palmer: Okay, sure.

Ms. Bell: So my specific question there, Chair, is around LaunchPad, the LaunchPad program. Minister, could you explain the function of LaunchPad and how many Start-up Visa applicants have come through that program?

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: So those are current ones? Currently in LaunchPad, the tenants as of first of May, we have one in Summerside, three in Montague and 11 in Charlottetown.

Ms. Bell: One in Summerside, three in Montague and 11 in Charlottetown?

Mr. Palmer: Yes.

Ms. Bell: So you have campuses at UPEI, ATC and there's one on –

Shannon Burke Director: Great George Street.

Mr. Palmer: Great George.

Ms. Bell: Great George Street, so that's the newest one? Then you mentioned Montague and the Holman Building.

Shannon Burke Director: And Summerside.

Ms. Bell: So how many applications are in the pipeline for the Start-up Visa program?

Mr. Palmer: I don't have that. We can bring that back. I don't have that. We don't have that with us.

Ms. Bell: Could you speak to the value of that Start-up Visa program? What's the condition around that?

Mr. Palmer: In LaunchPad?

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Mr. Palmer: We are there in LaunchPad to support eligible startup companies and established companies from other jurisdictions that are setting up shop. So we're a little bit of an incubator, I guess, to kind of help defer some of the costs or let them have shared costs so it's not as expensive to get your business started.

We can work with those businesses and identify available financial tools to assist with operational costs or startup expansions. So we're really – it's an incubation piece of how do we help get the business from idea to on the ground and moving.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

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

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thanks, Shannon. We'll see you again.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: Please be seated.

I will now call on the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the 22nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 22, *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 109, ordered for second reading.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 109, read a second time.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, would you mind coming up and chairing this bill?

An Hon. Member: Jamie Tesla.

Chair (Dumville): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, please.

Chair: I'll ask the presenter to give us an overview.

Mr. Fox: Just pass it.

Ms. Biggar: Just a (Indistinct)

Chair: All right, presenter, do you want to give an overview?

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair, I'd like to ask a stranger to come to the floor.

Chair: Is it okay if a stranger come to the floor?

All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Agreed.

Mr. Fox: If you could introduce yourself to the committee and also give a bio, a brief bio on yourself; your expertise.

Peter Brown: Thank you very much, Jamie and everyone.

Mr. Fox: Just put, say your name first.

Peter Brown: My name is Peter Brown. I'm a resident of Summerside, building developer. My interest in this – do you want me to talk about this, or –

Mr. Fox: In a second.

Peter Brown: Yeah. More as a consumer of energy is kind of my interest in this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Members, what this bill does, it actually allows that somebody that wants to completely go off-grid on a renewable energy proposal, being geothermal, solar, or wind, could provide power, provide an application to IRAC, and if acceptable they could be granted an application to provide an independent renewable energy source to a client by not hooking into the Maritime Electric grid.

It's totally renewable. Totally separate from Maritime Electric's grid. And totally on an agreement with that company or that individual.

A case-in-point would be that if an individual wanted to develop a solar farm or a wind energy farm or in conjunction with a geothermal energy source they could sell that energy directly to a company on a complete separate transmission line.

It's basically expanding on what the City of Summerside has done in a more of a broader sense and it also follows in line with the pan-Canadian framework on climate change and clean growth energy.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

I just have a number of questions, if you don't mind, there, to get a few things. You know, under our present utility, obviously, everyone has got equity on the grid. They're assured that they get their energy the same way everyone else does.

I just have a couple of questions. You, kind of, alluded to what you're trying to do with this amendment. Around that, do you think it's in the public interest because this could be a cost to everyone. You don't think it's in the public interest?

Mr. Fox: It is the public interest because what it actually does, it actually breaks Maritime Electric's monopoly on electricity in that it gives incentive to move away from fossil fuels by a company or an organization or a house or whatever, to be solely based on renewable energy with no connection to the grid whatsoever.

If you want to expand on that, Peter.

Ms. Biggar: Chair, I have some follow-up questions, too.

Peter Brown: I think one of the – and I was at the two Georgetown conferences. We actually were promoting the whole concept, based on the Summerside history of community-owned utility assets within small, rural communities. The opportunity to create economy, because we're importing all of our electricity now, we're importing all of –

Ms. Biggar: No.

Peter Brown: – our oil.

Ms. Biggar: No.

Peter Brown: – well, we have our wind, but we're still importing it over the transmission system, so you're right.

In Summerside, I think we're buying 50% of our power from NB or Quebec hydro or weather. If we can displace or create opportunities over and above the existing energy uses where we create green energy assets to encourage development, manufacturing, and all of that ties well into the Canadian-European trade agreement where you get green bonus points if you're manufacturing with green energy, when you export into the European market.

It gives us a leg up if we have solar rays on top of our welding shops, which we don't have now. We don't have the capacity to do now, but this will allow us to do that.

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

Ms. Biggar: I know how Summerside – how their system is set-up and if they need extra energy, they are still hooked up to the grid. I believe, hon. member, you suggested none of this would be connected to the grid?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Ms. Biggar: So, you're suggesting that they would do their own – put up their own transmission lines?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: I know we have a lot along the highways now, so I'm just – that's one thing I wanted to clarify. You're suggesting a whole new set of transmission lines separate from Maritime Electric lines?

Mr. Fox: Not on the broad sense, minister, of running transmission lines up and down the highway. A prime example would be Straight Crossing yard in Borden. You could take that yard and have a solar wind farm there with geothermal and you could provide direct power, we'll say, to MacDougall Steel Erectors, Silliker Glass, the mussel factory, the arena. It would be contained in a smaller area.

In, we'll say, Slemon Park, you could do the same thing at Slemon Park and you could take them off bunker C fuel and you could provide geothermal heat energy. You could provide them electricity from a solar farm located right there on the old base to that immediate area. It would be contained in that you wouldn't have a transmission line running from Borden or Slemon Park into the City of Summerside or somewhere else.

Ms. Biggar: I just want to clarify that we're talking about wind and solar mostly –

Mr. Fox: In conjunction with geothermal.

Ms. Biggar: In conjunction with geothermal.

So, what happens – I'm going to give a scenario that there's no wind blowing. It's in the middle of the winter when there's no sun and there may not be enough from the geothermal to heat the customers. You're totally unhooked from the grid.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: So, you're no longer going to be reliant or any expectation to still go back to Maritime Electric.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Ms. Biggar: I guess that would be a concern, I would think, in terms of if you have – if I use Slemon Park, for instance – you have 250 homes there that would not be on the grid, would not have access to wind,

would not have their solar, and perhaps not meet the demand through geothermal.

I would be concerned that that would be a negative factor for those people on that grid.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh what? Me?

Chair: No, not you.

I said Mr. Brown.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: I'm putting in a complaint. Where do I go?

Chair: We can't use your name in here.

Peter Brown: The suggestion is not necessarily to disconnect anybody from the grid, but to allow them to produce energy close to the site where they're using it while still being connected to the grid, but being on the backside of the metre independent.

So, going back to Slemon Park, I mean, you're not going to disconnect them but you're going to provide an energy asset utility that could complement what they're already doing.

In the case of Hangar 8 – some people are familiar; it's one of the biggest energy buildings on Prince Edward Island. That building has lots of land around it to do a geothermal solar installation that could provide, I would argue, 90% of their energy.

However, when the sun is not shining they're going to turn on the switches, or keep them on, to Maritime Electric. So, this is not saying you have to disconnect; it's allowing you some opportunity.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Chair: Minister, can I just go to other people?

Ms. Biggar: Sure.

Chair: One more, and then I'll go to other people.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, well I can come back. I have a number of other questions.

Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

You mentioned about, in response to the minister of transportation, that you were loosening the monopoly hold that Maritime Electric has on the power grid. What do you think the significant advantage of loosening that hold is in the long term?

Mr. Fox: One thing I could see would be, first of all, it moves us more into a clean energy atmosphere or the opportunity for businesses or community groups or houses to go environmentally green in a more significant way.

But, I also think it would also reduce electrical rates within the province because, of course, we open up competition. Case in point of that would be, would be when Aliant used to be the sole provider of telephone service to PEI, then there was a ruling where Rogers was allowed to come in, and Shaw, and we saw with that a reduce in rates. Yes, customers who went over to Shaw or Rogers had to basically pay a transmission fee or a tariff to use that infrastructure, but it allowed the client to negotiate a lower rate for phone service.

This would also possibly provide the same thing with Maritime Electric.

Mr. Myers: The long and short of it is that any company could use the transmission lines to transmit energy, or any individual who produced energy, either through their own device at home or from an energy farm of their own, be it wind or solar, could also transmit and sell on that line? Is that what you're basically saying?

Mr. Fox: I think we're seeing that already in the case of the City of Summerside. The City of Summerside pay a tariff or a transmission fee to Maritime Electric for power that comes across the cables. So, that's an example of how that's already being done.

Peter Brown: The value for communities, and I think it's important that there is no recommendation here that anybody is going

to disconnect from the grid. All we're doing is proposing that communities have – the word out there is self determination on their energy future.

So, in the case of Tyne Valley where the rink and the fire hall and every other asset that they have would have the potential to be a locally-owned energy utility where people locally could invest in that utility, generate power or energy for use in their community, and keep those import dollars. Instead of going to Fort Mac for the oil, we generate energy at home.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the Member from Borden-Kinkora for bringing this bill to the floor, and also thank the stranger, Peter Brown, for being here.

I think this is one of the most important bills that we've seen come to the floor of this Legislature since I've been an MLA. It's extremely important for the future of energy production on our Island and I can think of a number of examples that we haven't talked about yet.

I know 12 years ago, in my community, I was working with another person in the community. We were looking at putting in a big wind turbine, and with wind turbines you need economies of scale. You have to put in a big turbine to get the efficiencies, and with the net-metering that's in place and the restrictions on being able to build your own grid, we had to abandon that project. Of course, with these changes to this bill, that would allow that project to go forward.

With solar farms, again, with net-metering in place and the inability for people to create their own grid or send it out to their neighbours as it were, you're limited. I have a big solar installation at my place, but I can't just send part of that to my neighbour. I'm strictly regulated by net-metering with Maritime Electric and any excess energy I feed back into the grid and that's it.

But another case right in my district in Hunter River at Bagnall Pond – this is just one of the many ponds around Prince

Edward Island that were built and did generate lots of power, lots of energy throughout the last, oh, probably 150 years, in many cases the infrastructure is still in place. They've been built – and I know at Bagnall Pond specifically, Dwight Parkman who owns that one has looked at that and is indeed working with some other members of the community to plan that sort of thing. And he is unable to do that with the current regulations, because he wants to provide energy to the community of Hunter River, and this is hydro.

This is ongoing energy sources, this is not intermittent, so I think it's important in this bill that it's not limited to wind or solar, and hydro is a key one we're talking about. There are lots of streams that run through peoples' properties that could be harnessed.

The other thing that I think – I was noticing the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy's questions, she made a point that this is intermittent and if you're connected and you need to draw energy from Maritime Electric when the wind isn't blowing or the light isn't shining, that'd be a problem. Well right now, I think we're actively stymieing any development of innovation on the power storage front because people just have absolutely no incentive to go and try and do it and I think that this sort of change will actually allow innovation on the power storage front to move forward and you'll see people trying out different methods of thermal storage like they're doing in Summerside.

I just can't say enough about how great this bill is and how important it is for our future. Peter on the floor, he talked about import replacement and how important that is. That's a huge economic benefit. I know I've heard this government talk about that and they're on board for import replacing. The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism spoke at it at length in his response to the Speech From the Throne.

There's just so many positive impacts from this bill. I just want to salute you and I support this bill wholeheartedly and maybe if –

Mr. Myers: Carry the bill.

Mr. Trivers: – because Chair, I would like to ask a question.

In clause (2)(a) talks about the commission being satisfied that: the present or future public convenience and necessity of the area requires or will require the service that the applicant proposes to provide.

I was wondering if you could expand on just why you need that clause in the bill.

Mr. Fox: Basically the concept was given to leg counsel. I met with them and they basically believed that would protect the parties and the concept of the bill – if you understand that. The bill allows for a person or an individual on application to provide solar – any type of renewable energy – directly to, we'll say, a consumer, or another individual independently from Maritime Electric. So it allows it to be separate from Maritime Electric and the monopoly of Maritime Electric on the supplying of power to the consumer.

Do you want to expand on that?

Chair: Is that okay?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: That's good for me for now.

Mr. Fox: I think one – Chair?

Chair: I think we're okay.

Mr. Fox: Just to expand, Chair, I think one important point that I should turn out: This bill also basically expands on some of the ideas that come out of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate energy which was released and I think there's a paragraph in here that is important to read and it's called community-based energy generation.

In May, 2015, New Brunswick introduced legislation to allow local entities to develop renewable energy source electricity generation in their communities. I think that's a strong statement and basically gives the framework for what this bill would allow. This legislation will allow universities, non-profit organizations,

cooperatives, First Nations, and municipalities to contribute to New Brunswick's renewable energy requirements.

With that I will say, that as long as I've been sitting in this House – since 2015, and sitting on the infrastructure and energy standing committee, seeing what Summerside has done – which is amazing. What the City of Summerside has done for renewable energy is – they're leaders. They've done a phenomenal job. This bill will open the door and I think allow other organizations take advantage of that.

I'm going to be critical for a minute: I've yet to see one thing being done by Maritime Electric to promote renewable energy generation in this province. Yes, they buy wind power from our wind farms, that's fine, but them as an entity – I don't understand why they're not following some of the lead as the City of Summerside has done – which is phenomenal.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

This is our lineup right now: Vernon River-Stratford, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, Leader of the Third Party.

Minister of transportation, do you have an intervention, or can you wait until after the Member from Vernon River-Stratford?

Ms. Biggar: I can wait.

Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Chair.

I find this really interesting and I can see down the road possibly that new subdivision may spring up and I don't know how much it would take to – say you have 100 lots and you put all your wires underground like they're doing in a lot of ways so the maintenance on the whole project may not be that bad. I don't know how much energy it would take for that. I see down the road the storage situation is going to get better and better and I can see a lot of positives in this.

My problem right now is – I'll tell you the honest truth – I don't want to vote it down and I don't know if it's ready to be approved because I don't know what it would take to get this in gear. I'd love to have – and you may shy away at this – I'd love to have this bill really looked at, see what the potential might be, because I can't tell you that: yes, it's going to work – because I don't have the background. I don't know if we have the expertise – nothing against you, Peter, or anything like that – to tell me that: Hey, we could do this and it would take this number of dollars, it would take this type of generation, or no it won't, or maybe it will when the storage is better and we can get by the time when it's cloudy and it's winter. I can see the maintenance thing – putting the wires underground would be good, too.

To tell you the honest truth, I would love to see this bill seriously looked at – and I'm not trying to shut it down or anything like that, hon. member, but is there any way we can – I mean, have a great discussion, but right now I would love to see this thing looked at. Because I can see this thing in the future, when we get the storage things right, we get people interested in putting – say you take a whole subdivision off the grid, is that possible? I personally don't know the details there and right now I don't know how I'd vote on it because I think it's something that likely will happen in the future. What does it take to do that to make this thing work and will it work? I don't even know that. It's a terrific idea, but I'd love to see more study on it.

I'm not trying to shove it to committee, but I think it would be great if we did actually look at something like this because – hey, future's coming upon us pretty quick. Storage is changing, all that sort of thing. Either help me out in a big way, or consider looking at it.

Mr. Fox: And I appreciate it.

Chair: Mr. Brown would like to comment on that.

Peter Brown: Member, I think one of the huge values to Prince Edward Island is the potential to develop green subdivisions with net-zero housing, composting toilets instead of septic systems. We can rethink all of our

energy uses and create a learning or beta test site here in our beautiful Garden of the Gulf and create economy at the same time. This is kind of a beginning step.

Back to your point, if we can eliminate the energy uses in the houses at the beginning point, through insulation, in the new subdivision – passive house design and all of that – I would argue we can create tourism resorts that are net-zero. They will attract the – I'll say the carbon offenders from New England that'll drive here in their SUVs, and then drink our organic wine, and eat our organic food, and live in our organic resort. But the time is now. We want to attract millennials and that whole next generation. Let's get going.

Mr. McIsaac: I'm not in any way trying to kill it, I'm just saying: Do we have to say yes or no today because it might be the very thing we need to do, or maybe it won't work. That's the position I'm at. Could we just take a more serious look at it because I don't want to vote no to it, but I don't know if I'm ready to vote yes to it?

Peter Brown: There are all kinds of examples of places already doing it and being an early adopter can be bleeding edge/leading edge. However, this works. The green economy is real.

Mr. McIsaac: I'm not arguing with that point. I'd love to see some of that because I think there's likely potential here. I'd like to know, though, not just say yes or no to it, kill it, or approve it and it doesn't work. If there's some way we could get some more actual info.

Mr. Fox: I would propose that let's – before we get into the bill, let's continue our discussion with some other members and then we could look at your suggestion (Indistinct) –

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, then the Leader of the Third Party and then the hon. Premier.

Ms. Biggar: Member, and again, I'm not philosophically opposed to moving forward with innovation, okay? As you know, we have done – and are following up on the recommendations of our energy strategy. We have put out an RFP to look at a smart

grid proposal. Those things are in the works already.

We've changed legislation, as you know, so that now the province or the energy corp are the owner of any assets. Maritime Electric does not have that right anymore.

We have recently made changes, again, so that we can be an intervener at a demand-side management. We are moving forward with our demand-side management plan to go to IRAC. We are looking at distributed storage programs like storage for hot water heaters, net billing, and time-of-day use.

And again, talking about energy storage, that technology is developing so fast that within the next, I'm going to say, three to four years, maximum of five, we're working towards having PEI be more self-sufficient because of those types of storage technologies. We are engaged with renewable energy development or professionals, and we have had so many of those proposals come to us.

We are exploring all of those options. I don't think with this, going back to the Member from Vernon River-Stratford, I don't think we're there yet to be able to pass this bill as it is tonight, but to have further discussion is certainly nothing that we would close the door on. I just don't think we're ready at this stage today to take that big of a step, because we don't have all the information and the implications.

We do talk about Summerside. They still have a diesel power generator for backup. So, as much as they are way ahead of the game, and I applaud all of that, they still are connected to the grid, too, and this is something we have to – and the balancing on that grid is another piece of how we do the smart grids. We don't even have smart metres in this province yet, and that's something that we, as part of our demand-side management plan, will move towards so that we can take advantage of those programs that Summerside does have; the thermal storage units and all of those things.

I think those are things that all Islanders should have advantage of as options for their energy storage, but this is all kind of part of our energy plan moving forward, our energy

strategy. We have been out exploring those kinds of options, technologies.

This particular bill tonight, I just don't think we're quite ready for it and I propose, perhaps, we do, whether it's to move it to a committee – and I'm not stonewalling here on this, I can tell you that, but we're just not ready quite to pass this bill tonight.

Chair: Thank you, minister. I'll let the proposer intervene.

Mr. Fox: Just one – you brought up an interesting point, minister.

You talked specifically about Slemon Park and you talked about the diesel generators in the City of Summerside. To complement small test areas, we'll say whether it be a subdivision or parts of Slemon Park, we could look at what Cavendish Farms has done on the LNG side plug in to run a turbine to create electricity.

I just want to throw that in there, that that is an option. Of course, to get completely off the renewable energies, it's pretty hard, but there are other options out there instead of bunker C or heavy diesel.

Chair: An intervention?

Ms. Biggar: Just a comment because what we're talking about here now is: Let's look at, let's look at. And I think we're not there yet enough to say: Let's do – without putting that full plan together and I think that's how this can all tie together as part of the – we're working with a lot of the energy companies – are coming to us to look at other options of how we can all work together.

I think we're all on the same page here except that we're not quite ready to make this particular amendment at this stage in our development of our energy strategy –

Mr. Fox: And I appreciate that.

Ms. Biggar: – and so I'm not faulting you for putting it forward, but I can say that at this point, I can't support passing this yet, because there are too many unknowns on how – and we need to continue that working with the renewable energy companies and we are doing that.

It's just that we're at this point where we're at that next threshold and there's going to be very exciting things that I think PEI is going to accomplish, but if we're going to do it we need to do it right. We don't need to do it for the sake of doing it. Let's do it when we have the pieces of that puzzle together that are going to make it right for PEI.

That's why I can't support it tonight.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, minister.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Just for everybody's information, we have the Leader of the Third Party next then the hon. Premier, then the Member from Rustico-Emerald, and then the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I have to say I share the excitement in the room on both sides of the House about the prospects of this and what the promise of the future of our supply here on PEI is. I think we have incredibly untapped potential here when it comes to green energies.

My experience, or the reading that I've done when it comes to a distributed grid or micro-grids, is that they're not generally done in isolation from the existing infrastructure, and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy has already mentioned that.

I'm wondering – I have a couple of questions, Chair. The first one is I'm wondering why you felt that that was a critical part. It's a really tiny bill that you brought forward here to amend a huge act. I mean, the *Electric Power Act* is large and is complicated and I would love to think – if there's one thing I've learned in my three years in the House is that things are always more complicated than you imagine and I would love to think that amending the *Electric Power Act* with a simple amendment like this would break – well you said at the beginning, break the monopoly of Maritime Electric.

I'm struggling to see how we could do that with your bill, and I'm wondering why you

feel that this method is better than, perhaps, net metering where you would tie into the existing system.

Mr. Fox: The first thing, hon. member, is that right now within the existing Maritime Electric act, you're totally prohibited from providing, or submitting and application into IRAC to do this. So, this would allow for that, that if you wanted to put in a proposal or an application to IRAC to consider to grant that license, this bill allows that.

You would still have to go through all the regulatory parts of it and all the different phases of IRAC, but at least you would be allowed to submit an application, which right now you're prohibited from doing.

Peter Brown: The case in point – and we put together a fairly significant solar proposal for MacDougall Steel Erectors, and the problem was it didn't matter whether the economics made sense. They were a new division at the McCain plant. The economics made sense. We were doing a 20-year lease, but because of the Maritime Electric act, they – MacDougall Steel Erectors are not allowed to produce any more than 100 kilowatts.

So, what we're doing is we have handcuffed potential green energy advocates and businesses from doing business on Prince Edward Island because of the way we have the regulations written. This unleashes the handcuffs.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I would love to think that it was that simple, Peter, and again, if I direct you to the existing act, the *Electric Power Act*, section 2.2 subsection 2, it states quite explicitly that: Maritime Electric cannot provide services in an area where somebody else is providing it.

So, here we have a situation where you're asking large companies, like MacDougall Steel Erectors, to rely entirely and completely on what you are providing because you cannot have, according to the act as it's written now, you cannot have Maritime Electric and another provider providing power.

Much as I – there's no bigger advocate for green energy in this House than I am, well there are many on all sides, I should

absolutely acknowledge that, but this is where the complexities of legislation, for me, kick in. There's always a domino effect on what you do.

So, if we were to pass this legislation tonight, it would be in direct – or it's going to create problems for – what's your answer to that particular – I mean that's only one that I found in a very short time of looking at the bill.

How would you deal with that conflict?

Mr. Fox: It's my understanding, according to leg counsel; this does not conflict with other parts of the bill because it allows for IRAC to hear the application, and that's simply what it's doing. It's allowing IRAC to hear an application to provide some other form of energy.

Peter?

Peter Brown: The individuals, right now, take in the letter of the law there, would, if I have a solar panel on my roof, according to that reading, they would not be allowed to sell the energy because I'm producing energy for myself, but they do.

What we've done, is we've put a restriction on it of 100 kilowatts and this just removes the restriction. It will, I think somebody mentioned, it will create an industry, a made-at-home industry in the green economy.

I don't think there are any losers here. I don't think Maritime Electric is going to lose anything because if we can create more, and cheaper energy, we are going to use more energy to either manufacture or heat our homes versus using oil, we'll convert to electric if we have solar on a roof, our neighbour does. I don't see a loser on this. But, again, I'm not the technician on the wordsmith-ing of laws.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Mr. R. Brown: Good points.

Chair: One more?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, sure.

Thanks, Chair.

I, for one, am very grateful that Maritime Electric is there in a snowstorm in February to come by and fix the power when it goes out. I mean, power is essential, for not just economics, but health and life and life and death, actually.

If we were to create a number of independent producers, as this bill would encourage, and, again I'm all for this. I'm absolutely all for this. And Maritime Electric, as a consequence, they still have to maintain their grid in the same manner that they do now –

Peter Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – at the same cost. In fact, every increasing costs. The rate-payers to Maritime Electric, say you're not hooked on them; you don't have your own solar panel or wind farm or whatever, they are going to have to carry a proportionately higher burden of that maintenance cost for Maritime Electric.

I'm not sure that you can say there are no losers here. Again, I love this idea, I just think there's all kinds of things we haven't considered yet, when we go through –

Mr. Fox: A prime example of that would be Cavendish Farm moving off the use of bunker C into more LNG, right? We have the PEI government already – great program the energy for heat, right?

We've seen some big, pretty large corporations or users pulled away from Maritime Electric on new innovative ways, whether it be the LNG or wood for heat.

We're encouraging other – City of Summerside with solar panels, we're encouraging the wind turbines, some people are putting wind turbines up themselves. We're already seeing the start of the door being open where industry or people are going out.

If we truly want to talk about moving to a renewable-energy system then we must be aware that yeah, there will be a loser, but probably, more than likely, the loser will be Maritime Electric, at the end of the day.

Chair: We have five waiting to speak. We'll go now to the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair.

A comment on the, I'll say the spirit of what's brought forward here, it's moving in a direction or it's looking at a future that is, I would say, consistent with the future that has been anticipated by the Energy Strategy, which I – you could describe as being captured in four commitments; electrification, diversification, conservation and innovation.

In fact, the Energy Strategy speaks to micro-grids. We might look at these two provisions and say, well, that sounds like we're giving the legislative power and the regulatory power to make a micro-grid.

What I've said so far is not in opposition to this being part of our future. I would venture to say, middle-term future. We likely don't quite have a scenario in the next six to 18 months where, and let's say, a subdivision or a micro-grid could go off-grid, which is, I believe, what's kind of anticipated here.

Here are, then, some cautions, not reservations; cautions. We are fortunate in this province that in the main we don't have white elephants, or stranded assets as part of our energy mix. We did invest and we have a bill from the Dalhousie operation and NB Power. There are some farmers that put up windmills at the wrong time.

If you go from east to west across this country, pretty near every province has very big examples of doing the right thing at either the wrong time or one the wrong terms. Muskrat Falls being the biggest, single example. It may very well bankrupt the province. I'm not making a prediction there, but people talk about it in those terms.

Nova Scotia has got a current commitment to burn Donkin coal. There is even some question about whether there's enough coal there, quite apart from all the other issues.

New Brunswick, certainly got a bigger hit from the Dalhousie investment than Prince Edward Island did, but another of their – Ontario. Probably it was Ontario that went the furthest in the direction of what's being

talked about here, but did it with those long-term commitments, in terms of the feed-in rates that have turned out to be quite prohibitive for the overall – and users of the system.

We saw, recently, the board of Manitoba Hydro suggesting that Manitoba Hydro might be bankrupt. This is serious business.

In all of that, I'm not suggesting that what's here is being done on the fly, it's just that I want to go back to what the Member from Vernon River-Stratford said, is, there likely is some further, kind of, consideration or discernment that would be useful on this in terms of timing and, I'll say, terms, now, having, sort of, made that comment, I have two questions.

One is – to kind of pick up on what the minister of transportation and energy said. From the little bit I know about this sort of innovation it probably requires some tie-in to the grid with some deal around a feed-in tariff if they're generating more power than they need. And fall back or default arrangement if the renewable system or the local system doesn't quite measure – doesn't for – at whatever time is intermittent they tend to be. That's my first – and I only have two questions so it's not going to take long.

But on that first, I'm wondering if the Member from Borden-Kinkora or you, Peter, might have some comment on the comparative case for, kind of, providing for an arrangement that goes, in effect, that's not connected versus one that is connected intermittently and in a way that has some kind of a business model to it.

Peter Brown: I think the, if I could take that, Mr. Chair –

Chair: Mr. Brown.

Peter Brown: – the suggestion was actually initiated when we looked at with Enercorp PEI and there was an RFP out. We looked at the solar array at the SCI yard to be able to feed into the grid. Maritime Electric is right there. The blockage seems to be Maritime Electric. They have a monopoly and I think it was a previous administration to this one that I had a relative involved in at the time, but he got that wrong. How dare me say that.

The opportunity now is to provide a platform where individual companies could produce more, enough energy to meet their needs as a complement to what Maritime Electric is doing.

In the case of MacDougall Steel, everything that's going into McCain's, which was mothballed, you could argue: Well, McCain's used to use all kinds of power, but that (Indistinct) MacDougall Steel could be welding with green energy and the ability to export with the European trade agreement is huge.

I don't know what the percentage is again, the numbers. I'd agree with the Member from Vernon River's (Indistinct) where some of this has to be checked or measured; but this just gives people a license and it still has to go through IRAC. We, the people represented by IRAC, are still going to make the final determination if it's a good idea or a bad idea.

Ontario hydro, to your point, where they were paying farmers for methane-gas-produced energy, 80 cents and selling it for 20, that's not a good business model.

Premier MacLauchlan: Giving it away.

My parallel question has to do, in a sense, it builds on the comment by the hon. Leader of the Third Party about the overall, I might say, burden on the, I'll call it the ratepayers.

Just as there may be a case for this working out better if it is in whatever degree connected, there likely is also a case for not – I'm going to say not letting people completely off the hook in the local area because there are large costs that have to be shared among someone.

I go back to Muskrat Falls. It was probably a great thing whenever it was conceived, and then there was the further deal with Nova Scotia Power and the Maritime link and so on; but it turns out that Newfoundland and Labrador people don't need all that power. They might only need about 20% or less than 20% of it.

People in Connecticut aren't going to pay more than about five or six cents for it, which means that the person in

Newfoundland and Labrador who's the rate payer doesn't have any choice when they get the bill but to pay it, may only be using a fifth of it but maybe paying the pro-rated cost of 99% of it.

To bring it back to the context here, it feels to me – and it's only an intuitive thing – but it's like running the sewage system by the front of your property. Like the people who would take the initiative and have this largely or totally independent system might still need to be tied in, insofar as they contribute to the costs that are being shared from East Point to Tignish, of an ice storm or the next innovation.

If anyone would like to make a comment on that, it's as much a question as a comment.

Peter Brown: I think if I could cover that, Mr. Premier, we've done it over years with CRTC, cable jurisdictions to protect the infrastructure up-front costs, which makes perfect sense.

I think in this particular case, there are no public dollars being proposed to build this infrastructure. So the Muskrat Falls model – which is flawed, I think we could agree – is not going to be impacted by this. So the ability to generate energy at point of use is by far one of the most green models you can have, because transporting energy costs money.

We take oil from Fort Mac and dump it in my house on South Drive. The public infrastructure being used called Confederation Bridge, rail cars from one end of the country to the other, that option to be able to replace that, we should be looking very closely and saying: Is there a better way?

So the suggestion that we could create subdivisions that don't require oil imported or electricity imported – there's an example in Alberta, Drake Landing, Okotoks, a wonderful example of a community-owned energy initiative in a condominium townhouse complex. They've got huge geothermal, they've got solar, and they've got thermal hot water. It's a great model; but that science, I would argue, is already old because it was built in 2006 or 2007.

If we start moving in this direction, this would allow the platform for developers or builders or manufacturers to look. We still, I think there's – I don't know legislation, but I think there are enough meat and potatoes in this to make sure through IRAC we still have the final say.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Premier.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

It's really interesting discussion we have going on here; interesting debate. I think that we're sort of, in my opinion, missing the point of this bill. It's about enabling, it's about empowering, and it's about giving people the freedom to try things out.

Right now, Maritime Electric, in fact, they do incentivize renewable energy to a certain extent by offering that metering. There is a cost to them of doing that and thank goodness they do. Do I think they're going to do that for the foreseeable future? I don't think so. I see a time when Maritime Electric will say: Look, we're not going to store your energy for free any longer, we're going to charge you to store your energy. We're acting as a big, giant battery, so we're going to charge you for that. I see that in the future and that's how they're going to recoup some of their costs if we come to a point where there's so many people that have renewable energy they need to do that. It only makes sense.

Do I think that's going to happen tomorrow? No. Do I think that this bill means that over the next 18 months, 80% of PEI is going to go out and have wind turbines and solar energy and all the hydro dams are going to be hooked up and run to people's houses? Absolutely not, but this bill is so important because it enables people to do that. It enables people to go out and try it. It lets the early adopters get out there and try to be early adopters.

Right now, I wouldn't have put in a 19 kilowatt solar panel installation at my place. The numbers don't work unless I get that equity tax credit. Unless the Solar Island Electric had become a community economic

development business and was able to use that excellent government program so that I could get 35% back in tax credit, the numbers don't work. That's why I know tomorrow – I don't think a huge percentage of the Island is going to go out and put in solar panels because if this lobby comes into effect, but do I think they should have the choice to do that? Absolutely.

What we're doing right now is we're saying – and to me this is a political belief – a fundamental difference between political parties even – is we're saying: We are the ones in government that should be controlling the rate of innovation. We understand the timing when it's okay to say: You're allowed to go out and try it now. We're trying to say that to people.

I think that it's best to let people try it on their own merits when they feel it's best, when they do the calculations and they think the technology's there. That's how we're going to make the most efficient progress. If we just say: No, we don't think it's ready yet. I don't think the technology is there. I'm not sure about the power storage; I'm not sure about the cost, so we're just going to keep that control in government until we think private sector's ready and we have all the I's dotted and T's crossed and beyond a shadow of doubt – we're going to miss the boat. We're not going to be efficient in moving forward. We're not going to make progress at the rate we should be and that's, to me, what this bill is about.

I don't think that the concerns and the ultra caution that I'm hearing from different members is really warranted. There are lots of things Maritime Electric can do to make sure they don't lose their shirt overnight and I don't think they will. This really – and I'll state it again – this is about freedom. This is about the freedom of Islanders to go out and make progress on their own terms. It enables Islanders, it empowers them, it lets the private sector move forward without a monopoly environment to actually figure things out instead of waiting for government to do it for them or a monopolistic company.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

So I'm really interested by this idea to help increase the trade gap that we have and import replacement to stop buying oil or reduce the oil and use other forms. What this bill is saying is to kind of take that off the grid – not to be connected to it – but I think even though we all largely seem to agree on the theory of this – that wouldn't it be wonderful if we could do all of those things. To be removed from the grid in the environment we're in today which is: there's not good storage options. We all wish there was, but there's not today. Until we get that storage in place – and as the member from Rustico said, right now in his system he's using Maritime Electric as his storage – this bill says you're disconnected from the grid, so there's not storage.

Having said that, it's probably really important and good for us to be looking towards the future of – what are the other options? How can we do a subdivision and how can we become a test facility to do – one I saw somewhere in municipalities, they have a mini turbine in the water system – in the pipes underground? So you can be doing – there's lots of different technologies out there that we could explore, understanding that without the storage piece, you can't get off the grid. Or at least I think that's the case.

So I guess that's my question, Chair. Does this kind of – the way that this bill is written, how does that storage piece work because we do – I think it's quite expensive to do?

Mr. Fox: So the key thing that we have to remember right off the first of all minister, is this – the intent of this bill – right now a person is prohibited from putting an application into IRAC to look at this, or to do it, or as the Premier said: basically to consider – this allows for the application to go into IRAC. That's the key point. Just because the bill's there, doesn't mean you can go tomorrow and put the solar farm up. The bill allows you to put the application into IRAC to review and consider. That's the key part of it, which right now the Maritime Electric (Indistinct) power act, does not allow you to do that.

Chair: Do you have an intervention?

Peter Brown: Yes. Well I was just going to comment on that.

Chair: Go ahead.

Peter Brown: Summerside Electric produces all kinds of power and it's connected to the grid, so if my subdivision in Emerald does the same routine, they're still going to be connected to the grid, but I could produce enough energy, potentially, to – and back to the minister of transportation's point – or the Premier, I think he mentioned it as well – maybe there's some sort of a sidebar fee that my subdivision has to carry part of the existing infrastructure of Maritime Electric. I don't know how that works. Maybe it's a tax item, or whatever, but what we're doing now is we don't have the capacity to become innovative.

You and I both know, minister, that fail cheap, fail fast, but if you don't start, you're never going to do either. So I think we got to get started on some of this and the way I read it – but again, I'm not a technician on this – is we're saying we want innovative people to come with an application to IRAC, I think.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Exactly.

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

Oh, I'm sorry. Did I cut you off?

Mr. Palmer: Yes.

Chair: Sorry, minister.

Mr. Palmer: So if we do get to that point where an application goes into IRAC, there will be a whole set of criteria that needs to be created around what fits and what doesn't and a homemade windmill isn't the same as a commercial grade. Where does that come in to this kind of bill that we're looking at and that kind of larger set of regulations?

Don't get me wrong, generally I think this is a good idea. We can be making money on new technology and we should be doing that, so we have the ability to do those things from here and what a great test bed this is.

Generally, I like all of that, but the function inside the bill and then kind of pushing it off to IRAC to some – assuming that they've got a filing cabinet drawer full of a bunch of regulations about what's the right thing here. There needs to be more pieces that kind of come along with that and how do we – so this is just one piece of it. Where does the rest come in? Understanding the intent is really not to kind of get caught up in a whole bunch of regulations, but it's: can we innovate understanding there's a pretty good payoff here for us with our decrease in the trade gap of not buying fossil fuels because we have energy right here that we can take advantage of.

So I think, generally the theory's there, but the practice isn't and it's partially because of regulations. But the part that I'm stuck on is the storage isn't there. So you can't really – unless you put in – and I think as Peter said in the condo had four or five different technologies in place and can you do that and have the math still work on it as we're waiting for storage to catch up?

Mr. Fox: I think –

Mr. Palmer: And we all know that it will be here in three to five to seven to ten years.

Mr. Fox: I think you've hit on some key points here and the minister of transportation has and so has the Premier – and also Rustico-Emerald. This opens the door. Like any bill that goes through the House, it could be one line, it could be two lines and then with the regulations, of course, it's expanded to provide the framework or the actual working operation of that one or two lines of that bill. This opens the door to allow an application to be submitted so we can be ready for technology as it comes forward. Maybe next year they come out with a battery storage system that is bang right on, right? This opens the door for the province to move forward in this way.

Mr. Palmer: Back to the point of Vernon River: Is there opportunity to kind of move this to a committee to figure out what some of those pieces are because I think, generally, the intent and the spirit of this thing we're all really excited about and this seems to make sense. How do we close off some of those things so it's not willy-nilly

and you get into something that you just kind of create a whole bunch of regulations further down the road and you really end up talking here instead of out doing the work? So how do we deal with some of that?

Mr. Fox: I can say what I'd like to see happen is this: I think we've opened up a very interesting conversation today and a great debate and I think what this could do for the province going forward in renewable energy is it could be great for everybody, right? I would like to see continued discussion with the members that are on the list and I would be open, at some point, of this being moved to committee.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, we'll try to move it along.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Just following up on that: I think we need to, when we're talking about small utilities, basically, is what we're talking about, if they're wanting to put some of their power on the grid, there's a balance on that grid. Not just on PEI's grid, because when you look at the New England, we're part of that whole New England grid. When you're talking about expertise, there's nobody that I can think of better than to give us advice on this than Bill Marshall from New Brunswick who balances the grid for the Maritimes, New England – we're all connected on that grid and to have someone like that come to committee would be, I think, very valuable information for everyone. We've consulted with him. We consult with him on a number of things because when you're talking about putting extra things on the grid, you have to have that. That's part of why we put the proposal out. We've put a proposal out to look at a micro-grid, community. We've put that out. That's already out there right now. It's out there, and we've gotten some proposals back.

So, these are things we're looking at. But, when we're talking about – we're kind of talking about two different things. You're either taking somebody right off the grid, which I think is kind of what you thought at first. If you're taking them right off the grid but you still want them hooked there just in

case – it's like I'm going to buy a horse and carriage, but I still want to keep my car in the garage, right?

Mr. Fox: It's all part of it, right? It's all intertwined (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, but we have to – and coming back to what the Leader of the Green Party said – this is more complicated when you look at it, because there might be 10,000 people that are on those little utilities and their expectation probably will be they want to still be connected to the grid, but they don't want to pay anything for the maintenance of the grid. So, the rest of the rate payers are going to be bearing the cost at –

Mr. Trivers: Air Miles.

Mr. Fox: Air Miles.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It is –

Mr. Fox: But –

Ms. Biggar: – a possibility that could happen and that we need to be – it's all part of the discussion, right?

Just one more thing. When you may be taking applications – you send them to IRAC. It opens up, though, a whole other complicated situation because when you look at the rest of the electric –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) just want control.

Ms. Biggar: Excuse me? I didn't talk when you were talking.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: What I'm trying to explain is it not just as simple as sending the application because there are other pieces of that electric act that, at this point, prohibits that kind of thing from happening, so it's a much more comprehensive review, a comprehensive discussion, which is why I think if you had it at committee we could get a lot of different expertise in to really bear down into what would need to happen for something like that to occur, and I think, will occur in the future.

But, we have to have, again, the pieces in place to make sure that it's not going to have a negative impact overall on our grid, on our rate payers, and on our business. We want to make sure that people are investing in these kinds of innovative things so they can take advantage of that grid or that opportunity and to have something in place. Maybe next year there will be some – and I'm sure there will be something new. I think it bears great exploration beyond what we have the expertise here to discuss tonight.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Really interesting discussion; I've enjoyed it very much and learned a lot.

Rustico-Emerald brought up the fact that we want to encourage innovation. We want to encourage the greening of our energy production, and the infrastructure that carries it here on Prince Edward Island, but for me that has to be balanced with making sure that we maintain the integrity and the stability and the coherence of the whole grid because if you get that wrong, you're talking about Islanders' lives here.

There are lots of other things that we operate and if something goes wrong it's not a disaster, but this would –

Mr. Trivers: We're not talking about crazy changes here.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Well, I'm not –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) ability to create their own electricity.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I agree, member, but we have to make sure that we do this in a manner that isn't going to offset the integrity or, again, the stability of the grid.

I'm not saying that this is going to do that. I'm just saying that we have to really be careful about that.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Chair: Gentlemen, come through the Chair.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: For me, the crux of what the discussion that's gone on tonight is the compatibility of this initiative that you brought forward, and I hear nobody in the House saying this is a bad idea, but, the compatibility of this with the existing infrastructure and the existing grid.

I'm wondering what your thoughts are. This is slightly off to the right, or left, whichever direction you want to go, left I guess, about the public ownership of the transmission infrastructure on Prince Edward Island, which would sort of get over this problem of who pays for what if it was a – in the same way that we own the Internet infrastructure. We own the fibre backbone here and people tie into that and use that as a transmission.

What are your thoughts on public ownership of the transmission?

Peter Brown: If I could take that – Summerside own their own transmission. They lease the poles to the Fibre Op Bell Aliant and also to Eastlink cable, so once the infrastructure is there it can be used for other purposes, cut in point number one.

Whether the people of Prince Edward Island own that infrastructure or whether it's owned by Fortis and a group of shareholders, to some degree, and I think the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism mentioned it, we're going to see innovation globally that is going to change energy use and I will argue, but I'm not a soothsayer, that we're going to see redistribution of the utility assets.

Right now, if you go to places like Italy and you go back to post-second world war when they had no infrastructure left and had to rebuild it all, and they had to guarantee a rate of energy to be able to pay for brand new infrastructure because it was all ruined during the war. And then we look at cell phones and how they have displaced the Maritime Electric – or the Island Tel lines that we all remember going through the country. Somebody lost money when those Island Tel lines all came down.

The infrastructure itself that we want to protect as long as we need it, is (Indistinct) or whatever, but if we're going to move into the future some of that will become dormant

and I think the Premier mentioned it, where those assets are going to be less valuable than they are today.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Could I just have one follow-up?

Chair: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Not really a question, but just a comment that you mentioned cell phones and the wireless technology that has made many of the hardwired things redundant.

Wireless electricity is – we're already using that in some places to charge cell –

Peter Brown: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Exactly, so I agree with you, Peter, and things are just happening so fast in leaps and bounds, and that's a good point and one I hadn't really thought of.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture and then the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Chair.

I have a question, not so much about kind of the intent of this bill, but whether or not what you're intending to do can be done already or how much research you've done into that.

I'll go back and I'll give you some context and tell you what I know and what I don't know and maybe you can kind of take this for what it's worth. Back in, I'm going to say, the late 2000s our law firm, the law firm I was working at the time, acted in respect of an application. It never did end up going forward, but the preparation of an application to go before IRAC to do basically what it is that you're describing, or with the possibility potentially of generating electricity for more than just kind of one area.

I did some quick research in the hour and 15 minutes that we've had here since we started and my recollection at the time was that then minister Ballem had made some amendments to the *Electric Power Act* and

the *Renewable Energy Act* to allow this exact thing to happen already and he made the amendments at the time – this is just my recollection – but following through, I think what my recollection is is pretty solid and we never did get to a conclusion on this one way or another.

He made the amendments at the time for the purposes, I think, of the PEI energy corp becoming a public utility and the combination of the energy for windmill, like large wind farms, going on the grid with Maritime Electric and then later, of course, the City of Summerside came on with their utility.

But, if you go back and you read those two acts together, the way the regulatory came in – again, this is my recollection of an hour and 15 minutes, the way the two schemes work is you're either a public utility or you're a renewable energy provider. There are, I think, three different categorizations of renewable energy providers. There's, what the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald is, which is just the average Joe with some solar panels. There are also medium-sized renewable energy providers and large size renewable energy providers. Medium and large sized renewable energy providers can actually be public utilities as well. Or they can apply to become public utilities.

If you look in the *Renewable Energy Act*, there is the provision for net metering in there, you just have to make an application and sign an agreement and ultimately that's got to be a process that you go through with the public utilities. That could be the energy corp, Maritime Electric, Summerside, one of the existing public utilities. You just have to enter onto the grid that's there now.

I can tell you, there's been litigation over some of this subject, in particular, in relation to pole agreements between Maritime Electric and the City of Summerside that kind of have gone on. Of course, there's also very complex agreements related to the ownership of assets. We've talked about the domino effect that's here tonight, but if you're going to purchase assets and IRAC approves a power rate based on the capital cost of those assets taken out usually over 50 years, and then you have a new utility that comes on all of a sudden, that changes the capital structure that's there.

All to say, the reason that the scheme is set up the way that it is right now, is to allow for exactly what you're talking about. But to say that if you're going to come on and you're going to be providing a big input of power into the grid that's going to impact the provision of power by public utilities, there has to be the ability for an intervention to determine what the impact of that's going to be.

If you look in the *Renewable Energy Act*, all those powers are set out in there right now. So I think you could even – I would make the argument, I think based on what quick research that I did – if we set out to pass your bill there now, I think under the *Renewable Energy Act* and what's in there, you could still go back through if you're a public utility and say: Well look, I have an issue with this because it's affecting my ability to provide sustainable power into the grid that's there and set up right now, so I'm going to appeal to IRAC based on the provisions in the *Renewable Energy Act*. The outcome of that could potentially either be a bump in the rates for them or an order that would require the new power producer to enter into some kind of an agreement that says this is how much you're going to charge, or however that's going to work out.

Anyway, all to say like everybody else here, it seems like – I can remember the excitement when I first got into this back at that time. It looks great because I mean you look at it and you say: we're going to have much more autonomy and much more power to kind of dictate our own future. But the problem is, with that you lose some security and some certainty in terms of what you do have and how it's going to be provided. If there's an ice storm who's going out to fix the poles and the whole other piece of it that goes along with that.

Anyway, I'd say this: like some others that have made comments, I like the concept but I am leery to say: yes, let's do this without a bigger picture. This is really what we're talking about and including somebody going through the renewable – and that's what we're talking about renewable power – *Renewable Energy Act* – to determine how do these two dove tail and where does this amendment fit within the provisions of that act. I think they do fit together.

So I make that comment. I don't know if you have considered the *Renewable Energy Act* or not, but I'd make that comment and kind of throw it out there for discussion and hopefully we can look at it in the larger context.

Mr. Fox: I'll just comment really briefly.

What I understand, minister, is that given the *Electric Power Act* and given the energy act, there is no mechanism there for somebody to put that application forward. This would allow that. That's basically all I can say is that if you look at both of them there is no ability, actually for somebody to put that application forward.

Mr. J. Brown: There is though, in the renewable power act.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: *Renewable Energy Act*.

Peter Brown: Yeah, but not in the electric act –

Mr. Fox: Not in the *Electric Power Act*. That's (Indistinct) do, you got to deal based with one – it's one, but it's not in the other. It has to work in tandem, basically.

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not sure that you're right about –

Ms. Biggar: I just had a presentation –

Mr. J. Brown: – that.

Ms. Biggar: – on that.

Chair: I just have to move to –

Ms. Biggar: It's not a question –

Chair: – the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Biggar: – Chair (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Ms. Biggar: – on that comment.

And as a provider, whether you are another wind farm on PEI or whether you're the City of Summerside, make an agreement with

Maritime Electric. It's an owed agreement. There is capacity there, or mechanism there to enter into agreement now as you (Indistinct) or no. There is a mechanism there that you don't have to go to IRAC to do it. You can do a direct agreement with Maritime Electric –

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: – and then for them –

Mr. Fox: That is true, but Maritime Electric, at the end of the day could say, no.

Ms. Biggar: Well, so could IRAC.

Mr. Fox: Right.

IRAC is independent so the ability is there to –

Ms. Biggar: I'm glad to hear you say that.

Mr. Fox: No, I've said that before. Some of the people haven't, but I've said that before.

Ms. Biggar: Anyway, that's all.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Fox: Isn't that right, Premier?

Chair: Leader of the Opposition, bring us home, please.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks very much, Chair.

I'd like to congratulate the hon. member for bringing this amendment to the floor and also for the expert witness that you've brought forward. I know I've had the opportunity many times to sit down with Peter and discuss energy and to learn and to be educated to a certain extent, as well, of some of the things, wonderful things, that are happening out there, with regards to, in particular, geothermal.

I know, as the minister of TIE had talked about, you can't always depend on wind and the sun and so on and so forth, but we have a much better dependable energy source through geothermal.

I think one of the last conversations we had was regards to a closed loop versus an open

loop and the immense advantages that we have around that. I guess, I just wanted to say that I'm really excited that we're having this conversation this evening, this debate because I think the time has time.

I hear it on a weekly basis, if not more frequently from people that complain about their electricity rates, not only here in the province, but all across the country, really. I think that the more we can do to generate our own power and to get off the grid, to a certain extent, is for the betterment of the sustainability of our province.

I do think that by moving in this direction we're going to definitely foster our entrepreneurial spirit of people here on PEI, especially those that have the natural ability towards engineering and coming up with different concepts such as this.

There was some discussion earlier, too, from the Member from Vernon River-Stratford with regards to what would it look like, could we have actual subdivisions that would be self-supporting and things like that.

I guess, my question to you would be: Is there other areas in the world that we can look at that have actually already accomplished some of these things that we're talking about hoping to do here tonight?

Peter Brown: I think that, if I could address that, Leader of the Opposition, there's some good models and there are some bad models. I think the minister of transportation mentioned getting the right model, or the Premier maybe, at the right time.

Will it be perfect off the bat? As I said earlier, getting it right all the time is not always an option.

However, in the renewable energy sector, we would attract a whole new potential. I think the minister of innovation mentioned it, the potential to become a beta test site for renewable energy strategies. They could be based in downtown Emerald or Kinkora or Borden or Rustico.

The interest level in renewable energies from seniors is huge. They want to be responsible in their energy use. Only a

community-owned energy asset will make people more responsible because they want their personal asset net worth in their community to grow.

Leader of the Opposition: Right.

Peter Brown: There's responsible stewardship. There's economic opportunity. There is attraction to Millennials, who are all over the green stuff and I don't think there's any cost to anybody because the money is already being spent in spades on oil and –

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah.

Peter Brown: – excessive energy use.

Leader of the Opposition: Exactly.

Chair, just in the interest of time, I'm expecting this to come back so I'll hold any other comments or questions until that time.

Chair: Thank you very much –

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Chair: – what I'd like to do, is I'd like to thank everybody for the wonderful debate here tonight.

I'd like to thank Mr. Brown, our stranger, for coming on the floor and helping us out here tonight.

I'm going to turn it over to the proposer of the bill. He'd like to make a statement.

Mr. Fox: After listening to everybody in the House, I appreciate the debate. I think everybody's comments were very well taken.

It's my intention after we move from committee back into the House that I will be bringing forth a motion after that.

Ms. Biggar: You can do that here.

Mr. Fox: No.

Chair: No.

Ms. Biggar: No?

Chair: No, we can't.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No. 2)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion without proper notice.

Speaker: Yeah, do we have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Myers: This is how we always get into trouble.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) caucus.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that Bill No. 109, *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No. 2)* be referred to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy for review and report back to the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the 26th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 26, *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*, Bill No. 113, in committee.

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, if you want to come chair this bill for the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*.

When we left this bill, the clause was read and we were in debate of the amendment and we were having discussion on that.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Chair.

I think we just came through a fantastic debate on the past bill and my intervention previously was to put it to debate. I put forward the amendment and I have since spoken with my seconder and I'd like to ask for unanimous consent from the House to withdraw that amendment to do that.

Chair: Members, do we have unanimous consent for the withdrawal of the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Yes. Agreed.

Chair: Carried.

Thank you.

Mr. Dumville: I'd like to thank the hon. member for withdrawing the amendment. I appreciate it very much.

Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Biggar: Great. I just have a question – whether you looked into this, hon. member.

At the present time, we have the silver fox on our provincial coat of arms, so have you looked into whether or not – because we have the blue jay on there – whether this would have any implications on our provincial coat of arms?

Mr. Dumville: No, I didn't. I did not. I just put a proposal forward from Mrs. Arbuckle's class and the grade 6 students and it was all accepted here by the committee and the Legislature. We have very few silver foxes left; we do have the red fox that's quite prominent here now. So, no, I didn't not go any farther with that, minister.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: He has a question.

Mr. Dumville: Oh, we have a question, Premier. Do you want us to unwind it for you?

Premier MacLauchlan: No, no.

Mr. Dumville: You're okay?

I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Dumville: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I move that Motion No. 63 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 63.

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

WHEREAS there are 5,375 kilometers of roads on Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island's capital budget for 2018-2019 includes \$42 million to be spent on highways;

AND WHEREAS the provincial and federal government will spend \$59.3 million on the Cornwall bypass over the next four fiscal years;

AND WHEREAS secondary roads form the backbone of rural Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS the maintenance of the roads that we have is challenging and all rural MLAs regularly hear concerns from their constituents about the condition of local roads;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly call on government to redirect their infrastructure budget away from large mega-projects and invest in upgrading and preserving the rural roads that Islanders travel every day.

Speaker: I will now ask the mover of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Third Party to speak to the motion.

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

It's a real pleasure to rise this evening and speak to Motion 63 on maintaining our rural roads. If there was unlimited money, governing would be easy. Unfortunately, there isn't and because of that, governments have to make tough choices about priorities every single day. Pick your department and they could all use some more resources. More teachers, EAs and TAs for education, more nurses and doctors for health care, more social workers for human and family services, and on, and on, and on.

When it comes to our roads, one of the most important pieces of public infrastructure on which every single Islander depends every single day, we have some inherent challenges here on Prince Edward Island: soft ground that offers a poor base for road building, a harsh climate with extremes of temperature, increasingly common freeze and thaw cycles during the winter time. All of these Island realities mean that maintaining our roads is both difficult and costly.

Another unique challenge we face here is the sheer amount of highway that we have on PEI. Because of the way our province developed and was populated, we have far more than the average amount of road per person – more kilometers per citizen, that anywhere else in Canada, so we have to maintain more roads per person than anywhere else in Canada. All of this means that there are some intrinsic factors that make Island roads really, really expensive to maintain. And there's not much we can do to change that – we're stuck with what we have, and it is incumbent on government to maintain it and to maintain it well.

I represent a rural district, District 17: Kellys Cross-Cumberland, and I would say that the most common – by far – the most common constituency issue that I get contacted with is roads: clearing the roads in winter time, all of the woes during mud season, potholes in the spring, culvert issues, ditches, guardrails, grading, repaving, recap, you name it, on, and on, and on.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) to be an MLA.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: All roads – at least in rural districts – lead not to Rome, but to the MLA. People on Prince Edward Island are passionate about their roads and there never,

ever seems to be enough resources to take care of all the problems that are out there. And that is why we need to be so very smart about allocating what money we have to make sure that we are getting the best value for our money on our roads.

The minister of transportation, energy and infrastructure said this in a standing committee meeting in October 2016 – she was talking about the Cornwall Perimeter Highway: The questions we get about this process tend to focus on why we are undertaking the perimeter highway and why we are undertaking it now.

The two main reasons we are building the perimeter highway are to increase safety and to support economic development in a growing community. Right now, the road from Clyde River to the Maypoint intersection is among the areas where a motorist is most likely to be involved in a collision.

The minister went on to say: Since the change in the federal government and resulting positive changes in eligibility, many of our road and bridge projects are now cost-shareable, which came in the spring – this is the spring of 2016 – and that's when we saw an opportunity to begin the Cornwall project this year. End quote.

As we all know, there was no mention of this project in the capital budget part of this meeting and no consultation prior to the announcement. There was no recent survey of Cornwall residents. There was no study to show positive economic benefits.

Indeed, some service stations and restaurants in Cornwall estimate significant losses when the perimeter highway is complete. The justifications for the Cornwall bypass live in the world of make believe and smoke and mirrors.

Despite receiving reams and reams of so-called studies and evidence from the department to support their decision to proceed, there was nothing definitive in that tall stack of paper we received to suggest that safety is an overwhelming concern in this particular area, or that the economic benefits would accrue, or how much they would be.

A different minister from the preceding administration once said publicly that no matter how many millions of dollars it costs, and she was talking, at this time, about the highway that become known as Plan B in Bonshaw, she said: No matter how many millions of dollars it costs, if it saves one life it would be worth it.

This comment shows such a profound lack of understanding about what governing is and how it works. I refer the House back to my opening remarks about the limited supply of money that government has and the need to make smart decisions about how we spend it.

A few million dollars spent on a new road that may or may not contribute to saving a life is a few million dollars that are not available to hire medical equipment and the staff to operate it, or money for social housing or for universal Pharmacare, or to repair the roads that we already have that might, quite literally, be death traps.

Let's move from the make-believe world of presumed benefits that may or may not exist related to the Cornwall bypass to some real events related to road dangers on Prince Edward Island.

On May 9th, 2017, on Route 14 near Miminegash there was a wash out around an old culvert that caused the road to collapse. And despite residents having warned of problems in this area prior to collapse, nothing was done. A man was injured when drove over, or rather drove into the collapsed road. And it could have been much worse.

Then, on April 2nd of this year, just a few weeks ago, on Irishtown Road, provincial Highway 101, there was a culvert failure almost identical to what happened in the Miminegash incident. Literally overnight, a six-metre sinkhole appeared. It's not hyperbole to suggest someone could have been killed. Indeed, a TIE spokesperson said this at the scene: Lucky nobody got into it. It wouldn't have been good.

When we talk about safety, we have to be considering the safety of all Islanders as we travel on all of our roads. Of course, as I said earlier, I understand the challenges we face on Prince Edward Island; climatically,

in terms of the substrate on which our roads are built, and the increasingly extreme weather.

But, if we have had, as we have, two serious failures on two heavily travelled roads in two years, both, by the way, have school buses travelling on them during the school year, how long before the next incident and will we be as lucky next time. How many other potential problems are out there, slowly deteriorating away developing towards another potentially deadly collapse?

We all want safe roads. All reasonable people realize that there is only so much money available for maintenance and repair of our Island roads. Like every other decision in government, there are tough choices to be made. Trying to meet limitless needs with limited resources means difficult decisions have to be continuously made.

A prudent and responsible government must be able to validate the choices they make and, above all else, to ensure that when it comes to Islanders' safety, the decisions on how and where to spend money on our Island roads can be justified.

Government must also always have an eye to the future as needs are changing continuously. Perhaps, there's no place other than transportation, or perhaps electricity, as we were just discussing a few minutes ago, where that's more true. There isn't the same call today for blacksmiths as there was 150 years ago and there are not very many positions on the Island for railroad engineers these days.

To a certain extent we can project into the future and have some picture of what the future of transportation will look like, and therefore, what kind of infrastructure we should be building and designing for the future.

The electrification of transportation will be the biggest revolution in cars since they were invented. Those cars still need good roads on which to travel. When you combine electrification of cars with driverless automobiles, with Uber technology, with public transportation, with car-sharing and with economic modeling, many people and many studies are suggesting that our future

may actually involve fewer automobiles than are on the roads today.

Yet, we're stuck in the mindset of growth and expansion, in large part because that has always been our lived experience. There have always been more cars and because there were more cars we have always needed more roads. But things are changing and changing fast. It is incumbent upon governments to foresee such profound shifts in our world, in order that we don't end up using public funds to build stranded assets, again a feature of our previous discussion around electrical supply.

If we had to build a new road, then, it's absolutely a worthy debate to have; to hash out the cost-benefit analysis of what that road might look like, but I have yet to see compelling evidence that we should be building yet more kilometres of highways on the most densely-paved province in Canada.

Let's not forget that almost – that every new kilometre of highway that we do build needs to be maintained. As we discussed earlier, at not inconsiderable expense.

I imagine the tax dollars that Islanders pay out to form a sort of community fund, with government being the body that decides how best to spend that money to build our community, the community of Prince Edward Island, to make it resilient, to make it beautiful, to make it equitable, to make it so that it serves Islanders for many generations to come.

Roads play a crucial role in terms of community development, and well-being and public safety and economic prosperity. We must make sure that the roads that we have are the right roads in the right places and built for the right reasons.

I want my constituents, and, indeed, I want all Islanders to drive through District 17, and across the whole Island from tip-to-tip with confidence that our roads are safe and maintained to the best of our ability.

The events of the last couple of years suggest that we have ticking time bombs underneath the thousands of miles of Island asphalt. And with some questionable justifications for it being built in the first place, and dubious benefits with no

contemporary studies to support the claims of its positive economic impact, the building of the Cornwall Perimeter Highway, quite literally, at the expense of so many other potential road projects, is causing many Islanders, and myself included, to question this government's priorities.

I am proud to move this motion asking for support of our existing roads and I ask this House for your unanimous support.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: I'll now call on the seconder of the motion the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale to speak to the motion.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This evening, when I was able to go home, because I don't live in a rural district, I live just up the road, so I'm able to go home in between the afternoon session and the evening session to see my daughter and grab supper.

This evening, as I pulled into my driveway, there was a bag with something sitting in it. It was a phone book. I haven't seen a phone book for a couple of years, so that was surprising. It's a very small phone book. I took the phone book into the house and my daughter asked me what it was.

Now, when I was growing up you – being listed in the phone book was like you got to be grown up because you had a real phone. The reason why my 10-year-old daughter doesn't know what a phone book is, is because the iPhone came out 11 years ago. In that time, in that 10-year timeframe from when everybody had a phone in your home and we had phone books and you had to be listed in the phone book and you had to know where to look it up. In that 10-year timeframe our world has changed completely.

Not only do we not have phones at home, but we don't have phone books, and we don't have Yellow Pages advertising being a business model that really works so well anymore. We don't have all of those things that we took for granted when we were growing up.

That 10 years is not a very long time at all for things to change and the amount of investment that was made in things like copper telephone wires, and landlines, and telephones, and answering machines, and all of the pieces – voicemail systems, and all of the things that go with those things are gone because now we have smartphones that fit in our pocket that have more computing power than the rocket that sent men to the moon in 1969.

So the reason to talk about phones instead of roads is because that shift in change is, for most of us in here, a blink in the eye. We can remember the difference. Ten years is a really short amount of time and it is entirely possible that in 10 years time we are going to be seeing a future where the way that we use vehicles and the supports that we need for vehicles looks as different as the world does from having had a landline, or even a party line, which is what I grew up with – six people on the party line. I had two longs and a short – I think our ring was.

But going from that to having your cell phone in your pocket – what are some things that we're going to need to consider and how will we plan and prepare for that, but also plan and prepare for the transition because we just didn't give up those phones overnight and we're not going to give up our cars overnight, but we also need to think about that transition and making investments to not only maintain what we have now and maintaining the safety and security of Islanders as they use those systems, but being creative and appropriate with the funds that we have to spend so that we are not investing in, effectively, sunk assets.

In a future which is not very far away, huge parking lots and very expensive bypasses are going to be something that we are unlikely to need. What we are going to need are things like electric car charging stations, rideshare apps, safe bike infrastructure, interchange spaces for public transit vehicles, places for people to be able to share and share space as they transition from public to private infrastructure, but we're unlikely to need the things that we recognize. There may be things that we haven't even thought of yet. But making investments now that cost up to 10% of our health care budget into something which has not actually any background or study to

demonstrate that there is a return on that investment seems, both to me, and to people I have to explain that too, including my 10-year old daughter who's never seen a phone book – that's going to be a pretty difficult explanation to make.

We need to make evidence-based decisions and some of the evidence that we look at is people extrapolating into the future what our future could be, but it's also making good decisions with the information that we know. When we know that we're in a space of incredible transformative change, investing in architecture and infrastructure which is well past its sell-by date just doesn't make good fiscal sense.

So for that basis, I'm really proud to support the motion put forward by my hon. colleague this evening. I think it's one that kind of gives us a bit more of a sober thought about how we can not only protect Islanders now, but think about protecting our fiscal investments and our assets and infrastructure into the future and I look forward to unanimous support for this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 9th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, May 9th, at 2:00 p.m.