

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to colleagues here, and you, Mr. Speaker, and our staff; to visitors in the gallery and to those viewing from other locations.

Let me start by welcoming John and Isabel and Sandra MacKinnon –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: John and Isabel and Sandra take a great interest in public affairs of our province and in their community. They have been contributors through agriculture and certainly through politics. They continue to do more than their part and we appreciate it.

Joe Killorn is here today wearing a pink shirt. He started a pink shirt movement. That's great, Joe. Thank you for that. Congratulations.

Steve Ogden of Stratford council. Dan Larter, interested in politics on that side of the river, and generally. Gerry Stewart from the engineering profession. Then, I come to – well, I mention Eddie, since we knew everybody else in the gallery today.

I want to mention Ronnie MacPhee, who has a big day coming up on Saturday, when he graduates from UPEI as one of almost 1,000 graduates. We've followed Ronnie's career. A lot of us have benefitted from his good efforts and certainly want to welcome you. In fact, Ronnie was doing something – good work in response to New Brunswick floods. He's in New Brunswick now. In any case, great to see you here, Ronnie. Welcome.

Give him a hand, you fellows.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Yesterday evening, in Halifax there was the annual recognition of Atlantic Canada's top 50 CEOs.

I'm pleased to say that there were four Prince Edward Islanders recognized, starting with Jim Bradley, who was 36 years an employee of ADL; come up through the ranks and spent 13 years as CEO. It's great to see Jim and his company get that recognition.

Mitch Cobb of Upstreet Brewery. A great company and success. And Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz of UPEI. I might say that, Mitch, of course, would want to recognize that his co-founders at Upstreet were Mike Hogan and Joey Seaman. That's a great recognition of our companies and the business leadership in our province. I'm sure we all join in celebrating those achievements.

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 bring greetings to those individuals that might be watching us by television or over the Internet today. In particular, I'd like to say hello to Wade Mason, who has reached out to me on numerous occasions. He's an avid watcher and quite often gives some suggestions as far as maybe how the proceedings should play out here.

I, too, would be remiss if I didn't recognize some of the individuals that I'm familiar with in the gallery. Of course Councillor Steve Ogden. I spoke to you at the hallway. I'm very happy to hear of the very productive and busy meeting that the Stratford Town Council had last night, and all the great development that's moving forward.

Of course Daniel Larter; Joe, wonderful to see you here. And Ronnie, as well. I'm not sure who is taking pictures of Premier Gallant over in New Brunswick today with you being here, but anyway, I'm sure you got somebody to fill in for you.

Of course, Gerry Stewart sitting in the back

here. Gerry and I have been on various committees, over the years, together. I have to tell you that Gerry is probably one of the most giving volunteers that I know on PEI. Whether it was for Terry Fox Runs across the bridge, or walks across the bridge, or many bicycling events that took place here. Gerry always stepped up to the plate and brought his expertise to the team. Many events happen on PEI because of people like Gerry. I salute him for that.

I'd also like to just remind people that Thursday, Friday, Saturdays during the lobster season, there is a terrific spot to buy cooked lobster and that's from the Stratford and Area Lions Club, just located on the other side of the Hillsborough Bridge.

As I said, they're open on Thursday, Fridays, and Saturdays and they probably sell some of the best lobsters that you'll ever taste on Prince Edward Island. So I encourage people to stop in, support the Lions Club because the Lions Club supports our communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to, of course, welcome our regulars back: Eddie and Lorne and Dan Larter are here on a regular basis as well. There's a couple here who don't come quite so often: Carol Carragher from District 17, nice to see you, Carol. And, of course, Joe Killorn and all of the wonderful work that he's done in the mental health field over the years. Welcome to you all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today. It's good to see Eddie and Lorne back and all the regular crew. I'd like to welcome John and his family here today. It's good to see them – very community-minded people. It's good to see Steve here, the councilor

from across the way and I'm surprised Ronnie McPhee is here today. I thought Mr. Gallant would have him over sandbagging over there today, but it's good to see Ronnie here today.

Mr. Myers: He's over here sandbagging.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Dumville: Good one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That one's hard to follow, but this morning I had the chance to get my hearing tested with the new mobile hearing unit with department of transportation. The new unit allows us to test our employees annually and that only took five minutes. I want to recognize Gerry Stewart, who is with us in the gallery with – Occupational Health and Safety Officer with the Public Service Commission and thank him for showing me around there this morning and for the staff that helped with that as well.

Just another reminder to Islanders that this Saturday is the WI roadside cleanup. I see great things happening right across the Island now with the yellow bags sitting on the side of the road. If anyone hasn't had a chance to go into Access PEI, they can go into there or to the IWMC site, pick up their bags, and have a great day on Saturday helping out Islanders and the WI.

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

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

I want to recognize the members of the HMCS Queen Charlotte that's in my district down the street. There was a dramatic rescue last night in the Charlottetown harbour when a boat carrying 15 people capsized close to Fort Amherst. Luckily the navy reserve cadets from the HMCS Queen Charlotte were on training exercise and they attended to the boat. Six people were in the water, there was the rest hanging on to the boat.

The naval reserve people rescued everybody there and brought them to shore.

So, I want to on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, I'd like to recognize the cadets for their involvement in last night's rescue. They did a great job, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to welcome everyone; a lot of familiar faces in the gallery today.

Last night I had the opportunity to do a presentation and have a question and answer period with Fusion Charlottetown, which is members of a group – a very bright group, I must say – 20 to 40-year-old young professionals in this area and we talked, especially, about sustainability for their future and I can tell you with these people at the helm in the near future, Prince Edward Island's future looks very bright. So I just want to kudos to them to keep doing what they're doing and thank them for last night.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to get up on my feet and welcome guests in the public gallery. Actually, since the new change in protocol, this is the first time I got to greet constituents.

Welcome to all the folks in the gallery, of course, but I'd especially like to mention one of my constituents: Christine Batten, mother of our Page here, Olivia Batten and a great community-minded person. She operates a business up there in Alberton – the Prince County Penny Saver, which is a great informative and promotional paper and she's also on our regional advisory council up in the western part of the province, so we appreciate all she does for us.

Also, while I'm on my feet, would like to say hello to all the good people of Alberton-Roseville.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise here today. I want to welcome everyone in the gallery, most especially the MacKinnon Family; John and Isabel and Sandra. Susan is not here today. I just want to say, they'll be part of District 4 in the next election. I might get 'good luck anyway, dear' when I go to the door, but I'm not sure. They're a wonderful family I've known them since Sandra and Susan and I were in Brownies and Girl Guides together. Welcome to the gallery today.

As the minister said, lots of yellow Women's Institute bags along the road today. It was a beautiful drive in and it's great to see those ditches being clean.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to acknowledge some of the people in the gallery, especially John MacKinnon, a long-time farmer in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

I'd also invoke the exceptional status information here for speaking here. I want to acknowledge Harvey Stewart received a very prestigious recognition yesterday. Harvey's been involved in our community for the West Point fire department. He's also been on the West Point Development Corporation, the chair there. He's the president and CEO of Trout River Industries.

Yesterday, he was bestowed the acknowledgment by the Atlantic Business Magazine as one of the top 50 CEOs in Atlantic Canada. I want to pass on a great acknowledgment and recognition for that achievement to Harvey.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, enjoy the pleasure to rise here and welcome everyone to the gallery. A special welcome to the MacKinnon family, and to Gerry Stewart and to Ronnie MacPhee, it's good to see you back on PEI and I wish you all the best this weekend.

I would also like to congratulate my youngest son Jonathan and his lovely wife, April. April gave birth to a bouncing baby last night named Bennett Davis Gallant weighing eight pounds and four ounces at 3:00 a.m. this morning. I'd like to congratulate them on doing their part in increasing the population of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery and hope that everyone in Charlottetown-Lewis Point is having a great day.

Today, I'm rising to salute Ronnie MacPhee and welcome him back to Prince Edward Island. I met Ronnie, he went to school with my youngest son, and then asked if he could volunteer on my first campaign.

When he went off to UPEI, he started working for the Liberal Party and I was quite concerned that he wasn't going to finish his degree. I had the little motherly nag on him every so often to say, how is school going? Are you finishing? How many courses are you taking?

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Casey: I'm really proud of him. I'm pleased to rise today to say that he'll be walking across with a little bit of nagging from me, but he'll be walking across the stage this weekend. I just want to offer my congratulations to him.

Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to welcome everyone to the gallery here; Steve and Dan and Joe and Lorne and Ronnie and Eddie and Carol and especially the MacKinnons, John and Isabel and Sandra, they're constituents of mine and are fantastic members of the community, as the Premier has said.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. J. Brown: All right, Mr. Speaker. I'll get up. I hadn't intended to, but since you offered –

Speaker: Well, you raised your hand (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – I, too, would congratulate Mitch Cobb on his accomplishments. Actually, Mitch and Mike Hogan are both constituents of mine and they've been long-time friends. It's great to see them, certainly, doing well; and really not just adding to the business community on Prince Edward Island, but also the culture. They've been able to do that in a way that's really, kind of, raised the bar fairly significantly here. Certainly, I'd congratulate them on that honour.

Thank you.

Speaker: Are we sure nobody on the opposition side wants to welcome?

Mr. Myers: I'll pass today.

Speaker: Okay.

Statements by Members

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

John D. MacKinnon

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

This is a real pleasure. Today I rise to recognize John MacKinnon of Kinross, PEI, who will be turning 89 this Saturday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: In addition to the numerous community activities John has been involved in, I'm happy to have him as president of my district Liberal association, Vernon River-Stratford. A title he has held since my first election victory in 2007. He also happens to be the riding president for Lawrence MacAulay in Cardigan. He is a very busy man.

John and his wife, Isabel, as well, own a 250-acre family farm in Kinross, where they raise purebred Angus cattle, and market finish cattle under the Certified Island Beef program. He's a true representative of the rural community spirit where honesty, hard work and perseverance results in getting the job done.

John has been a member of the Vernon River Lions Club for almost 35 years, where he volunteers his time, skills and leadership abilities to the club. As well, he's a strong supporter of the PEI 4-H program whether serving as a club leader, district president, or serving on the provincial board.

You will never find a man at more community events than John. It simply does not matter what the cause, John is always willing to lend his wisdom and help.

Again, I wish to thank John a wonderful birthday, and to thank him for his contributions, not only to his community, but to the Island as a whole. He is certainly a role model for me and it's tough to find someone with a better work ethic than Mr. John MacKinnon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Eastern Fabricators

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege for me to rise today and speak about Eastern Fabricators. I rise in the House today to recognize a great company in Kings County.

A company, who has been a valuable asset to the community, Eastern Fabricators was incorporated in 2012, and opened its doors in January, 2013 with only two employees.

Originally, they were co-located with Aspin Kemp & Associates at Pooles Corner. They have since moved into the old planer mill, which was once operated as Georgetown Timber Mill. Although, being relatively new on the scene, they have certainly made an impact all across the sector.

Many major businesses put their trust in Eastern Fabricators, with 80% of their contracts being exported to Maple Leaf Foods, McCain's and Cavendish Farms. Approximately, 65% employees are currently employed, which is almost double the timber mill staff and as the demand for food processing equipment rises, so will positions available.

Twenty-three of these positions were created last June, so it's evident they are expanding rapidly. In the next year alone they are expected to grow to 80 to 90 employees. They have growth of close to 100% each year since they started.

This is a terrific example of starting a business in rural PEI and growing our economy. They may have started out small, but Eastern Fabricators has certainly transformed into a huge opportunity for everyone involved.

I'm happy to stand in the House today and recognize this terrific business and wish them the best of luck in the future as they continue to grow and prosper.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Saluting Private Enterprise

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm a Progressive Conservative and it seems I often rise in this House and talk about

being socially progressive, which is very important.

Today, I want to talk about part of why it's so important to be fiscally conservative. Businesses and the backbone of our Island economy, and hardworking Islanders in our free market system are the engine that drives those businesses, especially those in the core industries of farming, fishing and tourism. So many, of which, are ramping up for the season in District 18 Rustico-Emerald that I'm so privileged to represent.

Its private enterprise, and the entrepreneurs, owners, operators and employees to whom we owe the standard of living we enjoy every day as Islanders. It is these people that work so hard to add real value by producing the services and goods that people want and need on the Island and abroad.

Every dollar that government spends, every dollar, originates because of their innovation, determination and perseverance to succeed each and every day. When I'm talking to these businesses, they are telling me we need government to get out of the way: let business do what they do best with less red tape and administrative overhead.

Also, when government gives a loan or grant to one company, it automatically gives them an advantage over their competitor, who may not get a loan or a grant. Cutting taxes, or giving tax credits is the only fair way to do it. It puts everyone on a level playing field.

Our businesses are thriving because of the leadership and long-term vision of private enterprise. It is certainly no thanks to government tearing into plans with ever-increasing fees and taxes.

Our farmers, fishers and tourism industries have built up their reputations over many decades, and when our economy does well, Islanders are standing on the shoulders of the industry leadership giants.

It's so easy for government to sit here and take credit when the economy does so well. Our Premier, Minister of Finance, minister of economic development, they do this on a regular basis. However, every ounce of credit for economic growth, and every dollar that government spends must be credited to

the hardworking owners, operators and employees at Island businesses. Let's never forget that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

CBSA investigators stated in their court approved search warrants the clear fact that residency fraud hurts the integrity of the Canadian immigration system, in fact, our entire country.

Residency fraud and PNP program

Question to the Premier: Premier, why has your government allowed widespread residency fraud to occur through the PNP program here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start on the point about reputation that was raised yesterday, and again today. It seems we only hear from the opposition on reputation when they're trying to pull it down.

We have, over a period of time, worked diligently and in response to advice and recommendations from the Auditor General —

Mr. Trivers: Worst province in Canada for cooking the books.

Premier MacLauchlan: — to build up and improve our immigration pathways, including the investor immigrants and numerous other pathways, to the point where we're seen to be leaders in the country.

It would nice if the opposition would recognize, for once, the important role and

the important achievements that our province has gained in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Obviously, the Premier continues to turn a blind eye to the facts that are out there.

CBSA investigators have filed federal charges because they have found evidence of residency fraud with false information provided to the federal government through an organized network.

Files approved by government from PNP

Premier, you've had three days now. How is it that your government only has files on 17 of the 566 immigrants approved through the PNP PEI program?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very serious matter. We are working with border services to try to get to the bottom of this.

It is a federal program and federal charges are being laid. We understand – I understand that the people have provided incorrect information to border services. We are cooperating with border services on everything we can to help them get to the bottom of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

At least his minister acknowledges that it's a serious issue while the Premier still turns a blind eye to it.

CBSA sought a warrant for 16 Chancellor Street, the home of one of the charged individuals.

PNP applicants at 16 Chancellor Street (further)

Question to the Premier: Premier, how many PEI PNP clients do your records show at this address?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is a very serious matter and we are working with border services to try to get to the bottom of this. We're sharing all the information that we have to get to the bottom of this because we know that the information that has been provided to us is not the same information that was provided to border services. The federal department is looking into that and we're in full support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, very much.

Mr. Speaker, 363 provincial PNP clients stated: 281 Brackley Point Road as their address.

Listing of addresses for PNP clients

Question to the Premier: How did no one in government notice hundreds of PNP clients all listing the same address?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic –

Mr. Myers: Where do they all park?

Speaker: – Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is a serious matter. Border services, I believe, are the government agency that was receiving this same address as folks were crossing the border.

Our records show only 17 at the Sherwood address. That is – all information that we're sharing with border services. Anything we can do to help to get to the bottom of this, we are more than happy to cooperate and that's what we're doing.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, 205 provincial PNP clients stated 72 Beach Grove Road as their address; the two-story home of the other charged individual.

Question again, to the Premier: How many other addresses have hundreds of PEI PNP clients registered in your immigration records?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Border services has been receiving the common addresses. That is not something that was in the records that are provided to us.

We are cooperating fully with border services to provide all of the required information to get to the bottom of this because we know this is very serious.

We are going to continue to cooperate with the federal government in this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I heard the Premier speak earlier about how he somehow believes that we are leaders. We aren't leaders at all. We're a national embarrassment under his leadership and this government's PNP fraud file here.

The government actually knew about these serious incidents because CBSA sought and executed a search warrant on these properties in February, 2016 and laid charges only this week.

They knew. They've known for two years this was going on.

In the last three days, the minister here has been stating that border services has not shared any information with the province. He said it here today that the province is cooperating with them. The province is provided them documentation.

CBSA investing government re: residency fraud

Question to the minister: Will you confirm that border services is, in fact, investigating you guys over residency fraud, as well?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

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

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

We know this is very serious and we are continuing to work with border services. We will provide all documentation that they require. They have access to our files and we're very happy to continue to work with them because this is very serious. We want to make sure we get to the bottom on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm no lawyer, but carefully cooperating with somebody who is investigating you is probably the responsible thing to do. While the minister maybe trying to tell this House that they're cooperating. They don't have a choice. They're being investigated by the federal government.

The minister isn't partnered with the border services, at all; he is actually being investigated.

Question to the minister: Why do you not want Islanders to know that your government is being investigated by border services?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The investigation that's going on by border services, I understand, is towards two individuals and this relates back to an older program that we have. We now have a new program, which has an expression of interest.

It works with immigrants and municipalities right across PEI to help increase population across PEI. We know that's one of the key pillars to our population growth, along with recruitment and retention.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This minister has had two chances to tell Islanders that they're not being investigated by the federal government. They're being investigated by the federal government. All this complying that he's doing and all this cooperating and all this providing of documents is because he has to because federal agents have swarmed his office and said you have to give us this information.

There are 600 immigrants that this government vouched for that have lied and cheated their way into residency on Prince Edward Island and perhaps even a Canadian citizenship.

The Minister of Finance was responsible for immigration when border services executed this very warrant. He knew.

Minister of Finance and fraud investigation

Question to the Minister of Finance: Will you explain your knowledge and involvement over the two-year residency fraud investigation that has resulted in federal charges here on Prince Edward Island?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As much as the member would want people to think that border services have swarmed our office, I can tell you they haven't been to the office when I'm there. I seem to be there an awful lot. That is not something that has happened.

We take this matter very seriously. I don't know if the opposition does, but we certainly do and we're cooperating with border services and sharing all information that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So they're not in your office, but you're being investigated. There's no question that you're being investigated because part of the fraud that happened also was partly to do with your office. It goes both ways; 600 people lived in one house and you guys accepted them. Do you think border services is going to overlook that part of it and say: Oh, it's okay. They're government; they couldn't be crooked.

Concerns about the business stream were raised last fall. The now finance minister admitted that two thirds of the applicants last fall – he said that they had defaulted on their business deposits, but there was supposed to be good news. According to the minister, almost all the nominees are passing residency requirement, allowing them to keep their \$50,000.

Applicants defaulting on business deposits

Question to the finance minister: Do you still stand by your statement you made in November?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Border services are continuing to investigate this and we know this is very serious and we continue to cooperate with border services. This is very important and this is a federal program, these are federal charges, and the address that was given is to the federal border services. We continue to cooperate with all aspects of border services as they continue forward with this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If I was being investigated for fraud, I would also cooperate. So thank you for cooperating while you're being investigated for fraud.

A direct quote from the finance minister when these concerns were raised months ago while he was immigration minister:

He said: One number that really stands out to us is our residency number. Even though they may default on their business applications and obligation, they are staying here.

Trust of government in immigration program (further)

Question to the minister: How could you say such a thing when you knew then that border services was investigating not only you, but your entire program?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Border services is not investigating our department but we continue to work with them as they work towards getting to the bottom of this very serious incident that we understand that immigrants were giving false information to border services with this federal program and we will continue to cooperate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So somebody falsified documents, this government accepted them, took their money, and cashed their cheques, but it's all them. It's all somebody else who was doing the wrong thing, but this government thought 600 people could live in a motel in Sherwood. These people thought that 205 people could live in a house on Beach Grove Road. Of course, because why couldn't 205 people live in a bungalow on Beach Grove Road.

The Minister of Finance was minister in 2016 when one of the last recorded dates of the search warrant was there. So this isn't a new program, this is a program that the finance minister took care of. So either this government is incompetent, or they're in cahoots with the people who are committing the residency fraud. No one knew anything; no one saw anything; no one said anything. That's the way this government looks at it. There's hundreds of missing records and potentially all kinds that are fully falsified.

Question to the finance minister: Which is it – is your government incompetent, or are you in cahoots with the people committing fraud?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government is in cooperation with Canada border services as we continue to work with them so they can get to the bottom of this. We know this is very serious and we're taking this very serious and continue to work and share files with border services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, selling 600 fake addresses to immigrants nominated for residency in the province no doubt generated a lot of money.

HST revenue from sale of fake addresses

Question for the finance minister: How much HST revenue did the province receive from the sale of those fake addresses?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a serious matter and we are working with border services to get to the bottom of this. The addresses were given to border services and this is a federal program that – through the immigration file – and we continue to work with border services to make sure we get to the bottom of this. This is very serious.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Submission of taxes from fake addresses

Question to the finance minister: Can you confirm whether or not the businesses in question submitted any taxes to the province on the sale of those fake addresses?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we all know in the House and right across Prince Edward Island how important immigration is to PEI and what it's done over the past number of years to increase our population.

But I can tell you this that it is a federal program that is run by the federal government. We have to, as a province, follow the guidelines of the federal government and abide by those guidelines. The federal government audits the province, I believe it's every year, but I'm not 100% sure on that – every year on what we're doing here on PEI, how we're accepting clients, what those clients are actually doing. So, there are all kinds of checks and balances.

The opposition's trying to paint a picture here that is outside the realm of the provincial government. There's no content

to it whatsoever. There's an organization here doing an investigation and that's good. Bring it on. If there's someone breaking the law then so be it. They need to pay the penalty.

Mr. Myers: You didn't do that with e-gaming.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question was about taxes and hopefully this government is collecting taxes from immigrants that come in through PNP program. Often if a business has outstanding HST owing, provincial sheriffs are engaged to collect it.

Sheriffs engaged for tax collection

Question to the finance minister: Were provincial sheriffs engaged to collect outstanding taxes from the business alleged to have sold 600 fake addresses to provincial nominees?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: I think that's the whole essence of the investigation, Mr. Speaker, is that there was someone doing a wrong as far as what we're seeing from the federal agents. So for me to know that information, then I would know everything about the investigation, which I don't – which we didn't – and we're waiting on the cooperation between the provincial government and the Office of Immigration, immigration Canada, I'm sure, is a part of this as well and we'll wait and see what the results of those investigations are.

It's no threat to the Province of Prince Edward Island. If there are corrupt people out there, they need to be brought to justice and dealt with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Collection of tax revenue is really one way government could help determine if potential fraud and abuse was happening in the Provincial Nominee Program and indeed, close cooperation would be required between the province and the feds to make that happen.

Assistance to federal authorities

Question to the finance minister: What assistance is being provided to the federal authorities on this investigation on the tax side of things?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: First of all, if these individuals are breaking the law – I’m assuming that they’re not likely filing taxes. I’m assuming that everything that they’re doing is likely illegal, but I can tell you this: Whatever the federal government wants as far as our Office of Immigration, I’m sure the minister responsible would be more than willing to open the book on it because this party and this government, we have nothing to hide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: They know how to get there; they’ve been there before.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Myers: Wouldn’t be the first time they investigated you guys.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It’s pretty obvious to all Islanders that there’s some funny business going on here with the PNP program. Many Islanders – they’ve heard about, they’ve read about, they’ve even seen firsthand start-up businesses being set up and closed solely to meet the requirements of the province’s PNP program. We also know that provincial sheriffs are sometimes used to help collect outstanding tax revenue like HST owing to the province.

Sheriffs engaged for tax collection (further)

Question to the Attorney General: What direction has your department given to the provincial sheriffs around the collection of outstanding taxes from businesses involved in the PNP?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Look, we treat an immigrant – which we’re proud of – no different than we treat any other Islanders. They pay their taxes, we collect their taxes, and if there are issues with that, there’s a protocol in place to resolve those issues. It’s not going to change for anybody. That’s diversification in Prince Edward Island. That’s why we’re being so successful. We treat everybody equal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It’s one thing to say you treat everybody equally and it’s another thing to do that, and that’s not what we’re hearing.

Question to the Attorney General: Can you confirm that your government has advised sheriffs, provincial sheriffs, to take a hands-off policy when it comes to collecting outstanding tax revenue from PNP businesses so as not to raise suspicion or media attention?

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

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

That’s quite an accusation coming from a member of this Legislature. I would be interested to know what proof the hon. member might have of that.

Mr. MacKay: We’ve got (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: That said, what I will say about this is that our department, as far as I’m aware, has no knowledge of this investigation and we certainly have no knowledge of any sheriffs being directed in

any way and I would say that the hon. member doesn't even have a great handle on the process to engage sheriffs in something like this.

This is long from something that sheriffs would ever be engaged to do. An order of the court would be required before that would ever happen.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) start with federal agents (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: We're at the stage of a warrant and investigation that's been filed in relation to a criminal matter.

I think we need to get the facts straight. I'd certainly encourage the opposition to do that.

Mr. LaVie: We know better now.

Mr. J. Brown: We'd be here to help them in any way that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Bees are a critical component of a healthy ecosystem and agricultural economy.

Last week in this House, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in response to questions from the Member from Vernon River-Stratford spoke in reassuring tones about the future of bees on Prince Edward Island. But, Island apiarists remain deeply concerned.

Very recently, the European Union passed a comprehensive ban on neonicotinoids, a class of insecticides shown to be harmful to bees and other beneficial insects.

Alternative measures to neonicotinoid use

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: If a similar ban on neonicotinoids were to be enacted here in Canada, what alternative measures are available to Island farmers to effectively

protect their crops and would their use entail significant costs to those farmers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to pesticides and chemicals that are used on crops in Prince Edward Island or in Canada, we go by Health Canada's processes in determining what usages of those particular chemicals are used for and we will continue to do that as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Well, those insecticides and pesticides that we use here on Prince Edward Island used to be recorded. We used to know how much was sold and bought every year. But since 2014, there are no records of how much insecticide or pesticide has been sold here on Prince Edward Island. Back then it was over two million pounds were used or purchased.

Recorded sales of pesticides and insecticides

A question to the minister: Why are these records not available to Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, back a number of years ago there were some changes that were made that farmers now have to make sure that they document all the particular pesticides that they use on crops and that's the process that goes now. So, I think that's not actually under my department, but that's my understanding that our farmers do document all their pesticides, the days that they use them, what chemical that they do use. That would be the way we'd track that.

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

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

Ideally, we would be able to service all of our pollination needs with domestic bees from hives right here on Prince Edward Island and indeed, efforts are underway to expand our native bee colonies and I congratulate the department for that initiative. Thank you, minister.

Use of Island hives for pollination

Minister: Would you consider creating an incentive or better yet, a requirement for growers here on PEI to use Island hives for pollination before reaching out to off-Island apiarists?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: That's a very good point and that's exactly what we're doing in the department.

We've actually had a course, I think, about a week ago where we happened to have, I think, there were 42 individuals that were interested in getting into the bee industry and the honey industry, and they've received some training.

We've also had a program that we've recently announced where we've encouraged expansions of hives in Prince Edward Island, and we've also put in place some very strict protocols for the importation of hives to make sure that our pollination occurs.

We are hopeful in the near future we will be self-sustained when it comes to pollination on Prince Edward Island and bee production.

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

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

Agricultural diseases can be devastating to whole sectors of the industry and here on PEI we only have to look back to PVYn in potatoes and BSE in cattle for recent examples of that.

Enormous efforts are taken to prevent such outbreaks and strict quarantine measures put in place should one occur. The impacts of these outbreaks can be shattering for farmers, both economically and emotionally,

and the effects of that can last for years and years.

Protection for farmers re: disease outbreak

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: If you were aware of such a potentially devastating disease in any part of the agricultural sector, would you use all means possible to protect Island farmers from such an outbreak?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, it's my responsibility to make sure that we protect those commodities and these industries and sectors within our industry that they're able to flourish and thrive and that they're able to compete on a global marketplace, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Last year, New Brunswick suffered from a severe outbreak of small hive beetle from hives imported from Ontario, where they had been previously inspected and deemed to be clean. Some beekeepers here on Prince Edward Island are deeply concerned about the relative lack of controls on movements of bees within Ontario and the fact that small hive beetle remains present on the trucks used to transport those bees between one part of Ontario and another.

Protection for beekeepers from small hive beetle

Minister: Can you assure those Island apiarists that PEI will not be vulnerable to such an infestation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the question that the hon. member mentioned a little earlier was the real reason why we have now put in place a chief veterinarian within our department so they can make sure that they

implement all the proper biosecurity measures and all the protocols that advise our department to make sure that we're reducing the potential risk that has occurred.

So when we look at the situation of the importation of bees into Prince Edward Island, we've implemented some very strict protocols around the region within certain provinces that we will import bees. We've increased the inspections and in fact, we will be sending our own inspectors to Ontario, or wherever the location is that bees could be imported from, to make sure that they're free from small hive beetle.

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

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

Bee hives for pollination are imported right at that time when the small hive beetle larvae are crawling out of the beehives to pupate deep in the soil, and also when the adult beetles can fly for over five kilometres, which they did in New Brunswick last year.

Minister: What is your plan to deal with this pest if it is indeed introduced to Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Exactly, Mr. Speaker.

It's very important that we do have the proper protocols in place just in case something ever happened that we can destroy hives immediately and I think that's a key component of this. Anybody that's thinking about exporting beehives to Prince Edward Island, if they happen to have any identification or detection of small hive beetle, we can immediately destroy the entire truckload of hives, and we're working with the Department of Communities, Land and Environment to make sure that those protocols will be put in place and implemented immediately, should we find anything.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

In 2015, government committed to building a new manor in Montague due to the Riverview Manor being almost 50-years old. Last summer, it was announced that ground was broken and construction was underway, meaning sometime soon the manor should be completed.

Completion date of new manor in Montague (further)

Minister: When will the construction of the new manor in Montague be completed?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're very happy that we were able to do investments in the community of Montague to replace the existing manor, which was over 50-years old. Things are progressing very well on that particular construction project and we expect that to be completed by the winter of 2019.

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

Adjustments and design of new manor (further)

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, will this building be larger and accommodate more seniors in Montague, and were there any changes made with the engineering of this building in comparison to previous that were constructed?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're investing \$15 million in this particular project in the community of Montague. It's a 49-bed long-term care facility.

We did meet with the community there and had a chance for them to look at the plans –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – as we proceeded with going forward on that –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – and it's broken up into three small rooms that have 12 in each section. Then, there is another section that has 13, and one of those includes a respite care bed so that the –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – residents will have opportunities for all private rooms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the construction of this property is going to be very much welcomed in Montague. People are interested. They're driving by the site. They're looking at what's going on. I know that they're keen to see this completed.

Transition of manor to department of health

Minister: When will your department be handing the manor into the hands of the department of health so that the manor will be opened for residents to move into?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a process that takes place once the construction is completed. From our department we will hand the keys over to department of health so that they can proceed to moving residents in. There is a whole process that that takes place.

We expect in the winter of 2019 to be able to hand those keys over. Then, that process, through Health PEI, will start to transition

the residents from one area to another and to train staff and to make them familiar with the new site that they're going to be working in so that residents have a smooth transition from one site to another, and a brand new home.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister of health. I'm hearing a lot in the media and from constituents about ophthalmology.

Ophthalmologist complement on PEI

Can you tell me, what is the current complement of ophthalmologists on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: Good question.

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

On the Island we have a full complement of seven ophthalmologists here in the province. We're very fortunate to have seven. Ophthalmologists are doctors that take care of special needs in Islanders' eyes whether it surgical, or whether it's medical.

Currently, out of that complement of seven, three provide surgical needs. Four provide non-surgical needs.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, there are many Islanders waiting for eye surgery, and I have been told that we have an ophthalmologist, who is going on leave.

Wait list for eye surgery

Can you give us an impact on how this will impact surgeries?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is correct. Recently, Dr. Sefau has indicated that he will be taking a six-month leave of absence for personal reasons.

We currently are in the process of hiring a locum to handle the cares that Dr. Sefau is looking at. Because this was fairly quick in nature any of Dr. Sefau patients who required post-treatments are being handled by the other six ophthalmologists that we have serving us here.

As soon as we can get a locum recruited we will work with Dr. Sefau's patients. In the meantime, one of our ophthalmologists is triaging those patients for anybody that may very urgent needs right away.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: What about people, who do not need surgery, but still require the support of an ophthalmologist. Who is looking after them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The other six ophthalmologists are working collaborative together to take on the needs of the patients of Dr. Sefau. We also have asked for the services of a community-based ophthalmologist to assist us here, as well.

Quite frankly, I have to compliment the six ophthalmologists on Prince Edward Island, who are stepping up to the plate to take those needs of Islanders, who find themselves in a situation that nobody anticipated to take care of their eye needs; their surgical needs, their medical needs. I really have to compliment all ophthalmologists on PEI for stepping up to the plate, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're talking about the suicide prevention strategy earlier in this House session and its delay. We've been asking when it's coming. In the meantime, tragedies are still happening.

Admission and discharge of self-harm patients

Question to the health minister: What policies are currently in place around admissions and discharges for hospital patients, who have a history of self harm?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

When it comes to regards of our suicide strategy, as I stated earlier on the floor of the Legislature, we are very near to those completions of that review. I hope that that would be able to brought forward, I'll say, in the next few days. I'd be very proud and pleased to bring that to the floor of the Legislature.

Currently, when it comes to needs of Islanders suffering from mental health issues, we have a very good complement now of psychiatrists, who are able to see those having needs. They assess what needs to be there, and they work very closely with the patient to see that their needs are being met, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd actually asked what policies were currently in place around the admissions and discharges for hospital patients.

Earlier this year, an individual with a history of self harm went missing the QEH during an unsupervised leave. She has yet to be found.

Unsupervised leave from QEH

How does a patient with a history of self

harm come to be granted an unsupervised leave from the hospital?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Our great complement of psychiatrist work very closely with patients of those needs. Patients that are looking to go on day passes, they are assessed by psychiatrists. They are determined about they'd be getting along; how they'd been improving; how they'd been progressing. These are unfortunate circumstances, sometimes, if a patient leaves and befalls something of a serious nature.

Psychiatrists do their best to assess these patients to determine, yes, they've improved to the point where they're allowed to go out in society. They're not held in captivity in our facilities. These are Islanders that need to interact with others, need to interact with their families. Yes, that they should be allowed those processes when they ask for them, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This individual has previously attempted to commit suicide while on an unsupervised leave from the hospital. The individual's family had expressed concerns about the person's safety because of that.

Safety concerns from patients' families

Question to the health minister: What weight is given to patient safety concerns received from the patient's family?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I can't speak to specific cases, of course, on the floor of the Legislature. I do know that psychiatrists do their work with great due diligence. They assess their patients by how they're improving. If they see improvements they are allowed to do regular practices that

they would normally do; leave the facility; go out to dinner; visit their family.

The psychiatrists spend a lot of time with these patients. When they see improvements they need to indicate that this is the right health treatment for these individuals. And that's the way they do it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Between September and March we had a severe shortage of psychiatrists in the province. Things were at such a point that entire shifts would go without any psychiatric coverage for patients admitted to Unit 9 and the Hillsborough Hospital or presenting at the emergency room in crisis.

The patient, who went missing during an unsupervised leave, left the QEH on January 15th.

Incidences re: lack of proper psychiatric coverage

Question to the minister of health: Is your government aware of any other incidences where patient safety may have been impacted by the lack of proper psychiatric coverage?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we are quite pleased and quite proud that we were able, through recruitment and retention, go out and recruit four new psychiatrists.

I said before, we were struggling and having challenges six months ago, but today we have four new psychiatrists working on Prince Edward Island providing stable service to those who need mental health issues.

We'll continue to make those strategic investments in this area and try to recruit some more psychiatrists, but when it comes to patient health care, we have to make strategic investments of all kinds. This year alone, we are investing \$4 million into mental health care on Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know these are difficult issues to discuss. They're difficult questions to answer and they're difficult questions to ask. We know that the mental health staff that we do have are working hard to care for patients, but they're understaffed and under-resourced. But the only way that our quality of care will improve is to recognize these mistakes, learn from them, and take corrective action to avoid them in future.

Improvements to health care

Another question to the minister of health: What are we doing as a government to learn from situations like this to improve care for future?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The hon. member is right. Those working in our mental health field on Prince Edward Island are doing great work.

We continue to make strategic investments in regards to our children with supports in our schools so that we can catch things that are early on that are giving our very young people troubles. Our youth, through our Strength and INSIGHT Programs, being able to work with them, strategic investments there that are going to have great success.

When it comes to our other populations – walk in clinics that have been providing valuable services. These are investments that we are making in mental health. We will see successes from these, Mr. Speaker, but as I said on many occasions, there are no overnight solutions. We keep moving forward, we keep getting better, and we continue to do that as we move into the future.

Recognition of Guests (II)

Speaker: Hon. members, I have two requests for recognition. First request from

the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I'd like to welcome two special people to the gallery. Number one being UPEI President, Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz and Nicole Phillips, who works with communications at the University of Prince Edward Island. Welcome.

Some Hon. Members: [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I will speak a bit more about UPEI in a few minutes, but at this time I'd like to recognize Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz for being, once again, named by *Atlantic Business Magazine* as one of Atlantic Canada's top 50 CEOs. Congratulations.

Ms. Casey: Yay, nice.

Some Hon. Members: [Applause]

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Opioid Action Plan

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, last fall we launched our opioid action plan – our approach to mitigate opioid overdoses and death in Prince Edward Island. One of the priorities in the action plan was the creation of rapid response protocol so that ERs, the trauma registry, police, the coroner's office, and our Chief Public Health Office can work together to identify and respond to any spikes in opioid-related overdoses and deaths.

Unfortunately, last week we had to activate our rapid response protocol for opioids when it became evident that cocaine laced with fentanyl was detected in our province. I want to commend the Chief Public Health Office, as well as our local law enforcement, the Department of Justice and Public Safety and all those involved in this very serious matter. You worked swiftly and efficiently to identify the issue and warn Islanders of the potential danger present in our province.

As Minister of Health and Wellness I want all Islanders to understand the serious risks of using street drugs. We are asking anyone who is going to consume street drugs, not only opioids, but any drug in pill or powdered form to take steps to reduce the risks, including: never use alone, not to mix drugs, start with a small amount to check the strength, carry naloxone, and inform others who may use drugs that naloxone is available.

Since starting work on our opioid strategy, we have distributed 350 free take home naloxone kits at various sites, such as our Needle Exchange Programs, provincial addiction treatment facility, the Queen Street recovery clinic, and the provincial correctional center to people at risk of opioid overdoses. We have initiated public and harm reduction messaging and we continue to provide surveillance and reporting of opioid related overdoses and deaths.

Mister Speaker, the fact that fentanyl is present in PEI is disturbing, but not surprising given the spread of this drug over the past year both in Canada and the United States. I also want to commend the law enforcement and the Department of Justice, who are working to reduce illegal drugs in the province. Our province is committed to do all we can to mitigate opioid overdoses and deaths.

In the next 6 months we will be establishing a prescription monitoring program oversight committee, furthering our public education on opioids, releasing a provincial opioid prescribing report, and working with Health PEI to develop a multi-stakeholder committee to address pain management services, practices and education.

Our opioid strategy is available online, as well as our recently completed six month progress report, showing what we've accomplished and the actions to come.

We are pleased with the work that is happening and we will continue to put measures in place to protect the health and safety of all Islanders.

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. It was indeed a tragedy and really tough news to hear last week about the tragedy that happened.

I was at the opioid strategy announcement with Dr. Morrison and the minister at that time, and it's not a good thing to see that they have to enact the strategy so soon and the way they had to do it, but it is good to see that it's working and it's going out. The naloxone kits; it sounds like the minister has got a handle on the right places that these are going. It's scary with having kids of my own that are coming of age with the fentanyl, the illegal drugs that are coming to the province.

It's positive that we're hearing that there's going to be a prescription monitoring program that's coming. The six-month progress report, I haven't read it yet, but I look forward to reading it. The evaluation of these types of programs are key, and I encourage the minister to do all he can with his partners in the department of justice as well to help eliminate this problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Like Morell-Mermaid, one hopes that these sorts of things never have to occur here on Prince Edward Island, but the reality is that they do and it's a sad statement about the condition of our society, sadly. But, I'm really glad that this government has moved as proactively and immediately as they have by instituting the Rapid Response Protocol.

There was a time in my previous life when I was a dentist when I had the ability to prescribe opioids, and I was always very circumspect about using them and very mindful of the possibility of those drugs being misused or finding their way onto the black market.

There's a long story about how big pharma managed to persuade regulators that opioids were safe and efficacious, and we've come to realize that of all of the medications, the pain medications that are available to health care professionals, opioids are the ones that have the greatest addiction potential and the ones that are most dangerous because the margin for error is very small, particularly when you're talking about the newer drugs that have appeared on the scene; fentanyl, which is incredibly potent and when mixed with other drugs, if there's a mistake in how these things are made, it can be absolutely deadly.

Of course, there are new ones – carfentanil is 100 times more potent than fentanyl; 5,000 times more potent than heroin. So always, these problems are escalating and that margin of error, that opportunity for disaster, is just waiting there.

I appreciate and welcome this announcement, minister; a very important thing for the protection of the health and wellbeing of all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Psychology Doctorate Program at UPEI

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

Our government knows that access to quality health care is a top priority for Islanders.

That's why our balanced 2018-2019 budget includes the second-straight record year of health care investments, with a \$32.5 million new budgetary allocation. This includes \$4 million for new investments in mental health supports.

My Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning is doing our part to help improve access to mental health services in two key areas. We are supporting additional funding for mental health supports for post-secondary students. Acting on the advice of student unions, a new mental health supports fund will provide \$25 per student at UPEI, Holland College, and Collège de l'Île, a

\$200,000 investment for each year, and we are helping to enhance the supply of psychologists in Prince Edward Island.

Government is providing \$2 million in support for a new Psychology Doctorate program to be established at UPEI. This will provide a much-needed supply of psychologists to PEI.

The UPEI Doctor of Psychology program is a four-year doctoral program in clinical psychology that will start accepting students this fall. It is comprised of 26 required courses, a minimum of 600 hours of practical experience and a pre-doctoral internship, which will include providing mental health support for Islanders. The program is designed to prepare students to practice as clinical psychologists. It will initially enroll six students, and enrollment will increase incrementally over the next five years.

UPEI's program will be the first English Psychology Doctoral program in the Maritime Provinces. It will also be the first program in Canada with a primary focus on training students to meet the needs of increasingly diverse communities. This is a concrete step forward in addressing the need for psychologists in our province in the long term.

These investments in mental health services and supports for Islanders are in addition to historic investments for post-secondary students in our new Budget. Our government's \$3.3 million in new funding will help all Island students. More specifically, it will allow more than 1,000 Island university and college students in their first degree program to receive free tuition.

This combination of support will put Island students well on their way to a career in mental health services, including psychology, and show why studying on the mighty Island will pay off in their present, and long into their future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government is taking a lot of credit for a mess they've made. There is a need for mental health services at university, and there is a need for mental health services in the later stages of a student's life.

Quite frankly, this government has been missing the boat for 10 years. It's the early interventions that they don't have and the three-year wait list that there is for school psychologists. For 10 years you've known that there's been a wait list for school psychologists and you finally reach out after 10 years to UPEI to see if they can help bail you out of the mess that you've created here on Prince Edward Island.

I'm happy that UPEI has taken this on. I'm proud that a university here on Prince Edward Island recognizes the importance of a psychology program and what it would mean to Prince Edward Island and to the students. I think it's great that it's going to finally give us an out of this mess that government has created.

A three-year wait list, as we have said before, for a school psychologist is far too long. If you get in the queue at grade 3 and you have to wait three years, it means you're entering junior high before you have anything that any of the recommendations implemented in to your classroom life or your daily routine and that is far too long.

In many cases, that wait is too damaging and with the earlier interventions and the opportunity that government has missed the boat on for so many years, so much more could be done for students at a much earlier stage.

Congratulations to UPEI for helping government out of this giant mess they've created, and shame on government for waiting 10 years to deal with a problem that they knew that they had.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to the House, (Indistinct), it's great to see you here today.

This is really fantastic news for the province for a couple of reasons – or more than one reason. One of them is that we know that psychologists are part of a really essential part of filling the gap that we have in our mental health care program here in PEI.

And while beginning a program now – there is a timeframe before we get to the point that they are graduating through. The fact that that program is here shows that there is a long-term commitment to support.

I am particularly excited about the cross-cultural component of the program, with a particular focus on ensuring that indigenous peoples, newcomers and refugees are recognized with their specific needs as part of our reality of our cross-cultural needs of community building here on the Island, and also thinking about how exciting it is to see a made-in-PEI program to a problem that we have here, that using the educational facilities that we have to address that problem where we are – where we know best what we need and how best to solve it.

It's a really exciting time to see this come forward, and I congratulate the university and faculty for having the foresight in this to work with the department and find this solution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a petition to remove HST from facility rentals for nonprofit amateur sports, and these are the reasons for the petition: The PEI government recognizes that participation in amateur sports provides long-term health and wellness benefits for participants that reduce health care costs and contribute to individual success; however, nonprofit amateur sport organizations must pay HST on facility rentals. The HST paid must be raised via registration fees and fundraising, resulting in higher costs that make it harder for amateur sports organizations to operate and may discourage or prevent participation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island as follows: to be proactive in supporting the long-term health and wellness of Islanders by eliminating the HST from facility rentals for use by nonprofit amateur sport organizations.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the said document be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table two letters: one letter that I wrote to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner on April 25th, second's a letter that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner wrote to me on May 8th; and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that these be now received and do lie on the Table.

On April 25th, I wrote to the commissioner a two-and-half-to-three-page letter outlining the circumstances of a visit by Dr. Sheldon Levy to Charlottetown and my involvement in Discovery Garden in that matter. On May 8th, I received a letter back from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner that, among other things, says: "On April 17 2018, I replied to Mr. Trivers..." – who had started this matter on April 12th here in the House in Question Period by tabling a letter – and "...I advised Mr. Trivers I did not have authority to comment on the concerns expressed in his letter." And he goes on to say why.

I'll be tabling these two documents, but I have to do so with the comment that the accusation was made in this House with great fanfare, including the tabling of the letter to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and that nothing was said here in this House or elsewhere about the letter from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald –

Mr. Trivers: Not yet.

Premier MacLauchlan: – dismissing his accusations, and Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: It wasn't dismissed, actually.

Premier MacLauchlan: – I don't think it was done –

Mr. Trivers: It's not dismissed.

Premier MacLauchlan: – I don't think that showed much respect for the House or to me, but I'm happy to table these two matters today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: No character.

An Hon. Member: Shame, shame, shameful.

Speaker: The –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I've got the proof (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order!

Ms. Biggar: Put your money where your mouth is.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I beg leave to table a Statistics Canada report which includes a number of definitions of 'rural' as referenced in Question Period on Tuesday, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, that the documents be received and do now lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: Is 'not urban' one of them?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No, it's not. It's not on the list.

Mr. R. Brown: That's good.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

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

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Election Expenses Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Election Expenses Act*, Bill No. 37, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you mind giving us an explanation about this bill?

Mr. J. Brown: Sure, Mr. Speaker.

This bill amends the *Election Expenses Act* to implement a number of initiatives that will make election campaign financing more open and transparent. In particular, the bill prohibits corporations and trade unions from making contributions to an individual candidate or a registered party; it limits the aggregate amount that an individual can contribute to an individual candidate or a registered party to \$3,000 for a 12-month period; and increases the reimbursement amount for eligible election expenses.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Electoral System Referendum Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member

from Vernon River-Stratford, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Electoral System Referendum Act*, Bill No. 38, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, you can give us an explanation of this bill also, please.

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

This bill provides the framework for the upcoming electoral reform referendum. In particular, the bill establishes the referendum question; provides for the appointment of a referendum commissioner who is an officer of the Legislative Assembly and who will oversee matters leading up to and after the referendum vote; establishes public funding for organizations who register as referendum advertisers and are opposing or supporting a change in our electoral system; and limits spending on paid advertising in a reasonable manner for the public good so that residents of the province have the opportunity to make a decision that is based on information from both points of view, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Motions Other Than Government

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition calls Motion No. 61 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Motion No. 61.

The hon. member from Morell-Mermaid, moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the following motion:

WHEREAS participation in community programming such as amateur sports, arts and culture events, provides social, emotional, physical and psychological

benefits that empower our communities contributing to well-being and success;

AND WHEREAS, non-profit organizations currently must pay HST on facility rentals such as community halls, local rinks and other facilities;

AND WHEREAS, the additional cost through this taxation make it more difficult for non-profit organizations to operate, and may discourage or prevent participation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly urge Government to eliminate the HST from facility rentals to non-profit organizations.

Speaker: Okay, thank you.

I will now call upon the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, to speak to the motion.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chocolate bar sales. Magazine subscriptions. Bottle Drives. Fifty-fifty tickets. Door-to-door ticket sales. Sitting at the Co-op selling tickets. UPEI hockey ticket fundraisers. Scratch ticket lottery tree. Liquor baskets. Elimination draws. Sportsman's dinner. Thousand-dollar bill draws. Vessey tulip bulb tickets. We could go on and on and on.

An Hon. Member: Bagging groceries.

Mr. MacEwen: Bagging groceries, there's another great one.

All the things that I have done personally, all of the things that all these members have done to help raise money for local sports teams, for local non-profits. Removing HST from facility rentals for nonprofit organizations seems like a pretty smart move.

I know these facilities even feel guilty when they collect it. They tell you a rental price and then they say: Don't forget the HST. What could be done with that extra money? Sponsoring low income families, encouraging more people to get active. Those are types of things that we hope would happen.

But you know what? Really at the end of the day, a lot of the times it's just one less fundraiser. It's more time with the kids; it's more focus on whatever activity that they are doing. Amateur sports, all non-profits – I wonder how much money we do take in. It'd be interesting if the province could find that out for us – the total HST made off of these facilities.

It's not like these parents are stashing this extra money away; it's not like these non-profits are stashing this extra money away; it's going to a good cause. As I mentioned before, it's probably just one less significant fundraiser a year if this was happening.

I'm not going to speak too long to this; the Member from Rustico-Emerald has been championing this for some time. He understands this issue quite well. I think it's a very reasonable request and I'm curious to hear what government has to say on this.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It really is a pleasure to rise and support this motion and to second this motion.

The Minister of Health and Wellness knows this and I think every MLA does: that when it comes to health and wellness, it's a long-term goal. It's something you have to start working at now so that you're going to be healthy long into the future – decades and decades into the future and that's really at the core of minor sports. It's about participation, building leadership skills, social – but it's really about health and wellness.

These are community groups, they're volunteers, they're community leaders that go out and, whether it be ringette; or it could be ice hockey; it could be swimming, across the board, these community leaders donate their time because they want to see their children, the children of others healthy in the long-term. It's something that this government really has a hard time with, especially in health and wellness we see miniscule amounts of money put aside to spend on the long-term

health and wellness of Islanders. We've got a \$650 million health budget and primarily it's about acute care. It's about treating illness when it comes up. It's not about preventing illness. That's really, when you get right down base and the root of this motion and removing the HST from facility rentals from non-profit organizations, especially minor sports, that's what we're talking about. We're talking about the long-term health and wellness that's not only going to be better for Islanders; it's actually going to be better fiscally for the government. It's a win, win, win all the way around.

I want to thank Kenneth Macneill, one of my constituents who is a volunteer in ringette who really – this was his brainchild. He's the one who really advocated for this. This is a grassroots motion. This is a constituent who volunteers with ringette and said: Wow, at the end of the year we pay what may seem like small amounts when you're looking at the giant budget of government, but even a few hundred dollars can mean the difference between having to hold a whole other fundraiser or a team being able to travel to a tournament or any of those number of things.

I know the Minister of Health and Wellness understands this well. This is, as he said on the floor during budget estimates the other day: When it comes to sports and athletics, in particular, and helping athletes and making sure we have those opportunities on the Island – that's a fun part of his portfolio and I applaud him for that. I'm looking forward to see what he does in that area, but this would be a fantastic place to start. Work with the Minister of Finance and say: Look, what can we do to make sure that the hard work of community volunteers is rewarded? More Islanders – as many as possible – can participate and really non-profit organizations, especially minor sports, are able to reap the benefits of healthy activity for the long-term.

So, that's some of the reasoning behind this motion. It's about making sure that non-profit organizations, especially minor sports, get to keep the money that they work so hard to raise and it's about promoting the long-term health and wellness of Islanders.

I'd urge everyone in the House, especially on the government side – since it is a majority government and really not sure if there'll be a free vote or not, but it can make or break this motion. I really urge you to support this and take a long-term view. Don't think until the next election or one election after that, think about the future of the Island, the future of our children, and what you can do to make the Island a better place in the long run.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously I'm a big supporter of non-profit organizations. I've worked for them; I've worked alongside them and I participated in many sports over the years with two children. I actually even had the opportunity to coach Const. McDougall at one point, so that was a lot of fun.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: What's that? I was only two years older than him or so at the time.

I agree that participation in sport – recreational and competitive – provides many social, physical, and psychological benefits that help bring communities together and children, in most cases. Similarly, arts and culture does – to our physical and mental wellbeing and our sense of community.

Our government, through the sport and recreation division of the Department of Health and Wellness provides supports and assistance to athletes and sport organizations right across the province. As you all know, just recently our government invested \$2 million in non-profit organizations. These organizations do amazing work each day. This funding, in addition to other funding they receive, is extremely important to the communities that they deal with and the issues that they deal with in every day.

I truly agree with the intent of the motion and I think it's a great motion and kudos to your volunteer that brought it forward. I remember seeing this article in the newspaper back when – I think it was last

November, I believe it was, that you brought it and it was something that was truly on my mind and I have no problem with the motion, but I'm going to suggest a slight amendment to it because I feel that I don't want to leave anything out of this and just in relevance to sport – because I think there's all kinds of organizations out there that aren't necessarily sports-minded, but there's other things that they do. If you look at the number of facilities that we're talking about – not just recreation facilities, but you've got halls, you get churches, you get sporting events, you get ball fields, provincial parks – look what has transpired through Plan B development.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: There's other things that we should be considering in this motion and I think I'm willing, certainly, to do that and put our staff to work on this, but there's lots of things that we're doing now, too, that should get recognized and it's – grants in lieu in property taxes, for example, is a good example when you talk about recreation centres, and rinks, and youth camps, and things like that. But it is important. I spent a lot of days hanging around the boards, and on the ice, and in the dressing rooms, and on the soccer pitches and I'm certainly appreciative of this motion.

The other things that we do do with this is, there also is a part of the HST is exempt now from some of these facilities. There is lots that we could do. I think the intent of the motion, I certainly agree with. I would, hon. member, with your indulgence, love to make an amendment to the motion and maybe make sure that we get this right and we include as much as possible in this motion.

Thank you.

Speaker: Do you have a copy of the amendment?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, I do. The amendment – do you want me to read it, or?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes:

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly urge government to explore providing relief from the provincial portion of the HST from facility rentals to non-profit organizations.

A further note on that is the federal legislation allows a province to exempt so much. We just exempted electricity – HST on electricity. There's an exemption on clothing and footwear for children. We want to ensure that, first of all, that's explored to see if we're not closing in on our max.

But the alternative to this maybe – the easiest way for this maybe a rebate to these facilities or to the children that register, or the players that register or what have you. I think it has to be explored and I'm willing to ensure that my staff looks at this very closely and can work with both parties or three parties, to make sure that it happens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Speaker: We'd like to have a copy of the amendment circulated to all members.

Hon. Minister of Finance, would you like to speak further to the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: I can, Mr. Speaker.

The Harmonized Sales Tax is a broad tax obviously, and you try to keep it as low as possible because it is applied so broadly. Unfortunately, we cannot exempt everything, we know that. There is a limit on what we can include under provincial exemptions and the amount through. I mentioned the federal legislation. I think there's a will, there's a way to get this done and I think it may be through a possibility of a rebate. If we can do that that's kind of the intent of taking this further and doing a further investigation.

Speaker: The seconder of the motion, would you like to speak to the amendment?

Ms. Biggar: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think this is a great idea for us to explore this because of the impact it can make on our community groups and encourage more youth to participate in these particular facilities.

I want to highlight a little bit of the things that the groups in my community of Tyne Valley-Linkletter have been doing over the years to help assist youth to participate in those kinds of sports. I want to highlight specifically the Rock the Boat Concert that has taken place for the last five years at Green Park. Because of that particular concert, the funds from that have gone back to the communities sports centre in Tyne Valley. They've been able to offset costs of registration for minor hockey and for figure skating, and also, have been able to pay off the mortgage of our community sports centre in Tyne Valley because of that.

Those are community volunteers that are out there putting together the Rock the Boat concert and they're all parents and community involvement and it shows how we can gather together and come together for a great cause in our community and to support our community.

I also want to highlight the work that the figure skating club does and the minor hockey groups that are there. They're out there, they help with community dinners and they serve the community dinners. They help out actually, serving dinners at the Tyne Valley Oyster Festival. The figure skating club is out there serving those thousands of dinners helping out, again, to raise money for our community sports centre.

The money from the Tyne Valley Oyster Festival goes to the community sports centre. The money from the Rock the Boat goes to the community sports centre and those are all compacted together and making a great impact being able to ensure that youth in our community have access to the community sports centre for recreation, for family skates and just to bring families together to get out there.

Another thing that brings families together – and I really commend the organization of the group that's put this together, is the Tyne Valley Soap Box Derby. I know the member over there from Borden-Kinkora thinks that

I should have supported that particular organization – to ensure that when they had their race, that they could go down that hill safely. Mr. Speaker, we have over –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) roads on PEI.

Ms. Biggar: Last year, on that particular race –

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Speaking of soap boxes, you're on one.

Ms. Biggar: – we had 110 youth, ages five to 13 enrolled in that particular event in Tyne Valley, if you come – and I encourage the member to come and watch it that day because –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – there is about 1,000 people line that walkway. It's the biggest retail day for Dillon's in Tyne Valley of the whole year.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I can't –

Mr. Myers: It's worth \$200,000 in pavement.

Ms. Biggar: – congratulate the community enough for coming together to put that together and actually coming up next weekend is the –

Mr. Myers: I want to have a soap box derby on the Bangor Road.

Ms. Biggar: – is the rubber ducky race –

Mr. Myers: Four kilometer long (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – and that's a community, family event. It's a rubber ducky race. It's held in Tyne Valley on the dam, but it's not just a race, it's a whole day of community events, of family events. We have face painting, we usually have music, they have a little petting zoo there, and they all raise money, again, to go together for an event. That particular money goes, actually, to help support the soap box derby because there's children in our community. It costs \$100 to

buy a kit for the soap box derby, so we need to be able have money to put towards for those children to be able to participate as a family in an event that they might not be able to afford.

All of these things that could go towards making it sure that this HST – we need to review that so that it doesn't impact on these kind of events. I know our sport and recreation through health and wellness also give grants out to the community facilities to assist them in their yearly operations and I want to thank the department for that.

But I want to commend the work that goes on in our community rental facilities because there's a volunteer board that runs those facilities and it takes a lot of dedication and work to ensure that the funding is in place to operate the community facility and that takes dedication by many people and I congratulate them on that.

But I'm glad to see that the minister made this amendment and I'm happy to support it because we do need to ensure that we review this in a way that's going to make the biggest impact that we can for those groups that use the facilities and for those young people who can afford then to go and use those facilities.

I'm happy to support the amendment that the minister has made.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad that the Minister of Finance supports the intent of the motion. I think that's what it's all about. It is a non-binding motion anyhow, so I'm not entirely sure the amendment was really needed, but if they want to set up a committee and discuss it more, and maybe make a strategy document, and have more meetings, and an advisory council, whatever they want to do to explore this, I think the intent is that they agree with the intent, so this is good. Thank you for that.

Minister of transportation, I think you're making the exact same point. I think you're supporting the motion. Really, Rock the Boat is a lot of hard work, raising a lot of

money. Let the sports organizations keep it. It's really visible to them, especially the people that sit on the organizing committees and the boards of the sports organizations when they work so hard for that money and then they write that cheque for the facility or they give them the money and they're like: Man, look at that. There's that extra 15% HST and there's a provincial portion you have control over.

Yes, explore whether you want to do this right, as long as – please, please just take action. Let's not be talking about this two years from now. Two years from now, maybe we'll be able to just implement it here –

Mr. MacEwen: We'll be in government (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: – when we form government, of course.

Mr. MacEwen: We'll just do it then. Let's do it before that.

Mr. Trivers: But I wanted to ask the minister – I'll ask the minister through you, Mr. Speaker, maybe he can respond at some point – make a point about the Grants-in-Lieu of Property Taxes.

This is something I brought up at standing committee before and the former minister of finance, I've spoke to him about. So within District 18 Rustico-Emerald in fact, most of the Lions Clubs do receive Grants-in-Lieu of Property Taxes, however, they were grandfathered in because the regulations were changed at one point. So the North Rustico Lions Club – I believe it's the only Lions Club that does not receive a Grant-in-Lieu of Property Taxes – so if the minister really wants to take action and make a difference and help community organizations, then you could actually give them a Grant-in-Lieu of Property Taxes as well – may as well take a look at that while you're looking at supporting community organizations. It would only be fair. It would only make a lot of sense. Maybe this is part of the exploratory work that the minister's going to undertake. I don't know.

I'm not going to stand here and make an amendment to the amendment, or vote against the amendment. I'm just going to

take it to heart that the minister and this government supports the intent of the motion. I just want to urge them to take action as soon as possible. Don't sit on this for too long like you've done with so many other things – so many important problems with Islanders.

One final point – is that when you do implement this, make sure that it's not an implementation that requires more government administration. The minister had mentioned a rebate and very often when you're talking about a rebate – oh, we're going to have to add workload to an existing government employer department; we're going to have to hire another government employer; we're going to have to have a new – let's just keep it simple, let's keep it straight forward. Let's just give back the HST or just take it off so they never pay it in the first place.

So Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to vote against this amendment and I thank the government for supporting the intent of this motion, so I look forward to this coming to a vote in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Next speaking to the amendment, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is absolutely no question not-for-profits do a lot for Island communities – from Women's Institute on our roadside cleanup, to health organizations who lead research and fundraisers, to our amateur sports organizations – not-for-profit volunteers continue to run this Island.

As a province, we highly value these organizations, and we do a great deal to support them.

I want to speak just for a moment on our sports organizations who do, quite often, need to rent ice, rinks, soccer fields, ball diamonds and other sporting facilities. As a parent of four children, I know full-well with my three sons being involved in hockey in the winter and baseball in the summer; my daughter being involved very heavily in step dancing when she was young, quite often fundraisers and raising dollars and

raising money for facility rentals, for ice rentals, for field rentals, for all those kind of needs had all of our parents doing various fundraisers.

The hon. member from Morell, he ran through a lot of them. One that he missed that we did as parents was selling shampoo. I didn't hear that on his list. We went out in the community to sell shampoo – I think it was – this is not a commercial, but one of our parents was an Avon salesperson, so if you sold so much shampoo you got to –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, so these are real things that parents do for their children on Prince Edward Island so that they can be involved in sports and other extracurricular activities. I, like others, have done my fair share as others continue to do on the floor of the Legislature today, in regards to supporting sport teams on Prince Edward Island.

I certainly do agree with the spirit of this motion and I do agree with the Minister of Finance's amendment to further explore this as an option to support all of our not-for-profits.

However, I can to make it clear that we do support our organizations in this province now. Our recent budget for sport and recreation and physical activity division of my department is now over \$3.7 million. Over three of those million are dedicated to grants for sports on Prince Edward Island. We are heavily involved –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – we do, do a lot. I am fully aware though that teams do have to cover other various costs as they travel across the Island to other facilities to use and to improve their skills.

Obviously, the grants that we supply support our athletes and our sports organizations through programs such as our; Sport Hosting Program, our Elite Athlete Assistance Program, our Amateur Sport Funding Program and our Small Grants Program for Sports.

There are many benefits of sport and I believe all Islanders should have the

opportunity to participate. Obviously, you know, when you speak about health and wellness, children being in – participating in sports, it's great for their physical health, but, oftentimes, it's overlooked how good it is for the mental health. They're interacting with their peers. They're problem-solving. They're always working with others in collaboration. Those are very useful lessons for later in life. It's a two-fold approach here when you're talking about sports and being involved in sports as a team, as working together and working collectively.

In our department we also want to inspire that culture of wellness on Prince Edward Island, whether it's physical wellness, combined with mental wellness so that all of our Islanders are seeing the benefits of living healthy lives and lifestyles on Prince Edward Island.

I am pleased to support the motion. I am pleased that the hon. member brought this forward. We did have an opportunity last week to speak about it during my estimates on the floor. I do support the motion. I look for a way to work with the finance minister to come up with a good go-forward plan that allows these teams a rebate, or whatever the nature might be, so that they can reinvest those dollars that they're out collecting and working hard for, so that it just improves the healthy outcomes for those involved in sports, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Also speaking to the amendment, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree. I think this is a great motion, and a wonderful amendment by the minister. I'm happy to speak to this based on my own experience fundraising. Actually just last Saturday, I was driving kids around in Summerside as we were doing a bottle drive.

The Summerside Dolphins, they were raising some money. I always like to do it. It's one of my favourite times every year. It's good to see the kids get out. They've got a lot of hustle in them. They can run around and get to the doors. They're really, they're very polite, as well. It's nice to see them, I

guess I'll call it, grow each year, where they understand that the more they explain why they're at the door, the more bottles they'll receive.

They get better at that each year. I think it's a wonderful team-building exercise.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, it is. Yeah.

Mr. Palmer: I know it's – I look forward to it every year. I know the kids complain about it a little bit, but then once they get going they seem to like it an awful lot. Again, they just get better at it every year. I think it's a great team-building exercise, as well for the parents because the parents are involved as well. It does get everyone together. It is a very important part of sport to learn something other than what the core piece is, and the – in this particular case it's the Summerside Dolphin Swim Club. They do get that opportunity to engage in the community; work well with each other. Being the competitive group that they are, of course, they're trying to out-do each other to see who can get the most bottles. There is a little bit of that.

I think that is really important and maybe in an individual sport like swimming, it gives you that team piece of it where they are working together by car, by truck, to see which group can get the most bottles.

I think that's a really important piece. I'm always glad whenever there is a fundraiser component for the sports teams because it does get the kids to do something that they weren't doing before; to work together to get outside of their comfort zone; to knock on the doors and explain what it is they're doing and make sure that they are polite. They also understand the more polite they are the better off they'll be, as well.

That was just last weekend we were collecting bottles. I had a couple of people send me messages on Facebook to say, hey, we have bottles here. We went to a shed –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) next election.

Mr. Palmer: – well, it was a bit of a production last week because we got locked in a shed –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Palmer: – and I didn't really know how I was going to get out –

Mr. LaVie: The kids figured it out for you.

Mr. Palmer: No, the kids didn't figure it out. Luckily, the homeowner happened to see – it was really windy last Saturday, if anybody remembers, and the door swung shut and we were stuck in there.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) some things you shouldn't tell (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: We were stuck in there.

Mr. Myers: We thought you were locked in the dark for a long time over here.

Mr. Palmer: No, it wasn't dark. It was a glass – it was one of those aluminum doors –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – so you couldn't really kick on it to get out. So, I thought, we're going to have to climb out the window. Of course, I was going to put the kids out and see if they could get me out because I really wasn't that interested in climbing out the window.

I was really afraid that I was going to have to go out the window. Luckily, the homeowner did see the door shut, waited for about five or 10 minutes, came laughing out of the house, and finally let us out of there. My hands are all cut from that trying to bang on the door to get it out. We almost had to wreck the door actually to get us out of there.

Premier MacLauchlan: Charge you rental?

Mr. Palmer: I'm pretty sure the kids are going to remember that. I know they were pretty quick to get back to the bottle depot and tell everybody that I got them locked in the shed.

I think those experiences will be – I think those experiences are good for the kids to get out and work together as a team.

My daughter's sports team, she's a gymnast and they sell chocolate bars, which I think is terrific. I really like that one. But, it gives them the – she has to manage inventory. She

has got to go door-to-door again, of course and explain what they're doing; manage the money; make change; make sure that they get all the boxes of bars out of the house before I buy all the good ones. I think there's a lot of value to those pieces because they learn that responsibility, which is outside of the core sport they're in, which is in gymnastics.

I think that fundraising part is really important in all of these sports activities because it helps the kids grow and their more well-rounded and, at the end, I think you can really see the skills the kids learn from going door-to-door and being polite and talking to folks in the neighbourhood as they're trying to explain what it is they are raising money for. I think they're pretty excited when they're done.

For those reasons, I think, it is really important to continue fundraising. I think it's wonderful that we are going to be able to take a look at ways that those groups can continue to hang on to more of that money to do other things with. But, again, I do really want to stress that I think it's important to continue those fundraising and team-building activities. I can see a change in the kids from year-to-year as they're doing those and they get more comfortable and they seem to have a lot of fun. I think that's a really important part of sport, as well, is the fundraising component.

I am very happy to support the amendment. I look forward to maybe talking again on this as it goes a little further.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Also speaking to the amendment, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I support this motion. The amendment is probably okay and I'm like the member from Rustico, I would like to see government actually do something about it.

For a long time, as many of you know, I've been involved with sports in my own community, both hockey and baseball. It takes an enormous amount of community work to organize the events that happen

inside them, and government's very fortunate to have so many great people out there that are willing to spend their time organizing athletic opportunities for our youth.

It keeps them active. It keeps them on a good path. It teaches them the importance of physical activity in their lives and I think that the least government could do would be to take the HST off of facility rentals because that inevitably gets passed on to the kids and the point of it all is that so much of this is being organized at no cost to government as it is.

There are countless people meeting right now all through Prince Edward Island to get soccer season off the ground, to get baseball season, softball season off the ground, and many other summer activities off the ground. They're spending their own time; their own love of the sport and their own love of children and their own family to make sure that is a possibility. They're not asking for anything and this motion isn't asking for anything for those people.

That's why I think it's important, and I think government is getting a really good deal from the volunteer base on Prince Edward Island who are out there doing their job each and every day for small communities, big communities, for athletics, for young people right across the board.

There's no way that this is a big-money item for government, but this could be a big-money item for small communities. The member from Morell talked about some of the fundraising activities that go on, and I take part in as many of them as I can in my area. The group that operates the rink in Georgetown works really hard to fundraise to pay for upgrades that are needed, to keep the building in good shape, to keep the costs low for everybody. Part of the pride of the community is the local rink.

I know the same can be said for the ball fields in Cardigan. They were fundraised for. They were designed by volunteers. There were hours and hours of volunteer work involved in making that facility the shape that it's in, and the ball fields in Cardigan, I've been told numerous times, are one of the nicest facilities in all of Eastern Canada for a ball facility, and that's

due to the great work of the people who whipped it into that shape and kept it in that shape.

Going back for years and years, and that's where I grew up playing ball many moons ago, when I was small there were three fields there and they were three different sizes, and you kind of moved up through them as you went. But now, there are basically three fields that are the same size and one large baseball field. When you went by there on Saturday morning, every field is jam-packed with kids, and that's all due to a great, strong, vibrant ball community in Eastern Prince Edward Island, the good folks in the greater Cardigan area and the Cardigan proper that put that on all the time.

Anything that government can do to help alleviate the costs so that we can keep children showing up to these things is great.

The transportation minister talked about the fundraising efforts in Tyne Valley, and I certainly commend them on the great work. They've been really active over the last number of years fundraising in her community. She talked about the time that she paved the hill so they could have the soapbox derby, so I'm going to put out a few spots – I took a drive down to Georgetown this morning and from about Brudenell to Georgetown there's about four kilometres. We're going to have soapbox derby there.

Mr. MacEwen: That would be a good race.

Ms. Biggar: You need a hill.

Mr. Myers: We'll get it ahead of steam there. It'll be fine. We'll get ahead of steam –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) one end.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: So, we're going to need four kilometres of pavement there.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Must be the last four left (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: The Brothers Road –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: That would be a good (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: The Brothers Road; I went down and measured that this morning. It's 1.7 kilometres. It's really flat. We're going to have trouble getting a soapbox derby up off the ground there, but we're going to have one. We're going to need 1.7 kilometres there to get that taken care of.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: It would also help the Amish who –

Ms. Biggar: How's that?

Mr. Myers: – believe it or not, the horse and wagons, they run them on the shoulders because the pavement is too rough for a horse and wagon. I'm not even joking.

Mr. MacEwen: It's true.

Mr. Myers: No, I'm not. I'm not joking at all.

Mr. MacEwen: It's very true.

Mr. Myers: But, we're going to have a soapbox derby there because that's how pavement happens and I also took a trip up the hill from Rice's in Cardigan up to the ball field in Cardigan, it needs to be done. That is quite a hill. It might be a little bit to navigate. There would be some steering involved with that soapbox derby, but that's just about a kilometre that's needed to have that soapbox derby done.

I think down east is going to have a number of soapbox derbies this summer. It would be great to see now that the minister has set the table for how important soapbox derbies are to raise money in their communities. We expect the paving machine to come out and get those ready and we would like to have them in early July, so you have a little bit of time to work on it, but, the sooner the better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Speaking to the amendment, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today as well and to speak to both the motion and the amendment. I will applaud the Member from Morell-Mermaid for bringing this motion forward, and to the Minister of Finance for enhancing it.

We know study after study out there tells us of the importance socio-economic benefits of having children involved in arts and culture and sports at an early age and this motion, through the amendment, will ensure that any savings to families across Prince Edward Island will be passed on and enable children to attend, whether it be highland dancing or whether it be soccer – there are many community groups out there and there are many organizations that have wonderful programs for children starting at a very young age, three and four-years-old.

Published studies will show the positive effects of having children at a young age, again, involved in the arts and culture or sports. Children, time after time, show lower absenteeism in school, and drop-out, increased progression to higher education. They have higher numeracy scores. They have increased self-esteem and reduced risk of criminal behaviour.

There are also studies out there that show for every dollar that is spent in having a child attend an art or a cultural or a sport, there is a social benefit of up to \$8. That goes to what I tend to preach a lot about to my colleagues and anyone who will listen, is about the upstream programs, and this indeed is upstream.

I often use the analogy of a small town who's living near a riverbank, and at the top of a riverbank there's a very dangerous crossing and year after year, day after day, month after month, year after year, people fall into the stream and they end up downstream. When they're downstream, we have the town's people that are pulling them out of the river. They're throwing life-saving devices to them, but when they're in the water they're at risk. Try and fix the crossing to move upstream, so to speak, and try and prevent people from falling into the water.

I think this motion, and through the amendment, does indeed that. It is an upstream and very forward-thinking motion because if we can catch children at an early age before they reach adulthood, we will be saving in our justice system. We will see savings in our social programs. We will see savings in our health care. We will see savings in our addictions programs.

Again, to go back to the dollars spent in preventative equaling the \$8 savings in the downstream; it is definitely a good investment.

There's a gentleman by the name of Johann Hari who wrote a book called *Chasing the Scream* and he says everything we know about addiction is wrong, because a lot of times we think that addiction is caused by the high or people liking the feeling of being intoxicated or being high. But, it's not. Johann speaks about addiction being the opposite of connection.

Again, the more we can keep our children connected, the less chance we will have of that child developing an addiction later on. If we can have that early intervention. He goes and he speaks about many of our studies and many of our, I guess, understanding of addiction today goes back to tests that were conducted in the 1970s where they would put rats in a cage with a water bottle and a bottle filled with heroin.

Time after time again the rat in that empty cage would go to the heroin. They would keep drinking the heroin until they became addicted until they died. It wasn't until recently when more studies were done and they came up with what they called Rat Park. They put rats in a cage, but they put them in there with other rats. They gave them plenty of food. They gave them all kinds of exercise. They gave them all kinds of activities that they can do and they still put a water bottle in there with water and heroin. Those rats that were connected, those rats who felt a connectedness with other rats, the rats that had lots to eat, lots to drink, lots to do, they never touched the heroin.

Again, getting children involved early; keeping them connected to their communities, we are going to prevent many of the social ills that we see today.

I also want to talk – I don't want to talk too long because I really want to see this come to a vote because I want us to get to work on it so that we can start the pre-emptive or upstream intervention.

But, I want to talk about when I was on council at the City of Summerside and we had our turf field built. The turf field allowed us to play outside, under the lights, but we were talking about the cost of the lights. We were going to have to pass that charge onto Summerside United. We said, if we do that, if we charge them for those lights to be on in the evenings, they're going to have to raise the cost, and that might prevent some children from participating. Because soccer is one of the least expensive sports that are out there. Really, all you need is a pair of boots to play. We, as a council, we –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – boots, cleats, sorry, I call them boots, anyway. We, as a council said, you know what? We're going to have a test pilot of we're going to go three years and we're not going to charge for the lights so that Summerside United could keep the cost of the rental, the field rental or the turf rental, low. Low enough and actually it was zero.

Ms. Casey: Awesome.

Ms. Mundy: For those three years, we saw the soccer rates, the number of children that were participating, almost quadruple. Summerside was one of the fastest growing cities in the province for the sport of soccer and it has continued.

I see the benefit and I've witnessed the benefit of when sports or when arts, or when arts or culture are available to all children they will participate. I don't think any child should have to sit out because of the cost.

I also want to talk about another place in the City of Summerside, Generation XX and how that came about. That came about 25 years ago when a group of teenagers were sitting at a Tim Hortons and the police arrived. They were told to move on. A young brave woman – young woman stood up and she said: Where are we to go? These children were considered, I guess, the, you

know, the children that had nowhere to go. The children that weren't involved in sports. The children that didn't have a hang out place. The children that may have ended up in trouble.

The Tim Hortons there, they were worried about them sitting there and causing trouble. The young woman said: Where do we go? The police officer said: You know what? I don't know, but if you come to my office on Monday, we'll talk about it and out of that grew Generation XX.

It was a place for kids to go. It wouldn't cost them a thing. No judgment. Again, the children that had nowhere to go. The children that didn't have the funds to participate in sport or recreation or arts or culture now had a place that they could go. Then, they had a skate park, and a scooter park. Now, they're giving cooking lessons and they're giving all kinds of life lessons. It has grown and it has grown over the 25 years and no child gets turned away.

We can see the benefit of having organizations, sporting events, or sporting organizations that have low cost. I see this again as being a way to pass on savings to families.

With that, I will – again, I have my utmost 100% support of this amendment. We can continue to talk about it, but let's get it to a vote today because I think we need to get to work at it and we need to start helping families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trivers: Question. Question on the amendment.

Speaker: We have one more speaker –

Ms. Biggar: No, we'll be here all night.

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, speaking to the amendment.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were great conversations here today about people in their communities and the volunteers in the community. As I am well aware, I am one of those volunteers. You know, we all talk about our youth in our community. I was a youth in my community. I still am. I'm still in the youth of the community.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: I know, like when I worked at the local arena, so I was a volunteer and I was a worker at the rink so I've seen the bills and I've seen the taxes and I've seen the sad faces at the end of the year when everybody had to come in and pay their bills.

When I did work at the arena, I'm the fourth generation of working there. My great-grandfather worked there. My grandfather worked there. My father managed the rink. I did, myself. I worked there from 1980 to 1994 until I went fishing, so I had to give up the arena.

Back in 2009, when the rink wasn't doing so well, they asked me to go back and help them out. I said I'd go back and volunteer for a year. So, I ended up there for four-and-a-half years volunteering.

Why I did it, somebody did it for me when I was a youth, when I was into hockey, somebody did it for me. So, I give back to my kids in my community. I wanted to have smiles on the kids' faces and I didn't want the rink to close because that is the heart of a community. If you have a rink for so many years you don't want to lose it.

What we did, I went in and I assessed the thing and I – believe it or not, not like this government, I put in a plan. I had a plan. A five-year plan. I had a plan. You fellows don't have a plan. I sat down and my plan was, what's the most important thing here today? The most important thing is to make sure I had ice; to make sure I had lights, and make sure I have kids. The rest was just all material stuff; painting the building, or painting the ice, that didn't – we couldn't afford paint to paint the building, but we did clean it. We made sure the building was clean.

We started; I went up, my wife was going to a meeting. I said: I'll go over to the rink and see what we have for bills. That was on a Monday night. So, at 6:55 p.m. I phoned my wife and said: See if you can get \$20,000 on the agenda for the Eastern Kings Sportsplex, they're shutting the power off Thursday. We have a wedding and we have an exhibition.

The Town of Souris lent us \$20,000 to get going. We did that. I am proud of the Eastern Kings Sportsplex. I was there when they transitioned over from Eastern Kings Arena to the Spotsplex where they built bowling lanes, where they built a gym upstairs, where they built the Acorn Room upstairs. I had input into that and I'm proud of that and I'm proud of that building today.

When I went back there and volunteered in 2009, I introduced curling at the hockey rink in Souris. It's done in other rinks, but I brought it to Souris. What really got me going was they said it couldn't be done. So we did it, and ever since 2010 we have curling every Tuesday night, we have three bonspiels every year. So I'm proud.

Actually, when I was first elected in 2011 – I can say this now, because it's in the past – where was I on election day? I was up putting ice on at the rink for the kids. That's how much I enjoy kids at the rink. That's what I was doing, flooding the ice. I went in every three hours, parked my truck out back and I went in and I flooded the ice; but that's how much I enjoy kids. I want to make sure these kids have a facility in Souris.

After a rink that was being broke and being closed, in four and a half years we put in new boards, new glass, new players' boxes, new floors, new sound system, new kitchen, \$8,000 reno to the plant, \$8,000 reno to the Zamboni.

Mr. MacEwen: Don't even have a nomination up there.

Mr. LaVie: So Mr. Speaker, I'm proud I was able to –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. Brown: How do you make the ice, though? That's what I want to know.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. LaVie: And Mr. Speaker –

Leader of the Opposition: No you don't.

Ms. Biggar: Don't ask.

Mr. MacEwen: Recognition of guests, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. LaVie: So –

An Hon. Member: Don't even go there.

Ms. Biggar: I want a vote on this.

Mr. LaVie: So –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) for or against (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: So –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) lots of time, you got ten minutes yet.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of where we brought the arena. When we're doing all these renos – I was in government at the time, MLA for the district, and we wanted the grant from the government.

Ms. Biggar: That's (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Rural development.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Ron MacKinley was minister at the time.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: But he took the \$5 million grant away from rural community.

Mr. MacEwen: Did he give you half of it?

Mr. LaVie: So he sent up his deputy –

Mr. J. Brown: He gave it all to you.

Mr. LaVie: No, no.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) half the money or all the money?

Mr. LaVie: He sent up his deputy to look at our boards, because Mr. Speaker, back in the 1980s and 1994 when I worked there, the boards were rotten then. So when I went back there to volunteer, I said: My first priority is them boards are coming out. So I went – yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, there's money available. So I can get 90,000 from the feds and I get 90,000 for the province, but when it came time to do it, there was no money. So what I had to do was play a game. I had to go to the province and say that the feds were giving us 45,000. They said – well, Ronnie said: The feds are giving you 45,000, I guess I'll have to give you 45,000.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. LaVie: So then I went to the province –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) when he's not here.

Mr. LaVie: I went to the province, Mr. Speaker –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – I went to the province and then I –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – and I told the feds that the province is giving us 45,000. Oh jeeppers, if the province, the little province of PEI give you 45,000, we better give you 45. So I got 45,000 each, Mr. Speaker.

When I had to do that, we had to take out a mortgage for the rest. We took out a mortgage for \$120,000. The deputy come up and said: Looked at the (Indistinct) and said we got no money, take out a mortgage. You know?

So when they talk rural development, when the minister of health says how much he does for rural PEI, well you took \$5 million from them. Yeah, you gave 2.5 back, you

know. The province does give grants out for \$9,000 to the rinks. It started off at 16,000 and now it's down to 14,000 and now you're down to 12,000 and now you're down to 9,000.

Mr. MacEwen: Less than (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: And the Minister of Finance says: Well, that's for your property tax. No, we pay our property taxes; and actually, our property taxes are \$11,846.50 to tell you the truth. That's what our property taxes are and you're giving us nine.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do support this motion because I am on both sides of it. I was a coach renting ice, I was working at the rink renting it out to the teams; and when you get senior teams coming in, your Midget Triple A teams coming in and they're booking two and a half hours and three hours at a time, and they got high expenses, like the refs, their ice time, their scorekeepers, their timekeepers.

There's a lot of expense there; and three hours for a game and then you take an hour and a half for practice. That's four and a half hours. That's four and a half hours a week. Four weeks, so that's 16, 17 hours a month. Then you take that and you go by six months. So you're talking about 102 hours, 104 hours of ice time. That's a lot of HST that that team could use.

The way the – what these local establishments have to do, not only rinks, like your ball teams and your soccer teams and there's some much fundraising they have to do. It's fundraising – the major fundraiser, especially for the rink, is their lobster supper, which is so superb. The fishermen donate the lobster, and I want to thank the fishermen in the Eastern Kings area, all around the area donate the lobster for this lobster supper, and it's a just amazing lobster supper.

Then they have the elimination draw, and this is all volunteer organization. Your board of directors, your volunteers, they just do a superb job of – the elimination draw started at the curling club. When the curling club closed, it was carried over into the Eastern Kings Sportsplex. So –

An Hon. Member: Did you have wrestling?

Mr. LaVie: It was just – we did have wrestling there. Actually, back in the old rink – and I mentioned this before, and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters would remember this. Some of the older members will remember –

An Hon. Member: I'm not old (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – was the Great Antonio; the Great Antonio. The member from Montague-Kilmuir would remember Great Antonio. He pulled seven buses up Main Street in Souris that time for a fundraiser for the rink.

So, I do support this motion. I hope we get it to a vote here today. I'll give the floor back to the mover of the motion to close debate, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Or the amendment.

Mr. LaVie: Or the amendment.

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Ms. Biggar: Standing vote.

Speaker: On the amendment?

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) question.

Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, a standing vote has been –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) to be unanimous.

Speaker: Ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this is on the amendment? (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Speaker: This is on the amendment. Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Whip.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, the third party is ready to vote.

Speaker: Thank you, third party.

An Hon. Member: Bush?

Mr. Dumville: The fourth dimension is here, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, independent.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, government members are ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, Government Whip.

Hon. members, all those voting against the amendment, please stand.

All those voting for or supporting the amendment, please stand.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: The amendment is carried and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: If nobody else wants to speak to the motion as amended, I will call on the mover of the motion to close debate on the motion.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate all the good stories and the comments here on this motion. I think the Member from Rustico-Emerald hit the nail on the head when we talk about words like 'explore' and 'rebate'. We've heard those words before, but we will take government at its word and we know they'll work towards this. I think it's a good idea. I think it's a no-brainer, so I was happy to support the amendment. I do want to point out that it is ironic that we do have a government that kind of campaigned on having no HST period, ironically. So I think this would be a great step to do that and I appreciate everybody's support here, hopefully, on this motion.

With that, I will close debate.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ready for the question? Question.

All those in favour of the motion, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

All those not supporting the motion, signify by saying 'nay'.

Motion as amended is carried and it is unanimous.

Mr. Roach: Great.

Speaker: The motion as amended, that is.

Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I request that Motion No. 57 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Motion No. 57.

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

WHEREAS the Provincial Nominee Program underwent evaluations in 2012 and 2016 in which recommendations were made to develop performance measures and targets that would influence the quality and effectiveness of the program;

AND WHEREAS media has reported that a majority of applicants to the program are defaulting on their \$150,000 business deposits because they are not meeting the terms of their escrow agreements with the province;

AND WHEREAS two thirds of the PNP businesses in 2016-17, a total of 177 people, didn't receive a refund for the business portion of their deposit, with the majority simply never opening a business;

AND WHEREAS Island Investment Development Inc., a Crown corporation indicates \$18 million in net revenues as a result of forfeited deposits in 2016-17;

AND WHEREAS questions and concerns have arisen around key outcomes of the Provincial Nominee Program and how the government's internal review rated the program's performance on these outcomes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge Government to request an audit of the Provincial Nominee Program from the Auditor General.

Speaker: Thank you.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to bring forward this motion.

Over the past few days, we have heard a lot about the Provincial Nominee Program with broad allegations and equally broad denials being exchanged during Question Period. Although Question Period is one of our most public forums to hold government to account, during my short time in the Legislature, I have learned to take some of these exchanges with a good dose of skepticism. Often opposition parties try to make any activity by government look and sound as bad as possible and ministers, in turn, are inclined to present only the information that supports their own narrative.

I personally don't know the facts around the Canadian Border Service Agency charges and I cannot claim to have inside information; however, I, like many other Islanders, have grown increasingly concerned about the administration of this program. Immigration is essential to the continued growth and development of not just Prince Edward Island, but Canada as a whole. Through the two streams of the Provincial Nominee Program, Prince Edward Island has been given a wonderful opportunity to counter the out-migration that has plagued Atlantic Canada since the end of the golden era of shipbuilding in the 19th century.

It is vitally important that we do not allow poor administration, the PEI government's narrow view of strategic sectors, or a thirst for escrow account defaults to taint this new program and result in the federal government once again shutting it down.

Living in Charlottetown, I've seen the transformation of our city and it is fantastic. New restaurants and businesses are opening. At the farmer's market every Saturday morning, I am delighted by the diversity of vendors and shoppers. As a parent, I am happy to see my daughter grow up in a much more diverse and culturally exciting environment. In this modern and interconnected world, it is essential to be exposed to and understand people with different religious, cultural, and social experiences.

It may be cliché, but there truly is strength in diversity, whether we are talking about an ecological system or our own neighborhoods. But for those of us living in the city, there is also some challenge to this sudden increase in population.

For example, it is getting more and more difficult to lease affordable retail space in town. The necessity for every business stream applicant to start or purchase a business has distorted the normal operation of markets in PEI. When even a small minority of immigrants are focused on meeting the requirements of the program rather than building a sustainable long-term business, it can quickly and adversely affect the natural market function in a small city such as Charlottetown. Properties are turning over rapidly on short leases, rents are increasing exponentially, and long-term tenants are telling stories of being evicted or priced out of their long-term commercial spaces.

The same can be seen, also, in residential real estate prices and the availability of rental housing in Charlottetown. The rules of supply and demand can be relentless, even for necessities such as housing. There has been a rapid inflation in the value of real estate and that may be good for those of us who already own our own homes, but it may make it very difficult for young families starting out or wanting to purchase their first place. These may be just temporary market bumps; however, with government so aggressively pursuing this policy, there is an obligation to try to mitigate some of those negative impacts.

My broader concerns relate more to the program's objectives, administration and oversight. I would also like to make it perfectly clear that my concerns are around the business impact category of the program, not the overall labour stream.

When the federal government shut down the original Provincial Nominee Program in 2010, it was essentially in response to the provincial government distorting the purposes of that program to meet their own short-term agenda. Because of the blatant mismanagement of that program, we, as Islanders, were left with a deep skepticism about this government's ability to administer

and oversee a program of this magnitude without manipulating it.

There were many reasons to criticize that earlier program, but its most obvious failure was an abysmal retention rate for new economic class immigrants. According to Statistics Canada, the five-year retention rate for economic class immigrants to PEI for the 2010 cohort is a shockingly low 14.1%. This was not only the lowest in the country, but even more shocking is that the second lowest rate in the entire country is New Brunswick at 45.1%.

Ms. Biggar: Wrong stats (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Of course, we don't have equivalent statistics for the new program, but recent media supports have pointed out numerous flaws within that program.

Reports have alleged that PEI standards are much more lax than other jurisdictions, that the \$150,000 deposit in the escrow account is much higher than other jurisdictions, and that two-thirds of the approved applicants forfeit that deposit rather than actually open a business.

The \$18 million in forfeited deposits have added a nice cushion to this government's claim of a balanced budget, but it has done little to help build vibrant immigrant communities on PEI.

For example, the business impact stream with 100% ownership requires an investor to be in control of a business that they either purchased out right or start from scratch. They are allowed time to get their business started after they arrive and are supported via programs like the PEI Connectors Program which provides networking, connections, workshops and training to assist in this process. Yet despite this support, the turnover rate on these businesses appears to be very high and I have heard that there is much frustration from the immigrant entrepreneurs themselves.

I have personally delivered business training and navigational workshops for hundreds of PEI Connector Program clients over the past few years and have spoken to them about their experiences, successes, and challenges firsthand.

The business immigrants who can afford to participate in PEI's program often have extensive skills and work experience. In fact, transferable management skills and past employment or business ownership experience is one of the key eligibility criteria for acceptance into the program. But because of the restrictions within this stream, we are attracting high-level executives, management consultants and engineers, and then encouraging them to open small retail stores and cafés in order to qualify for the nominee program eligibility. And have these businesses really validated a vigorous business plan assessment as required that includes things like assessing the market capacity and evaluation.

Could you imagine the unleashing of ideas and business opportunities for our small province if our immigration program actually valued the skills and experience of those business stream applicants rather than treating them as a means to artificially boost a limited number of sectors government has chosen to support and the book value we get from their deposits?

There are so many talented, experienced and skilled people who have chosen PEI and are currently here on the Island as participants in this business stream who have vast, untapped resources that we are simply ignoring. For example, some of these immigrants have networks and contacts in their country of origin that are significant beyond anything that we could possibly access here.

At least two PEI companies in the Startup Zone are launching or exporting innovative products that are being manufactured in bulk in China, but this is not actually an option for the PNP immigrants who came here from China. In fact, I have spoken personally to a PNP immigrant who owns a manufacturing plant in China, yet is not allowed to use that as part of their business plan. Instead, they are needing to give those leads to Islanders who are allowed to access it.

International contacts of possible markets for export to assist and grow our local markets create new products for those markets and connect with those international markets is something that this government invests hundreds of thousands of dollars in,

yet we have a resource right here in front of us with these immigrants as they come in through the program every year.

These immigrants' knowledge and experience with language, payment systems, social media channels and ways to contact and build export growth markets including likes like webbo and WeChat in China, which we just do not have knowledge about, are things that we are missing as opportunities to help. If we really want to support export and building our GDP through export growth, it seems very strange that our government doesn't see this opportunity right in front of us.

Finally, the new tools resources approaches and technologies that happen when they're developed in the biggest markets in the world are so far ahead of us in terms of innovation, that advances in things like green technology, component manufacturing and technology and advances are available that we just are not accessing.

We do not allow these new immigrants to use these skills and resources to their full potential. Instead, our Provincial Nominee Program explicitly disallows bed and breakfasts and home-based businesses, real estate development, brokerage, insurance brokerage or business brokerage, professional practices, financial services and consulting services.

We also place very explicit requirements on how much money must be spent by the business and on what it can be spent. For example, an immigrant business owner must spend \$75,000 in eligible expenses which can include things like rental, fixtures, fitting and marketing expenses and so often we see that reflected in things like commercial lease payments that are over market value to meet the requirements of expending funds. Those requirements really make one wonder for whose benefit those rules have really been created.

I have also been told that business plans prepared in advance of arrival in the country as required by immigration officials often do not reflect the actual market opportunity, risk, challenge or need of the PEI market. Sometimes these newcomers are welcomed to a shocking understanding of a market

which bears no reality to the plan that they've developed.

Many applicants, particularly those from China, are not provided advance information on the cultural challenges to running a business in China including media, marketing, branding and just styles of communication. So, a cultural awareness is something that has to be learned on the fly in a new space and does not give these immigrants the advantage that they should have through a program of this complexity.

The program delivery is designed for simple and rigid business models and does not reflect the reality of our modern world that includes flexible working, international markets, online and digital sales and marketing, and businesses that do not need bricks and mortar to be successful.

There is so much that we could do instead. We could support new immigrants to build strong community connections, which is often the biggest barrier for inclusion and retention, by allowing them to invest in social enterprises, non-profits, economic development projects or events. Perhaps even something in Tyne Valley.

But, we must also require those investors to be active participants operationally, as well as financially. A financial investment does not allow people to build relationships, connections and community. Investments could even be pooled for things like social housing projects.

But instead, we are bombarded with rumours and accusations of mismanagement and Islanders are being expected to take it on faith that the mistakes of the original Provincial Nominee Program are not being repeated. There is still a substantial lack of clarity on key outcomes for this program. There are clearly issues with oversight just based on the most recent set of rumours in media.

We have an opportunity to build strong, vibrant communities that are diverse, inclusive, and representative of the world beyond the borders of this Island. But for that to happen, this program must be administered with integrity and with clear performance measures. It is beginning to feel very much like 2010 when the previous

program was shut down over mismanagement.

For that reason, I am calling on government to request the Auditor General to begin a special audit on the Provincial Nominee Program business impact category immediately before we are faced yet again with a humiliating shut down of a program by federal government.

I hope that all members of this Legislature will join me in supporting this motion today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Also speaking to this motion will be the seconder of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Thank you, my colleague, for her thoughtful and articulate remarks.

I grew up in a tiny little village in the Highlands of Scotland 56 years ago and it was a pretty mono-cultural place. I loved it. My childhood was very happy, and the little fishing/farming village in which I grew up was in some ways, I think, the reason why I feel so at home here in Prince Edward Island. You could air lift it and drop it down here on PEI and it really wouldn't look out of place at all; same sorts of dynamics in the community, the same chemistry, the same characters in the rural communities as we find here on PEI.

But again, it was a very mono-cultural society. When I was a teenager, our family moved to Glasgow. Glasgow is a very big city, an industrial city in the south of Scotland. It was an enormous cultural shift for me. We moved there because my older sister was a very fine musician and in the highlands of Scotland there were just not teachers that could help her anymore, whereas in the city there was access to sorts of training and tutelage that she needed at that point to – so the whole family went. We all moved down there.

I have to tell you, I loved Glasgow. Glasgow has a – it's sort of considered to be the poor cousin of Edinburgh. Edinburgh is this

lovely, beautiful city with a castle on a hill in the middle in of it. It's just a glorious place. Glasgow is much more a working-class city. It's a place of hard work and it's not without its beauty and I loved it, but it's still considered to be the poor cousin to Edinburgh.

Now, one of the things I loved about Glasgow was that I could suddenly access Indian food. I could suddenly be around for Chinese celebrations and festivals. I could go down Sauchiehall Street and listen to African music. I had this exposure to a world that I really – I knew it existed, but I had never had actually experienced it firsthand. I loved it. I absolutely loved it. I loved it in my school because I sat next to somebody, who was from India, on one side and I sat next to somebody from Israel on the other side. I learned so much about my world. I learned, in the classroom, of course, from my teachers and the way that we all do, but I learned equally from the different cultures, the religious traditions, all of that beautiful diversity that comes with living in a multicultural society.

That was new for me. I experienced it in school. I experienced it in my music and in bands that I used to play with. I was exposed to Cuban music, to jazz music, to African music, to Latin music; to all sorts of things that up in the Highlands we didn't have. These were all beautiful things for me.

In the last 40 years, the world has shrunk a lot. From my days in Glasgow, the world has become even more multicultural and the spaces between us all have narrowed. The world in – we talk, of course, about the global village and that really has very much become a reality in our communications, in the way that we approach each other and the exposure we all have to the wonderful diversity and the beautiful number of ways of expressing yourself here in this world.

I came to PEI less than two decades ago, but in that very short timeframe, the culture of this province has changed dramatically, absolutely dramatically. In Glasgow – when I moved here you couldn't get Indian food here except sometimes in the market on a Saturday in Charlottetown. I think that's been there for as long as I've been around. But there certainly were no Indian restaurants available. There were, as far as I

remember, there were no Chinese festivals, there was no African music. That's all here, now.

PEI has just exploded in terms of its multiculturalism over the last couple of decades. I love that. I welcome it. I know that Islanders welcome that. I love walking around downtown Charlottetown and seeing all the different cultures; expect the visible minorities and also the religious – the diversity of religion that we have here. We were all celebrating here in the House just the other day, the expansion to the mosque here in Charlottetown. That clearly demonstrates that the number of people, who are coming and staying here on Prince Edward Island from some cultures, it's really happening and I love all of that.

We're very quick, and unfortunately, also often very willing to erect barriers between us to emphasize our differences whether they be political, or whether they be religious or whether they be ethnic; we're very good at emphasizing our differences. I find that a real shame because that forgets about the far more numerous commonalities that we all share and that go unacknowledged.

When I look at the human family, whether that's here on Prince Edward Island or in Canada, again, a beautiful multicultural country, a real, sort of, lesson for the world in how multiculturalism can work well.

When I look at that, I see –

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – so many commonalities.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

This House will recess until seven o'clock this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the 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 of Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

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

Hon. members, we are in the process of discussing the Tourism PEI estimates. We're on page 48.

Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: While she is getting settled, there was a request the last time that I just read the total, the title and the total. Are –

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Chair: – we still in agreement with that?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Works for me.

Chair: The section that we are under is called strategic initiatives. The section has been read and we were still discussing that.

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

Shannon Burke Director: Shannon Burke, Director of Finance.

Chair: Welcome, Shannon Burke.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

The top of page 49.

Regulation and Compliance

Total Regulation and Compliance: 205,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

French Services

Total French Services: 138,900.

Total Strategic Initiatives: 3,954,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Tourism Marketing Communications

Digital Marketing

Total Digital Marketing: 863,000.

Mr. MacKay: Question, Chair?

Chair: We have a question from the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Minister, I'm curious how much your department spends on advertising as a whole for PEI?

Shannon Burke Director: That would be in the next section in –

Mr. MacKay: Next section?

Shannon Burke Director: – advertising.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, perfect.

Chair: Okay, perfect. Can you hold it?

Mr. MacKay: I can hold it, yeah.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Digital marketing?

Chair: Yes, digital marketing.

Ms. Bell: The integrated tourism solution grant, can you just advise where that is in the handouts?

Shannon Burke Director: It's actually not in the handouts, but I have a breakdown of who that – part of it is for the integrated tourism solution.

You just want a breakdown? Okay.

Ms. Bell: It wasn't in the materials provided, so yeah.

Shannon Burke Director: I can get a clean – I have a copy here, but I have notes all over it, so I can get a clean copy and give that to you.

Ms. Bell: Okay, I can't ask questions on it today, though, without knowing.

Can you just explain what it is?

Shannon Burke Director: Okay, so it's for all the different systems that we use in Tourism PEI so our BookPEI, licence and billings. We have \$318,000 that goes towards that. We have \$27,000 that goes towards website hosting.

I'm just going to name off some of the major ones here; for our CRM system we have \$34,000. We have email marketing services through Rocket Science Group for \$16,000 and \$14,000 for a platform licence and call centre software for \$10,000. Then, a number of smaller –

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Are those services all provided through external contracts, or are those all in-house or a combination?

Mr. Palmer: I believe they're mostly external. We might have a little bit with IT Shared Services do we, or not?

Shannon Burke Director: They do some shared, they do some hosting, but all these that are listed under that would be external.

Ms. Bell: That's good, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Visitor Services

Total Visitor Services: 822,300.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, is the breakdown of visits and all kinds of that information, is that in the handouts per visitor information centres, the VICs?

Shannon Burke Director: No, that wouldn't be in the handouts.

Mr. MacEwen: Can we get a copy of the breakdown of whatever you collect, statistic-wise on all the different VICs in the province?

Shannon Burke Director: Are you looking for the number of visitors to each centre?

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah. I'm guessing, is there any other metrics that you track –

Shannon Burke Director: I have some information –

Mr. MacEwen: – like, inquiries –

Shannon Burke Director: – in terms of parties counseled. So, whether it be visits to the actual visitor information centre, contacts made. So, very –

Mr. Palmer: We could start with that. We could give you that part first and then see if you'd need anymore, on that.

Mr. MacEwen: I'll take whatever you have.

Do we have inquiries, or origin of visitor, anything. What do you collect?

Shannon Burke Director: We don't have that here. I have the number of inquiries I guess. I can read it off to you, or would you rather us just –

Mr. MacEwen: I'd like a handout just so I –

Shannon Burke Director: Okay.

Mr. MacEwen: – have it.

Chair: They'll get that for you and come back.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah. I don't need it now. Just –

Chair: He doesn't need it now.

Mr. Trivers: I just remember in years previous they would have a list of different things that each VIC would track or – I was just –

Mr. Palmer: Some of the information that we have is on parties counseled. In Souris we have 8,800, Wood Islands almost 11,000, 41,000 in Borden and 2,500 in West Prince.

Mr. MacEwen: What did you say they were?

Mr. Palmer: Parties counseled. So, folks that we –

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, okay.

Mr. Palmer: – help out.

Mr. MacEwen: But that's just for a few of the – do you have them for them all?

Mr. Palmer: Those are for all of our Visitor Information Centres.

Mr. MacEwen: You just listed off four or so.

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah. We don't have that information for the Charlottetown airport because it's self-serve –

Mr. Palmer: Self-serve.

Shannon Burke Director: – and then the Charlottetown, the other Charlottetown one, we just don't have that information here, but the minister can take that back.

Mr. MacEwen: How many VICs are there in the province?

Shannon Burke Director: Six.

Mr. Palmer: Six.

Mr. MacEwen: Six.

Shannon Burke Director: And then we have the Welcome Centres, yeah.

So we have six VICs that we operate, and then we have community-based VICs which are called Welcome Centres. We have one in Mount Stewart, Montague, Cardigan, Georgetown, Morell, East Point, Victoria, Evangeline, at the shellfish museum, potato museum, Alberton, North Cape and Tignish.

Mr. MacEwen: So is St. Peter's a VIC or the second kind?

Shannon Burke Director: It's a Destination Centre.

Mr. Palmer: So it's a former VIC, Visitor Information Centre, that's run by the Regional Tourism Association, and that's what we have in St. Peter's, Cavendish and Summerside.

Mr. MacEwen: So their funding would fall under where?

Shannon Burke Director: It should be in strategic initiatives that we already carried.

Mr. Palmer: That would be funding that would go to the Regional Tourism Associations, so they would run their operations out of that and any other programs that would be happening. I know we have it in here. I'll just see if we can find what section.

So we can get that for you.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay. So are they employees of the province or employees of the eastern –

Mr. Palmer: (Indistinct) of the Regional –

Shannon Burke Director: RTA.

Mr. Palmer: – Tourism Associations.

Mr. MacEwen: Regional Tourism Associations.

How do you evaluate that? I guess my straight question is do you have any plans to increase them or to decrease the numbers? You've mentioned a number of different kinds. They all provide somewhat similar purposes but are you comfortable with the

number we have? Do you think we need more? Are you ever considering cutting them?

Mr. Palmer: Centres or –

Mr. MacEwen: All three of the types we just talked about.

Mr. Palmer: Okay. It depends on demand. We don't have any immediate plans to do anything with them. They all seem to be doing the job that we need them to do and servicing enough people.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I think I asked you this two weeks ago. Maybe we can get an answer now about whether the lease has been signed for the VIC in Wood Islands.

Shannon Burke Director: I'm not sure.

Mr. Palmer: We'll have to get back to you on that.

Ms. Compton: Could you let me know when you'd get back to me?

Mr. Palmer: I will.

Ms. Compton: Because people are pushing me to find out. It's kind of important for the community; and also while you're getting back to me, could you find out how much the lease is for and whether that's been increased anytime since they took it over?

Mr. Palmer: Sure.

Ms. Compton: We had the discussion, too, about being open longer in Wood Islands. It is a gateway to the province and a number of people are complaining about the fact that especially September, late September, there are still lots of people coming over on the ferry and expect there to be somebody there and there's not.

If we can look at extending the opening two weeks and the closing two weeks, it seems to be that some of the staff I think are being

taken into Charlottetown to work, and it's because, well, it could be busy but down in Wood Islands it's like; well you're not busy, but it could be busy there. It's kind of the same argument but different sides of the coin. It's important for the community and for the ferry, too.

Mr. Palmer: Yeah, sure, and we monitor that. Last year, we opened two weeks earlier than we did in 2016.

Ms. Compton: So the ferry started the 1st of May. It's now the 10th. Just pointing that out, and it is important because it is a gateway and we do have people traveling all the time but –

Leader of the Opposition: When the ferry works.

Ms. Compton: When the ferry works. So (Indistinct) –

Chair: Belfast-Murray River, do you have any other questions?

Ms. Compton: No, I just wanted to clarify those questions and that the minister will get back to me. I do have people pushing me on that, so thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Advertising and Public Relations

Total Advertising and Public Relations:
4,200,900.

Question from the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I couldn't find, minister, in the handout or the electronic breakdown you sent, anything for materials, supplies and services. Do you have a breakdown for that or did I miss it?

Shannon Burke Director: No. We don't normally hand out materials, supplies and services. Did you have a question on this one in particular?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I'm wondering where that two and a half million is going.

Shannon Burke Director: Okay. Primarily, that's our advertising budget for Tourism PEI. So that's where we do all our media buys and – I do have a bit of a breakdown here. We have a marketing contract with Hero Marketing and they administer –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm sorry, which marketing company?

Shannon Burke Director: It's Hero Marketing.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Is that an Island company?

Shannon Burke Director: I believe they're in Toronto. There were RFPs for all these contracts as well, so they were open to Island companies as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So that fee there, materials, supplies and services, does that also relate to the production of whatever material we're using for advertising?

Shannon Burke Director: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So the videos we use, all of those –

Shannon Burke Director: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and the –

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – social media –

Shannon Burke Director: Creative and –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and t.v. stuff. Okay.

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So could you tell us how much of that spend goes to creative companies here on Prince Edward Island, filmmakers?

Shannon Burke Director: We wouldn't have that breakdown here, but that's something that we could probably take back.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. Is there a reason why, traditionally, you have never broken down – given that it's the biggest expense in

the tourism department budget I think? Yes, it is.

Mr. Palmer: I know we do have a percentage breakdown of media buys and production and print and those pieces. I'm just looking for it here, and if I can't find it, we'll get it back to you; but if you want to continue on with your other questions –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure.

Mr. Palmer: – while I –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I will.

Mr. Palmer: – flip through here?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Minister.

I'm looking at the next line down, the professional services, which is a remarkably consistent figure, almost a million dollars. I'm wondering why the work that – the Hero company, is that what you said it was? –

Shannon Burke Director: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah – why that would be included in the materials, supplies and services. It sounds to me like a professional service.

Shannon Burke Director: The way we break down materials, supplies and services is advertising and promotion is included in that line right across government. So the fee that we paid to Hero Marketing we consider that an advertising expense.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So can you tell us where the million dollars for professional services goes? I know there is a breakdown there –

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – but there was no –

Shannon Burke Director: Yes. It would be in handout 24.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, the \$925,000. It wasn't clear to me who receives that money.

Shannon Burke Director: Oh, sorry. The Hero Marketing fee, that is. That's the \$925,000.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, it is. Okay.

Shannon Burke Director: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So the –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair. My apologies.

Chair: No worries. We just want to make sure, hon. member, that when – in 20 years time when you come back and you want to see what this conversation was about, the comments that you're making will be attributed to yourself.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I really appreciate that.

Chair: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Dr. Bevan-Baker: You've thrown me off now, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MacEwen: That's going to be in (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: It was that easy?

Ms. Bell: If only you knew.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So going back to the line about materials, supplies, and services: I take it that is for what you said earlier minus the Hero.

Shannon Burke Director: The advertising. Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So does Hero receive the entire \$925,000?

Shannon Burke Director: That's the account management fee for them.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. All right. I'm good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, how much does tourism bring into the province of PEI annually?

Shannon Burke Director: Are you looking for their revenue figure for –

Mr. MacKay: Revenue.

Shannon Burke Director: Tourism PEI?

Mr. MacKay: Yes; just a rough total.

Shannon Burke Director: It's about \$6.3 million. So that would come direct to Tourism PEI and then we're –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) contributed to the economics.

Mr. MacKay: To the economy itself in a full.

Shannon Burke Director: Oh, okay.

Mr. MacKay: I had the number 46 –

Mr. Palmer: 459.

Mr. MacKay: 450, okay. I was thinking 460. Okay.

I've noticed over the last few years we've got a budget of \$4 million for advertising. Do you think \$4 million is sufficient in advertising to something that is bringing you in \$450,000?

Mr. Palmer: \$450 million.

Mr. MacKay: Or million.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) Gallant would say 'no'.

Mr. Palmer: In marketing, I think, you always say 'no', but our visitation continues to increase, so I think we're pretty comfortable with the amount we're spending on the budget seeing that we're getting gains with it all the time.

Mr. MacKay: So what I'm hearing from tourism operators is they feel that \$4 million should increase – I've heard by numerous people they use Newfoundland as an example. So you get on the airplane; no

matter where you see on t.v. now, Newfoundland's got a beautiful advertisement. They're telling me that if they spend about \$12 million, they take in approximately –

Mr. MacDonald: 600,000 visitors, compared to (Indistinct) million.

Mr. MacKay: My point being: Newfoundland for \$12 million took in \$1 billion in revenue through tourism last year and we're still only spending \$4 million. I just think if our tourism numbers are where they're at and they're increasing every year, \$450 million is a lot of money, what could we do if we were to double that. Has there been any projections done? If we spent more money in marketing, could we – for an extra four of \$5 million, could we offset and pull in another couple \$100 million in revenue?

Mr. Palmer: We continue to evaluate that and there's kind of a larger impact than just the advertising to bring in revenue. There needs to be product and accommodations and those types of things, so we are growing year-over-year and we want to continue to sustain that. We are always evaluating the budget and moving it around from one medium to another medium to some degree and measure results based on those things. I think an age old, I guess, complaint in any line of business or in any business is that we should always spend more in marketing, but there is an upper limit to that where you have kind of diminishing returns on it. We're pretty comfortable with where we are now.

Mr. MacKay: I'll just follow up: \$4 million is not a lot to spend when you're generating \$450 million in revenue and I just think that the number hasn't change from what I'm being told over the years and I think that the department really should look at it and see what kind of impact it would by contributing more to it.

Mr. Palmer: Yes, I think they're doing terrific with \$4 million to be able to bring in \$450 million.

Mr. MacKay: Oh, there's no doubt about it.

Mr. Palmer: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: That's what I'm saying: If they can do that with \$4 million, what could they do with \$8 million?

Mr. Palmer: Yes, great returns.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Just one quick question. Minister: Could I just confirm that you had said you were going to come back to us with a breakdown of the Island firms that are – where the material, supplies, and services spend is happening on an Island bases?

Thank you.

The contract for Hero Marketing at \$925,000 – I know you said it does go to RFP. How frequently does that go because I understand that that marketing firm has been in place for a number of years, so how often is that revisited?

Mr. Palmer: Three years.

Shannon Burke Director: I believe it was a three-year agreement and it's up in 2019, or –

Mr. Palmer: This year.

Shannon Burke Director: This year.

Mr. Palmer: This August, I believe.

Shannon Burke Director: August, yes.

Ms. Bell: One of the things that we've heard from marketing companies and agencies that are trying to work with the government is the level of past experience of working with the government is required excludes companies that haven't previously worked with the government. It's very difficult for new companies to break into that. Is there any consideration of sort of looking at the RFP requirements when you open that up again, so that there is, perhaps, a broader scope that could be included?

Mr. Palmer: We certainly will look at it and I know that we have had some great success with some Island companies that have been doing some subcontracting work through that Hero contract that we are able to engage in locals and they're doing some

great work. When we come around to RFP time again, we know there are a lot of talented operators here and we'll look forward to their submissions.

Ms. Bell: My last question.

When you have so many great staff people who have incredible experience in the industry, what additional value does having a third-party marketing company in Toronto add, other than another layer of expense and infrastructure? Is that not possible to do that internally?

Mr. Palmer: Some of those you can do internally, but that also comes with – for the lack of a better term – a buying group, so we can get media placements cheaper than we could buying it ourselves. So we get that through the agency, so it does really stretch our dollar.

Ms. Bell: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Media Relations/Editorial

Total Media Relations/Editorial: 316,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Fulfillment

Total Fulfillment: 379,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Premier MacLauchlan: You think you're spending enough on that?

Chair: Order?

Publications

Total Publications –

Mr. Fox: You were told.

Chair: – 397,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

It's been a long day. I didn't want that can of worms to open.

Travel/Trade Sales

Total Travel/Trade Sales: 509,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Tourism Marketing Communications:
7,488,500.

Total Tourism PEI: 20,408,500.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the total tourism marketing carry?
Carried.

Thank you.

Thanks, Shannon.

Ms. Bell: Chair? Can I just ask (Indistinct)?

Chair: Great question, Charlottetown-
Parkdale.

Charlottetown-Parkdale has asked if there's
a timeline when you'll be bringing back the
things that you said you would be bringing
back to the house.

An Hon. Member: Next year.

Mr. Palmer: Next week.

Chair: I'm told next week. Thank you.

Hon. members, we're now going to move to
Rural and Regional Development. We'll ask the
minister to come to the table.

Chair: Hon. members, we are doing
Department of Rural and Regional
Development. It's on page 120.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Mr. Fox: Chair, (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Fox: If you want to do the end totals –

Chair: Thank you.

It has been requested that I, again, once just
read the title and the total.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you,
Chair.

Just before we get going, I was wondering if
there are any handouts in this department.

Mr. Murphy: Yeah. There's (Indistinct)

Chair: Let's allow her to get set-up thanks.

Leader of the Opposition: Wonderful. I
would just like to see the handouts –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: – before we –

Mr. Myers: – might have them.

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

Mary Kinsman Director: Mary Kinsman,
Director of Corporate Services Rural and
Regional Development.

Chair: Welcome, Mary Kinsman.

Mary Kinsman Director: I have copies of
the deputy minister travel; the list of
permanent positions, professional services
and grants. Then, there's a map of the CDP
projects.

Chair: Perfect, thanks. I'll give this to the
Page.

They'll be passed around.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

I know a request has been made just to read
the totals, but I would like to request that we
receive the handouts before we start before
we start –

Chair: Okay.

Leader of the Opposition: – going through
the –

Chair: Sure.

Leader of the Opposition: – totals, so that we are prepared.

Chair: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: We'll wait.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) certainly let you know (Indistinct)

Chair: I think there are four handouts. Does everybody have four handouts?

Leader of the Opposition: I just – Chair, thank you.

I have just received the fourth handout, but I haven't even had time to open it, yet. If I could have a moment, and then as I repeatedly asked you if I could have a moment to review this and I'll let you know when I'm ready?

Chair: Absolutely.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

I'm just wondering, and I don't know if in other years we did it or not, but I see we have a breakdown of your – a lot of request for services and stuff. The things I'd be looking for were where did the job creation program jobs go? Where did the Jobs for Youth go? Where did the RGIs go? Who, specifically got them? Do you have that broke down?

Mary Kinsman Director: I don't have a handout for you, but I could bring –

Mr. Murphy: We can get one for you.

Mary Kinsman Director: – you one.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you. That's all I'm looking for.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Mr. Murphy: Good. We done?

Mr. Myers: I am.

Ms. Biggar: Chair?

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

Ms. Biggar: I'm just wondering if, maybe, while we're waiting for people to review things, if the minister could talk a little bit about the new Rural Development Program, perhaps that will give people time to review their papers and give us a chance to learn a little bit more about what you are doing with that program, minister, if you're prepared to do that?

Mr. Murphy: Yeah.

The program has funding of \$2,485 million and it's broke down into four different categories; there's – the objective of this is to increase rural population and growth (Indistinct) economies; increase the strategic capacity of rural communities and revitalize rural community infrastructure.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Murphy: And the program – inclusive growth is part of the program is a – this program aims to support rural population growth through activities which foster a culture of community inclusiveness for newcomer retention.

The maximum contribution from the program is \$2,500. That's for any municipalities or anything that wants to put on a welcome committee, or whatever to welcome newcomers to the communities.

The economic growth part of it: this program aims to reduce barriers for economic growth through investing in activities, which cultivate entrepreneurialism and enhances the impact of strategic economic development plans. The maximum contribution for that stream is \$50,000.

Community capacity building: this program aims to increase the strategic capacity of rural communities to identify solutions for complex problems. This program will provide funding to organizations to learn how to develop strategic and organizational plans and to increase organizational

capacity. The maximum contribution for that stream is \$25,000.

The final one, which probably has the most interest, is community revitalization. This program will support the enhancement of culture and society. This will be accomplished in part by providing funding to non-profits organizations and municipalities to renovate and/or expand existing infrastructure that is deemed important for rural culture, society and economic development. The maximum contribution of that stream is \$100,000.

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

Ms. Biggar: Just one follow-up question, Madam Chair, thank you.

Minister, if a non-profit organization or one of our service groups, live, or are located, I should say, in the city, a larger municipality would they qualify that funding?

Mr. Murphy: They could if there's a large portion of their clientele that are from rural Prince Edward Island and they're providing a service that includes rural Prince Edward Island.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Hon. members, I'm just going to read the total and title of this section, then I'll open the floor.

Rural and Regional Development

Total Rural and Regional Development:
3,948,300.

Total Rural and Regional Development:
3,948,300.

Total Department of Rural and Regional
Development: 3,948,300.

Next person on my list is the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, I have to say I am excited that there is a rural and regional development department. I know there is, just like, probably, most of the non-urban areas, I'll

call – or rural areas across the Island here. There are a number of project that people have been bringing to my attention.

I was wondering who the contact is specifically in your department for, I guess it would be the community –

Mr. Murphy: Development officer?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, the Community Development Program. Who should I have people contact and how do they apply?

Mr. Murphy: All the applications are going through the Community Development Program officer.

The one in your area, I'm just getting it here, now.

Mr. Trivers: Probably Kellie –

Mr. Murphy: I think it's Kellie Mulligan.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. Murphy: Yeah, Kellie Mulligan.

Mr. Trivers: Just to be clear: if I have them contact Kellie Mulligan by email –

Mr. Murphy: She'll help them fill out the –

Mr. Trivers: – phone –

Mr. Murphy: – application –

Mr. Trivers: She'll help them –

Mr. Murphy: – (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

The other thing that I always find interesting, or challenging, even, is to navigate the different government departments because there are little pockets of funding for different things, like in early learning, education and culture and then within economic development and tourism.

Is that a service that your department can provide for rural PEI? Can they call in? I noticed you have two admin assistants, for example. Can they call in and they'll help guide people and sort of like a business development officer does for businesses;

help you find what programs are available and where they might be able to access money? Is that something your –

Mr. Murphy: That actually would be part of the role of the development officer, would help with that; help with the application and help identify other sources of funding.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: Good to have an MLA do that.

Mr. Trivers: Great, that's fantastic.

Chair: Are we good?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Minister, on the special projects grant. Can you explain to me how the special projects work?

Chair: It's in the next section, sorry.

Mr. MacKay: Okay. Next section.

Chair: You okay to hold it?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, on this section?

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

This handout you passed out, rural development CDP projects; Central Development Corporation, how much do they get?

Mr. Murphy: I'll tell you there in a second.

That's actually Rural Action Centre there, so it's \$37,500.

Mr. Fox: Is that a rent or is that a –

Mr. Murphy: It's cost-shared with the federal government and that's our half of the contribution to run the entire (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Does the provincial government have any involvement with how the Central Development Corporation works or runs?

Mr. Murphy: Actually, we've just done a review of all the Rural Action Centres in the province.

Mr. Fox: Projects that the Central Development Corporation undertake, do you actually – are you involved in that – I guess when the Central Development Corporation sold the old building in Borden-Carleton, which was the HST centre and the town office and stuff like that was in there, that was sold to Sillicker Glass. So would the province actually be involved in that process?

Mr. Murphy: We'd be involved in our own projects and our own programs.

Mr. Fox: But would you be involved in that project?

Mary Kinsman Director: I don't believe so.

We provide funding to run these centres and it's for administrative costs, operating costs, and one position. It houses provincial/federal. It's sort of like one-stop shopping.

Mr. Fox: Right.

Mary Kinsman Director: That's nothing to do with how the corporation itself runs. It's for us to have a facility where everybody can be together to provide service. Our staff would be dealing with our programs, right?

Mr. Fox: Because that's where Kelly works?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct) would have some staff and some of the (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Back a year ago, I believe, the province took over or got involved with the Summerside Development Corporation and the Charlottetown Development Corporation.

Would that be under this department?

Mary Kinsman Director: I don't believe so.

Mr. Murphy: No, no.

Mr. Fox: So that's now under tourism – okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Murphy: Yeah (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Couple of questions; I do have specific questions with regards to the handouts, but they don't come into play until job creation placement.

But, with the handout that we did provide us with for rural development CDP projects, do you have a handout or a breakdown of what all of those different projects received?

Mr. Murphy: Yeah, we could get that (Indistinct)

She might have one here with her.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Just while they're looking for that, I just want to go back to the urban and rural question for a second. Is Summerside considered an urban area, or a rural?

Mr. Murphy: I would consider it urban.

Some Hon. Members: Rural.

Leader of the Opposition: Summerside is rural?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Really?

Mr. Murphy: Summerside rural?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) minister.

Mr. Murphy: I guess it depends on what your definition of –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, oh sorry. Mary?

Mary Kinsman Director: I have documents to table.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Leader of the Opposition: So do the people in Summerside know that they're rural?

Some Hon. Members: It's not urban.

Ms. Biggar: It's not urban.

Mr. Murphy: It depends on what definition you look at.

Chair: She does have the request that you had made.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Murphy: I don't know if you had the chance to see the –

Leader of the Opposition: Just getting it now.

Mr. Murphy: – document that the Leader of the Third Party tabled there today, there are lots of different definitions of –

Leader of the Opposition: No.

I didn't actually. I wasn't privy to those yet. But, just again, I always assumed that Summerside would be an urban community versus rural.

Chair: Are you done, hon. leader? Leader of the Opposition, do you have any more questions?

Leader of the Opposition: Not for now.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) control yourselves over there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale has the floor.

An Hon. Member: The old urban/rural question.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Following on from the question from the Leader of the Opposition, I would also point out that the Island Media Arts Cooperative, while a fantastic project who received \$25,000, are located in the West Royalty Industrial park.

Chair: Business park.

Ms. Bell: Business park, thank you. Sorry, business park – who recently moved from Downtown Charlottetown and so there's a little flexibility, again, in rural/urban there.

Mr. Murphy: Yeah, and these here were from the previous Community Development Fund.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Mr. Murphy: Not the new Rural Growth Initiative.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister, because that actually leads me to my very next question.

I notice in your description for the grants that you have nine projects that continued from the previous year. Is that what you meant by continued? Did they – have been awarded previously or carried over?

Mary Kinsman Director: Exactly.

They would have started the previous year and they did not – weren't completed so a few projects did carry over to year two.

Ms. Bell: Great, thank you.

Can you advise, minister, how long the cost-share agreement has been in place for the Rural Action Centres?

Mr. Murphy: Since their commencement. I don't know exactly what that date is.

Mary Kinsman Director: 2011.

Mr. Murphy: Since 2011.

Ms. Bell: Since 2011?

So the cost-share agreements that we have on here are for operating costs which, despite the fact that your grant description says that it does not normally support operational assistance, in that case this has been carried over. But, this isn't new funding. This is an agreement that's been in place for seven years. Is that correct? And it's been included in this list?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes, it's always been included as part of the program, but it's kind of an annual contract.

Ms. Bell: I guess my point with that is that where we have sort of an ongoing contract that's been in place for seven years, then those costs are an already-committed expense, but they're being included in this grant line. So really the grant line does not actually reflect the total that's available for grants. It's that whatever that total is less that commitment that was already in place.

Would that be correct?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes, if we have – like, we normally sign it at the first of each fiscal year.

Ms. Bell: Right.

Chair?

Chair: Leader – the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale. Sorry.

Ms. Bell: That's okay. It's that kind of day.

Chair: He's next.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct) Peter MacKinley.

Ms. Bell: The rural action centres, though, are a key piece of your rural economic development piece. They provide fantastic resources. Is that like you said? That one-stop shop place in the shared co-working space for the staff, so I don't expect that funding agreement is going to suddenly stop. We hope not, right?

Mr. Murphy: Right.

Ms. Bell: So perhaps, then, a reflection of fixed recurring costs versus flexible grant costs might be a little bit more helpful for those of us looking at what is available in the community. Thank you, though.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I see that the CDP projects are – there's no budget for that in this current year. So, am I correct in thinking that all of these projects will be rolled into the Rural Growth Initiative?

Mr. Murphy: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

So everybody on this list –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair. I keep doing that, my apologies.

All of the projects which are listed here in the CDP, will they be automatically eligible, then, for Rural Growth Initiative funds or did the parameters of that fund might exclude some of these people?

Mr. Murphy: I would think most of them would be eligible for the funding if it's a different fiscal year.

Mary Kinsman Director: Yeah.

These projects – the ones you're looking at actually ended last year and so there wasn't a carry over to 2018-2019. Any projects this year in the new program, people would apply and it's a very similar program as to

the previous one, only expanded and has four components versus one.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Thanks, yeah, expanded greatly and that's wonderful. About four-times the size, almost five-times the size it was last year.

I'm wondering – and I realize there are four components to this, but specifically the grant projects that would have gone to projects exactly like the ones that were in CDP. What is the budget for those sorts of projects within the Rural Growth Initiative?

Mary Kinsman Director: The budget has increased from the old program, which ended last year. The maximum that they could apply for was \$25,000 right?

Now, the new program has four components with varying amounts that can be applied for with the largest one being \$100,000.

It's a new program.

Mr. Murphy: It depends on where they fit in those four categories.

Mary Kinsman Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mary Kinsman Director: They can apply and are applying now.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, I'm fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

The Community Development Fund. That's maxed at \$25,000 per project, except the RAC. The RACs were all approved for above the maximum. Why is that?

Mary Kinsman Director: That's a very point. They are a separate piece of the program and different qualifications. They have a specific contract renewed on an annual basis and it is higher than \$25,000.

Mr. MacEwen: Explain to me again what the different RACs, that's the regional –

Mr. Murphy: Rural Action Centres.

Mr. MacEwen: The Rural Action Centres, sorry, yes.

Is this new funding just last year?

Mary Kinsman Director: No.

Mr. Murphy: No. It has been ongoing since 2001.

Mr. MacEwen: Why is it, all of a sudden, in the Community Development Fund?

Mary Kinsman Director: It's always been there.

Mr. MacEwen: It hasn't always been listed like this, though, as a grant?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Really?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) on there last year –

Ms. Biggar: I see you got new (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Let's talk about those (Indistinct) if you'd like to talk about them –

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Do you know what that \$3,000 is for? It's so the kids don't fall over the edge and stab themselves on the pieces of wood that was sticking up, so the minister, at the time, was very good to fund 50% and pony up a couple of thousand dollars so that kids didn't fall over and stab themselves on the wood that was sticking up.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Mr. MacEwen: Did they come and when the ask was there to actually replace it and fix it, no? We asked the Minister of Rural and Regional Development. We asked the minister of transportation. We asked the minister of the environment. We asked the minister of tourism.

Every time we emailed back those people and try and tell them: oh, no. We've got funding for that. No. They have been refused every single time, minister of transportation. Every time.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct) square peg in a round hole.

Ms. Biggar: Thanks for (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: You're welcome.

Thanks for the interjection.

Chair: Are you good?

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, no.

The Rural Action Centres. Did that take away from the previous budget or is that, you know we now say there's \$2.5 million for the new fund? Is that in addition to project funding or is that just assumed right off the bat?

Mary Kinsman Director: \$2.5 million is the total grants –

Mr. MacEwen: For the new – that's the new one?

Mary Kinsman Director: That's correct.

Mr. MacEwen: But for this, when this Community Development Fund was budgeted were those RACs, were their budgets just automatically put in there?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes. They were a part of that.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay, so –

Mary Kinsman Director: We knew –

Mr. MacEwen: They don't need to –

Mary Kinsman Director: – at the beginning of the year –

Mr. MacEwen: – apply every year –

Mary Kinsman Director: – that that was already committed.

Mr. MacEwen: They don't have to apply every year, then?

Mary Kinsman Director: No. We work with them on a contract basis.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the Total Department of Rural and Regional Development carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

In the handout there's a review and evaluation of the Northside Windmill Enhancement Program. Could I get a copy of that?

Mary Kinsman Director: No. The report, we call them NWEF the short for that. They have a committee. The report has been – is being, right now, reviewed by that committee with government. I think they have had a meeting this week.

Right now, they're still in discussions. The report is complete, but the process is yet not complete between the community and government. Right now, it's with them.

Mr. MacEwen: Can you explain what that project would be – what that consultant's report would have said, or what it's proposing?

Mary Kinsman Director: What they were working on, this was a five-year agreement –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mary Kinsman Director: – with the Hermanville/Clearspring and its funding, because of the windmill development there.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mary Kinsman Director: In year four of that, there was an MOU signed with the community. In year four, they were to review the program. That has been done. Now, between the community and the province they're taking a look at what happens after year five. That's what they're looking at now.

I have not read the report. I'm not part of that committee.

Mr. MacEwen: The money that that's – when we're talking about the budget of it was estimated \$200,000 last year. They spent \$120,000. Now, we're estimating \$165,000 for this upcoming year. That's money that's going to the community, right?

Mr. Murphy: Right.

Mr. MacEwen: That's, you know, a certain, I forget –

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct) carried over (Indistinct) one year and carried over to the next.

Mr. MacEwen: Do we have a breakdown of what that was spent on?

Mary Kinsman Director: Last year?

Mr. MacEwen: Or it is just a grant to –

Mary Kinsman Director: No, there's a project that – it has an approval process within the committee and between the committee and government.

I do believe I do have a list of them projects from last year.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, or Chair, I should say, have any projects been approved for the upcoming year already for the new fund?

Mr. Murphy: No.

No, they can't be approved until the entire budget, because it's a new program, it can't be approved until the entire budget is carried.

Mr. Trivers: Do you have a list of pending projects?

Mr. Murphy: Yes.

We're still accepting applications.

Mr. Trivers: How many applications have you received so far?

Mary Kinsman Director: I don't have a number because it can happen on a daily basis.

The community development officers work closely with the different groups. I don't have a number on that. I could ask them and we'd bring it back of how many applications are in to date in each of the program areas.

Mr. Trivers: I'm just trying to figure out, are we close to the capacity for this new fund, yet, or is there a lot of room and you know the projects, I know that haven't been applied yet, if, sort of, what are the odds they're going to get approved.

Do you do it on a – is it a first-come-first-serve? How do you set the priority for what projects are funded?

Mr. Murphy: I think we could look at the applications periodically. Like (Indistinct)

Mary Kinsman Director: Yeah, it's –

Mr. Murphy: Evaluated (Indistinct)

Mary Kinsman Director: Yeah, they're evaluated.

It hasn't been a problem ever, coming in that the projects on a first-come-first-serve as they come in.

What normally happens with these projects is the community development officers are working very closely with the groups and the organizations. They know what's going to be coming in because they're working closely with them from day one. They

actually start by helping them with the applications.

Mr. Murphy: It's usually such a long process. There's usually multiple funding partners in most of the projects because we're in (Indistinct) percentage; ACOA is in, heritage Canada. There are a lot of different funding partners involved in most of the projects so it takes a while to get them finalized.

Mr. Trivers: Just to be clear, then. For the Rural Growth Initiative, the money you have in the budget hasn't all been spoken for. You're accepting applications. It is basically a first-come-first-serve, but it's going through the community development officers and you don't expect there to be a lot of projects turned away.

Mary Kinsman Director: We don't know at this point depending on the demand.

Mr. Trivers: I'm just a little confused. Who makes the final call whether a project is funded or not. Is it the community development officer, or is it –

Mary Kinsman Director: No.

Mr. Trivers: You said – is it peer reviewed, you mentioned? I'm just a little confused. I want to make sure that the people who want the funding make the case for their funding to the right people and –

Mary Kinsman Director: Yes.

Mr. Murphy: Right.

Mary Kinsman Director: The applications will come in; CDOs would work with the groups. They meet on a regular basis that all the CDOs and the team that reviews them, being rural and regional development staff; they would review all the applications. They would be sent to the deputy minister and final signoff is the minister.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Just on the handout we received – the Northside Windmill Enhancement Program 2017 – 28 projects. Almost halfway down the list, there's a Shediac Lobster Shop building renovation/insulation of ice house: \$10,000. Can you tell me where the Shediac Lobster Shop is located?

Mary Kinsman Director: I'm not aware of the project.

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct).

Mary Kinsman Director: I don't have the details on the project. We'll need to come back to that for you. It would have to be in that area.

Chair: They'll come back with the information, she said.

Leader of the Opposition: Can you confirm that the Shediac Lobster Shop is actually – it's a business here on PEI? Because I'm googling Shediac Lobster Shop and the only one that I see coming up is in Shediac – which province is that? Oh, yes, New Brunswick.

Mr. Murphy: I would imagine that would be something (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Is there one in Monticello?

Ms. Biggar: Monticello.

Chair: Monticello.

Mr. Murphy: Monticello, is it? I would assume that their approval committee would verify that.

Leader of the Opposition: Just learned that there's one in Monticello.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall it – oh, we've already carried that section.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm just wondering about what information about the people who apply for funding through the Rural Growth Initiative. How much of that will the public be able to see? Who applied; how many

applied; what criteria were used to make the decisions. How much of that will be public information?

Mary Kinsman Director: That's a good question. We would advertise – I'm not sure if they show approved projects on their website or not. I'd have to check. I'm sorry.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mr. Murphy: We can get that information back to you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Another thing: It's my opinion that should be freely available. And another thing I would love to be able to see is evaluation of the projects and what the – did the outcomes – did the objectives of each of these projects get met and are we going to be measuring that? If so, how?

Mr. Murphy: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can you tell me how that you're going to be measuring?

Mary Kinsman Director: Well there's a policy framework set up when they created the program and they have a list of program outcomes to meet the final – what the goals are. I don't have a handout for you here, but I could probably bring something back to you of what they're using for the measures.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I would really like that. What performance measures they're using, metrics – sure.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

We're now on page 121. Employment Development Agency.

Total Department of Rural and Regional Development: 3,948,300.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Mr. MacKay: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, could you explain how the special projects work?

Mr. Murphy: Special projects – the organizations –

Chair: We haven't gotten to there yet.

Mr. MacKay: Oh, I thought you said job creation and placement.

Chair: No. No, I didn't. I said we're going to move on to Employment Development Agency and somebody had a question (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Okay, my apologies.

Chair: All right.

Employment Development Agency

Management

General

Total General: 204,400.

Total Management: 204,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Job Creation and Placement

Community and Business Projects

Total Community and Business Projects:
5,277,100.

Total Job Creation and Placement:
5,277,100.

Total Employment Development Agency:
5,481,500.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

So minister, how do the special projects work? How are they allocated out?

Mr. Murphy: I think there's a fair distribution across the province. Organizations can apply for the special

projects. They can get the applications online or in the Access PEI –

Mr. MacKay: So do they go by counties? Do they go by districts? How does it work?

Mr. Murphy: I think it's mostly by need.

Mr. MacKay: Mostly by need? So is there any of them weeks leftover at the end of the year, or are they always used up?

Mr. Murphy: I think they're pretty much always used up.

Mary Kinsman Director: In special projects, we were forecasting to be under about sixty eight five. That would be – sometimes there's a little slippage in the projects themselves, so yes, we were slightly under in forecast, but we pretty well spend it.

Mr. MacKay: Usually spend it. Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I have to admit to being confused by this. We have four programs, actually: Special Projects Program, job creation program, Jobs for Youth, and rural job initiative. Can you sort of explain in clear English what distinguishes those four different programs – how they're different from each other.

Mr. Murphy: The EDA program, it's to help people, mostly harder to employ people, I guess – they have a hard time finding a job. They can go to a municipality or a non-profit organization. In that case, the full wage is covered up through the minimum wage plus 4% vacation pay if it's a non-profit or a municipality. If it goes to a business, then it's a 50/50 split.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Mr. Murphy: The rural job initiative is – the primary focus is to have a place in businesses across the province. It's to entice businesses to hire people in rural parts of the province. It's a job creation. And that one – we just increased it to the – the top wage in

that one is \$15.60 an hour and that's for 40 hours a week for a 14 week period. JCP is job creation. I forgot to mention: For the EDA program, it's between individuals between the ages of 30 and 65 years old. JCP is for people – job creation placement. It's for people that are having a hard time to find work. Some of those referrals come from social assistance and that's the same as the EDA when it comes to wages – it's minimum wage plus 4% for 12/13 weeks.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Are there plans to review any of these programs?

Mr. Murphy: I think it's always a good idea to review all ongoing programs to make sure that our money's being spent wisely. As you're well aware, an urging from your party, we've undertaken a review of the Jobs for Youth Program and maybe it's time that we looked at these other programs to make sure to look if the money's being spent wisely.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I'm fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Quick follow-up question, Chair. I forgot to ask.

Do you have a list of who received the 475 positions for special projects? Is that a handout we can get?

Mary Kinsman Director: I don't have that handout. I can see if I can get you one.

Mr. Murphy: Get that information back to you.

Mr. MacKay: Perfect.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the total Employment Development Agency carry? Carried.

Thank you. That's it.

Ms. Biggar: There you go.

Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mary.

Mr. Myers: Rough ride, Pat.

Chair: Who is next?

Hon. members, we are now going to move onto the next budget.

I'll invite the Minister for the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to the table. Welcome minister.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you. It will just take me a second to set-up.

Chair: No problem.

Ms. Biggar: Madam Chair, could I ask –

Chair: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Oh, sorry, Madam Chair.

It'll just take me a minute here to get organized.

Chair: Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: We'll allow them to get set-up before we ask – get organized here.

Thank you. Welcome.

Before you get started. Ask her to introduce herself.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Chair: Just like (Indistinct) handouts. Do you have an opening statement?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Chair: I'm going to get her to introduce herself.

Ms. Biggar: Just take your time.

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

Wendy MacDonald Director: Wendy MacDonald, Director of Finance.

Chair: Welcome. Welcome to the table.

Wendy MacDonald Director: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Madam Chair, we have a list. We have a number of handouts to pass out. If I could ask the Pages to give them to the opposition and the third party first.

Wendy, maybe you could list off what it is you have?

Wendy MacDonald Director: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair, actually, I think the Pages have to give them to the Clerk first –

Ms. Biggar: Well, yes. Obviously.

Leader of the Opposition: I just wanted to make sure –

Ms. Biggar: Not necessarily. They don't have to.

Chair: Excuse me?

Ms. Biggar: Do they?

Chair: I've got it under control hon. member. I appreciate your help.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) intervention (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I'm going to table them, yes, but we don't have to.

Wendy MacDonald Director: List of permanent positions for the department; deputy minister's out-of-province travel; grants for the department and professional services for the department.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Chair: All right, hon. members, it looks like all the handouts for the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy have been distributed.

I'll bring your attention to the top of page 126.

Corporate Services

Total Corporate Services: 2,048,300.

Total Corporate Services: 2,048,300.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Minister, when the department looks at contracting to different providers on shale or specifically shale, how does the department decide who they're going to buy a product from? Do they do testing on the product?

Ms. Biggar: We'll be talking about that a little bit later on.

Mr. Fox: Okay, what section would that be in?

Ms. Biggar: Shale? That is under materials, I believe.

Provincial highway maintenance.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you –

Ms. Biggar: We'll be discussing that a little bit later.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm just looking at the deputy minister's travel.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I see that he attended an intelligent transport system world congress in Montreal.

I'm wondering whether, when a minister, a deputy minister goes away to a conference like that, I have no idea what that was about, but I like the sound of it. I'm wondering whether they are obligated to come back with a report to the department and whether the department follows up on any of that?

Ms. Biggar: Thank you for the question. If you want specifics on what that particular conference was about I can certainly get that for you.

Normally, when they go to that, it's with other deputy ministers across Canada. I mean, there's not an official report, but it is shared.

When the deputy minister comes back he meets with the directors that directly work under him to share that on what went on at that.

If you want a specific report about what that conference was about, we can certainly get you that information.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure, but I would really appreciate that, actually.

Thank you, minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Minister, we discussed this over the last two or three weeks about consultation.

I'm wondering just why the department wouldn't go out and – when they're – I know they can't go out and they can't consult with everybody about every little project. I understand that totally. But, when they're talking about big projects like roundabouts and stuff like that why wouldn't they go out and ask the questions before going to tender?

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, hon. member.

What you're talking about is in our Capital Budget, which was tabled last fall. That is where that process would have started. There is nothing in here about roundabouts. That's all under our capital expenditures, which was tabled last fall –

Mr. Fox: I never mentioned anything about a project –

Ms. Biggar: You mentioned roundabouts.

Mr. Fox: Well, any project. Any project at all that the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy deals with.

Ms. Biggar: That involved putting a culvert in –

Mr. Fox: No, not a culvert.

Ms. Biggar: That's a project though –

Mr. Fox: Okay, well –

Ms. Biggar: – that is a project.

So, if you're talking about major projects, those that are cost-shared with the federal government, those are under our capital expenditures, which we table in the fall. In that, we always have a list of what we're going to do.

So, members here know in the fall what it is that we have planned over a five-year schedule. So, that is not in this particular budget.

Mr. Fox: Chair –

Ms. Biggar: Those result as a result of issues that have arisen in certain communities, or in certain areas.

So, in consultation with some concerns from community, that's usually how that gets in a Capital Budget process.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: What would be the largest project that would happen in this department not in the Capital Budget?

Ms. Biggar: It's mostly, hon. member, things like, it's an overall culmination of how many culverts we buy bulk, how much sand we buy bulk, how much salt we buy bulk; how much of those items that we do buy in bulk. As we go through, you'll see what those amount to. They can be several million dollars in sand or culverts as part of a contract that we put out. You'll see that as we go through, what we spend on that.

Mr. Fox: I'm going to beat this to a dead horse.

The question being next will be: What would be the biggest project under this department or this budget that would be budgeted for? That you would go out and spend?

Ms. Biggar: Mostly maintenance projects that are under \$75,000.

Mr. Fox: Are there any projects over \$75,000 in this budget?

Wendy MacDonald Director: Any projects that are greater than \$75,000, under the capital asset rules for accounting, fall under the Capital Budget. They are a capital project at that point.

Mr. Fox: Is there any time that during this line item budget that you have to go over \$75,000 that's not in capital?

Ms. Biggar: I think it would have to be a one-off if there was something exorbitant happened that involved something maybe a little bit – that it came in over even though it was budgeted for \$75,000. But generally, as –

Wendy MacDonald Director: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, even then it would have to go back into capital and put out that way.

Mr. Fox: Back in the spring, my understanding was, there was \$7 million that were unbudgeted for that was in the newspaper that had to be spent.

Ms. Biggar: And that was under capital.

Mr. Fox: So that would be put over to capital then?

Ms. Biggar: That was in capital, yes.

Mr. Fox: Question – the question would be: Would that not affect the budget overall the year?

Ms. Biggar: That would affect the Capital Budget, not the operating budget.

Mr. Fox: So, Chair, is it safe to say that that would affect whether we have a balanced budget or not?

Ms. Biggar: Do you want to respond to that?

Wendy MacDonald Director: Sure. I guess I'll do my best to answer that question for you.

Items that go into a Capital Budget are amortized over a longer period of time, a number of years, a greater number of years.

Most of our capital projects that we do have have significant federal funding that come back into the province as well.

They tend to offset each other. The amortization period for roads can be significant. Again, that's part of our Capital Budget so they come into the operating budget, not at a full method as, I'll say – I'm just going to pick a number – 10 years and they would come one-tenth every year with the project.

Ms. Biggar: I'll give you an example of that, hon. member.

When we had the – and this again, I want to clarify, is not in operating. But, I will just clarify this one more time that under capital, for instance, when we had the rain event in 2014, we had to expend those dollars up front and then submit our claims to the federal government. Those were audited; the same as we're doing any of our capital projects that involve 50% dollars or cost-shared dollars from the federal government under capital. They're submitted – what we spend is submitted for audit to the federal government and then once it's audited, we get the money back.

We have to expend it up front. It's audited by the federal government –

Wendy MacDonald Director: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, to the rain events, but even our build Canada projects, they're all audited. That's under capital, though.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Biggar: And I'd be happy to talk about that this fall.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the Total Corporate Services carry? Carried.

Infrastructure

Total Infrastructure: 41,252,900.

Total Infrastructure: 41,252,900.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm wondering in that large budget line, the grants there, how much of that will be dedicated or will be used for active transportation?

Ms. Biggar: Active transportation falls under a number of different things. As part of some of our capital projects, again, we are implementing and incorporating active transportation quarters as part of our capital projects.

So, that is not under this.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Thank you, I'm fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

It's a clarification, minister with the different handouts. I know you had spoken about the federal – the cost sharing and the federal funding cost shares and so the handouts that we have now that have the green heading that identify the Building Canada Small Communities Fund, the Gas Tax Fund – did that identify the federal contributions?

Ms. Biggar: Just a moment until I flip over to that.

Ms. Bell: I'm not sure if I'm in the right the section, but I just wanted to clarify –

Ms. Biggar: Yes, you are.

Ms. Bell: Yeah, okay.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: I just have to flip to my corresponding sheet on that, if I can find it.

Ms. Bell: B4?

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, I have it.

Ms. Biggar: Which – B4 you're on?

Ms. Bell: Yeah, so –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, I have the number there.

Okay, got it.

Ms. Bell: So this is the Building Canada Small Communities Fund?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Ms. Bell: It shows a total cost and in a fiscal year – does this reflect the provincial contribution or the federal –

Wendy MacDonald Director: Under the FY 2017-2018, that is federal/provincial dollars both in total.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Wendy MacDonald Director: The total cost is actual total cost of the project over a number of years.

Ms. Bell: Okay, thank you.

So that would be the same approach that you've taken in the other sheets with these headings?

Wendy MacDonald Director: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

We approved 49 projects, or 29 – well, this one is for six, but over that whole project. Some of them go over into the next year.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister.

That's really helpful with the – I understand the complexity with some of these funds and gas tax funds and those kind of multi-year or multi-level contributions with audits are very complex.

In all of these other ones, like the gas tax and the clean water wastewater funds, that same approach; that same as there – so fiscal year of 2017-2018 is what we're actually booking. It's a shared cost and then the total

cost is the total cost of the project over a number of years?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Ms. Bell: Right? Okay, super.

Minister, when we see the lines, then, around those investments, we're only showing the investment for that year after the federal money has been returned?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) go ahead.

Wendy MacDonald Director: That is the total of both federal and provincial.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

I'm following the kind of breadcrumbs – so then is the revenue line that comes back what we claim back from the federal government after those projects have been expended?

Wendy MacDonald Director: During the fiscal year.

Ms. Bell: During the fiscal year?

Wendy MacDonald Director: Same year.

Ms. Biggar: Okay?

Ms. Bell: Good heavens, I think I can follow that.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, it's very – it gets complicated.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to clarify the breakdown of the grants under infrastructure, is that the – which handout is that?

Ms. Biggar: What do you have in front of you there?

Mr. Trivers: I've got this one and I've got (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Okay. Those are the current year?

Mr. Trivers: I've got the green one too with the salaries.

Ms. Biggar: 2017-2018, so I'm not sure what you're asking.

Mr. Trivers: I'm just trying to figure out where the breakdown of the grants is and which handout it's in.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: Sorry, I looked through them and I can't figure out which one.

Ms. Biggar: We don't have that with us tonight, but we can –

Mr. Trivers: Oh, that explains why I can't find it.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: So –

Ms. Biggar: If you would just hold on a moment.

Okay, what I can – a breakdown of the grants? You're talking about the 40 –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, the 40 million.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, I can read that to you, hon. member. It's very short.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: I can read the breakdown; I just don't have a copy of it with me.

Mr. Trivers: Is there a reason you didn't include it in the handout?

Ms. Biggar: Well, it's not really in particular, but we can certainly –

Mr. Trivers: All right. If you want to read it, I guess, please.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. MacEwen: Can we get a photocopy?

Ms. Biggar: Under the new Build Canada Fund, that's the Small Communities Fund, that's \$470,000; the gas tax, the permanent side which excludes \$4.75 million on roads and bridges, that is \$11,550,000; the Clean

Water and Wastewater Fund, these are all grants, again, \$24,590,000; the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund is \$71,000; the Municipal Capital Expenditure Grant, which goes to municipalities, 2,000,700. That should be it, I believe.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair. In fact –

Ms. Biggar: Those are all –

Mr. Trivers: In fact, I think I do have the breakdown –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: – here for those ones.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: I wasn't sure you had that in front of you there.

Mr. Trivers: So I was looking at the Permanent Gas Tax –

Ms. Biggar: The Permanent Gas Tax?

Mr. Trivers: – breakdown.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) Okay.

Mr. Trivers: And it, of course, is broken into communities with water and/or sewer.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, yes.

Mr. Trivers: Then there's a notional allocation for other communities.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Municipalities. I was wondering why some of the smaller municipalities like Breadalbane, for example, I thought had a notional allocation. Maybe I'm just mistaken but they're not on the list.

Ms. Biggar: Which one again?

Mr. Trivers: Breadalbane.

Ms. Biggar: Breadalbane? If they're not on this list, they would not have got (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I could have sworn when I attended their AGM that they did receive money through the gas tax.

Ms. Biggar: This is the total that gets the grants. I'd have to go back and look specifically about Breadalbane, whether it's an incorporated or not.

Mr. Trivers: It's incorporated.

Ms. Biggar: Well, I'm not sure what they fall under but this is our ongoing list; but we will go back and check that to make sure. Did they report that they got gas tax on their annual report?

Mr. Trivers: From what I recall in the AGM, I believe they –

Ms. Biggar: Okay, well –

Mr. Trivers: – they do.

Ms. Biggar: – we'll have to verify.

Mr. Trivers: It's the key thing they rely on to –

Ms. Biggar: Well, we'll –

Mr. Trivers: – by their community.

Ms. Biggar: – go back and find that out.

Mr. Trivers: It could be just an omission.

Ms. Biggar: It could be.

Mr. Trivers: I'm hoping it's just an omission.

Chair: Rustico-Emerald, are you good?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I'm good with this.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. Biggar: Just for clarification, if they didn't submit their capital plan, they wouldn't be on this list. So these are the ones that would have, so – I'll get some verification from you.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Biggar: For you, sorry.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's just a small question about the growth management study, \$30,000 that's allocated to the municipality of Afton, and that's one of only – I think there are five or six communities involved in that study.

Ms. Biggar: Oh, okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Is it just that it's given to one community or allocated unto one community but it covers for all of them rather than split it up between five or six?

Ms. Biggar: It went to that specific municipality to do that study.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Ms. Biggar: What they studied under it, I'd have to – if it's a larger water, obviously the West River –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – is a very important estuary.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: I'd have to look. I think they have a committee they work together on.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, it's actually – that's an amalgamation, just like the Three Rivers area where they're considering amalgamating five or six municipalities. I'm just wondering whether that's the entire cost of the management study. I don't know if Communities, Land and Environment would like an intervention here. Apparently not.

Ms. Biggar: I don't think so. I'll find that out for you. Just for your information purposes, specifics on what that study – and what it encompassed.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair. I'm good.

Chair: Great.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

If it's not carried, I can't move on.

Highway Safety

Registration, Safety and Scales

Total Registration, Safety and Scales:
2,981,700.

Total Highway Safety: 2,981,700.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

One thing that I've noticed really helps a lot within communities, especially with the lower speed limits under 50 kilometers an hour – and I think we've discussed this before – are the speed radar signs. Is there budget here in the safety area to buy more of these radar signs to put in the smaller communities across the province?

I know especially in District 18 there's a number of them that would just love to have that, and I think it would really, really help when people come into the community to slow them down.

Ms. Biggar: It's not in this section. This section is to promote safe conditions about licensing of drivers. It's actually under the section of traffic. It's under traffic. When we get to traffic –

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Biggar: – we can talk about it more, but just to answer it now, we do deal with those on a one-off basis as there's nothing in the budget line, no, for those to say we're going to buy ten of those digital radars this year, but we do deal with the community as it comes up.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair

I realize this is in the traffic operations. It's just something that I've been asking for for a couple of years now, and if you want I can email you the names of the communities where they're needed.

Ms. Biggar: Well, we –

Mr. Trivers: If that'll help.

Ms. Biggar: We do work closely with the communities, so – thank you, though.

Mr. Trivers: I hear that, but –

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: – they don't have the speed radar signs yet, so –

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Anyhow.

Mr. Myers: I'm looking for one on the 48 Road.

Chair: Good?

Mr. Trivers: I'll wait for traffic (Indistinct)

Chair: Thanks.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. Biggar: And I'll talk about the philosophy around speed reduction later, when we get to that section.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. We will. We'll talk. We need (Indistinct) –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party has the floor.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd just like to ask a question about the one-metre law, that separation between cars and bicycles on the road. Are there any resources earmarked in this section for public education on that? I'm not sure that everybody is aware that that law is now enforced.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, we did install signs along the highway indicating that they are – we have installed them, but we can always, we did do some public education when that part of the act changed. It's in our access site, on our websites. We do our promotional messages on the radio. We always continue to come back and do those to remind people during that time. We have

done some promotion by doing it that way, but certainly it's always a challenge.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Some people just don't pay attention maybe.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No.

Ms. Biggar: But thank you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I think that's a fair comment. We had a really nice discussion or ministerial statement I think it was on motorcycle safety just this week. I don't want to forget the pedal cyclists that are out there and this is something that's changed recently and I'm wondering whether it would be worth giving some money to the cycling advocacy groups, Cycling PEI for example, who would I'm sure be very happy to advocate on behalf of their members and do a public education exercise.

Ms. Biggar: And we do partner with them on a lot of campaigns.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: On helmets, different things. We do talk to them a lot on things, so –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Back when you, we brought in Hannah's Bill there, minister –

Ms. Biggar: Yes?

Mr. Fox: – we had a discussion about one thing was mentioned was people that abused the disability parking that don't have the permit? We discussed about the possibility of highway safety officers when they're out taking a look at these, when they're out doing their patrols. Was that ever followed

through on? Did they ever look at that or try to –

Ms. Biggar: If they're within our jurisdictional authority, they certainly have that authority now to do that.

Mr. Fox: Which it is.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, which it is. I'd have to check back and see if there's been charges laid under that particular act for that particular infraction, I'll say.

Mr. Fox: It'd be interesting to –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah. I'll see what might be there from that.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: They certainly have authority to do that.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah. Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

I'm not sure if this is going to be the right section –

Chair: We'll let you know.

Mr. LaVie: – but you'll definitely let me know if it's not.

Minister, I know last fall I was talking to Graham at Highway Safety, Graham Grimmer –

Some Hon. Members: Miner.

Ms. Biggar: Miner.

Mr. LaVie: Miner. And –

Ms. Biggar: That's Parker Grimmer and Graham Miner.

Mr. LaVie: Yes. (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Don't get them mixed up.

Mr. LaVie: And we were talking about the safety for tow trucks and he was telling me, Graham was telling me that there are, he's got some homework to do on it and lights for tow trucks or how they were going to do it. You don't know where that situation is with the safety for tow trucks when they're towing rigs out of ditches –

Ms. Biggar: Well –

Mr. LaVie: – on the highways for safety?

Ms. Biggar: Well, one of the things we've been reviewing, I believe, under the *Highway Traffic Act* is to recognize tow trucks as an –

Mr. LaVie: – got some homework to do on it and lights for tow trucks, or how they're going to do it. You don't know where that situation is with the safety for tow trucks when they're towing rigs out of ditches –

Ms. Biggar: Well –

Mr. LaVie: – on highways for safety.

Ms. Biggar: One of the things we've been reviewing, I believe, under the *Highway Traffic Act* is to recognize tow trucks as an emergency, you know, to be aware of that. We've been doing some work on that, to make amendments to that. I know Graham has been working on that and we hope to bring that forward as part of some further legislation.

Mr. LaVie: I know that was last session and now, we're into the spring session. You don't know when that will be put –

Ms. Biggar: I hope –

Mr. LaVie: – forward?

Ms. Biggar: – to have it for this fall, quite frankly.

Mr. LaVie: This fall?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: Okay, thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: With that, minister, last year there were concerns at an accident where a police agency was on-site and they allowed a tow truck to carry a vehicle that was way oversized for what that tow truck was legally allowed to carry. That did go into the RCMP and that did go into highway safety.

Would that new regulation, or whatever, deal with to ensure we're not overloading tow trucks or using them when they're not supposed to be used?

Ms. Biggar: I do know, hon. member, that I had that reviewed by highway safety. I don't think they found any infractions, specifically on that –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – but it's certainly something to be aware of. Yes.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, is there – are passing lanes allowed in speed zones like of 50 and 60 kilometres an hour speed zones?

Ms. Biggar: I'd have to look at the act. I doubt it, but I can't say specifically.

Mr. MacEwen: I apologize for the specifics, but there's a – quite a piece of section of road out in Fort Augustus, 60 kilometres an hour and there are passing zones in it. It's a fairly residential road; numerous houses after numerous houses.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: Kids and all that stuff. They've talked about requesting the signs and we talk about how that probably is not going to work.

They're concerned because it's a straight stretch where there is a passing zone. I'm wondering about maybe, at some point in time it probably was an, maybe, 80 and now

when they got it reduced back the lines just keep being painted and painted.

Is that something that we could look at? It doesn't make sense to me to have a passing zone with a speed zone of 60 kilometres.

Ms. Biggar: That does happen, hon. member, where that, as you say, it was originally it was 80 and so there would have been a passing.

We find, and this gets into traffic calming and all that piece again. We get requests from everywhere that, you know, they're speeding here and they're speeding there, I want the speed down. But by putting the speed down, it doesn't necessary mean that they're still going to not speed.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Similarly, if we put two double lines, you know, what I'm going to say next: it doesn't mean they're not going to cross –

Mr. MacEwen: No, absolutely.

Ms. Biggar: But how do we help calm that traffic, I guess? As you say, there's more laneways now between there that might not have been there originally, perhaps.

Mr. MacEwen: You're right. We've talked before about that stretch of road and the department has been very good. At the end of that road now with the roundabout and how much more traffic. Basically, it was a very residential road that's turned into a main through-fare for so many people now. That's kind of the issue that we've been facing for some time.

We'll work on that section –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: – through our road supervisor. I appreciate that.

Ms. Biggar: Sure.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, minister. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Land and Environment

Total Land and Environment: 2,566,500.

Total Land and Environment: 2,566,500.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Minister, I've mentioned this now for the last three years: How come we haven't yet cleaned up the rest of plan B in that area. And also, the department did a great job on the new, big, huge culvert up there in Tryon, but they continue to leave big mounds of dirt and fill there. It's the same thing down in Bonshaw, before you come into that area by the Esso, on that left hand side there's those big piles of crap that has never been cleaned up.

Ms. Biggar: I did raise this with the – it's not, I wouldn't term it that four-letter word.

Chair: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: But, hon. member, it is material –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – that the department may need from time to time. We have used portions of that for other projects that we might be doing. It is left there for that reason. It belongs to the department so that we can use it in those areas that, yeah –

Mr. Fox: So Chair –

Ms. Biggar: Some of it we did take some of the rocks, I believe, and put –

Mr. Fox: You could –

Ms. Biggar: – down around for shore protection –

Mr. Fox: The one before that, you did a great job –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: – you cleaned that one up.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: Then if the department owns all that substance are other companies allowed to go in and just take it out, or do they have to get a permit?

Ms. Biggar: They would have to get a permit or ask permission. We don't just give it away to everybody.

Mr. Fox: Because saying that, I recall seeing a construction company in at that one site with their trucks and loaders removing stuff.

Ms. Biggar: They may have been contracted by the department to do something for the department.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Okay?

Mr. Fox: But –

Ms. Biggar: I know –

Mr. Fox: – people find it unsightly –

Ms. Biggar: People see it there. I understand.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Okay?

Mr. Fox: Carry that.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

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Highway Maintenance Administration

Total Highway Maintenance Administration: 3,222,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Provincial Highway Maintenance Operations

Total Provincial Highway Maintenance Operations: 30,711,600.

Shall the –

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Chair, back a minute ago, I mentioned to you about the quality of shale. Do we actually do shale testing before we allow it to come out of certain pits?

What I have been told is that a prime example would be the Bradford Road. They hauled in shale last year. Yeah, last year and literally it was nothing more than mud. I just happened to go on the road and the grater was there. I got out and I said: How can you be spreading this –

An Hon. Member: Crap.

An Hon. Member: Junk.

Mr. Fox: – junk?

An Hon. Member: Say it.

Chair: No. Hon. member, hopefully you'll make sure that your words are tempered and worthy of this House.

Ms. Biggar: Let's try and use some different four-letter words.

Chair: Thanks.

Mr. Fox: It wasn't the fit stuff –

Ms. Biggar: The quality.

Mr. Fox: It wasn't quality.

I'm wondering, are we checking this stuff to find out what the quality is? Does it have to pass a test?

Ms. Biggar: We do try to get the highest quality that we can in a particular regional area. There are challenges, at times, to get high-quality shale. I will agree.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

With that –

Ms. Biggar: I'll have to bring that answer back.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

With that there is a real good shale pit down in Tryon out past Morely Wood's. There's a real good shale pit out in Wilmot that's owned by A.J.L. construction, there's another real good shale pit that's owned by Duffy Construction, but this stuff came in from up in the Wellington, Tyne Valley area.

Ms. Biggar: I don't think we have a shale pit in Tyne Valley –

Mr. Fox: That's why it was mud, minister.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Ms. Biggar: I know we don't. I know we don't have a shale pit in Tyne Valley. It should not have been transported. I don't know of anyone that is in Tyne Valley that has a shale pit, but I will go back and get that question answered for you.

Mr. Fox: That would be great.

I was asked this question about (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) all right (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Why do we pay the same cost for regular and premium (Indistinct) half of everybody in here doesn't even know what that is.

Ms. Biggar: I don't know what that is.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I'll be very honest. I do not know what (Indistinct) is.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) Bonshaw.

Ms. Biggar: I'm just being honest.

So, you tell me what (Indistinct) is –

Mr. Fox: Apparently it is –

Ms. Biggar: What is the definition of (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – is it a type of shale mixture that's used on the sub base or the base of road construction.

Ms. Biggar: Okay. Well again, that's a very technical question that I would rely on my engineers to answer and I will go back and get answers about (Indistinct) for you.

Mr. Fox: Final question on this section: Why did we drop from \$18 million down to \$15 million?

Ms. Biggar: In which section?

Chair: I think it's materials, supplies, and services.

Ms. Biggar: Okay. We didn't drop, actually. We didn't actually drop. If you look under materials, supplies, and services – you're looking?

Chair: Hon. members, we're having a hard time hearing the question and the response. The minister has the floor.

Ms. Biggar: We actually are forecasting over an expenditure there if you look across the line, hon. member, it's actually an increase.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: Okay?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: My question is on that increase, minister. It didn't strike me as particularly a difficult winter in terms of the roads, but maybe I'm wrong about that. Is that – the \$3 million overspend, was that related to weather conditions this winter?

Ms. Biggar: It related to summer maintenance, contract services increase. We were busier than normal last summer – for patching, extra culvert replacements, we also though, had an increase in salt usage as a result of that freeze and thaw that we had over the winter, and increased maintenance contracts. Under the contracts, there's a fuel adjustment in those contracts. Under that contract we have with contractors to do the work as a fuel adjustment.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: So all that increases is due to that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Can you tell us, minister, how much it costs for a tonne of road salt? If I remember –

Ms. Biggar: By the tonne –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's a lot.

Ms. Biggar: Just a moment here. I know we actually got 22,816 tonnes of salt spread in 2016-2017. I'm just trying to find that. But for per tonne, to break it down, I'll have to get you that per tonne.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: All right. I can't remember the figure, either, but I do remember being shocked. It was almost as much as a tonne of asphalt. They were comparable if I remember right; just absolutely shocked me.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So going back to the overspend from last year. You said, at least, that was in part because of the freeze/thaw cycles that we had.

Ms. Biggar: Yes. And the extra culverts, and cleanup, and roadside maintenance, and winter maintenance contract services. It was a combination.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So you're anticipating that those extra costs will not be incurred this year, I suppose, if we're going back down – slightly over the budget from last year estimated.

Ms. Biggar: Well, I guess we're hoping not, but – and we also took over the streets of Kensington and Alberton maintenance as well. But there's a bit of a decrease for bridge supplies and utilities.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right. Last question, Chair.

Do you have a breakdown of how much the snow clearing cost was across the province last year as compared to the year before, or even two years before?

Ms. Biggar: Is an increase funding for salt and snow removal contracts – CPI, that’s an adjustment for sure, but we don’t have the breakdown with us.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

The snow costs to the province; those are contracted out to subcontractors, right?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: When we don’t get as much snow as we have – for instance, this year – that’s not necessarily a cost-saving to the government, is it?

Ms. Biggar: No, because usually if it’s not snow, it usually means we have to put extra sand and extra salt because there’s a change in weather. So it doesn’t necessarily mean that there’s going to be a cost saving. We just have to budget it and then it may be saving in one, but transferred over to another under this whole section because of maintenance operations. But I’ll get a breakdown of what I can get for you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, but I guess what I’m saying, minister, is when I get somebody to clear my lane out, I can either pay them for every time they plow my lane out, or I can pay them for the winter and then it’s however many times they come. So the contracts that we have –

Ms. Biggar: That’s the way it is.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Is it the latter?

Ms. Biggar: It is.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So we pay them regardless of how many times they have to go out there.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, because they’re always on call 24 hours, seven days a week.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right. So whether they’re moving snow or whether they’re putting down salt and sand, it makes no difference to the – other than the material cost of salt and sand.

Ms. Biggar: Well it depends on what the contract is for. If it’s for snow, it’s for snow but –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right. That’s interesting.

Ms. Biggar: We usually have a combination now of snow and sand at the same time on the roads. When you’re going, you often see them plowing and spreading salt and sand at the same time.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, sure.

Just a comment because I get a lot of people – I live and represent a rural riding and they: Oh my gosh: the province must have saved all kinds of money this year on snow and that’s not the case.

Ms. Biggar: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I guess the corollary of that is that two years ago, when we had that massive snowfall, there would have been no extra expense to the province necessarily because of the amount of snow.

Ms. Biggar: Well, we had to bring in extra contractors under that condition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right, because it was so extreme.

Ms. Biggar: We needed to bring in extra, yes, so there was an extra cost.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, when we’re spreading that brine on the road, is there any threat of that going into – some of the people were wondering if that’s actually causing some of the pavement to breakup when it goes down inside and then the frost freezes and then – in the cracks. Is there any worry of that?

Ms. Biggar: No, that’s not attributed to that. The reason we have that fluctuation in our roads is the actual base of our – makeup of our land.

Wendy MacDonald Director: The bedrock.

Ms. Biggar: The bedrock itself.

Wendy MacDonald Director: No bedrock.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, so – and it fluctuates when it freezes. It's not attributed to the spread of the brine.

Mr. Fox: No, but is there any threat of that from going into the crack –

Ms. Biggar: Seeping.

Mr. Fox: – and then causing it to breakout?

Ms. Biggar: No, I wouldn't think so because it is a salt and brine combination. Any of that break up is not really attributed to that.

Mr. Fox: How long is that contract for?

Ms. Biggar: I'll have to check. I'm sorry.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mechanical Operations

Total Mechanical Operations: 11,841,000.

Shall the section carry?

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Is there any worry about them boxes that we bought – them slip in boxes from Ontario?

Ms. Biggar: Which boxes?

Mr. Fox: The boxes that go in the back of the plow trucks to spread.

Ms. Biggar: Right.

Mr. Fox: Is there any correlation with them causing extra breakage on them plow trucks because of the weight?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Fox: You're sure? Because that's –

Ms. Biggar: There might be some people who feel that, but we haven't found evidence.

Mr. Fox: Can we come back to the House with any information on what the normal plow truck in maintenance is taken compared to a truck with one of them boxes in it.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: I'll see what we can find.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Confederation Trail Maintenance

Total Confederation Trail Maintenance: 1,315,900.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I think I understand that the engineering department at UPEI are working on a design for new gates on the Confederation Trail. Any idea how far along they are with that and whether the department's going to implement that newer, safer design?

Ms. Biggar: No, I don't have an update on that, but I'll see –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total Highway Maintenance Operations carry? Carried.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Minister, if you could read this.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration 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.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, that this House adjourn until Friday, May 11th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

See you in the morning.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, May 11th, at 10:00 a.m.