

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recognize this is our sixth Friday in this sitting and it being Friday to welcome everyone here on the floor and those in the gallery and folks, who are taking it in from other locations.

It's a great time of year with various celebrations, not least of which this weekend will be Mother's Day. An opportunity to say, from this Chamber a Happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers in our province, and to the families who get together to celebrate with the mothers. It's a great time of year and a great occasion to be thankful for the blessings that we share, starting with our mothers.

Tomorrow, will be a big day for the graduates at UPEI, morning and afternoon convocations and recognition of their achievements, as well as those who will be receiving honorary degrees. I want to extend congratulations to everyone there.

In the gallery today we've got Cheryl MacLean and Ann Bevan-Baker, welcome Ann. Eddie Lund, Kevin Clory, great to have – I should have your name, but I don't, the regulars here, and people that pay close attention to what we're doing.

Three quick notices. One, of course, roadside clean-up. A lot of it is already done as we can see around in our various communities and thank everyone; our neighbours and our fellow Islanders for that great work. And, of course to the WI. And, it'll be another day of it. Then, onto the good work of collecting up and disposing of the garbage, the litter that has been gathered up.

Second, the Charlottetown Rural *High School Musical* started last night. Performances today and tomorrow. A lot of people get to take that in. Students from schools from across the province. It's a great

achievement for the students, who take part in that, and of course, the people, who help them put it together.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everyone a great weekend.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure to rise on Friday. As the Premier said: the end of another week here in the Legislative Assembly.

Of course, I want to send out all my best wishes to all the mothers and grandmothers out there that have the very special day coming up on Sunday.

Of course, I can't let that go without wishing my own mother, Elizabeth a very happy Mother's Day. I look forward to spending some time with her on Sunday.

I would also like to recognize a few people that joined us here; becoming more and more regulars all the time. Of course we have Kevin Clory over here; Cheryl MacLean, Eddie Lund and Ann has joined us, as well, today. It's great to see you here.

Once again, the weekend on PEI brings a lot of activities. Of course, there are a lot of celebrations around Mother's Day.

There's also an event tonight in Rustico that I wanted to highlight. It's a fundraising event for Lennon Recovery House. I know the hon. member behind me from Rustico did highlight on it just quickly yesterday, but I wanted to bring some emphasis again towards it.

It's not officially up and running yet, but Lennon Recovery House, when it is up and running, it is going to provide a tremendous service to Islanders that are in need.

Also, I am looking very much forward to the UPEI convocation tomorrow. I'm especially pleased that I will be able to attend both the morning and the afternoon and see many familiar faces walking across the stage. I

congratulate all of those individuals that have reached this milestone and stage in their lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's a pleasure to be in the House this morning on this gorgeous morning.

I want to welcome back our regulars, particularly Cheryl MacLean. Cheryl gives the warmest smiles and the biggest hugs when I arrive here in the morning. I really appreciate that. I need to say, right after that, that my wife is also here and I occasionally get warm hugs and lovely smiles from her, also.

When I came into the House this morning, the member behind me said: Oh, you'd better be on your best behaviour today, seeing me wife in the gallery. I informed him as I should inform all hon. members that she keeps an eye on every single one of us. It's not just me that's under the eagle eye of Ann and –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: - and with Mother's Day –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – approaching, I just want to mention what an incredibly wonderful and kind mother she is to our four children.

Also, to the mother of all of us, Mother Earth; I know that we have our climate change strategy being released today and I'm really glad to see that and I look forward to hearing all about that later this morning.

I also would like to mention the *High School Musical* which is going on, the Charlottetown Rural, and particularly the music teacher there, Mark Parsons, who is an incredibly inspiring and devoted music teacher to all of the children at that school.

This morning on the radio I think many of us would have heard Dianne Young from Lennon Recovery House in a very touching and moving interview. Students from Bluefield High School have built benches for the facility that she has inspired in Rustico, and I would just like to make special mention of the incredible work that that mother has done since the loss of her son and for that amazing institution that she has conjured out of thin air, really, so thank you, Dianne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone here and send greetings out as well to all mothers, to all grandmothers, to all caregivers who have made a contribution in the lives of a significant youth or person that they've cared for over their life and to recognize that mothering comes in many different forms. I want to recognize that and to wish everyone a Happy Mother's Day. If they can't be with their loved ones, to hopefully have communication with them on Mother's Day.

I also want to send a Happy Mother's Day out, if I may Mr. Speaker, to my mother, Pauline Dymont, who is a resident of Stewart Memorial Manor in Tyne Valley.

And also on Mother's Day, in Tyne Valley, at 2:30 p.m. in the afternoon we'll be gathering for the Special Olympic torch run through the valley and up to the fire hall to have a reception to honour our local Special Olympians in the community. So, I hope the community will get out and support them as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought I had someone in the public gallery, but they must have left.

I'll take this opportunity to –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Now that you're up.

Mr. Murphy: – wish all mothers across Prince Edward Island – first, welcome all the guests in our public gallery, but to wish all mothers right across Prince Edward Island a Happy Mother's Day and I would take this opportunity to wish my mom, Leona, a Happy Mother's Day, my mother-in-law, Arlene, a Happy Mother's Day, and of course the main woman in my life, my wife, Karen, and wonderful mother and supporter of mine. She does a lot to support all of us as we make our way through life, and I really appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to rise and welcome everybody who is watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and of course everyone here in the gallery.

I wanted to welcome Cheryl MacLean, my new friend, and also Kevin Clory who has been a good friend and supporter. I want to point out that Kevin Clory really gets out to the coffee shops in the community. I think he was at Receivers this morning. He's a big fan, a supporting local, which of course I support as well, so thank you for that, Kevin.

I also wanted to just mention Lennon Recovery House and the big benefit that's happening tonight. It's an excellent – it's a grassroots – it's a community-driven project. They're going to need government's support if they're going to be successful. I know we saw some grants in budget estimates yesterday in rural and regional development. So, I hope we see more of that and we see some support from health and wellness going forward. I know he's on Dianne Young's profile picture, the minister, so I hope that's a good sign.

I also wanted to just give a heartfelt thanks to my wife, the mother of our children, and my life partner. She actually – I want to congratulate her. She just got a new job as

well. She's into her second week at the School of Sustainable Design Engineering at UPEI. She's a business development engineer; very smart lady. Thank goodness that she's able to run our household and keep everything in line.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to rise and welcome everybody in the gallery as well and send out a special Happy Mother's Day to my mom and for what she does for our family and my children, and all her grandchildren, and also to my wife, Elizabeth, and also to, it's been mentioned, Lennon Recovery House.

Listening to the interview this morning, Leo MacDonald, the instructor at Bluefield High School who is forgoing building the benches with the students – I think it's a great initiative. Leo is actually a double cousin to my wife; two sisters married two brothers, which is not that common, but just a shout-out to Leo and the good things that they do and we all know that our trades are extremely important to Prince Edward Island, and our labour shortage; hopefully some of those students graduate and go on to become Red Seals in the construction industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the other members have, I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize and thank my mother, Judith Bayliss, who is watching, I think, on video and despite having retired this year, is probably working more than any of us put together as she always has and without her, I wouldn't be able to do the work that I'm doing here. So, it's really great to be able to recognize her.

I'd also like to recognize Ann, who despite the stumbling of partner here is eagle eyed, not evil eyed.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here to the gallery and those watching at home too.

Happy Mother's Day to my wife, Anita, and my mother, Arlene, as well.

I know a few people mentioned about Dianne Young already. I was listening too, and got emotional as I listened to it too; just a wonderful job by Dianne and I encourage everybody to help out.

I know when I was talking to the Member from Souris-Elmira quite early this morning, and I know he always ingests – talks about all the hard work he's doing up in Souris. But do you know what? He's auxiliary coastguard. He was towing in a boat this morning quite early when I know he could have been out there; likely had a lot of other things to do so I just want to give a shout-out to all the auxiliary coastguard boats out there. Thank you for all you're doing.

We've been – myself, personally, we've been giving a lot of ministers a hard time over the Community Development Fund the last few days going through budget estimates and that type of thing, and we were talking about the cut from \$5 million to \$2.5 million and I know a few local projects too I know will get done in the background. But, I was thinking about it last night and I do want to talk about the – in estimates we were talking about the guidelines and evaluation. All that stuff is important, but for that fund especially, I really do appreciate the government's flexibility and willingness to work on projects like that.

I've been involved for a number of years previous to being an MLA too, and I know a lot of people have been as well.

Mr. Myers: He wants something.

Mr. MacEwen: But, with that kind of fund – it's not a big, big fund, but I do know that they're flexible and they make things work.

When you look at the list and you see certain projects that do they really fit that or not? We know locally in that community that it does really well. So, I do want to thank the ministers for their flexibility in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

High School Musical

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

I am pleased to rise to today and recognize Charlottetown Rural High School on their musical taking place from May 10th to the 12th.

When director Richard Haines was looking for a musical for the students at Charlottetown Rural, he knew the *High School Musical* would be a natural fit.

Countless numbers of young people grew up watching *High School Musical* on television or listening to the CD. The musical, in fact, became the soundtrack of many lives.

It was a natural choice for the student company, comprised of 60 to 70 students who are actively engaged as actors, dancers, musicians and stage crew, including 24 students, involved in set painting and other work behind-the-scenes.

The musical is based on a Disney Channel original movie. It's a story about Troy Bolton, the star athlete at a small-town high school, who falls for nerdy beauty Gabriella Montez at a holiday karaoke party. Gabriella is played by Emma-Jane Webster-Lawrence, and Troy is played by Stratford's own Julian Kitson. I know Emma-Jane and Julian both have amazing voices and will work extremely well together.

The *High School Musical* is on stage until tomorrow at the Homburg Theater, at Confederation Center of the Arts, and curtain time is at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the box office and I encourage

all Islanders to come out and enjoy an excellent show.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Pinette Raceway

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today and recognize the importance of the Pinette Raceway in my district Belfast-Murray River.

Pinette Raceway is hidden over the crest of a hill overlooking the Pinette River. You get there by turning down a clay road just past the Pinette Bridge on the Trans-Canada Highway about 40 kilometres east of Charlottetown.

The Pinette matinee raceway is a place that locals and visitors come to enjoy the simple pleasures of watching the horses and the races. It's a place where I went every week with my grandfather. It's where I found my love of horseracing. It's a place where young people first come out to learn the ropes, both trainers and drivers before they move onto Charlottetown and Summerside.

There's no betting on winners. Well, no official betting; it's a place to come and enjoy the simple pleasure of enjoying the sport and having a good time.

There are no lights over the track so races have to be over by the time the sun sets over the Pinette causeway. The Pinette Raceway is a tradition that dates back many years and it brings out many from the community and surrounding areas to enjoy the races.

Races begin for the season next Wednesday, May 16th, at 6:00 p.m. This summer, I would encourage all of you to come out to the Pinette Raceway. Take your family. Take your friends and I can assure you, you will have a good time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Minimum Speed Limits

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, last week the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road spoke of the need to build additional passing lanes on Route 2 for the safety of the travelling public.

This suggestion has merit and should be acted upon. However, previously in this Legislature, I proposed a less expensive option that would enhance additional passing lanes. Minimum speed limits on the same roads, for safety, and the expectation that people and goods could be transported in the least possible time.

If we are building a multi-million dollar bypass around Cornwall to economically save a few minutes of drive-time, do outlying, rural communities like Tignish deserve to have drive-time savings considering they are presently two-and-a-half hours' drive to Charlottetown.

If the province is not willing to regulate minimum limits with certain vehicle capability exceptions, I am requesting they adopt the following signage policy.

The erection of signage below the posted speed limit sign that reads, as follows:

Please maintain the posted speed limit for the courtesy and safety of all motorists.

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.

This government's Provincial Nominee Program continues to generate a lot of controversy in the national media. It also generates a lot of money for this province.

Dollars into PNP program versus bad publicity

Question to the Premier: Which matters more to you, the money or the bad publicity?

Mr. Trivers: Don't hold back.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what matters to me is that our province do well. That we achieve the goals that have been outlined in our population action –

Mr. Myers: At any cost.

Premier MacLauchlan: – plan. I'm proud to say –

Mr. Myers: Even fraud is okay.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that we are surpassing those goals –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – and that that is happening in communities throughout our province, and communities throughout our province from Tignish to Guernsey Cove; a lot of great activity; building our culture; diversifying our population and our talent.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of that.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: No holds barred, even fraud (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Between 2015 and 2017 the province actually cashed in \$27 million in forfeited PNP deposits; a huge windfall.

Forfeited deposits and immigration rules

Question to the Premier: Didn't these forfeited deposits give your government 27 million reasons to look the other way when it came to enforcing immigration rules?

Mr. Myers: All about the money.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned –

Mr. Myers: All the way to the way to China.

Premier MacLauchlan: – earlier and yesterday the question of reputation –

Mr. Myers: And your buddy who took you there.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and it may have missed the attention of the official opposition because we haven't heard a peep about it, that on January 19th of this year, *The Globe and Mail* had a feature, front page piece for the weekend edition promoting Prince Edward Island as Canada's immigration lab. As of the place that Canada could learn from in terms of people –

Mr. Trivers: Everybody makes mistakes –

Premier MacLauchlan: – coming here –

Mr. Myers: They're going to want a correction on that one.

Premier MacLauchlan: – staying, doing well and contributing as Prince Edward Islanders and Canadians and we should all be proud of that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

According to court documents, 99% of the clients were approved by the PEI government. One possible outcome of this investigation could be that some, or all, of these 566 nominations signed by the province could be rescinded by the federal government.

Legal implications re: approvals of PNP nominees

Question to the Premier: What would the legal implications be for PEI if the federal government were to rescind all or a large number of approved provincial nominees?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These charges that we're talking about are in relation to individuals who gave false information to the federal government, not to the province.

We continue to work with the federal government to provide all the information that we can to make –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) investigated (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – sure that they can get to the bottom of this and hold those that are responsible –

Mr. Trivers: How much are they going (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – hold them to account –

Mr. Myers: Shameful.

Mr. Palmer: – so again. They gave false information to the federal government, not to the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Provincial nominees pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to government in fees. With hundreds of nominees involved the total could certainly run into the millions.

Financial implications re: approvals of PNP nominees

Question to the Premier: What are the financial implications for the province if the federal government were to rescind large numbers of these approved provincial nominees?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immigration is one of the components of our population strategy. We have lots of new businesses continuing to operate in PEI. Our population continues to grow for the first time – 2017 –

Mr. Trivers: It's a revolving door. Open your eyes.

Mr. Palmer: – was the first time our population was over 150,000 –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) in one instance (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – so, we're very happy to continue to grow our –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – population. Recruitment is one of those ways we do it. Retention is another, and immigration is one –

Mr. Myers: They'd have to park all the way to Walmart.

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier referenced a story that ran in *The Globe and Mail* that ran back in January. I've said before a well-run immigration program matters, deeply matters for our economic future.

But, if these investigation results in hundreds of provincial nominees being rescinded, that will be a huge black eye for this province.

Successful marketing of PEI as immigration destination

Question to the Premier: How can we successfully market PEI as an immigration destination if scandals like this are what turns up in a Google search?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our programs continues to improve. Over the past 10 years, we've made recommendations – we have implemented all the recommendations made by the

Auditor General. Our retention rates have improved. And we now have an expression of interest model that includes a community endorsement letter –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) for sale (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – from various –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – communities –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – in our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's one troubling case highlighted in the court warrants this week and it's a three-person family from 2015. **Ms. Lee** and her three-person family were stopped in September, 2015 at the Vancouver Airport when they gave the Sherwood Motel as their address.

Of course, by that point border services had that address already flagged. The family told border services that their immigration consultant was Tony and he gave them the Sherwood Motel address. They didn't know Tony's name they only had a Vancouver number for Tony.

BC Tony and Sherwood Motel address

Question to the minister: Why would BC Tony have given these already approved PEI clients a Sherwood motel address?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These charges are in relation to individuals who allegedly gave false information to the federal government, not to the provincial government.

Mr. MacKay: That you signed off on.

Mr. Palmer: We continue to work with them – with border services – so we can get to the bottom of this from a program that's 10 years old.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to remind the minister that late 2015 wasn't 10 years ago. This government had already changed the program and these clients were approved and they were already committing residency fraud when they were allowed in by this government.

BC Tony told the family his immigration company was based in Beijing and run by his wife, but when border services checked on BC Tony, he was not, and still is not a registered agent in Canada. The PEI client family then admitted to border services: Tony told them this was the place where their permanent residency cards would come to.

Approved clients in Vancouver with PEI addresses

Question to the minister: How is it that in 2015 approved PEI clients were still landing in Vancouver with cover stories that had fake addresses in a motel in Sherwood?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These charges relate to investors from the program from 2008 and it is false information given to the federal government, not the provincial government. The expression of interest model that we have now includes a community endorsement letter and we also have residency verification that we look for purchase or lease agreements for a house, we want utility bills with PEI address, we're looking for income tax forms proving PEI residency, and all other documentation that will support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's doing a terrible job trying to run away from this. You know the Premier is tied right tight to Frank Zhou because he was in China with him with Anne. We know Frank Zhou's tied to probably all these people.

Let's go back to this family that landed that were defrauding all of the Canadian government. The next day, September, 2015, the family flew from Vancouver to Charlottetown and they were under the watchful eye of border service agencies. Upon landing, they were met at the airport by a man – this guy who's now up on federal charges – and they drove off in his car.

Meeting at Charlottetown Airport with program families

Question to the minister: Why do you suppose the motel fraudster met with one of the government's program families at the Charlottetown Airport at 2:00 a.m. in the morning?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, again, these charges are related to individuals that gave false information to the federal government –

Mr. MacKay: That you signed off on.

Mr. Palmer: – not the provincial government.

An Hon. Member: You cashed a cheque.

Mr. Palmer: They allegedly gave the false information to the federal government.

We continue to work with border services to support them because we're not interested in this kind of behavior. This is not the people we're trying to attract to PEI and if there's any wrongdoing, we're very happy to work

with border services to get to the bottom of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: So this story is probably a lot bigger than Tony because we know the Premier went to China with Frank Zhou, who was one of the major intermediaries for bringing Chinese people to the Island

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – who are defrauding –

Pardon me?

Mr. J. Brown: Say that outside the rail.

Mr. Myers: Are you challenging me outside the rail?

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: The minister of education is challenging me outside the rail during Question Period. Follow me out when this is over and I'll say whatever I feel like.

This motel fraudster and his family drove right by the Sherwood Motel after they were picked up and they went to the Delta. The Delta staff later confirmed that the reservation was booked through a third party from BC. The fraudster picked them up from the Delta in the morning and took them to the Innovation PEI office. So now you can stop saying this has nothing to do with you and this is federal people. They went right inside with the family and met with government.

Meetings at government offices

Question to the minister: Why in September, 2015 was no one from the government concerned when a stranger was picking people up at the airport and taking them down to government offices, walking inside, and meeting with government officials with them.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope the hon. member is passing all the information that he think he has along to the federal government because they're trying to get to the bottom of this because that's where the false information –

Mr. Myers: I'm not being investigated for fraud. You're the one being investigated.

Mr. Palmer: – was being delivered from to the federal government –

Mr. Myers: You're the one being investigated for fraud here, not me.

Mr. Palmer: – not to the province.

Mr. Myers: I didn't commit any fraud, you're the one.

Speaker: Order! Order!

Go ahead hon. minister.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I don't know if they could hear over the shouting, but I certainly hope that they would pass that information along to federal agents because they seem to think they have some information that maybe the feds don't, but this is false information given to the federal government.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) that's shameful. (Indistinct) embarrassed this province. You're shameful, shameful, shameful.

Speaker: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Myers: He's got nothing to say.

Mr. Palmer: This is false information that was allegedly given to the federal government, not to the province. We're there to continue to support the federal government as they get to the bottom of this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) your office.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've never seen such an embarrassing attempt to run away from questions in my life. I've never seen a more embarrassing attempt in my days in this House from somebody trying to hide the truth from Islanders. This is an embarrassment – a national embarrassment to Prince Edward Island. You guys were at the helm of it. You've been at the helm of it since 2008, according to you, embarrassing Islanders over an immigration program. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Minister: How many separate interviews did these two individuals sit in on with your government and your officials about immigration here on Prince Edward Island?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to support the federal government so that we can get to the bottom of this because we do know it is serious.

Mr. Trivers: Find out the information and bring it back (Indistinct).

Mr. Palmer: We've continued to improve our immigration program.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: We've continued to improve our immigration program.

Mr. Trivers: Islanders want to know. They're tired of your games.

Mr. Palmer: We've continued to improve our immigration program since 2008 and we've evolved it to the point where we now have an expression of interest model.

Mr. Trivers: Maybe we can bring witness to public accounts. Oh wait a minute, government keeps voting them down – can't do that.

An Hon. Member: The PCs don't know the answers.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After his interview with government, this motel fraudster and his clients walked next door to Service Canada, where border service surveillance observed the fraudster helping the family fill out social insurance forms and verbally confirmed the Sherwood Motel as their address to federal staff. Social insurance numbers, as we all know, are very valuable in Canada and can be used to access programs like Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan and numerous other things.

Residency fraud and PNP program (further)

Question to the minister: How was this blatant fraud happening right here in Charlottetown under your government and signed off on as late as 2015?

Mr. Fox: In your offices.

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, the alleged false information was given to the federal government –

An Hon. Member: You cashed the cheque.

Mr. Fox: In your building.

Mr. Palmer: – not to the provincial government.

Mr. Myers: Social insurance numbers work here in PEI too.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last fall, when this government's PNP program generated national headlines over revolving door business startups, the Leader of the Opposition Pressed this government over how it evaluates the success of the program. In response, the government belatedly released the March 18th, 2016 evaluation of the program.

Verification of legitimacy of provincial nominees

Question to the economic development minister: What did this report have to say about how government verifies the legitimacy of its own provincial nominees?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our immigration model currently is looking – our improved program requires all of the following information for residency: lease agreements or purchase of a house, tax returns confirming PEI as a province of residence –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) recycling answers now.

Mr. Palmer: – utility bills confirming residency of PEI –

Mr. Trivers: Answer the question.

Mr. Palmer: – letters from schools confirming dependence, and Visa and Mastercard. I'm repeating this because it doesn't seem like they seem to be listening on the other side. Maybe they don't want the answers they just want to ask the questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Compton: Well regardless of what the minister is telling us, in that report, they were silent on the topic – perhaps not surprising given this week's federal charges being laid.

Program evaluation of PNP and agreement

Question to the economic development minister: Why do you think a program evaluation of PNP wouldn't look at how many nominees actually fulfilled the terms of their agreement?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to be clear: the province is not under investigation.

Mr. Fox: Yes they are.

Mr. Palmer: The federal government were the ones that received, allegedly, false information, not the province. We cooperated with border services –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Palmer: There are no charges against the province of PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct). You stand up for fraudsters.

Mr. Trivers: Be accountable.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll read from that report:

Reporting indicates progress toward the goal of recruiting and settling the full number of nominees allocated by the CIC. However, no reports include specific action steps through which IIDI plans to attain that goal.

Question to the economic development minister: Don't you think that's a pretty big piece of the immigration puzzle to be left missing?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our retention rates continue to grow. In 2014 –

Mr. Myers: 601 motel –

Mr. MacKay: So does your bank account.

Mr. Palmer: – they were 53%. In 2015, it was 57%. Another improvement, and we

have our expression of interest model – is we engage the community.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) retention numbers before they leave at the end of the year.

Mr. Palmer: So, there's community endorsement letters, and immigrants are talking to various communities and they're getting support of those communities because they want them to come to their community to help them grow the economy –

Mr. Trivers: The PNP program is selling passports.

Mr. Palmer: – help them grow the population –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and grow diversity here in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It would be interesting to know whether those 601 and 255 or whatever it was, supposed residents are part of our population increase.

I'll read further from the government's own review of its program:

In a sample of reports reviewed, targets were not incorporated into the reports and management review was not formally documented. Similarly, the reports did not incorporate a comparison of actual results to the plan submitted to the federal government or immigration figures allocated to PEI.

No targets. No management review. No comparison of the plan you submitted to the feds to the actual results.

Potential fraud from beginning of program

Question to the economic development minister: Wasn't that a recipe for potential fraud from the very beginning in this program?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to improve our program. We now have an expression of interest model, and we have communities involved, and they are meeting with immigrants –

Mr. Fox: Trying to figure out (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and working with them to get endorsement letters to go to those communities, because we know various communities are interested in growing their population and bringing new economic ideas, bringing new economic development. We're very happy to have that as one of the pillars of our population growth strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Yesterday, the long awaited referendum act was read a first time. In the 2017 throne speech in reference to their proposed referendum, government committed to, and I quote: Do everything within the scope of its responsibility to assure clarity, fairness, and the inclusion of all voices during this process.

These principles were so fundamental that government repeated them in motion 43 calling on the Legislative Assembly to adopt a clear question for the upcoming referendum. So far, nobody, other than government members, have had an opportunity to speak to this motion, and the Legislature has not yet voted on it and yet here we are with the act in front of us.

We also have heard concerns from Islanders that there has been no public consultation.

Fairness and inclusion on Motion 43

A question to the Premier: How do you reconcile this process with the promise of the 2017 throne speech to assure, and I quote: Fairness and the inclusion of all voices?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Third Party may recall that in December of last year he was approached, as was the Leader of the Opposition, and invited to join me in signing an invitation to the Electoral Boundaries Commission to prepare the map that was intended to educate Islanders and to provide a sample of what would be involved in mixed-member proportional representation and they both declined.

That's one of several examples of how we have indeed endeavored to engage a dialogue around this and it hasn't been that much activity from the other side.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

When speaking to motion 43, the Premier made much of his role in the Supreme Court decision around the clarity question.

Legal actions and referendum act

Could you explain to us, Premier, the legal basis upon which your referendum act combined future governments in violation of the principle of Parliamentary sovereignty?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the referendum will take place in conjunction with a general election. There will be people who have their names on a ballot in that general election, and I expect their electors will have an opportunity to ask them whether they intend, those on the ballot, to go through with the result of the referendum.

That is really the foundation of Parliamentary democracy, is to hold an election at which people put forward positions and come back, those who are

elected, to live up to what took place in the course of the election. That is the ultimate in democracy and a Parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

Written legal opinions re: survival of court challenge

Well, a further question to the Premier: Can you provide this House with all of the written legal opinions that you have received to ensure that this referendum would survive a court challenge?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear.

We are, and have been saying now for two years and going back to the white paper that was presented in this House in July of 2015 on a course that has been engaged with Prince Edward Islanders, we said in the fall of 2016 that we would respect what took place in that plebiscite by giving Islanders an opportunity to have a clear question, to give a clear answer, and that is the foundation on which this bill is brought forward and it is in that principle and in that spirit, and in the interest of allowing Islanders to have their say, that we are presenting this bill and we'll have an opportunity to consider it here in this House.

That's the ultimate constitutional principle on which we are here. It's democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

My question is for the minister of agriculture. I think everyone in this House, and most everybody across the province, realizes the value of our agriculture and our fisheries to this province. I know that's just

what this minister's department stands for. I know we have a fantastic staff over there and we have great programs.

Programs for farmers and fishers

I'm just wondering what the minister could tell us what you're doing to ensure that all of our farmers and fishers are quite aware of the programs that are within your department.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is that our department has a very impressive group of professionals who focus solely on making sure that we can grow our agriculture and fisheries commodities and make sure that we're providing safe and traceable biosecurity measures as well as food measures.

One of the issues is, is from our staff, we hire very professional staff and they focus on the protocols of making sure they're delivering good customer service and feedback and information to our farmers and fishers.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your first supplementary.

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

Again this year we're hearing stories about vehicles being driven over some farmers' fields, which is very unfortunate. I know it's only being done by a few, but if someone is driving over a soy bean field or a field of winter wheat, or even a hay field, this is the farmer's livelihood and it's quite distressing that this would be happening. It is the farmer's livelihood.

Disrespect for farmers' fields

I'm wondering what the minister can tell us: How do we get the message out to those few who are violating the farmers' fields and what your department may be doing to get this message out as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, that's a very good point and it really saddens me as the minister of agriculture hearing that there would be people out there that would be denigrating some of our land. Farmers put a big investment into their crops, whether that's the forage crops, alfalfa hay crops and some of those things, as well as dealing with winter wheat and winter rye and some of those things.

These are people that are trying to make a livelihood, and when people disrespect landowners, it saddens me. As far as trying to make sure that we're aware of that, we do encourage landowners to contact the RCMP, law enforcement agencies, or the Department of Communities, Land and Environment conservation officers and (Indistinct) that, they are certainly welcome to contact our department and we'll give them the proper information.

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

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another issue has to do with, in the livestock industry, the biosecurity; our farmers are pushed now to spend a lot more dollars with regards to this and it is very important. I mean we are wanting our consumers to consume our products.

Issues of biosecurity

I'm just wondering what the department is doing to help our farmers with this issue of biosecurity.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, Prince Edward Island certainly has a global reputation as Canada's Food Island. We have a high commitment to food safety and quality of food products.

Our department does recognize that having an efficient traceability system that addresses food safety and animal health issues as paramount.

We are working with – we, actually, have now a provincial vet that is working with all of the sectors; livestock sectors out there to develop biosecurity protocols. It is our provincial responsibility to make sure traceability of livestock, wherever they may go, that we can trace, that should an outbreak of some disease or a contagion that might impact our industries, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Recruitment of doctors in West Prince

Minister: Can you give an update to the House on the doctor situation in West Prince. Including how many doctors have shown an interest and maybe how many doctors have actually visited West Prince?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, over the last while, there has been an incredible amount of activity on that file. Just in the last four weeks alone the good staff and the good folks at recruitment and retention have interviewed seven physicians for that area. We have another two interviews scheduled for early next week.

As well, last week, we were able to work with the community of West Prince to have one physician in for a site visit. We currently have two more that are coming in June with a third coming in July.

We are very hopeful that we, because of that work, we will be rewarded with a couple of doctors for the West Prince area, at least, hopefully, by summer, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, in other jurisdictions, there are physician assistants. If we were to have them practicing in West Prince this could alleviate some of the pressures that are put on the doctors that are presently working now; probably help the potential doctors coming here, especially with emergency room coverage.

Physician assistants

Minister: Can you explore, or have you explored the possibility of a physician assistant as some other provinces have them in place?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Currently, physician assistants are not – it's not a regulated profession for work on Prince Edward Island. Currently, to the best of my knowledge, there are none practicing here on PEI.

They do have to work under direct supervision of a physician. In most cases, as you kind of mentioned there, most of their work, a physician assistant in other jurisdictions, is done usually in trauma situations, or ER situations.

In the area of West Prince we are currently not focusing on acute care, but more primary care. We are looking to attract family physicians, nurse practitioners to the area. We are not actually out recruiting physician assistants at this time, but that is something that could be looked at in the future.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do understand that the physician assistants are primarily for – they would help in the emergency coverage, especially. Some doctors potentially don't want to go out to an area if they have to do emergency room coverage. This might help entice some new doctors to come and take the pressure off the existing doctors that are there.

I know of one physician assistance who is actually living in the Alberton area. He works out west, out in Alberta. He flies out there to work. He is monitored, or affiliated with a doctor in Newfoundland. We have that resource in our own backyard.

I think it would only make sense to use our own resources to help with the current doctor situation in West Prince.

Minister: Will you seriously consider this as an option?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I think absolutely we could look at considering this as an option. Obviously, up to this point, we have not had any requests for physician assistants.

It's a bit timely. Approximately, a year ago, we were doing some work in regards to that, but it was determined at the time it may not have been a viable option.

As we move forward this summer with the registered health professional act, there is an opportunity for regulation for physician assistants on Prince Edward Island. And absolutely, we'd be interested in taking a look at that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Excluding students from PISA

Question to the minister of education: Can you explain how the process works to exclude a student from writing common assessments like PISA?

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

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

This is not a process that I have the step-by-step detail in respect of right now. I can bring that back.

What I will say is that this process is very well defined in terms of what is set out by PISA. PISA is operated by the OECD, which is a major international group of the top performing countries in the world in terms of their economies and the education systems that they have, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Decision on student exclusion

Question to the minister: Who has the final say on a student exclusion, the teacher or the department?

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

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

Again, I'm not 100% certain on that, so I'm not going to say one way or another here today. Again, this is done in very close adherence to guidelines that are set out by the OECD and the operation of their PISA assessments. They monitor this. When the reports are performed, there is an audit that's done on that information. It's ensured that that information is correct and that the standards have been adhered to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For international student assessments like PISA no more than 5% of students should be excluded from taking the tests.

When Island students last wrote the PISA in 2015, the government excluded close to 12%. In 2012, more than 8% of Island students were excluded.

Exclusion rates in PEI

Question to the minister: Were you assure Islanders when Island students write PISA

this year, that our exclusion rate won't exceed the 5% ceiling?

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

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

What I can assure this House is that our education system takes the PISA testing very seriously, as we do with the other tests that we do and have had success in, such as PCAP.

We have had a great deal of interaction with the folks that operate this testing. We know, as an example, Andreas Schleicher has commented and he's the fellow that is the head of the PISA testing from OECD, and said: Prince Edward Island's exclusion rate was high because we include so many students in our regular classes. He goes on to say: Inclusive education is Prince Edward Island's strength and it provides a high degree of equity for students.

PISA and the OECD have certified that the results that Prince Edward Island delivered were accurate and were well within the guidelines. We would take their word for it and we would propose to adhere to those guidelines and do it again.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks for freedom of information requests from the media, Islanders learned more this week about how fixated government is with assessments like PISA and how far they'll go to avoid poor results.

Reducing sample size for PISA test

Question to the minister: Why was government trying to find ways to reduce the sample size and have fewer Island students write the PISA test?

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

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where this opposition is coming from sometimes, lately with their questions.

I can say that this is absolutely not the case. Again, we have seen results, like our latest PCAP results that demonstrate the great work that Island teachers have been doing and the great work that Island students have been doing. Those follow on the 2015 PISA results.

We are talking about an overall program that has demonstrated improvement in the education system in Prince Edward Island over the past 10 years, where we have come from a position of being closer to the bottom of the pack, in terms of performance in Canada, to the top of the pack. That's something to be proud of. We're one of the top countries in the world when it comes to education and we're near the top of that pack.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The deputy minister of the day was exploring the idea of excluding entire schools from writing the PISA test based on their socio-economic status.

Excluding schools based on socio-economic status

Question to the minister: I find that appalling. How can you boast about an inclusive school system if you're trying to exclude students based on their socio-economic status?

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

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

This just goes to show where the opposition is coming from with this. The indication is that at the time there was an effort to determine who would be or who would not be excluded. There's no allegation, I don't think, here today that there was anybody improperly excluded along those lines.

I should say that in other provinces, there are large exclusion rates based on schools in different areas of the provinces. This opposition can't take 'yes' for an answer. Our students are doing well. We need to celebrate that. This is another way that we recognize that, and we will continue to take the information we garner out of these tests and we will continue to feed –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – that back into our loop that is set out to improve student performance in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) teachers and students.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. Myers: Calm down (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I do agree our students are doing great. That's why I find it unbelievable that you're trying to cut 12% of them out due to their social-economic status. It comes from a previous deputy minister in your department.

Exclusion of schools re: socioeconomic status

Question to the minister: Which schools was government planning to exclude based on their socioeconomic status?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

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

Again, our education system on Prince Edward Island is probably the most inclusive education system in our country. Many of the other provinces in this country have entirely different schools for students that we would have in our regular classrooms. That does present interesting challenges that we do have to deal with.

Let me say it also adds a great deal of perspective to the students that we do have in those classrooms. It builds empathy. These are all skills that the OECD is looking at as being very important in their upcoming PISA assessment.

I expect that we'll continue to do well on these assessments because of the inclusivity and the equality that we have in our Prince Edward Island education system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Excluding students like that would be really stigmatizing and a terrible message.

Question to the minister: How was your government planning to exclude students based on their socioeconomic status? Were you going to have students ask to bring their parents' tax returns in?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: You're fudging the numbers.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: You are. 12%. You pick and choose. Minister of everything – knows everything.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Have some morals. Do you not feel guilty (Indistinct) do?

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

Mr. Myers: You'd have to have a conscience for that.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you.

Mr. MacKay: I know. You must have to put that on a form to be signed.

Speaker: Members, let the minister answer the question.

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

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

Again, there are guidelines that are set out in respect of all of these programs, whether it be PISA or PCAP or any of the assessments that we do. We adhere to those guidelines, we insure that we know what they are and understand. We're always trying to ensure that students are doing better. That's what our education system is all about here on Prince Edward Island.

That's why we've added 161 frontline positions to our compliment over the last 12 months. We are trying every day to try to do our utmost to improve the lives and the education of Island students, whether that be right from the age zero where we're now recognized to be the top early years education system in the country –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – right through to PCAP results that came out and indicated that we're doing very well at the intermediate level. We need to recognize this; we need to celebrate it; and we need to continue to support our Island students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

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

Climate Change Action Plan

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House today that I will be tabling Prince Edward Island's climate change action plan.

[Applause]

I want to thank all the people who have contributed to this plan, Mr. Speaker, and there has been many over the last couple of years.

Mr. Trivers: Great minister.

Mr. R. Brown: The Earth's climate is warming and there is overwhelming scientific evidence that human activity is causing the change. In particular, with the burning of fossil fuels.

Every day we see the evidence of more extreme weather events; rising sea levels, and coastal flooding. Our Climate Change Action Plan will provide a framework for both, adapting to new forces, and that are reshaping our environment, and reducing our carbon footprint.

The plan includes a greenhouse gas emission target. The target is 30% below 2005 levels by 2030 –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: This will serve as a key indicator measuring the success of our efforts on reducing emissions.

I have 100% confidence that Islanders will meet that challenge. They have in the past and I know they will in the future.

It aligns with the 2015 Paris agreement reached with Canada and 194 countries requiring all nations to put forth their best effort to fight climate change.

The actions outlined in this plan provide practical solutions to help us adapt to changing climate and reduce greenhouse emissions.

We are taking a cooperative approach. A made-in-Prince Edward Island approach, with strategic investments in energy and the environment to build a sustainable future for all Islanders. The plan will support Islanders in their daily lives as we work together to meet these targets.

It identifies provincial priorities and will guide the development of policies and programs to help us transition to a low-carbon-climate economy.

Islanders have a long history of taking action on climate change. We lead the country in wind production. We are a leader in waste management. With the 2011 PEI Energy Accord Islanders began to switch home-heating fuels from expensive, carbon-

filled fossil fuels to cleaner, cheaper energy sources.

We took another step towards making cleaner energy more affordable for Islanders with the 2018-2019 operating budget. The budget provides rebates on the provincial HST on residential electric bills, and low-emitting sources, such as firewood, wood pellets and propane.

While the province is already the second-lowest emitter per capita in Canada, we will build our record of low-emissions and develop and approach that makes sense for Islanders and the economy of Prince Edward Island.

We will also partner with the federal government to offer low-carbon economy fund programs to assist Islanders as they make changes to reducing their carbon footprint.

I look forward to working with Islanders to make our homes and businesses more energy efficient; to innovate in our industries; expand our forests, and to build a more secure future for Prince Edward Island.

We have a real chance to be a leader in this effort because of our small size and connectiveness, which allows us to work together and focus on these matters.

I want to thank all Islanders for their efforts here. I can assure each and every member in this House, we want to work together here. This is an important issue, not only for Prince Edward Island, but for our nation and for our world.

If you look at the earth from the moon, we're only a small ball in a big universe. We have to protect that. We have to do our part and I know each and every Islander will do their part. They've done it in the past. They'll do it in the future. One thing: We will meet those targets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's really great to hear the minister finally stand here in the House and announce the climate change plan. I'm very optimistic that there is some really good stuff in here. I can't wait to dig into the details and check it out.

There are a few things to criticize, I think, right off the top, not surprisingly, I guess. You know, you talk about the HST, the provincial portion of the HST off home-heating sources, which is something we advocated for. And it's great. Don't get me wrong. Take it off of firewood, propane, and wood pellets, chips, is good, but it's not really going to help you decrease carbon emissions. I'm just saying. I don't know why you'd include that as part of this, really —

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: — I mean firewood, propane, wood pellets, they produce carbon, right?

The other thing is, if you're continuing to build biomass that, again, when you're burning, it does not help on carbon emissions. Maybe that's great. Maybe it's a good way to go, but let's not talk about that as helping work against climate change.

One reason it's good to finally hear some action is because since 2007, we really haven't seen much but talk out of this government. The Liberal governments did come up the ALUS Program, which is good and the Office of Energy Efficiency, although they did cut the rebate for hybrid vehicles.

But those are really, other than travelling to Paris and things like that, all we've heard from this government is talk up until this point. That's why I'm really hoping that this announcement is going to see action happen right away.

One thing that the previous minister talked about a lot and — was watershed groups. He talked about watershed groups are going to do this and watershed groups are going to do that. But the amount of funding that was given to watershed groups was —

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

An Hon. Member: Went up.

Mr. Trivers: — not —

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) thousands —

Mr. Trivers: — enough for them to do all the things this government wants to them to do —

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) two million (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: It increased a little bit —

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Trivers: — but not near enough.

I think, if you're going to rely on watershed groups to help implement your action plan then, please, please look at giving them more funding and supports.

The one thing that I find very perplexing about this is it got a great round of applause from the government side here, the Liberal government seems to think this is good, but the new GHG emission target is 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The old one was 35 to 45% below 1990 levels by 2030.

I just Googled it here to see what were 1990 levels, and what are 2005 levels. In 1990, it was 1.9 megatonnes of carbon emissions. If you look, I just chose 40% halfway in between that 35- 40% so that means the target was a 0.76 megatonne reduction by 2030.

Mr. MacEwen: What do they do now?

Mr. Trivers: But, in 2005, it was 2.1 megatonnes of emissions, which means the target now is only a 0.63 megatonne reduction. You have actually lowered what you're trying to achieve with this new climate change action which I'm not sure is quite the right way to be going. You're actually saying you're going to try and achieve less with this action plan than you were trying to achieve before.

In fact, even if you looked at 40% of 2015 levels, you'd still be looking at a 0.72 megatonne reduction. I don't know if you really ran the numbers quite right but —

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – in fact you're looking at achieving less with this action plan than what the previous target was.

I'm not sure if I can really applaud that. You should really be trying to reduce carbon emissions more if anything else.

In fact, your targets are 17% lower than what they used to be. That's one-fifth. That's not good. I just wanted to point that out.

The point is, this government appears to finally be taking some action. Please, do take action. Make things happen. No more strategies, committee meetings, let's just go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Taking action.

Mr. MacEwen: You're confusing (Indistinct)

Speaker: Also responding –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) no idea. An engineer couldn't even figure it out (Indistinct)

Speaker: – to the –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Who do you think gave you (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. J. Brown: Notice he's leaning away from you, there, now.

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, if you're willing, I would like to hear from the hon. Leader of the Third Party responding to the minister's statement.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Like the hon. member before me, I really welcome this announcement. It's long overdue, of course and we have been

waiting for this for a long time, but let's give credit where credit is due and now, we have a plan.

I haven't had a chance, of course, to look through this, but I appreciate this government bringing this forward. I think it's important that we don't fight over who should take credit for what happened in the past here. What was done or what was left undone, whether we're talking provincially or federally because everybody has sort of dropped the ball to varying degrees when it comes to climate change; a problem, a challenge that is universally accepted as the biggest challenge that humanity faces right now.

We all have a responsibility to future generations and governing, to a certain extent, is about succession planning to make sure that we leave this province in a state – whether that be economically, or socially, or today we're talking environmentally, in a manner that is suitable for our children to live prosperous, and safe, and comfortable lives.

Global problems – this is a new problem. Global climate change, by its very name, of course, is global in scope. We've never had to deal with that. We've had local problems; we've had regional problems; even the so-called 'world wars' were regional in their scope, but climate change truly is a global problem and it requires cooperation, and buy-in, and ambition, and inspiration from governments all over this world. I'm really glad to see that PEI is now stepping forward and taking their place at the table for this critical – absolutely critical – discussion that we're going to have.

It's time that we stop knowingly creating problems for our children. We are burdening them with a huge financial debt here. There are social problems, infrastructure problems that need to be taken care of that are going to cost a huge amount of money and here we are, leaving them with environmental problems that are a real burden. A measure of this generation's responsibility will be when we step forward and we provide the inspiration and the ambition to really take climate change seriously.

I want to be able – and I'm sure everybody else in this room – wants to be able to look

at our children and our grandchildren in the eye and tell them that we did everything that we possibly could to make sure that we left them a world that was habitable and safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Supporting Mental Health

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, this National Mental Health Week has been an opportunity for us to talk about the importance of good mental health and where people can turn for help when in need.

Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of briefly attending a summit on mental well-being that brought together, for the first time, representatives from more than 40 government and community partners with the goal of better supporting Islanders. Everyone attending the summit shared a commitment to transforming attitudes and behaviours around mental health issues and to improving mental health services and supports for Islanders. We all need to work together to leverage our resources, expertise, and skill sets, if we hope to truly make a difference in people's lives.

As a government, we are working to strengthen mental health supports for all Islanders, but we know that we cannot do this without partnerships. In government's balanced 2018-2019 budget, we are specifically investing \$4 million new dollars in mental health and addictions services.

Some Hon. Members: [Applause]

This includes investments in collaborative initiatives with community partners like the Canadian Mental Health Association and the University of Prince Edward Island to help build and strengthen our mental health total system. Our investments will also allow us to hire more frontline health care providers: doctors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists to directly support mental health services in our province. These new staff allow us to introduce new services over the coming year such as the mobile mental health response team, expand existing services such as the mental health walk-in clinics and student well-being teams to

provide them to more communities across the province, and enhance mental health resources in our hospitals as well.

I want to recognize and thank the hundreds of health care providers and staff working in the area of mental health and addictions across our wonderful province, as well as the many community organizations and groups who support the mental well-being of Islanders each and every day.

We are making headway on multiple fronts to promote positive mental health for Islanders and we are doing it in collaboration with committed partners who are determined to make a difference. Together, we can offer Islanders and their families hope for better access to care that will change their lives for the better.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure why the minister keeps getting up and just repeating the same things over, and over, and over again. It's great that he was at the mental health summit. I assume our invitation got lost in the mail. I'm curious to see what community groups were involved – peer support groups were involved as well.

I don't know what else there is to say. We keep talking about it. Hopefully there's action soon. Hopefully, if we've got the right people in that room that are coming up with solutions – I know it's not just all the time throwing money, throwing money, throwing money, but we do need to dedicate a significant portion of our budget to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As for my hon. colleague, perhaps our calendars were a little full, but we also were not able or invited to attend the summit; however, I did hear great things about it. Any time we can have the opportunity to

have conversations that create new opportunities for collaboration, that's a positive thing.

We also kind of are hearing familiar announcements and it's really good to know there is that kind of focus and strength on supporting and investing in existing services and expanding to new; the walk in clinics, in particular, are a really exciting initiative.

There is an opportunity to think about integrated services beyond those partnerships, including some of the things we've talked about in other aspects like pre and postnatal care; integrated in mental health in our education system, which I think we're going to be hearing about next; and even some of the areas where interventions at an earlier point can prevent future challenges that require response. So prevention at an earlier point, versus reactive care is always going to be one of the most useful investments we can make. So I look forward to that next stage of the mental plan, perhaps rather than continuing to repeat the ones that we're very happy to hear, but know quite a lot about already.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Student Well-being Teams Progress Update

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

For many years, governments have strived to support children and families who may require supports by several departments of government. Many folks are saying that we are making real gains in this area through the student well-being teams.

Today I'm pleased to update members on our plans to establish teams in schools throughout the Island. This September, we will have three more teams in place. They will serve students in Bluefield, Colonel Gray, and Morell-Souris families of schools as well as the French language schools in these areas.

We will have 22 new staff on the teams who will be working in our schools by August,

including: mental health clinicians; comprehensive school health nurses; school outreach workers; and an additional occupational therapist. This will bring the total number of team members to 38. Some new positions will require bilingual capacity and experience working with newcomer and Indigenous students. The teams will be supported with funding of \$3 million from several government departments.

The Bluefield team will be based out of Bluefield High School and team members will travel from school to school; the Colonel Gray team will be housed at St. Jean Elementary; and the Morell-Souris team at Morell Regional.

Our staff and steering committee has been out meeting with principals, staff, and parents at the welcoming schools to provide them with information and identify priority needs. These schools are really looking forward to having their own teams and the assistance of dedicated, specialized staff who: are trained to identify and support student needs and can provide students with easier and more timely access to services that help them succeed inside and outside the classroom. By September, 2019, we will have teams in all eight families of schools including the Three Oaks, Kensington-Kinkora, and Charlottetown rural families.

We have a far better chance of reaching and staying connected with students and their families when we locate specialized services in schools where children are – and when we provide them with the support of a whole interdisciplinary team.

The great work of our Montague and Westisle teams and their feedback throughout the year has helped to create a sustainable program that will help our children and their parents for years to come.

I should add, I was up at the district advisory council meeting for Prince County on Monday evening and the DAC group from Westisle was extremely pleased with the work that was being done by the student well-being team.

In fact, they were saying the more that could put into that the happier they will be. It speaks to the work that these great folks

have been able to do in the seven months or so they've been at it. We look forward to seeing what more that can do for Island students.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The mental health teams into the schools is a great thing. We know that. We have been hearing great things from the groups that are already in some of the schools. I hope that the new teams that are coming into place will be able to learn and do even better based on the experience of these teams.

I need to remind this government, the education minister, the health minister, the entire government that even Dr. Keizer said when these mental health teams were first announced, I think the words were like: It's water in the garden when the house is on fire. Yes, these things are needed, but you've got core services.

We talked about it during budget estimates; Richmond Centre, all these places where the need has just increased incredibly, but the resources haven't. The same number of staff are dealing with so many more referrals; so many more intake. You can't forget about that. These – it's a great news announcement, but you can't forget about our core services.

I am disappointed with the minister's announcement here today. I'm not sure if it was announced before, or if this is new information, but he talked about one team from Morell, Souris. He talked about one team for Kensington, Kinkora. I understand that these are smaller schools and we might not need, but I'll tell you what, those small schools in those areas, they have part-time guidance counsellors, 20% positions, 40% positions, some of them split between two schools, some of them are split between three schools.

It's pretty hard for these counsellors to make the connections with the students; to deal with the students on a day – you know mental health issues don't just pop up on Monday, Wednesday, Friday mornings.

They don't just come in afternoons when the guidance counsellor is here. I was hoping and I was kind of keeping this to myself, but I was hoping these mental health teams would be per family of schools, not joined together because in these small schools, they already have minimum resources to deal with this already. I thought: Here's a good opportunity to put those teams in per school. It doesn't sound like that's going to happen.

I hope the minister monitors this correctly, and it that's the way it's going to be, maybe we should be bumping up our guidance counselling positions in these small schools. I hear it from parents all the time. Little John doesn't just have problems on certain mornings of the week when the guidance counsellor is going to be there.

We welcome this announcement. It's great. I hope they learn. I hope they do well, but let's also remember that if you're going to limit the mental health teams in schools, let's make sure the guidance counsellor positions are there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Also responding to the minister's statement, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, of course, welcome this announcement minister. I thank you for it. I've heard all sorts of positive feedback about the teams that are currently already in place in the schools on PEI. I look forward to this being rolled out.

We, of course, talked about this many times before in this House. I will just finish by saying thank you. This is an early intervention, which I believe is going to show some really long-term benefits, not just economically and educationally, but in terms of humanity. I really appreciate the announcement, minister.

Thank you.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the a Climate Change Action Plan for Prince Edward Island, 2018-2023 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Consideration of the Estimation 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.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, and the Deputy Speaker.

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, just a reminder, we are on the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. Today, we are at the top of page 129.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you. We'll allow her to come in and introduce herself and set-up before we open the floor.

Ms. Biggar: We have a few items hon. Chair to bring back. We're working on the list, but I think we have a few –

Wendy MacDonald Director: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Correction on that. We are still working on the list.

Chair: Okay –

Mr. Fox: Chair –

Chair: Excuse me. Just until we introduce – just –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) introduce –

Chair: Could you introduce yourself for the record?

Wendy MacDonald Director: Wendy MacDonald, Director of Finance.

Chair: Welcome back.

Ms. Biggar: If we could wait for just a moment until Wendy gets her things together there, that'd be great.

Chair: No problem.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Chair: Public Works and Planning

Public Works Operations - Administration

Total Public Works Operations - Administration: 2,838,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Direct Building Maintenance

Total Direct Building Maintenance: 8,173,700.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering if there any plans as to what to do with the old PE home?

Ms. Biggar: That's going to be torn down, actually. We have it in a budget now. When we tear those kinds of things down, you have to put it in your operating budget, not capital, so we do have it in the budget to start the process of being able to tear it down.

Before we can tear it down, though, we are having part of the energy from waste lines are all in that area so we're starting a process now of what we need to do with those, also having discussions. I know the City of Charlottetown has some interest and how we can look at some green space in that area as well.

Those things are all starting now.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right, thanks.

Minister, will that process begin this calendar year?

Ms. Biggar: The demolition won't because we have to have those other discussions first. So, the demolition will not be this year, but it's in the budget now to be able to do it so we can start the plan.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, what are we doing with the old buildings up in Summerside?

Ms. Biggar: Could you clarify which old buildings in Summerside you mean?

Mr. Fox: The old manor and in and

Ms. Biggar: Oh, Summerset Manor?

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: It's also going to be demolished. There should be an RFP going out very soon on that.

Mr. Fox: Are there any further talks going on? My understanding is the City of Summerside was interested in part of that property for a new fire department in that. Are there any further talks on that?

Ms. Biggar: Well as I said, the process is now that it's going to go to RFP to tear it down. In order for the City of Summerside or anyone else to acquire that property, which is a part of our properties, we have not declared that surplus property.

What we're doing now is tearing it down.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Accommodations

Total Accommodations: 9,451,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Planning and Building Construction

Total Planning and Building Construction: 1,283,700.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Just a quick question, Chair.

In this section, is this where you would have budget to go out and consult with Islanders?

Ms. Biggar: No, hon. member.

This is where we do planning for buildings that we manage for other departments that are under construction. For instance, the long-term care manors, the Prince County Hospital upgrades, Ecole La-Belle-Cloche, the addition.

This department oversees the planning of that and so – okay?

Mr. Trivers: Where would I find, Chair, the budget for public consultations and reaching out to stakeholders to engage them to really plan what's going to be done with our roads and get their input?

Ms. Biggar: Well again, this budget that we're talking about is the operations of the department. What you're referring to is under capital expenditures, our fall – we had a fall budget which outlined what the plans were.

When we put a plan together, anything to do that we're getting federal funding, we have to put a five-year plan together. We have to send it to the federal government for approval; so we have to look out over those number of years. As part of that planning it comes as a result of concerns that have been brought to us by communities about safety in certain areas, and then looking at that area is how we go forward with what's going to be.

I don't want to go too far into the Capital Budget, but that's the process.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks for bearing with me here, Chair.

For example, the resurfacing that was done on County Line Road through Emerald last summer, I think we had pretty close to a kilometre, maybe a little bit more, would that – my understanding was that that actually under maintenance, not under capital.

Ms. Biggar: Actually, our recap budget is under capital.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm just looking at the materials, supplies and services line there and I see that there was a \$3 million overspend last year on a \$120,000 budget line. What happened?

Ms. Biggar: That's the PE Home demolition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, okay.

Ms. Biggar: That's what it's going to cost us.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Perfect.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Finally got it in the budget.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Is this section also to deal with any planned building the new RCMP headquarters and detachment?

Ms. Biggar: No, that wouldn't be under us.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Capital Project Division

Traffic Operations

Total Traffic Operations: 3,246,600.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I've been waiting for this section to come up, as per your request. This is, I believe, in the right section now.

For the last couple of years, and we've talked about this on the floor several times, is communities are coming to me and they're saying: We really would like to see the speed reduced within our community, small communities everywhere from New Glasgow to Stanley Bridge to Wheatley River.

One thing they're saying, there's a number of things they think that could be done as opposed to big capital projects like building

a roundabout like we're seeing at the Newton and Scales Pond Road. They're saying: What if you took and you put up those stop signs that are really well lit up with the flashing lights? What if you put in speed radar signs so people know how much speed they're doing?

They really feel – rumble strips and things like this – they really feel that that could really slow down traffic. I'm not really seeing any of those things being put into those communities. If they are, they're going through municipalities, which is good, like North Rustico put them in and that sort of thing.

I was wondering if you have any budget here to address, really, the speed through these communities to improve safety.

Ms. Biggar: When we talk about reducing speed, it's a culmination of different types of what we call traffic-calming projects, one of which are roundabouts. It is proven that it does slow down traffic and reduces accidents, and just to address that comment.

Now, with certain communities we have worked with them to do different things like overhead lights on certain intersections and a number of those different things. So, we do continue to work with them on specific things.

In terms of putting speed down below what is proven – like if you talk with the RCMP, we have – our safety committee deals with the RCMP. It's proven that lowering, lowering, lowering does not mean it's going to reduce speed in a community. I know what you're – you're lobbying for these digital signs all across the Island. They are helpful. We have worked with communities to do that. We'll continue to do that.

Mr. Trivers: So can you commit here today that there's actually money in this budget so you can add these speed radar signs to, say, coming into the community of New Glasgow? Coming into the community of Wheatley River? Because I don't know how much they cost, but I would say your department says time and time again, I think you might have even said on the floor: If you save even one life then it's worth the expense.

This is a relatively low-cost item and I think it could help a lot. I agree with you. The Scales Pond Road and Newton Road roundabout, other than the huge expense of \$900,000, I think is going to be a good thing to help slow traffic and reduce accidents there. But, obviously we can't put roundabouts in through most communities.

Will you commit to actually getting some of these speed radar signs?

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, under our materials, supplies and services we do have a budget line under signage for \$208,900, and that will encompass all of those types of things in regard to other support structure, reflective materials – so there is a budget line in there. It's reviewing and looking at the area that needs to be addressed. There is a budget line.

You asked, I believe, if there was a budget line, but I'm not making a commitment today on any specific community.

Mr. Trivers: I made this request and I made it before. I made the request to you. Are there other people I should lobby and so we can get some action on this?

Ms. Biggar: Well, we'll work together as a department with the community.

Mr. Trivers: Last time I checked, I represent the community.

Ms. Biggar: We will work with the community.

Mr. Trivers: For the unincorporated area, at least in my district, so I'm here on behalf of the community asking you to put those in.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you. I'll take that under advisement.

Mr. Trivers: Another thing I wanted to ask you. I think it's in this section. Illumination, is that here?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Are street lights and I know there's a request for a street light in a couple of different areas in the district. One at Taylor Road and Rattenbury Road, I believe

and another one at Myers Road and St. Mary's Road.

I'm not sure what the traffic numbers are through those roads. I would imagine the one on St. Mary's Road is fairly high, and Rattenbury Road, as well.

I wanted to find out what the ongoing costs are to have a street light put in, and what are the upfront costs to have them put in?

Again, from a safety perspective, I think if the cost isn't too high, given the technology we have with streetlights, that can be solar-powered and things, I would really like to see streetlights put up in the locations where they have been requested by the community.

Ms. Biggar: I'll have to bring that back.

Mr. Trivers: All right.

Ms. Biggar: You wanted to know what the cost was of having a light installed. Once, we install it, it comes out of our ongoing budget to pay for those costs. I do believe there's actually, I'm not sure if it was still in place or not – there had been a request that we're working on to – did you get that information?

Unidentified Voice: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Okay. I know we're compiling a list of all the street – there was a request from your caucus or a member of your caucus they want to know where every street light is on PEI, and how much the costs attached to that are.

We are compiling that information for your caucus.

Mr. Trivers: Just since I am asking questions, I believe down on the Nodd Road, there is another streetlight needed there. There's at least three in the district. That's why I'm asking for it. I know you're coming back with the cost information. We are asking on budget estimates, but is that something you can commit to doing within this budget?

Ms. Biggar: I can't commit to that because we'd have to look at the factors that play into, you know, the factors that go into installing a streetlight. I know everybody

wants streetlights. That's a good reason to have incorporation because then you'd have the tax to pay for those. I know that's the only thing I get as part of being in an incorporated area, is a streetlight on my corner. That's what I get for being in an incorporated area.

In terms of taking your suggestion under advisement, we would have to look at what is involved in those intersections.

Mr. Trivers: I think that's a really, really interesting set of logic you have. You need to incorporate to get streetlights put in –

Ms. Biggar: No, I'm just saying –

Mr. Trivers: – because the province can't handle it and they can't look after that. Anyway –

Ms. Biggar: It is a budget –

Mr. Trivers: – thank you very much, Chair. I have no further questions.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you for your question.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Following on from that, there is a corner on the Inkerman Road, which is right in the west end of District 17, or won't be once the new boundaries come in, but it is now. A couple of neighbours approached me just very recently, actually, asking what the process was to apply for or ask for a streetlight.

What is the proper (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Again, I'll take that information back because – there is a whole process that goes into it; what's the traffic; what are the sightlines at those corners? You know, a lot of times it helps to just install some extra signs to make people aware that the corner is coming up. A lot of times that helps, as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, minister.

In terms of the process. I presume the department has some priority areas that they have already identified. But, for citizens,

such as the people, who approached me, should they approach the department, or is that something the MLA could or should do?

Ms. Biggar: They can send a message in, yes. Or a letter or forward it through either one of you. It's good to have the information written down on where it is, and what the issue is. Then, it can be reviewed by our traffic section as to whether that needs more signage; more reflectors. A lot of those things do help at nighttime, as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, minister. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, does this section right here deal with what information is passed up to Ottawa in regards to GPS uploads?

Ms. Biggar: GPS?

Mr. Fox: Uploads.

Ms. Biggar: I'd have to get that for you. Could you be more specific in what you're looking for?

Mr. Fox: My understanding; once a year, the department sends up GPS uploads up to Ottawa, which deal with the roads and all that kind of stuff.

I'm wondering how often do we update that information? Or do we just pass up – the reason being is we have two roads out in District 19, they're still showing on GPS as being accessible and able to cross, but yet the bridges are closed.

Ms. Biggar: I will check that out for you, hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, that would be great.

I have also had talks, minister, with Stephen Yeo on this. He's been great on it. I'm wondering if there is some way, maybe, the department can look at preferred routes within GPS, so that we keep large transport trucks off of back roads and keep them on the main roads?

Ms. Biggar: I don't think there is a way to designate that. But it makes more sense, as you say, for larger trucks to stay on the main highway, which is, if we didn't build the main highways anymore, they would be going right through the middle of a lot of small communities.

That's why we're trying to re-route –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) Cornwall.

Mr. Fox: What?

Ms. Biggar: – re-route around some of the communities like Cornwall, so that those tractors are not going through or – Kinkora, you know, there was a lot of work done. To keep them out of those smaller communities, but at times, if they're familiar with that area, they may be more comfortable driving through that.

I know we've had discussions on several routes.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried. Capital Projects Administration

Total Capital Projects Administration: 2,622,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Design

Total Design: 629,500.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Bridge Maintenance

Total Bridge Maintenance: 2,420,200.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Any idea, minister, when we're going to get some work done on that Searletown bridge?

Ms. Biggar: Not off the top. We have 1,237 bridge structures on PEI. I'm sorry; it's not at the top of my head on where we are with that. I'm familiar with –

Mr. Myers: When would you like it done?

Ms. Biggar: – with it.

Mr. Fox: I'd like to have it done next year.

Ms. Biggar: Next year.

Mr. Fox: My understanding is the engineers have determined that the actual support beams are A-okay.

Ms. Biggar: Yes they are.

Mr. Fox: But the sides of it and the angle of the road, which connects, it's like a sharp double S turn, need to be considered. That, the fish way underneath of it is in real bad shape.

Ms. Biggar: I think, in terms of, replacement of the actual bridge and redesign of the road, that's probably a larger project, but looking at those other items is certainly something we'll try to see where it might go in a priority list for in the upcoming future.

Mr. Fox: And with that – just a comment. What truck drivers are telling me, minister, is that where it's such a sharp radius on that S turn and some of the trucks now that are taking that route because of GPS are longer, they're the big, long 53 footers, so when they actually get on the structure, meeting another transport truck it's – they're close. So, that's the point.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

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

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, under bridge maintenance, can you tell me how a bridge that was used for years and years have been determined to be closed down and will not be fixed.

How does that happen?

Ms. Biggar: There are a number of factors that go into that hon. member, is certainly where it's located; the amount of traffic that's on it; how much of a detour there is to go a different way. Again, that's part of the factors that go into making those decisions.

Mr. McIsaac: What's the determining factor on distance of the detour?

Ms. Biggar: Usually, it's approximately seven kilometre detour would be the maximum that we would go.

Mr. McIsaac: If you're at six-and-a-half, you're out of luck.

Ms. Biggar: I'm just saying that's generally the radius that we look at.

Mr. McIsaac: Who makes the decision on that, minister?

Ms. Biggar: We have a chief engineer of the province and our engineering section that make recommendations on what bridge work that has to be done on a year-to-year basis.

What ones that are at a point where it's not going to be that inconvenient, I'm going to say, to have either a restriction on the bridge, whether it's similar to North Lake bridge. There is a restriction there. Or, is it something that, because of the distance of the detour can be left as it is, and shut down.

We have 10.

Mr. McIsaac: It's interesting though that on the bridge, the Settlement Road there down in Lyndale; the ditches were all cleaned, widened out, the road has been improved immensely with new gravel on top of it. All of a sudden, now, it seems to be the road to nowhere, where it's all ditched graveled, and a stop sign right at the bridge; this bridge will not be opened anymore. Those, who are farming in that area have a 6.5 kilometre detour.

It just boggles my mind how that could possible happen when agriculture is the number one industry. It's not even open to a car to go over that bridge anymore. It's only about 20-foot gap. If we could have that relooked at. It's of utmost importance in that area.

I am befuddled on how – what kind of a reason I can give to the people there that the bridge they've had forever that is led to by a road that has been completely renovated, is now not going to be open anymore.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, member.

Mr. McIsaac: So you will look at that and –

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: I just said thank you for your opinion.

Mr. McIsaac: It's more than my opinion, hon. minister. It's the opinion of the people in Lyndale.

Ms. Biggar: As I have said, there are 10 bridges closed. That is not one that is scheduled for reopening.

Mr. McIsaac: Will you look at that again, or not?

Ms. Biggar: At this point in time, we don't have any plans to reopen that bridge.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay, I shall tell my people.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

Could I just respond to the Member from Vernon River-Stratford just quickly before I ask my questions on the bridge?

If the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford would like to give me a call. I would be more than happy to go out and take a look at that, as well. Then, after the next election, we'll make sure that that bridge is reopened.

Chair: Thank you.

Do you have a question, hon. member?

Leader of the Opposition: I do.

Thank you, Chair.

When we refer to 'small bridges', what's the perimeters on how small a bridge has to be before it's a small bridge?

Ms. Biggar: I'll get that information for you. I don't have that measurement in the top of my head. I'm sure my chief engineers

and engineers can get the data for me on that, and give it to you.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: Since I'm not a bridge engineer. I don't have the measurements or the definition. Now, we seem to be in definitions, now again, of a small bridge versus a large bridge or a side-road bridge. I'll get that information.

Leader of the Opposition: I guess the reason I'm asking is I'm just interested as to whether or not the Hillsborough Bridge would be considered a small bridge?

Ms. Biggar: I think, as you know, hon. member, that we have made a big commitment. It will be over \$8 million that we're investing on the Hillsborough Bridge. We have made that commitment. We're moving forward on that commitment. Things are progressing very well.

Leader of the Opposition: Minister, I think you for that announcement and the work that's going to be done to the bridge. I've been advocating for that now since I was elected in 2011.

As of late there is a group of people, who have come forward and made some very public statements. They held a press conference, as well. They're very concerned with the safety on the Hillsborough Bridge, particularly with individuals that may be looking to self harm.

Is there any consideration or thought with regards to the renovations and the widening of the bridge in some format to put up barriers to help, essentially, to deter people from possible jumping off the bridge?

Ms. Biggar: I'm familiar with that type of a structure. It's not something that we have in the plans to construct during the renovations and the additions to the bridge.

I'm not sure, too, and I'd have to check this with the engineers, if those types of barriers would be able to be installed on the bridge. I'd have to check that information with them.

Leader of the Opposition: I guess, minister, while you're checking that. I

would look at the bridge that was newly redone at Covehead because they have installed –

Ms. Biggar: I'm familiar with those.

Leader of the Opposition: – such barriers.

I think, especially with proximity to our primary care facility here in Charlottetown and the location of the addictions facility, as well, I think any measure we can put in place to assist with deterring an individual from self harm on the bridge would be money well spent.

Ms. Biggar: I think, in any manner, hon. member, if someone plans to take their life, it is tragic. That whatever measures that we can do to prevent that in terms of treatment in advance of them getting to the point where they take that action, whether it's on the bridge, whether it's in other means, is always tragic.

In terms of that project, I'd have to go back and talk to the engineers on the specs on that project.

Leader of the Opposition: Just to continue on with the Hillsborough Bridge because we're not sure if it's considered a small bridge or not, so I'll ask a few more questions on it –

Ms. Biggar: I think I made that clear, hon. member. It's not a small bridge. Just for clarification.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

The minister also stated that she didn't have the exact engineering specifications with her; that she would have to check with her chief engineers and staff to determine what the definition of a small bridge is.

In any event, I guess with regards to the Hillsborough Bridge and the planned renovations or work that's going to be done to the bridge, number one, to be able to accommodate the pipe to move the effluent from Stratford over to Charlottetown, which I'm very glad we're going that route. I certainly supported the Premier in his decision to negotiate with all parties to go that way.

But with the active transportation hub, has it been determined which side of the bridge that that will be on?

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, the particular project you're talking about is a capital project. It is not in this. This section, under this is operating budget to maintain and to inspect and to run the division that oversees the small bridge repairs. It's under Capital Budget that particular budget. I don't have all that information here in front of me.

Leader of the Opposition: I thought it would be a fair question to ask, seeing as the minister, during her first response to me was there was an \$8 million investment being made to the bridge so it was only an –

Ms. Biggar: I can answer.

Leader of the Opposition: – assumption on my part –

Ms. Biggar: I can answer and tell you, hon. member, that we have a working group together with Stratford, with Cycling PEI, with our department, with the City of Charlottetown and we're working on those plans to go forward for that capital project. That's about all I can tell you today.

Leader of the Opposition: I guess I'd just like to say to the minister: See that wasn't that hard to –

Ms. Biggar: No –

Leader of the Opposition: – actually give a response.

Ms. Biggar: Absolutely not.

Leader of the Opposition: It's a shame you're not fully prepared, but anyway.

Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Biggar: Again, just to clarify for all hon. members. We are doing the operating budget of what we do for each division. We're not in the Capital Budget, which we did last fall and had those discussions.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, could you table the – have you given out the bridge maintenance contracts, yet?

Ms. Biggar: Sorry –

Mr. MacEwen: Have you give out the bridge maintenance contracts, yet?

Ms. Biggar: Those were tendered out –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – they're probably in that process of –

Mr. MacEwen: So they're not finalized yet then?

Ms. Biggar: We're not sure.

They were tendered.

Mr. MacEwen: If they're –

Ms. Biggar: I think they're just in process of –

Mr. MacEwen: – if they've been given out could you, I guess, I'm just looking for the final result of it. If they were tabled, who got them and what the contract was for, the bid.

Ms. Biggar: I'll go back and check.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Could you table the list of all the grass cutting contracts? Who won them and what the winning bid was?

Ms. Biggar: I don't have them today –

Mr. Myers: No.

Ms. Biggar: – but I could go back and –

Mr. Myers: If you don't mind.

Ms. Biggar: – look into it for you.

Mr. Myers: Yeah. Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: I think I just signed that today, actually.

Chair: Shall the section carry –

Mr. Myers: Good timing.

Chair: Carried.

Materials Testing Lab

Total Materials Testing Lab: 1,352,000.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Yesterday, minister, we just breached very briefly on shale. Is it possible to get a list of the shale pit qualities that are across the Island that we use?

Ms. Biggar: We'll go back and check that out.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Biggar: It'll be interesting to have.

Mr. Fox: Yes. Carry.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, does the materials testing lab hire students still?

Ms. Biggar: Yes, engineering students.

Mr. MacEwen: Yes. Do you know how many they hire each year?

Ms. Biggar: I don't know if it was one last year. Each area, usually, we have several. So if there's engineering students, we'd be happy to take their names out of those areas.

Mr. MacEwen: Has the materials testing lab taken on any new services or testing capabilities in the past couple of years?

Ms. Biggar: I think it's been standard, that I'm aware of. I don't think there's anything changed specifically. If there is something that I should be bringing back to you, I certainly will.

Mr. MacEwen: No, I was just curious.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: They do a fantastic job.

Ms. Biggar: They do a great – I was just going to say that. They do a great job and it's very interesting. I'm sure you've been in there.

Mr. MacEwen: Yes, I used to work there.

Ms. Biggar: Oh, sorry. Okay.

Mr. Myers: Back when the Tories were in government.

Ms. Biggar: As a student, I'm sure, but it is very interesting to see what they do, yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Access PEI

Total Access PEI: 2,752,700.

Total Access PEI: 2,752,700.

Mr. MacKay: Question, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, how many, I guess, fee increases, possibly, will be increasing this year through Access PEI?

Ms. Biggar: We're not expecting any increases.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, perfect; great to hear.

When there's tire tax, where does the money from the tire tax go?

Ms. Biggar: The money from the tire tax – oh, it's in the finance budget, not my budget. So it goes to a number of different things.

Mr. MacKay: I had a constituent of mine call me over the winter – he was quite upset. He had to pay tire tax on a snowmobile. Why would you pay tire tax on a snowmobile?

Ms. Biggar: Good question. I'll find that out from Mr. Miner.

Mr. MacKay: That's great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Hon. members, I'm having a hard time hearing questions and answers. If we could keep it down, that would be great.

Thank you.

Energy and Minerals

Total Energy and Minerals: 13,863,700.

Total Energy and Minerals: 13,863,700.

Total Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: 144,574,600.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

In the energy and mineral section, the money for efficiency PEI for the implementation of the climate change strategy, does that come from general revenues, or any specific revenue source?

Ms. Biggar: It's through the Low Carbon Economy Fund. Part of that will go in there as well as our own budget. It's cost-shared federal/provincial.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure. With the federal transfers, what's the length of the funding agreement with the federal government? Is it four years?

Ms. Biggar: The Low Carbon Economy Fund?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: I think it's – yes, it is four years. It's, I think, a little over \$40 million over four years; \$48 million, I think, about average over four years.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right. So we just got the climate energy plan today and I haven't – of course, I haven't had a chance to look at that yet.

Ms. Biggar: We'll be doing more promotion and roll-out of those programs, certainly.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure. The money that we were just talking about – the \$40 million over four years – is that going to be enough to cover the climate change plan and the energy strategy, which is, I think, a 10-year plan?

Ms. Biggar: They do all tie together, but that is just specific to the programs that we're going to be offering as incentives – carbon reduction incentives – to Islanders at residences and businesses. The other parts of that that tie in with the energy strategy are like the new wind farm and some of those initiatives, so that would be separate from this.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I did see enough of the climate change plan to see that it's pretty ambiguous when it comes to carbon pricing. There's not a lot of detail there, but I'm wondering whether any funds that you do receive from carbon pricing – assuming that that is part of the climate change plan – will that be tied to climate change strategies, or will it go into general revenues, or what will happen with that?

Ms. Biggar: Well the programs that we have put in place all have carbon reduction pieces attached to them. If we're doing one particular part of a program, we have energy reduction – carbon emissions, sorry, GHGs attached to that so that we can track those emission reductions because of that particular program. So we have attached a GHG number to that so that over – as part of incorporating these, we have a set number – I don't have it right in front of me, but that's for these specific programs and then the other programs that we have out.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right. So let's imagine there is a fund which accrues from carbon pricing – if that indeed happens – would some of that go to, specifically, projects to combat climate change?

Ms. Biggar: Well I'm sure any of those revenues are part and parcel with our whole, overall strategy of ensuring that we are doing incentives for carbon reduction for Islanders so that they can take the most benefit out of any of those benefits. We'll be putting them back into programs.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'll move on. I see there's a \$3 million increase in professional services. Can you tell us what that's for?

Ms. Biggar: Okay. Just a moment, we'll – sorry, just a minute member.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: That \$2,953,200 includes a direct benefit to Islanders that will be going back through the – we have a new program coming out: home comfort and winter warming program, so that's for energy auditors, for the home insulation rebates, business energy solutions program that we're going to be rolling out; so that's targeted to go to Islanders – is what that is.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: All of those programs that you just mentioned, minister, they would have appeared somewhere else in the – is this a move from one other part of the budget – another budget line to this –

Ms. Biggar: It's under our energy piece of it, yes. No, it wasn't moved from anywhere else.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It wasn't. Okay. So this is new money – this is \$3 million of new money for efficiency programs or –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes. Okay, great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Premier. Did you have a question?

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm okay now.

Chair: You're good now? Okay.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct)

Chair: Since you've got the floor.

Premier MacLauchlan: The premise of that line of questions – it was the minister might have more money than she was going to spend, but there's not a chance.

Ms. Biggar: I'm going to spend it. We'll spend it.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the total Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy carry? Carried.

Hon. members, we're now moving on to Interministerial Women's Secretariat which could be found on page 133.

Interministerial Women's Secretariat total:
514,000

Total Interministerial Women's Secretariat:
514,000.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

From the total budget that's there, how much of that funding goes to the Advisory Council on Status of Women?

Ms. Biggar: Just a moment. We'll get that for you, specifically. They did get a raise this year.

Wendy MacDonald Director: Increase (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: \$210,000 will go to the council.

Ms. Bell: Minister, you said that was increased this year. What was it previously?

Ms. Biggar: It was \$198,000.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

My understanding, minister, is that that provides for the full operational overhead of that organization?

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: Given the high priority that the hon. members of the House have expressed in recent days for improving representation of women in the Legislature and generally, sort of, representation of women in the province, why is the overall budget for this department so low, and really kind of not very moveable?

Ms. Biggar: Sure. Well, through your grants are other grants. We are supporting other organizations through those grants to partner with them on the programs that they are doing as well such as the PEI Coalition for Women in Government.

We are supporting other organizations as well on that strategy, I guess, you would say. We're doing a combination of that.

I know, talking to the council, they're very happy with having received the increase. The other, well, you heard some of the organizations that we're supporting so.

Ms. Bell: It's an increase of \$12,000, which is super. I mean costs go up. If that comes out of the grants line, and that means there's \$139,000 remaining for grants in this year, is that across – for the rest – for the whole province for women's organizations?

Ms. Biggar: Well, that meet the criteria that we give the grants to, yes.

Ms. Bell: Yeah, so –

Ms. Biggar: Because there is a certain criteria that we use for those, as you know.

Ms. Bell: Is it possible to get a breakdown of which organizations have received grants and you know, against that criteria for the last few years?

Ms. Biggar: I'll go back.

Wendy MacDonald Director: (Indistinct) tabled last year (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We have last year's with us.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: Then, if you want further, we can do that.

Ms. Bell: That would be great.

Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bell: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: So, as I said, given the priority that's been given to women's – the challenges of women participating in things like our democratic processes and the Legislature and other aspects and you know things like toxic masculinity being one of the themes for this year, and so on –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: – \$139,000 is not a lot of money. Has there been any consideration to increasing the amount of – the funding that's available to go out into grants?

Ms. Biggar: Actually, we were very happy that we were able to have a separate grants for violence against women. That is a new grant that we put in there, \$50,000. We have added, just last year, for the very first time, we were able to put an extra \$50,000 in to address that particular issue.

We are very pleased with some of the progress that we're been able to do. That's the first time, I think, in a lot of years. Last year and this year that we have added more to the budget of this particular section. I think we're making progress. Obviously, there is always more that can be done. In working with our partners, I think we're making, and in combination with what the extra dollars that have been put in through the minister of family services to those particular challenges in the organization. We have come forward compared to other years.

Ms. Bell: Absolutely, any money that goes out into the community is good money.

When this funding goes out and it goes out in project funds it means it's a one-time project and sort of, obviously, my disclosure is, having worked on these grants prior

things, we know there are restrictions and requirements. Is that violence against women prevention grant which came from, in here which came from another department, is that going to be renewed, or is that just a one-time grant –

Ms. Biggar: No –

Ms. Bell: – that's included in this one?

Ms. Biggar: – that's included again –

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: – it's in this budget now.

Ms. Bell: That's excellent.

Ms. Biggar: It's in our budget.

Ms. Bell: As I said, whenever grants go into the community, it's a positive thing. I do really want to highlight that, you know, the total money that you're talking about for the entire department, including the advisory council, is half of the money that we pay to a marketing firm for tourism last year.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: So, when this is the only department that specifically targeted and has a mandate to work with and support women and women's issues in the province, but a total budget of \$500,000 is really challenging.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: I would really encourage government to think about two things. One of them is broadening that mandate and the scope of that funding and recognizing that a \$10,000 grant is wonderful, but it's very limited in what can be done with that.

The other piece is that there are many other organizations, as well as the advisory council that could really benefit from consistent and predictable funding that allows them to make longer term outcomes and plans.

Is there any thought at all about expanding funding to provide operational funds for other organizations, in addition to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women?

Ms. Biggar: Not within the women's secretariat.

The other goal of the women's secretariat is to work across government, as well, to keep that gender lens on the programs that we are working on, or to make change within government. The gender-based analysis, you know, we're concentrating and making great strides across government department in recognizing that and shining a light on that.

The work of the ABC boards, you know, we've made a lot of great strides on the number of women. That's all tied in with the advocacy of the women's secretariat. We have one person who works there as the staff, as the main staff. She does wonderful work with a couple of support people that she has. We have been able to really make some big strides this year. As we go forward, we will continue to lobby for more money.

Ms. Bell: Chair –

Ms. Biggar: I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Premier for their support though in me moving forward and all my caucus members for supporting the increase in the budget that we did get. And, the work that we're doing is being supported by caucus. I certainly appreciate that as minister for status of women.

Ms. Bell: My last question.

I agree, minister. I think the fact that we have a secretariat is critical because it also ensure that that lens is there interdepartmentally. I'm really looking forward to seeing the equality report card this year.

I know there's been, there has been real progress in bringing that gender diversity lens.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: I'm looking forward to seeing that report on that progress and knowing that something that is incremental and building.

Thank you for that.

My final thing is, that pressure needs to continue to –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: – to expand that scope. I look forward to, perhaps, having this conversation with future funding –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Ms. Bell: – at another time.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

My question would just be with regards to, besides the grants, is there any other handouts that the minister is prepared to provide at this time?

Ms. Biggar: That's all there is.

Leader of the Opposition: Is –

Ms. Biggar: That's all there is in this department.

Leader of the Opposition: With many other departments we get materials, supplies, services, travel and training, salaries; various materials such as that for handouts.

Wendy MacDonald Director: Can I speak to it?

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, go ahead.

Wendy MacDonald Director: There are no professional fees in this division.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Wendy MacDonald Director: We did handout our professional fees for the department. Salaries are included in your salary handout that was already passed out yesterday in the green package. The salaries for this division are in there.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh, they were in there, thank you.

Wendy MacDonald Director: Yes, they were.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Wendy MacDonald Director: And as far as the materials, supplies and services, it's not a handout that we normally handout, but we can look into it. I think (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It wouldn't include a lot of things. It's just mostly –

Wendy MacDonald Director: It's \$23,00 (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It's \$2,300 for meetings, training, some office paper supplies those kinds of things is what would be entailed in materials, supplies and services.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I'm assuming your role in Cabinet is to lobby with that perspective for all Cabinet decisions. I know, probably unintentionally, maybe some people overlook that.

In your time, in government, has Cabinet or government every had gender-bias training?

Ms. Biggar: Cabinet? Not Cabinet specific no. There is a gender analysis that goes – but gender-bias training. That is an interesting program that we could look into for all hon. members, not just Cabinet. I think it would be good for all legislative members to have something like that.

I'm sure we would be happy to put that together.

Mr. MacEwen: That's a great idea, minister.

I know we're looking at it for our own caucus and you're right. As an entire Legislative Assembly, it's probably a fantastic idea so; would you take that on in your role?

Ms. Biggar: Well, we'll be happy to partner with the legislative staff here to see if we can coordinate – we have some great resources that we can draw on to do that and I'm sure we'd love to be involved in something like that, so I'll make that commitment to follow up on that and see where we can take that.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, minister.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Chair: Thanks, Wendy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Wendy.

Wendy MacDonald Director: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, members.

Chair: Workforce and Advanced Learning.

I would like to invite the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning to the table.

Hon. members, the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning will be starting on page 138.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll allow him to come in and set up.

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

Brad Colwill Deputy: Brad Colwill, Acting Deputy Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Minister, do you have opening remarks? Do you have handouts for the members?

Mr. Gallant: We do have some handouts here and I do have some opening remarks, if I may, Madam Chair.

Chair: Let's get the handouts circulated before you give your remarks.

Hon. members, the handouts for the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning have been circulated and the minister has opening remarks, and then I will read the title of a section and then we'll open the floor for discussion.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Chair.

At this time I would also like to welcome my acting deputy, Brad Colwill, to the floor with me.

Thank you very much, once again.

As you all know, this department is focused on three key inter-related areas: Connecting Islanders to great jobs, supporting post-secondary education in PEI, which of course helps young Islanders get a good start in life, and growing the province's population and helping newcomers settle in PEI over the long term.

Thanks to the strong growth in the economy and responsible government spending, we are thrilled to be able to invest more in these three key areas.

Some of the key highlights in our budget include increased funding for Island students which will mean free tuition for over 1,000 students, and all Island students will get additional help with their tuition through over \$33 million in student financial assistance.

Government will double the annual increase in funding to its publicly funded post-secondary institutions with a 2% increase in their operating income.

Government will be funding mental health supports on campus to help students on advice for students.

Government will support UPEI in a new psychology doctorate program providing much-needed psychologists here on PEI.

Expanding funding for youth in the workforce through great programs like Graduate Mentorship Program, the PEI

Farm Team, Team Seafood and Team Youth, and also Team Trucking.

We've also contributed \$1 million in additional funding to connect Islanders to great jobs with the help of community partners like East Prince Youth Development Centre, Adventure Group, Reach Foundation, the construction association and the Literacy Alliance of PEI.

The province will also increase its investment in rural settlement supports to all newcomers to better integrate in rural areas.

Also covered in this budget is Skills PEI. Through Skills PEI, we have a number of programs to support efforts to hire and train students, grads and unemployed workers. Skills PEI helps thousands of Islanders annually.

Workpei.ca is also funded through this budget and it can help connect Island workers to employers looking to hire talented people. There are currently about 700 job listings on workpei.ca representing over 2,000 available jobs in PEI.

While I'm speaking about jobs, our latest job numbers came out this morning for April and we have a total of 1,200 new jobs compared to this time last year, and 4,000 or more jobs since April of 2016.

Madam Chair, I would also like to thank the staff at our department. They work diligently and we just had four job fairs across the province in the month of April and the staff looked after that, and they deal with employers and clients on a daily basis, and I would just like to thank them for all the hard work they do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Departmental Management

Administration: 292,300.

Total Administration: 292,300.

Total Departmental Management: 292,300.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I don't actually have any questions at all. The only question I'll have, because it directly relates to you and I know you're not the decision maker on it, is the push to have UPEI and Holland College – well, UPEI in particular, because the student union is pushing to have them under the FOIPP act. But, I know in doing that, it would be a good move to bring in your other post-secondary institutes that you fund.

Where does that stand right now of bringing those into the fold?

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, hon. member.

From my understanding, they've been notified that the faculty and the students have shown a request for that to happen and there's been some discussion with my department and I'll let my deputy carry it from there, but there are ongoing discussions on it.

Brad Colwill Deputy: The consultation was out in the spring and as part of those deliberations, the student union and other union groups weighed in on it as well as the institutions and evaluating all of those factors and moving forward with the decision soon.

Mr. Myers: So this is probably something that they're going to see sooner rather than later then (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: It's something that's coming.

I mean, every other part of the country has it. It's something that will be discussed and a decision will be made soon.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Labour Market Research and Population Development

Administration

Total Administration: 2,302,800.

Total Labour Market Research and Population Development: 2,302,800.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

A question regarding the foreign qualifications program, which I think falls under this section – is that correct?

Unidentified Voice: Yes.

Ms. Bell: I understand that's federally funded.

How is that administered locally and what's the through put on that program with the funds available?

Brad Colwill Deputy: You're correct, hon. member.

It's a federally-funded program. They provide the funding to our department and then it's applied to projects which meet the criteria that are laid out by the federal funders.

Ms. Bell: Okay. So now I've spoken to a number of newcomers to PEI who are challenged with the qualification process and often they're in areas that we have a need. Engineering is one; another one is medical; so whether that be pharmacy, or psychologists, or doctors, what are some of the things that we do here to kind of help that qualification process? How does that work?

Brad Colwill Deputy: The professional organizations which often dictate the requirements for that profession are key in this as well, so through some of this funding – through our initiatives – it's working with them to see what expectations, what requirements they have, how that can relay into what the skill set and the qualifications that exist for the individuals you're speaking to.

It's a variety of things. Sometimes it's finding ways to meet the training requirements of that professional organization, so as a department we'd help, potentially, bridge that gap or to explore other avenues, which we can (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Do any of those funds go actually to the applicants to help them with those bridging costs, or is this all spent by the department?

Brad Colwill Deputy: This pool of funding is projects that are spent by the department, but there are other funds that they can access for that up-training.

Ms. Bell: And perhaps this may be a place where the minister of economic development may want to do an intervention, but I understand the Micro-Loan Program through Finance PEI, part one of the streams for that is funding to cover the cost of qualifications. Have you done any referrals from here to there – because it provides up to \$15,000 for that?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Yes, certainly. And in addition to that, I know there's a federal micro-loan similar program as well.

Ms. Bell: Sorry, I missed that.

Brad Colwill Deputy: Sorry, I understand there's a federal similar lending program that can be used to access that's offered through the national (Indistinct) federal group. Sorry.

Ms. Bell: But you're not able to speak to whether that's actually happened here – whether anybody's actually access that.

Brad Colwill Deputy: Oh, I'm certain. I know some have. I don't have the exact numbers. I could endeavor to find that, but it's something outside of our realm here.

Ms. Bell: Sure, but that relationship – sorry, Chair.

Brad Colwill Deputy: No, for sure (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. members, we're having a hard time hearing the questions and the responses. If I could have your attention, it would be appreciated.

Ms. Bell: I guess the point is that this is the management and oversight and the, like you said, the federal regulation and then if someone needs to pay for that, then there are programs available and they are being accessed to some extent. Is that correct?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Correct, yes. We would do some referrals and other instances the individual may seek that out on their own, so we wouldn't really know the full number that (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: I would be very interested to know – of the number of newcomers who come through, how many are seeking to get their qualifications validated or upgraded and what that kind of success rate looks like because it's something that is another aspect of our capacity to address workforce challenges. So it would be very interesting to see that analysis.

Mr. Gallant: We can bring that back and if I just may add, we've earmarked \$94,000 to that for foreign qualification recognition and we'll check with the association of newcomers to address your concern there.

Thank you, hon. member.

Ms. Bell: Under the same section, the other primary pieces of the grant are, I understand, the operating grants to organizations that do settlement services. Is that correct?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Correct, yes.

Ms. Bell: What's the difference between foreign qualification support and settlement services in the context of labour and labour market relationships?

Brad Colwill Deputy: The settlement supports we would provide would have more breadth in what they're earmarked for, so it wouldn't be just so much in specific getting the qualification you earned in a foreign country recognized here, it also could be helping to facilitate language training, if that's something that's necessary, or other avenues where there may be other barriers. That's not necessarily time for the qualifications had, but perhaps some different.

Ms. Bell: Thank you very much for that and what I'm really excited about with that is an operating grant because for non-profits, the operating grants where they can choose based on the demand to develop programming and services is so much more flexible. There's a direct connection. Though, are there any other operating

grants, or do they appear in other sections that are not tied to immigration?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Yes, we would have employment assistance services; in SkillsPEI there'd be a significant –

Ms. Bell: So EAS appears under SkillsPEI?

Brad Colwill Deputy: SkillsPEI.

Ms. Bell: I'll save it until then.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, if you could help out again. I'm able to hear some of your conversations at the table and there should only be one person speaking at a time and we all know the minister has a very soft voice and it would be helpful if I could hear the questions and the responses.

An Hon. Member: It's like a lullaby.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Labour and Industrial Relations

Total Labour and Industrial Relations:
1,177,400.

Total Labour and Industrial Relations:
1,177,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

SkillsPEI

Total SkillsPEI: 29,283,700.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Employment assistance services, as mentioned earlier. I understand there are 11 organizations that provide this across the province?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Yes.

Ms. Bell: How many of those organizations are private sector and how many are non-profit?

Brad Colwill Deputy: The entire group would be non-profit.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Minister, perhaps you could advise – I understand there was an RFP process – quite an extensive RFP process for the employment assistance services that was done – that people invested in and did the work on and then was tabled. Could you advise if there's going to be progress on that?

Mr. Gallant: There was some input from those organizations and it was decided just to renew their contracts, so that – what's the date on that, do you know?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Likely later this year.

Mr. Gallant: Later this year there'll be some new negotiations on it.

Ms. Bell: If I could clarify, minister, there was a formal request for an RFP from those organizations, some of whom spent a significant amount of time and money responding to that RFP, which was then cancelled or shelved.

Mr. Gallant: Well their contracts were renewed for a time period, which is coming up this year.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Minister, and I appreciate that the contracts were renewed. I guess my point is the RFP was asking for a new model, so my question is: Is there intent to go back to that – reopen or relook at the need for a new model for the delivery of employment assistance services in the province, rather than continuing with the current contract?

Brad Colwill Deputy: If I may, it is the piece with that new model. As you mentioned the RFP being tabled for the time being – was to explore the options that came in and what the ideal model that we want to see going forward is at the correct fit, so that would be why it was put to the side. The

model that the RFP was based on needed to have some further examination and potential changes.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Minister.

So we can expect, then, a new call with a new set of criteria? Is that what – I guess that looks like a yes.

Checking my notes – there is one for-profit organization in that mix. I think CDS, right?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Oh, yes. Sorry.

Ms. Bell: But, minister, perhaps just for your consideration because I'm speaking as someone where this issue's being raised with me – it's a chance for me to let you know that that expense was significant for the non-profits, who were involved in that previous progress. Kind of, there's a one-spurned-twice-shy piece in there.

Brad Colwill Deputy: Okay.

Ms. Bell: If funds could be made available to assist when that program comes up for renew, that would very helpful to ensure that all have the equal opportunity to participate in the process.

Where, under the different programs does EAS fit?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Under the Labour Market Development Agreement line.

Ms. Bell: Okay so LMDA?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Yeah, you would see the majority there. You'll also see, in your handout, as well, handout 18, I believe it is, for provincial programs where there are additional funds allocated to these groups.

Ms. Bell: For the Labour Market Development Agreement, offsets a huge amount of funds that are, kind of, come in and then are reallocated back out into the community.

Can you speak to how that – what the primary objectives of that program, of that funding agreement are?

Mr. Gallant: The main focus of the funding agreement is to attach people to the

workforce and get people working. So, you know, one prime example was the Graduate Mentorship Program. We saw a three-fold increase in that. It really took off and it was a wonderful program.

There was additional funding for that, so we took advantage of that. Anything we can do to help our students and our workforce attached to employment will certainly help. When the feds offered some additional money we thought we'd take advantage of it.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister.

So, this is the primary funding model for the programs that are available for both employers and job-seekers?

Mr. Gallant: In some cases, yes.

Ms. Bell: Grad mentorship; post-secondary career prep, training PEI; Work Experience PEI; Self Employ PEI.

Those – all that group all come under that?

Mr. Gallant: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: The self employ program, which requires people to be EI eligible to be able to take place in that program, has there ever been any movement on changing that requirement, or is that still a requirement for eligibility?

Mr. Gallant: As far as I know it's still required for eligibility, but we've brought it up at our meetings. So, it's something that we put out there for further discussion.

I appreciate your concern on that. It's something that is being talked about.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister.

I am a broken record on that one and it's something that because it's coming from the community as a barrier to people, who are not EI eligible, which can be quite a broad scope of our population.

Some of the other programs, something else we're hearing from the community, minister, is that non-profit organizations, who are employers are sometimes not eligible to access funds that are eligible

under the same agreements in other provinces or jurisdictions.

Has there been any thought about ensuring that kind of continuity is being applied?

Brad Colwill Deputy: We're exploring right now, yeah.

Mr. Gallant: It's being explored, as well.

Ms. Bell: Do we have a timeline on that, minister?

Mr. Gallant: Territorial and federal ministers will meet again in June, so, you know, it could come up for discussion then, but as far as a timeline, I couldn't say it will come out of that meeting. There may be further discussion on it, but your points are well taken.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister.

One more question: What has happened to the targeted initiative for older workers program? It seems to have –

Ms. Biggar: Get it done.

Mr. Gallant: It's still there. I went to the Passport to Employment there a while back.

Ms. Bell: It has zero line item in the current papers.

Brad Colwill Deputy: If I may, you'll see the line workforce development agreement. That is, starting this year there is new sets of those federal funding agreements that we're receiving. LMDA is being renewed, which actually will have increased EI eligibility, which we feel comfortable helping with some of the issues you've raised earlier.

The workforce development agreement envelopes the targeted initiative of the older worker. As a department you'll see that budget line item appear with that additional funding, but we still plan on proceeding with those programs.

Ms. Bell: That's really good news. Thank you for that.

You mentioned the workforce development agreement. I understand there's some really

other great things under there, including the HR Toolkit and eForcePEI.

What's the annual cost for eForcePEI to be delivered?

Brad Colwill Deputy: I don't have the exact. It's just under \$100,000 I know. Ninety-ish, I think. I can get back with that.

Ms. Bell: Do we have any data on the usage of that for that investment?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Yes, we do. I don't have it with me, sorry. I'll deliver it back.

Ms. Bell: I'll be good for now, Chair.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Post-Secondary and Continuing Education

General

Total General: 827,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Apprenticeship and Training

Total Apprenticeship and Training: 478,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: I may be in the wrong section, but is this – this is the certification for apprenticeship. Does that include the apprenticeship and mentoring programs that are being done with things like theatre PEI, and culture – sorry, Creative PEI, or is that a different section?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Yes, so this would be the division that would be involved with the management of the apprenticeship program. They actually draw funding from Skills PEI for initiatives like that. Skills PEI is the general labour pool for all the different programs so different divisions will plug into that as needed.

Ms. Bell: Okay, last question.

I think, I may have asked you about this before, minister, but the SYnC program, which was previously in place for providing funding for youth initiatives where the youth themselves got paid to participate, which was a fantastic program.

Where has that gone? Is it coming back?

Mr. Gallant: We had the opportunity to present a proposal and it's in that stage, right now, there hasn't been a final decision made. The funding was – it ended and there was a request for proposals from the province and we submitted one?

Brad Colwill Deputy: That's correct, yes.

Mr. Gallant: We're waiting to here on it.

Ms. Bell: Super.

I would love to hear when that one comes back in. We've got some people waiting to know.

That's it.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. members, I'm going to give way to the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for recognition.

Recognition of Guests (II)

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to acknowledge a former MLA in the area here, Stavert Heustis is here in the Legislature. He, also, is a very significant farmer in the farm community. Welcome here to the provincial Legislature again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: If I may add my voice to welcome Stavert Heustis, here and your grandson, Stavert with you? Great.

To certainly to go along with what the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries said, and to mention that two years ago, you golfed you age. You're probably going to do it again, this year.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Chair: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Post-Secondary Grants

Collège de l'Île: 1,066,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Holland College: 32,300,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

University of Prince Edward Island:
41,542,900.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Atlantic Veterinary College: 8,956,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Student Aid: 10,530,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Maritime Provinces Higher Education
Commission: 5,921,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Lifelong Learning Grants: 343,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Post-Secondary Grants

Shall the total carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Just going back to the student aid line in this bottom section here. I see that that was under spent last year?

But it's going up considerably this year. Can you explain whether there's any relationship between those two?

Brad Colwill Deputy: Gladly.

In the last year, we introduced a new program called the loan rehabilitation program, and with that brought forth a significant amount of loan recoveries and bringing loans back into good standing.

In doing so the annual provision we provide was decreased by the \$500,000 that you see as the decreased there. It wasn't less money provided, rather it was through that new program –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Got you.

Brad Colwill Deputy: – (Indistinct) provision.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I understand.

Could you explain then why we are going up three, or almost \$4 million from last year to this year?

Brad Colwill Deputy: That would be the new Island Advantage bursaries, the George Coles enhancement; the low-income grant and the increased debt reduction.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Great. Great programs all (Indistinct) thank you.

Chair: Shall the total carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Total Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning: 135,022,900.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Does somebody want to call the hour?

Okay, perfect.

Thank you, minister.

We're going to move on to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. We'll bring the Speaker and Clerk to the table.

Thank you, minister.

Thank you, Brad.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. members, the budget for the Legislative Assembly is on page 148.

I would like to welcome the Speaker and Mr. Clerk to the table.

Legislative Services.

Speaker, do you have any opening remarks?

Speaker: Yeah. Thank you, Chair.

I just want to note that this whole thing regarding the Legislative Assembly has been pretty much all reviewed by the LMC, which is an all-party committee. You know, all parties, certainly do have a hand in –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: – kind of running the show here.

An Hon. Member: Carry the budget.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, do you have a question?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I do. I could wait until the appropriate section here, but basically it has to do with making the Hansard more easily, I'll call it, machine-readable. I've been working with the Legislative Assembly a little bit on it. I put in a request.

The idea here is, if you wanted to take the data, in Hansard, the text and break it down by member so you can do that programmatically. For example, you wanted to know all of the times that the Premier had spoken on a given topic, you could use that in an open data format and then have your own place where you could do that sort of thing.

I just wanted to promote that, and see if that's something that has made it up to the senior levels of discussion?

Clerk: Yes, as a matter of fact, it has, thank you, hon. member.

That is presently under consideration in the Hansard office, and is being looked into. I think it's a strong probability that that can happen.

Mr. Trivers: Fantastic.

Thank you so much.

Chair: Hon. members, as the Speaker has said, this budget has been discussed by an all-party committee.

Mr. MacKay: Carry the section.

Mr. Fox: Carry the section.

Chair: Shall the Budget carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: Chair? Clarification; not the Budget carried.

Chair: No. The Speaker's. The Speaker's budget.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. members, the Speaker's budget also includes the Auditor General's budget on page 143, which also has received all-party scrutiny.

Shall this budget carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Speaker: Okay, great.

Chair: Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

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

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, May 15th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

You all have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, at 2:00 p.m.