

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS .....	3085
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS .....	3087
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Three Rivers Objection Forms) .....	3087
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (Community Legal Information Association of PEI).....	3088
ORAL QUESTIONS.....	3088
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Health symptoms related to project at TOSH).....	3088
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Serious health issues re: Public Schools Branch).....	3089
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Government refusal to parents and students re: survey).....	3090
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Chief public health officer investigate health issues at TOSH).....	3090
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Testing results for Three Oaks for tabling).....	3091
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Testing results shared with parents of TOSH).....	3091
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Testing of mould at TOSH) .....	3092
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Test results from cafeteria area) .....	3092
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Publicly release of all test results from TOSH) .....	3092
BORDEN-KINKORA (Cost of renovations to TOSH doubled).....	3093
BORDEN-KINKORA (Completion date for TOSH project) .....	3093
BORDEN-KINKORA (Disposal of hazard materials/asbestos).....	3093
BORDEN-KINKORA (Waste materials inventoried when removed off-site).....	3094
BORDEN-KINKORA (Hazardous waste dumped in Miscouche) .....	3094
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Duty to provide legal advice on government bills).....	3095
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Confidence in Attorney General).....	3095
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Lack of legal opinion on bill).....	3096
VERNON RIVER-STRATFORD (Investment in educational assessments) .....	3096
VERNON RIVER-STRATFORD (Use of assessment results to improve) .....	3097
VERNON RIVER-STRATFORD (Use of educational assessment results).....	3097
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Future immigrant students in western PEI) .....	3098
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Staff to accommodate increase in enrollment).....	3098
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (School resources for immigrant students) .....	3099
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Public interest represented in regulatory proceedings) .....	3099
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Submitting objections to IRAC re: amalgamation).....	3099

GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Submitted objections to IRAC presented publicly).....	3100
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Islanders re: IRAC table for mediation) .....	3100
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Creating two classes of Islanders) .....	3101
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Unincorporated areas to turn to court or human rights) .....	3101
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS .....	3101
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Suicide Prevention Strategy) .....	3101
EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING AND CULTURE (PEI Symphony Day) .....	3103
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	3104
REPORTS BY COMMITTEES .....	3106
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT (Committee Activities).....	3106
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT .....	3106
MORELL-MERMAID .....	3106
RUSTICO-EMERALD .....	3108
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT) .....	3109
ESTIMATES .....	3109
FINANCE .....	3109
P.E.I. Public Service Commission .....	3127
ADJOURNED.....	3134

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.

Good morning everyone and welcome colleagues here and those joining us – visitors in the gallery to our eighth Friday of the spring sitting. In the gallery we have representatives of the PEI symphony – Bruce Craig, chair, is here. Representatives of Canadian Mental Health Association – they'll both be recognized later.

We've got some of our great regulars who get mentioned from time to time. (Indistinct) Friday and others may wish to speak. I'll mention one, being my neighbor, Krista Shaw; great to see you here, Krista, and all the good work that you're doing.

This weekend there will be the national meeting of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada/*L'Association canadienne d'ethnologie et de folklore*. The meeting will take place at UPEI and I mention it, in particular, because two of our great contributors to folklore here on Prince Edward Island, John Cousins and Georges Arsenault, will be recognized with the very distinguished honour of the Marius Barbeau Medal which is conferred by the folklore studies association nationally to recognize lifelong achievement and contributions to the area and, of course, we know the work of both John and Georges, and they are highly deserving and it's a great acknowledgement of the work that they do, and many others do, is a critical and integral part of the fibre of our community here on Prince Edward Island. Barbeau, for whom the medal is named, is widely acknowledged to be more or less the founder of folklore studies in Canada.

This weekend is the annual meeting of the women's institute. On other occasions in this House we've spoken about the importance and the contributions of the women's institute and we all know their great work in communities and then at a province-wide basis and, indeed, how

women's institute ties into national work and relationships and a number of us will be taking part in that meeting.

A couple of other things on the more local level: Charlottetown Police Services offering a bike rodeo for youngsters – great service by CPS and an opportunity for the youngster to learn about bicycle safety. In our own community, there's a pancake breakfast that the Brackley Beach community organizes from time to time.

Later today, I will be taking part in a federal announcement about funding for the Charlottetown Airport runway and taxiway and of those who have been out in that area lately, you can see quite a mound there to represent what that project is. That work is, along with other big projects such as the transmission cables, the water and wastewater, the work that's done on harbours, the work on the corridor road on roads and bridges, a great example of the big investments that are being made to be sure that our province continues to do well and is connected to the world.

Finally, this will be the day of the unveiling of the cornerstone of *l'École La-Belle-Cloche* and a number of people from throughout the province will be participating in that and it's a great achievement for the francophone community and the French-speaking community in that area and, indeed, for the whole province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise as well and to bring greetings on behalf of the official opposition to not only those that have joined us in the gallery today, but also to anyone that may be viewing over Internet or EastLink.

I'd also like to recognize a few people in the gallery today, if I can have your indulgence. Krista Shaw is here and as the Premier mentioned earlier, she does lots of great work and I thank her, particularly from this

side of the floor, for the wonderful work that she does do.

Also, I want to recognize Toby MacDonald and Samantha MacPherson, who, I believe, are down from Summerside today.

Of course, in the back row here we have Kevin Clory and Jamie Larkin; John MacLean; Cheryl, as well, great to see you here.

As well as the representatives from the Canadian Mental Health Association, it's great to see them, and the wonderful work that they do for our entire Island.

I would also just like to remind everyone that this is the weekend for QEH telethon. I encourage and Islander that, if it's within your means, to make a donation to this very worthwhile cause.

Last, but not least, I also want to single out a very important event that's taking place this evening at the Inn at St. Peters. It's a benefit for the Anderson House. This has been going on for many years now. I've attended it a couple of times. It is a fantastic evening of fellowship and a beautiful menu they put on. I really want to thank Karen Milligan for unselfishly hosting this event every year. All of the proceeds from this wonderful evening go to the very worthy cause of Anderson House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I would like to welcome everybody to the gallery, of course, including some of our regulars. Also, some people, who are not so frequently here; John MacLean, I don't think we've seen you here this year, John. It's nice to see you.

Also from the PEI Symphony board, I see Bruce there, the president. and Marlee Saulnier. Nice to see you both. I know we'll be mentioning the PEI Symphony and its 50 year anniversary later on. And to Jamie, welcome to you, Jamie, nice to see you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today. It's good to see Eddie and Cheryl here, our regulars. I'd also like to welcome Jamie Larkin here with us.

I would remiss if I didn't congratulate John Cousins. I grew up with John, went to high school in O'Leary with John. It's a wonderful thing to see him being recognized so greatly in our community. All the best to John and his future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone, who is watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald.

I just wanted to point out three constituents, who did pass away this week; Norma Gauthier, who was a friend of mine. I just sent condolences to, especially, her husband Herbie and her daughter Kyra, who I know well. Also, Andrew Gallant, who passed away this week, I also know some of his family, like his son, Dale. Finally, Shane Wilson, who passed away at only age 54. There is a service today.

I also wanted to recognize people here in the gallery. Of course, Krista Shaw and Cheryl MacLean. I wanted to recognize John MacLean, and just congratulate him for his persistence in keeping this fight for what he believes in workers compensation. I believe he's made some progress lately. Congratulation on that.

I also wanted to welcome Jamie Larkin. I understand one of his competitors in the mayoral race for Charlottetown has released his business card. I have it under good authority, Jamie's going to have even bigger and better, not only business cards, but a fridge magnet.

I want to welcome Kevin Clory to the gallery. Now, Kevin Clory his mother was

admitted to hospital. Unfortunately, she was released last night, without the family's knowledge. I know Kevin has had a long night. They spent about five-and-a-half hours, I understand, looking for his mother. They finally did locate here. That's something that really shouldn't happen. I know the minister of health would take this under advisement.

I really wanted to wish the best of luck to all of the people, who are looking to be elected as French Language School Board trustee on Monday. It would be nice if we also had English language school board elections –

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Trivers:** – but especially, *dans la quatrième zone (Indistinct) L'école Saint-Augustin. Les candidats sont mes amis, Stéphane Blanchard et Michelle Pineau. Bonne chance à vous et tous les candidats.*

*Merci.*

In zone four (Indistinct) L'école St. Augustin. The candidates are my friends, Stéphane Blanchard and Michelle Pineau. Good luck to you and all the candidates.

Thank You.

**An Hon. Member:** Mr. Speaker –

**Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. Myers:** Now, he wants up.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Oh, you again.

**Speaker:** Yeah, go ahead.

#### Recognition of Guests (II)

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome Bruce Craig, Evan McCosham and Marlee Saulnier from the PEI Symphony. Pat Doyle, a constituent of mine, and Cheryl MacLean, a constituent of mine, as well, to the gallery here today. I'll have a further statement on the PEI Symphony later, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Three Rivers Objection Forms**

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, a group of concerned citizens in the proposed Three Rivers amalgamation area that government is shoving down their throat, delivered over 15,000 objection forms to IRAC –

**An Hon. Member:** Fifteen thousand?

**Mr. Myers:** Or 1,500, sorry.

These 1,500 forms did not even include those forms that had been dropped off by individuals on their own, or mailed in.

In fact, more than three-times the amount of people have filled in objection forms than voted yes for amalgamation in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. In fact, more people filled out objection forms than voted 'no' for amalgamation. I think it's fair to say that Islanders are dead against amalgamation.

However, we know from the Member from Borden-Kinkora's questions yesterday that the fix was in from the start. The government actually infiltrated these communities with what they call community champions to undermine any attempt to organize against amalgamation.

It's a shame our government has resorted to treating Islanders with such disregard. Three weeks ago we hosted a meeting in Pooles Corner to gather objection forms. We have over 200 people come out. There really is a grass movement that is saying: Enough is enough, and standing up to this government.

I want to thank the group that has been leading the charge against this government's forced amalgamation. Keep fighting and I will be right there with you.

As I said at the rally here at the Legislature, we've gotten along fine for the past 150 years and we'll be fine for the next 150 years. Leave us alone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

### **Community Legal Information Association of PEI**

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Community Legal Information Association of PEI, commonly known as CLIA is a non-governmental organization that provides essential information, education, referrals and support to Islanders, who need help with legal issues.

Since opening in 1985, CLIA has grown into a trusted resource that is widely used by the public, businesses, community organizations, government, the judiciary and by the Island's legal community to facilitate access to justice.

Among the many essential services CLIA provides; an inquiry line and a lawyer referral service; power of attorney and uncontested divorce kits; resources and information on family law, criminal law, housing and property law, health care, wills and estate planning; court forms and procedures.

Services are available in English and French and some resources are also available in Mandarin, Farsi, Arabic and even Japanese.

CLIA receives some funding from the federal government via the department of justice; provincially from the Law Society of PEI and the Law Foundation of PEI. In kind support from the Department of Justice and Public Safety and via private donations.

It has also received project-based funding from 100 Women Who Care PEI; Skills PEI; Work Smarts to name just a few.

In 2015, CLIA won the Charlottetown chamber of commerce's President's Excellence Award. Earlier this year, long time executive director, David 'Lobie' Daughton announced he was retiring.

I'm thrilled to welcome the new executive director for CLIA, a good friend, and outstanding community leader; Ellen Mullally. Ellen is a fluently bilingual Islander, who has more than 15 years of experience collaborating with diverse groups

to achieve common solutions. Most recently, Ellen worked as an employment counsellor with the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, and as a consultant with the Canadian Career Development Foundation. Ellen is also the candidate for Charlottetown ward four in the municipal elections this November.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lobie for his years of service to CLIA and look forward to seeing him weekly at the farmers market.

I would also like to welcome Ellen in her new role, where I'm certain she will thrive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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.

As work continues on the renovations to the Three Oaks high school in Summerside, so do the concerns about the health and safety impacts the project is having on students and staff.

### **Health symptoms related to project at TOSH**

Question to the education minister: How many students thus far have reported health symptoms related to this ongoing project?

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

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

Yes, this is a project that has been ongoing. Actually, the students at Three Oaks, I believe this is their last full week of school so I'm sure they're looking forward to their summertime. They've worked extra hard over the year to make up that time in each of the days between September and now.

We have been working diligently, together with the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to ensure that the students that are there see the least disruption in their day-to-day program as possible.

The principal, Jeff Clow meets with the construction crew everyday to ensure that things run as smoothly as they possibly can.

We are keeping a close eye on that, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

According to students and parents from TOSH, at least 25 students to date, and counting, have reported experiencing a range of health issues during the construction. Some students, who also graduated during the construction period have also experienced ongoing health issues.

Many of the students have a higher than normal absenteeism running as high as 30 days, 30 school days per semester.

Question to the education minister: Does having current and former Three Oaks students report health issues from this construction trouble you?

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

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

As I indicated anytime that we have a construction project like this that's underway at the same time as school is in progress, obviously, there is a great deal of care and attention that's paid to the construction process, and to the students' schooling.

We would certainly acknowledge that there are students that would have greater reactions than other to air quality amongst other things. Working with the Public Schools Branch and principal Clow there have been great steps taken to ensure that the students are as comfortable as possible,

including offering to have them make alternative arrangements such as go to other schools if they so desired, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Some of the common health issues being reported by students include; fatigue; chest pain; shortness of breath; cough; headaches and migraines; dizziness; poor concentration; lack of energy.

I met with a group of concerned parents just last week, and from parents directly with regards to their children. One boy has missed six weeks of school. One girl has missed four weeks of school. One girl has missed 30 days since Christmas. Another girl suffers from chest pains, fatigue, shortness of breath, poor concentration, headaches. There is another girl, who suffers from fatigue. This list goes on and on.

### **Serious health issues re: Public Schools Branch**

Question to the minister of education: These are very serious health issues. Why do they not seem to be concern to you or the Public Schools Branch that you oversee?

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

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

I will assure you that the health and safety of Island students, including those at Three Oaks is of great concern to us. I will indicate that a number of steps have been taken to ensure that our Island students, particularly at Three Oaks, do have the greatest opportunity to have great health through this project.

In connection with parents and with staff at the Public Schools Branch, we've added a number of different testing mechanisms, which are undertaken at regular intervals to ensure air quality safety at Three Oaks school.

Hoarding walls are ensured on a regular basis to be in place and to be airtight. Every day, as I indicated, principal Clow meets with the construction crew. They make an effort to ensure that students are not being educated immediately adjacent to construction particularly where it might be noisy or where dust might be created.

Every effort is being made, but we do recognize that this is a \$23 million construction project that's being undertaken at the same time as school is going on. Though, extreme efforts are being made to ensure that the two don't overlap to the greatest extent possible, there is still minimal interruptions that do occur and we acknowledge that and have taken steps to try and help students through it.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The minister mentioned some of the measures that they've taken to protect and secure the students and the staff at that school. He also mentioned some of the temporary walls that are put up to block off construction.

In fact, one female student was in a hallway when a temporary construction wall fell on her and actually fractured her knee. I don't know how something like that could happen if the procedures were put in place correctly. Now, this girl's parents are considering litigation against this government.

As troubling and concerning as the health issues are, many of these students have also experienced lower academic performance and higher anxiety and stress. To further document these physical and mental health issues, government is being asked, they're being asked to send a survey to all students and staff.

#### **Government refusal to parents and students re: survey**

Question to the minister of education: Why is government refusing to address this simple request from students and parents, and actually conduct a survey?

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

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

We, being the Public Schools Branch, the construction committee, the principal of the school have had regular meetings with parents and staff. Through that process, concerns have been heard; extra security has been added to ensure that folks are not going into construction areas.

I will say here: we do not have any reports of any fractures that have been – occurred as a result of any particular results. We wouldn't speak to any specific incidents in relation to students in any event, but I do want to indicate that that kind of a thing has not happened.

And, I should say that through all of the air quality testing that's been done through professional services, all of the results have come back as being positive and meeting Health Canada standards through the month of April.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, government refusing this simple request to help address the health concerns isn't instilling confidence in the students or the staff.

They want answers. They don't just want a deflection.

#### **Chief public health officer investigate health issues at TOSH**

Question to the minister of education: Will you have the chief public health officer investigate these environmental health issues and interview all students and staff at TOSH?

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

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

What I will say is that workers compensation has been present through the course of planning in terms of what we might do. They have actually consulted with, it's my understanding, different government departments that would give advice as to what testing might be done. We're doing all of that testing.

In fact, at the direction/concern of parents, we added an additional test. All of that testing has come back fine. What I will say here is we are open to any input as to what might be done. I think there has been a very good track record of doing things that have been suggested as potentially being of assistance in this situation. We will continue to do that kind of a thing, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Six weeks ago, I asked for air quality, water and other environmental testing results for the Three Oaks renovation project to be publicly released.

#### **Testing results for Three Oaks for tabling**

Question to the transportation minister: Do you have that information with you to table today?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As was just mentioned by the minister of education, the air test for April has certainly come back clear in regard to Canada health standards.

I don't have that with me, but I'll certainly go back to the department and see if that's available.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It shouldn't take six weeks for this to be done unless you're foot dragging for a

reason. I'm not the only one asking. Concerned parents at TOSH have been asking for these results, as well.

#### **Testing results shared with parents of TOSH**

Question to the transportation minister: How many environmental test results has your department shared with concerned parents of TOSH?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All results have been shared with the principal of the school. They have, in turn, sent messages out, I believe, from what I understand, through the school and the team that is working with our construction team, to parents.

There is ongoing testing. Those fall within the regulations of Canada – Health Canada. We have put extra air quality and exhaust systems in place.

In regard to the recent tests that just came back this week, I certainly will go back and find out if that's where that's at.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Your department did provide one test result to concerned TOSH parents: a copy of the March 28<sup>th</sup> asbestos (Indistinct) air monitoring report was given to parents in April.

Question to the transportation minister: We're almost two years into the TOSH project now. Why did you only give one day's test results to concerned parents?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I just noted, the results that came back from April have been shared with the Public Schools Branch, the school staff and

principal and they, in turn, are free to put that information out to parents.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The one day of test results you gave concerned parents says nothing about mould issues.

### Testing of mould at TOSH

Question to the transportation minister: Why are you refusing to test for mould and share the results with the concerned parents asking for this to be done?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any testing, as I noted, has been released to the Public Schools Branch, the school principal and staff and they, in turn, are in communication with the parents.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'm looking at concerned parents in the crowd shaking their heads, so that's obviously not the case. The one day of test results you gave concerned parents wasn't for the entire school; I believe it was for the cafeteria area.

### Test results from cafeteria area

Question to the transportation minister: Does one day's test results from one section of the school give a clear picture of the environmental health issues plaguing dozens of TOSH students?

**Mr. Fox:** That's right.

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

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

I do want to clarify on this point that following the health concerns expressed by students, parents, and staff at TOSH, TIE, and representatives from the school's joint health and safety committee, and an occupational health and safety officer from the Public Schools Branch, and the environmental consultant reviewed and agreed upon five locations within the school for additional testing, which occurred between April 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

These areas were occupied by staff and students at the time and each were tested for particulate levels, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and total volatile organic compounds.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> that testing came back and all that testing was within satisfactory levels according to Health Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You gave concerned parents only one day of test results for only one area of the school taken on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Students have been experiencing environmental health issues for months for areas all over the school, like the Leader of the Opposition noted.

### Publicly release of all test results from TOSH

Question to the transportation minister: When will you clear the air and publically release all the environmental test results from the Three Oaks project?

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

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

I'll add to that by saying that round about the first part of April, perhaps a little bit before that, more students began to come forward and indicate that they were experiencing health concerns related to their school environment. It was at that time that, together with parents, staff at the Public Schools Branch, staff at the school, worker's

compensation, the environmental consultants that were there; a testing program was determined and put into place. That was done in collaboration with all of those groups and the testing was looked at – and as I said before, ideas were determined as to what might work in terms of what should be tested for.

A program went forward with regular meetings between the parent groups and the school staff and the results, as they came back, were released to those groups.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Government first announced the Three Oaks renovation during the last provincial election at a cost of \$15 million.

#### **Cost of renovations to TOSH doubled**

Question to the minister of transportation: Now the renovations are expected to cost more than \$23 million. How did this project go over budget by 50% in less than two years?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a construction project, it's a reconstruction from the outside in of a completely renovation – a reconstruction of that particular school. In the climate that we're in with construction, certainly the costs that were estimated during the initial construction –

**Mr. Myers:** It's not a construction project. You said. I don't know. Don't confuse me.

**Ms. Biggar:** It doesn't take much.

[Laughter]

To continue – we're on a tear here on PEI with construction right across PEI. The costs that were associated – any costs, extra costs – are associated with the demand on the trades that are working in all fields, but in particular, with the Three Oaks project and

that is a factor in why things cost more these days.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: What we have here is a health disaster. This project was supposed to be done by this fall; now we're talking about 2019.

#### **Completion date for TOSH project**

How far behind schedule, minister, is this \$23 million project? What's the new completion date?

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

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

To my knowledge, this project is actually not behind schedule; in fact, it's trending right on schedule. That is exactly why school was accelerated throughout the course of this year and they actually have it right down to the percentage in terms of where they plan to be when they were to start the first of June and where they hope to get to over the course of this summer.

We're talking about going from roughly 40% to the mid-60s over the course of this summer. From that point on, they have roughly a year worth of construction to go to have the school finished on time – as far as I'm aware, Mr. Speaker. That's been the plan since the renovation project started.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about asbestos and duct work.

#### **Disposal of hazard materials/asbestos**

Question to the transportation minister: Where does construction material with hazard materials like asbestos get disposed at?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

I want to note, also, that this project is on schedule.

**Mr. Myers:** You didn't want to answer when he asked the question just now, but that's okay. We understand.

**Ms. Biggar:** In regard –

**Mr. Myers:** You didn't know. He gave it to you. Now you know the answer.

**Speaker:** Carry on, minister.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Somebody else seems to know more answers. They're welcome to answer.

In regard to this particular question: Anything that is determined to have any particles of asbestos in it is bagged and put together and it is taken to the waste watch site and stored there until it can be disposed of.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The one item not checked off was for documentation of asbestos – was the manifest of construction waste materials transferred to off-site for disposal.

#### **Waste materials inventoried when removed off-site**

Question to the minister: Why aren't the construction waste materials removed off-site being inventoried given the presence of asbestos, mould, and other hazardous materials?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, again, I want to reiterate. Anything that is deemed to have any particles of asbestos – of anything that would be of hazardous particles in it are bagged and are disposed of and stored, at the moment, at the Island waste watch site. They are not taken to any other site. They are strictly monitored and adhered to protocol for disposing of any hazardous materials. It's bagged again. It's deposited at the Island waste watch site.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Good.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government has previously cited the high cost of asbestos removal from the school. Residents of the Kinsman Road in Miscouche have noted an increase in heavy truck traffic dumping construction materials on an empty lot with marshland areas nearby. I'm going to table these photographs later.

Question to the minister: Why would construction materials from Three Oaks reno be ended up on an empty lot in Miscouche?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that particular area. Anything to do with anything that is disposed of, again, that has any kind of hazardous materials in it is bagged. It's not allowed to be transported to any other site other than the site that identified – anything hazardous is bagged and transported to the Island waste watch site.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The nearest licensed construction demolition site would be the IWMC facility in Wellington.

#### **Hazardous waste dumped in Miscouche**

Question to the minister: Can you confirm that hazardous material of any type construction waste from the Three Oaks reno aren't being illegally dumped in Miscouche to cut cost overruns?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, again, I will explain to the member over there –

**Mr. MacKay:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – anything identified that has any particles of anything hazardous in it –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – are bagged and are and have been transported to the Island waste watch site in Wellington –

**Mr. Myers:** It hasn't been identified.

**Ms. Biggar:** It has been identified and it is being transported there.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Yesterday during debate on bill 38, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and the Attorney General was asked repeatedly about whether he has sought a legal opinion on the constitutionality of his legislation.

In response, he suggested that if my colleague from Charlottetown-Parkdale had concerns, she should bring forward her own legal opinion. I found that response entirely inappropriate and disparaging.

### **Duty to provide legal advice on government bills**

A question to the Premier: Whose duty is it to provide legal advice on government bills? Is it opposition's? Or is it the Attorney General's?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, up until about 8:15 last night, we were treated to quite a long monologue that included legal advice or legal opinions, so it may indeed be that the third party has some, and if they have, I'm sure it will come out now that we are in debate. I'm sure that's where we will also have an opportunity to have good, full discussion, which did start at 8:15 last night. I was very proud of what took place after that, and that will be an opportunity to consider any issues that people have regarding the constitutional issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well, my understanding is that it is indeed the Attorney General who has a special responsibility to ensure that Cabinet actions are legally and constitutionally valid.

This bill, bill 38, infringes on the freedom of expression of Islanders quite substantially and similar provisions have been struck down in other Canadian court decisions, some of which I tabled earlier this week.

### **Confidence in Attorney General**

A question to the Premier: In light of the Attorney General's failure to secure a legal opinion, do you have confidence in his professional competence?

**Mr. Myers:** As a lawyer or as a Cabinet minister?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we started in committee, finally, at 8:15 last night. There were some very important exchanges that took place there and I have to say, as a member of this Legislature, and I said earlier, I was proud of what took place in terms of the caliber of the debate, the earnestness, the contentiousness of the questions that were raised, the introduction and the responses of the Attorney General as the sponsor of this bill.

I have full confidence in the bill and in the Attorney General, and in this Legislature, which was fairly widely disparaged, I might say, by the Leader of the Third Party, to do our work in committee and to give full consideration to the bill that is before us. I look forward to the continuation of that debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Far from disparaging this House, I'm trying to protect the integrity of it.

Given that the Attorney General is refusing to do his job, and the Premier appears unwilling to compel him to do so, it would be irresponsible for any member of this House to pass this bill.

#### **Lack of legal opinion on bill**

A question to the Premier: How can you expect members of this House to support this potentially unconstitutional bill without a legal opinion on its constitutionality?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, this bill is brought forward with the intention to permit and to provide the whole structure and terms for Prince Edward Islanders to provide a clear expression of the will of the people on an important question that has been before us for getting on for three years, and that is exactly what we are now engaged in in this Legislature, and that, I fully expect, will include an opportunity to respond to the issues that are being raised here.

I don't think anyone to date has failed in doing their duty, and I'm glad to say that this matter is before the House on the floor where it will be the subject to full and robust and conscientious consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

My question today is actually for the minister of education. He's having a busy day here today.

It has to do with the latest round of assessment results we received, and I know for many years we've had lots of pundits going on about our assessments and why we use them. I know we had some really good results this time, but just if I was to use the analogy that perhaps, Premier, any profession in this province, and I'll pick the one of my own in agriculture, or yours of your own, Mr. Speaker, in the fishery, in agriculture we do assessments on a monthly basis for our dairy for milk recording. That's a type of assessment. We do classifications twice a year on our cattle, which is an assessment. We do samples on our feed, stuff that we are feeding to our cattle on a regular basis. All of those assessments are used to help us produce our milk and produce it the most efficiently as possible.

I know in the lobster industry that you're a professional in, we have a lobster monitoring program that has actually made our stocks now very stable and we need all of those assessments.

#### **Investment in educational assessments**

I'll just ask the minister of education how the information from the educational assessments is used, and do you really feel those investments are worth the investment – those assessments are worth the investment?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture; 40 seconds.

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

We do feel that a great assessment program is well worth the investment. That starts with teachers in the classrooms assessing their students every day. It goes on to a great provincial assessment program to tell us how well those students are doing on a province-wide basis, one compared to the other directly.

We know how students are doing at key stages of their learning, and that enables our

department to be accountable for student outcomes and performance within the education system. Without those assessments, we would not know how well our students are doing and where our resources should be allocated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I might use another analogy as well. In our industry, we use a lot of soil sampling. We could drive by the fields and have a look at the crop and say: You know what? Maybe it needs a little more phosphorous. Maybe it needs a little more potash. We haven't put enough manure on it, or what exactly is the problem? We really don't know, but we can get a lot of different ideas.

Actually, what we do is we sample the soil. We take it to the experts at the lab. They come back and tell us: You know what? For this crop you're growing here, actually you need more lime. But, on a drive by, we may not be able to know that.

In the department of education, I know with Elizabeth Costa at the helm there, they do great work with these assessments. Again, we take those results to the experts.

### **Use of assessment results to improve**

My question to the minister is: Has the department used the results in the past to help our students improve?

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

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

The short answer to that is yes, and the longer answer is about 10 years ago we didn't have any idea how well Prince Edward Island students were doing. When we first did find out, the end result was not that well.

This year, we have announced outstanding PCAP results where we're now number one in the country in terms of our reading

expectations. We're right up there in terms of math and science, and that's through major investments in literacy as a result of our provincial assessment results, and that work has been achieved through Atlantic Provinces' work, in creating standards in reading and writing achievement, trained literacy coaches, and new language arts resources and PD, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

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

I could use all kinds of different analogies. Pretty near every profession across the province uses assessments to improve the direction they're going.

### **Use of educational assessment results**

Just as an example; a question to the hon. minister: How are the schools on Prince Edward Island using these results?

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

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

We have fantastic staff on Prince Edward Island, which starts with our teachers. We have great coaches, as well. They have done a number of great things. With our principals, they have created school literacy goals. That helps to drive a top-down approach to this.

Our school-based initiatives targeted a number of different things. Examples of that would be an oral language program at Elm Street that supports our youngest students that have not developed language skills yet. It helps them to do that.

The foundations program at Montague Consolidated and Glen Stewart helps kindergarten students with sound, touch, sight and movement. And progress monitoring, we've spoken a lot about in this Chamber, lately. That helps to understand where students see gaps, and helps the

teachers understand what to do to fill those gaps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is also the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Minister, recently there have been a number of immigrant students register for schools in western PEI. The schools are told, after speaking with students services that there may be more students registering as a result of the government's immigration plan, which I welcome. This is good news, as it is in contrast to what was happening this time a little over a year ago.

#### **Future immigrant students in western PEI**

Minister: Does your department have any projections for the number of immigrant students that may register for schools in the west in the near future?

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) get them move into a hotel (Indistinct) 600 (Indistinct)

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

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

Yes, we have been tracking this. Janet Perry-Payne, who works with these groups has been out around. She has confirmed that there are seven new registrations in the past month. There may well be more coming in the coming weeks or months.

She's been around to Kildare seafoods; Royal Star; South Shore and Trout River speaking with employers and looking at the work visas that these individuals might have and trying to determine whether that will allow them to bring their families with them or not.

We're really trying to get an on-the-ground level, in terms of who might be and who they might have with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In speaking with the schools, they are thrilled with this, but they're concerned; thrilled with for the increase in enrollment and what it will do for rural development, but concerned about staffing in their schools and whether or not the potential registration of these students will result in not meeting the staffing needs for next year.

Minister, as we know, allocations will be determined soon. Schools are wondering what would happen if the enrollment numbers of immigrant students rise drastically over the summer.

#### **Staff to accommodate increase in enrollment**

My question is: Will there be teachers and staff available to accommodate a sudden rise in enrollment?

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

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

It's great to hear that these communities are thrilled. I'd heard a story this week, actually, about Francis Morrissey, who was regretting not having purchased a tuxedo and having renting them, as we had walked six different individuals down the wedding aisle –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Not for himself.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and it is thrilling to see your community growing like that.

The answer to the hon. member's question is: yes. We have 25 new EAL positions to be allocated for unexpected EAL needs such as these. These resources will be allocated by the Public Schools Branch and French Language School Board over the coming weeks.

We would expect there would be some availability if there's student increases that are unprojected heading into the fall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the minister did answer my question with this. I'll ask him just to elaborate a little bit more on this.

It is quite possible that some of these students that come here may not have English as their first language.

### **School resources for immigrant students**

I just wanted to know what resources may be available for these students for school, and also within the community.

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

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

This is a great question. As I indicated, we do have an intake process for new immigrant students. We're actually working on improvements to that that will hopefully ramp any students without great English capabilities up over the summer, which will also be new.

We have had EAL itinerant teachers in Alberton elementary and M. E. Callaghan just this week. They've already been at O'Leary elementary. Also this week, we had our EAL teacher support specialist to go to Alberton elementary and M. E. Callaghan to meet with teachers and administration and help them prepare for newcomer students. She plans to return up there.

We feel like we're doing a lot. It's certainly a lot more than we had been doing in the past. We will continue to focus on our immigrant communities and see our rural communities and urban communities build in Prince Edward Island and we're proud of that in our education system.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member from Borden-Kinkora has introduced Bill No. 104, *Public Intervener Act*, to establish someone, who intervenes in IRAC regulatory proceedings.

### **Public interest represented in regulatory proceedings**

Question to the minister of justice: Do you support the idea of having the public interest represented in regulatory proceedings?

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

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

I'll make note, in advance, of my obligation to walk a bit of a line, here. IRAC actually falls under my department in education, only because it's an omnibus appeal body and it's seen that it would be arms-length, particularly from education.

IRAC is an omnibus appeal body. They regulate a number of different things in this province. They are arms-length –

**Mr. Fox:** Do you support it?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – from government.

They do have a capacity to do that work. We are seeing some of that work go on right now in the amalgamation process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier actually brought up the *Municipal Government Act* whenever the *Public Intervener Act* was in committee on this floor.

The bill sponsor told the Premier the MGA was not included because he believed people would clearly have a voice and a chance to intervene as part of the process.

### **Submitting objections to IRAC re: amalgamation**

Question to the Premier: Will all persons, who formally submitted objections against amalgamation to IRAC, be given a chance to actually intervene and present their concerns in front of the commission?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, this very matter is currently before IRAC. The IRAC has been established with the authority, as the minister has just said for a number of areas including *Municipal Government Act*.

I've got full confidence that IRAC will deal with this matter. It's certainly not my place to be standing here in the House in the middle of a matter that is actively under consideration by IRAC, saying anything to indicate how I think they should handle it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's your bill. You're the reason why we're down in this rabbit hole. You're the reason that everybody's upset.

### **Submitted objections to IRAC presented publicly**

Question to the Premier: Will you publicly commit to allowing all Islanders, who followed your legislation and submitted objections to IRAC to present their objections publicly?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the objections have been filed with IRAC. The matter is in the hands of IRAC. That's where it should stay. That's exactly under the legislation that creates IRAC –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – the *Municipal Government Act*, which is not a bill; it's law.

I expect that all of the parties – all of the parties will have an opportunity to have their case dealt with according to law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's sad when the opposition knows the bill better than the Premier, who authored it because it's the minister himself can call the public hearing. The minister can actually call a public hearing.

In the case of Three River, the Towns of Georgetown and Montague filed municipal objections, and when they filed objections they required a mediator to be put in place, and then possibly a public hearing if that is unresolved.

### **Islanders re: IRAC table for mediation**

Question to the Premier: Will individual unincorporated Islanders also be given a seat at the table for IRAC's mediation?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

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

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

I thank the member for the question.

According to the legislation, a mediator will be appointed because objections were raised to the amalgamation process and I think that mediator will work, not only with the municipalities, but also with the unincorporated areas and with the people that have filed objections.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the legislation under the new municipality act appears to have two levels of citizenry: one if you're in a municipality and one if you're not in a municipality. In

the case of the proposed amalgamations, municipalities and their residents are welcome at the table for the IRAC mediations and unincorporated Islanders are not.

### **Creating two classes of Islanders**

Question to the Premier: Why has your amalgamation act that was supported by the Green Party allowed to create two classes of Islanders?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

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

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

As I said earlier, now that objections have been filed with IRAC, the legislation mandates that a mediator be appointed. That mediator will work with all individuals involved in the process down there and I expect that the mediator will work with the people in the unincorporated areas.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately this is no longer about amalgamation; it's about an arrogant government who mandated a process that deliberately silences the most effective people in those areas. It's deliberate discrimination by this government against those Islanders who reside in unincorporated areas.

### **Unincorporated areas to turn to court or human rights**

Question to the Premier: Will these Islanders be forced to turn to the courts or human rights in order to overturn your undemocratic government's legislation and have your government's arrogance reigned in so that all Islanders get treated on a fair and even playing field?

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

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

I thank the member for his question.

The act clearly states that it is in the hands of IRAC and public meetings may be held. I would assume that IRAC will be holding public meetings because of the number of people that have objected with this and the mediator will work with everybody involved. We're not setting up two classes of citizens.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** The member himself has said that people filed objections. A number of people in the unincorporated areas file objections. If it was discriminatory, they would have not been allowed to file those and municipalities would have been only able to file.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) mediator though.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Therefore, there was no discrimination here. They have filed their objections – a number of them – I understand today, 1,500. These people will be listened to.

Thank you.

### Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **Suicide Prevention Strategy**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, the last thing most people expect is that they will run out of reasons to live, but if someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts, they need to know that they are not alone and that there are people here ready to help.

Last year, our government commissioned the Canadian Mental Health Association to create a Provincial Suicide Prevention Strategy. We knew that there was a need and that suicide is a very complex issue. Often times, there are many factors that combine to create the hopelessness that leads to this tragic outcome.

This afternoon at 2:30 p.m. in the provincial media room, the Canadian Mental Health Association and my department will publically release the Provincial Suicide

Prevention Strategy entitled: The Building Blocks of Hope. I invite all members of this House to attend the official launch this afternoon.

I would also like to thank the Canadian Mental Health Association, some of them who are here in the gallery today. I'd like to take a moment to recognize and introduce those folks: Amanda Brazil, Tayte Willows, and Pat Doyle are all with us today.

[Applause]

We are extremely pleased that they are in the gallery today.

Through this strategy we will work to reduce suicides by helping those at risk and providing information and support to the loved ones left behind. As a province, we need to work together to support our families, friends, neighbours, and coworkers.

This strategy is about inspiring a culture of hope where people feel that they belong, that they have worth, and that they can find support to help them work through suicidal thoughts and feelings and find a way to live a full life.

I'd once again like to thank the Canadian Mental Health Association for their contribution to this very important endeavor.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business, and this strategy lays the groundwork for government, our partners, and all Islanders to create a culture of hope right here in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the minister for his statement. It certainly is a long time coming and we're quite pleased that this strategy has come forward and that you'll be announcing it today.

I'd like to welcome the members from the Canadian Mental Health Association here today and for all your hard work on this

report and all those that did work on it. We are curious to see who was consulted on this project. I know it was about a \$50,000 report that's coming. We certainly hope that it's going to talk about tracking suicides – better ways to do that in the province. We hope that there will be measures added for security at the Hillsborough Bridge, the security at the QEH and the Hillsborough Hospital programs for those with suicidal tendencies.

I'm interested to compare this study to the national suicide strategy, which actually called for six legislative elements and I'd like to remind everybody of those today. Number one: provide guidelines to improve public awareness and knowledge of suicide; number two: disseminate information about suicide and its prevention; number three: make existing statistics about suicide and related risk factors publically available; number four: promote collaboration in knowledge exchange from domains, sectors, regions, and jurisdictions; number five: define best practices for suicide prevention; and number six: promote the use of research and evidence-based practices for suicide prevention. We know this is a very serious issue in PEI and we really look forward to seeing your report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for bringing this forward. We look forward to attending the event this afternoon. The title of the event: The Building Blocks of Hope is one that really so speaks to the approach – one of optimism – in the face of something which often is very difficult for people to talk about. The fact that this was done with public consultation and key stakeholders is a critical piece of ensuring that we are looking at those conversations across a broad spectrum and I really am hoping to see that recommendations for that enhanced coordination of services, as was discussed in the initial call for action, are reflected in the report, as well as identification of priority areas and what needs to be invested in those, whether it be manpower, funding, or

education and communications to ensure that those priority areas are supported.

A key piece in this is that need to have an open, honest, inclusive dialogue about something which is an aspect of mental health in our community is one that is often not spoken about until it's too late. And the stories of 'we don't know' and we wish someone would have said something or done something is afterwards and we need to be having that conversation before. So, again, thank you, minister, for bringing this forward. As my colleague said, looking forward to seeing the details and the context and continuing that very important conversation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### PEI Symphony Day

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

Again, I welcome Bruce Craig, Evan McCosham, and Marlee Saulnier to the gallery.

In May 1968, 50 years ago to this month, the PEI Symphony Orchestra performed its first concert. Over the last five decades, the symphony has performed over 200 concerts, reaching an audience of over 90,000 Islanders and providing the province's own source of high-quality, live, orchestral music. In doing that, the symphony has elevated the Island's cultural profile and contributed over \$10 million back into our local economy.

In celebration of its service to the community, the government of Prince Edward Island declares May 26<sup>th</sup> as PEI Symphony Day. Tomorrow there will be a variety of celebrations, beginning with a performance by the brass quintet at the Charlottetown Farmer's Market at 11:30 a.m., followed by violinists Michelle Baldwin and Judy Yun at Receiver Brass Shop at 1:00 p.m. The PEI Brewing Company will host a series of entertainment that evening featuring groups like the Singing Strings and Holland College's School of Performing Arts – better known as SOPA – starting at 7:00 p.m.

Our government recognizes the importance of our cultural organizations and the impact they make to our Island communities. That is why we have invested \$1.45 million of our 2018-2019 provincial budget into exactly that. Government is very pleased to provide \$10,000 in funding for the symphony, as it provides music education, opportunities for young people, and employment to professional performers, composers, and arrangers.

I encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to congratulate the PEI Symphony Orchestra on their 50 years of success and cultural contribution to our province and to enjoy the incredible musical talent in tomorrow's celebration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let the horns ring, the woodwinds hum, the strings sing out, and the drums beat in celebration of PEI Symphony Day – May 26<sup>th</sup> – such a great announcement to hear. When I was at pre-budget consultations last year, the PEI Symphony Orchestra was one of the groups that made it out there to lobby for funds and it's great to see this government supporting them – despite the fact that the pre-budget consultations were hard to find in the middle of an afternoon. They're a smart group, Mr. Speaker, and they were able to get there.

Music is so important on this Island and all kinds of music, right from the individual who's learning to play the recorder, right up to the grand symphony orchestra. It's important that music education happen in our schools because, indeed, it is those recorder and ukulele players that some day may aspire to be playing the cello, or the violin, or the trombone.

So thank you to this government for supporting the arts and supporting the PEI Symphony Orchestra. Let me just say again: Let the horns ring, let the woodwinds hum, let the drums beat, and the strings sing out for today, May 26<sup>th</sup> is PEI Symphony Day.

**Speaker:** Also responding to the minister's statement –

**Mr. Trivers:** Tomorrow.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I could almost make the horns ring out. I've got my trumpet (Indistinct) – unintentionally had it in my pocket but I'm going to put it back, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate Bruce, and Marlee, and Evan – all of the board, all of the staff, and all the players of the PEI Symphony Orchestra for 50 years of providing Islanders with really beautiful, live music – an enormously beautiful variety – sometimes challenging programs, things that you don't always find in small populations like PEI. I think it's quite extraordinary that a place with a population of 150,000 has supported and continues to support a full orchestra.

Orchestras are struggling all over the world financially, whether they be professional or semi-professional or amateur. Orchestras are expensive. You've got 50-70 people and to provide them with – even with a stipend – to practice properly and perform to the level that the PEI symphony does, is a real challenge. And it is just extraordinary that we've managed to maintain that for 50 years.

I have a special connection, of course, because for many years I played with the PEI Symphony Orchestra and I carry with me many happy memories of sitting at the back of the band with my fellow brass players and I really miss that. I miss that camaraderie of an orchestra. I miss the thrill of making live music and there's nothing quite like it. And I hope when my political days are over, maybe sooner, rather than later – as some of the on the other side of the House would wish – maybe I will one day get back and play with the orchestra again. Thank you so much for all of the work you do – all of the volunteer work that you do – to keep this orchestra going and I wish you well for the next 50 years.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Presenting and Receiving Petitions.

### Tabling of Documents

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** I beg leave to table a few documents here. I have a number of them, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Roach:** Seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

The first document is from the *National Post* and it deals with an Angus Reid public opinion poll on the banning of the sale of plastic bags in grocery stores. The majority in this report – it shows that the majority of Canadians support banning the bags. In fact, it also goes on to say that the greatest majority to support the ban is Atlantic Canadians.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a document, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford. It's a document from the CBC report, dated 21<sup>st</sup> of May this year and it's in reference to what's referred to as the great pacific garbage patch. This island is now grown to be three times the size of France – and that's just the one that's floating on the surface. In that report by the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science deep-sea database, the scientist by the name of Sanae Chiba – and in that report, they went below the surface where macro-plastics composed nearly 90% were single-use items: plastic supermarket bags and that was the Mariana Trench, one of the deepest bottom bases in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Speaker, I have another document here and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that this document do lie on the Table. It's from the Government Office for Science in the United Kingdom. It talks about the future of the sea and it's a 110 page report document and in there, it talks about the risk that all of these contaminants

in the water bring to our oceans and it's a \$3 trillion risk to our ocean industries.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. Murphy:** Carry the bill.

**Mr. R. Brown:** He's got to get this passed.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to table another document, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford. This is a letter that I received and I believe all the members of this House got it from Dave Barrett, a lecturer at the University of Prince Edward Island in Environmental Studies, specializing in Environmental Impact Assessment. He got his MSc in Environmental Management from the Imperial College, University of London. One of the things he specializes in is a cost/benefit analysis.

There was one done that he was involved in in Victoria, BC, and when he compared the net economic benefit to PEI, he estimates that it would be approximately half of that of Victoria and we would see a net economic benefit of \$30 million over 10 years, \$15 million over five years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. R. Brown:** If you don't listen to us, please listen to the scientists.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this would be the final document that I'm going to deliver today.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that this document be received and do lie on the Table.

This document is the report that was done on plastic bag options and the cost – this is the

cost/benefit analysis that was worked on for Victoria, BC, and everything that's in here would be applicable to Prince Edward Island as Dave Barrett has suggested.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. R. Brown:** We know you won't listen to us, but please listen to the scientists.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) government (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a petition. Essentially this petition is calling for this government and the public schools board to stop construction at TOSH while the students are attending school. This petition contains 532 names and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that all the documents that were tabled by the member are distributed so we can have time to read them. I only wish as the finance minister he would have tabled all that kind of stuff before.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table three photos of industrial waste material dumped on a lot and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table six written questions to the minister of health on Island EMS service and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

#### Reports by Committees

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford that the report of the committee on the committee's activities be adopted.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Ms. Casey:** Mr. Speaker, your committee is reporting on its activities since last reporting to the Legislative Assembly in the spring of 2017. As a result of its deliberations, your committee is pleased to make several recommendations on various topics. On the review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, your committee makes the following recommendations for changes to the act: One: that municipalities, including municipal police services, be added as public bodies under the FOIPP act; two: that the post-secondary educational institutions be added as public bodies under the FOIPP act; three: that on the topic of claims to solicitor-client privilege, the FOIPP act explicitly states that the commissioner may require a public body to produce records that contain information over which solicitor-client privilege is claimed and that solicitor-client privilege is not waived when the said records are provided to the commissioner; and four: that sections 19, 20, 21, and 22 of the FOIPP act, on the topic of discretionary exceptions to disclosure, be amended replacing 20 years with 15 years; five: that a periodic review of the FOIPP act by a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly is established within the legislation for every six years; and recommendation number six: that the Department of Communities, Land and

Environment undertake a public consultation and review of the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*; and number seven: that government consider and research ways to create a new designation for agricultural land as prime resource land to ensure its protection under the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*.

Mr. Speaker, your committee is aware that amendments to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* were introduced to the Legislative Assembly prior to the presentation of this report, but thought it important to include our findings.

Your committee thanks the organization that met with our committee to provide information advice in matters relating to the mandate of the Standing Committee for Communities, Land and Environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I want to thank the committee for their work there. They've done a tremendous job, especially with the review of the lands protection act and as identifying agriculture land as a resource. It's important that we review the lands protection act because I see Prince Edward Island going through a transition and there's a lot of discussion and debate in the communities across Prince Edward Island asking about where Islanders want to see Prince Edward Island in 10, 15, 20, or 50 years from now.

I think the committee did a tremendous job. They hit the nail on the head there, Mr. Speaker, and we also included municipalities – some of the big municipalities that can afford the FOIPP act and we will review the smaller municipalities as time goes by. I want to thank each and every member of the committee. You did a great job. Keep up the great work.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was a member of this committee for my first two and a half years in the Legislature and there was a lot of good work done.

I get a kick out of the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment talking about the review. Basically our committee had requested a whole lot of information and then all of a sudden one day in the Legislature the minister goes: Yes, we're doing a review. That was actually our request, so now that's turned into a –

**Mr. R. Brown:** No, I didn't try to (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** That was turned into a review and it doesn't really matter, as long as it gets done because all MLAs are getting a lot of questions about that.

It's great to hear the recommendation on FOIPP legislation. I believe the government brought it forward, but I don't believe it covers the police services if I'm not correct, so we'll have to –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) it does.

**Mr. MacEwen:** It does?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Okay, good. That's great to hear.

I really want to encourage this committee. They've got a lot of important things in the work plan and I really want to encourage them to drive through that agenda because I remember last – it was a year ago February – I made a request to get the Workers Compensation Board in, and actually had we talked about the office of the worker advisor, clients who have failed to get proper service. We asked the medical society. I think we talked about employers. I had mentioned all these people, and we did eventually get the Workers Compensation Board in last fall. So there's a lot of other people, I think, that the committee still needs to follow up with.

I don't I think see any recommendations around Workers Compensation Board, but I'd like to put forth a couple of suggestions, especially when the committee gets back to

meet. The Workers Compensation Board had talked about that they were not an insurance-based model but they didn't declare what model they are. So I think the committee should request that, to ask specifically if it's not an insurance model.

**What** model is the Workers Compensation Board actually using, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker? I can't really hear myself speak.

**An Hon. Member:** That's terrible.

**Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Tell the guys beside you to quiet down.

**Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A second recommendation, or a question that the committee should ask is what reassurances do we have that the Workers Compensation Board isn't using paper doctors, as defined by the Alberta review and was also first mentioned in an Ontario review? We talked around that at the committee but we didn't really get a final answer, so we would like to know what reassurances we are getting as a province.

I think it's a really important issue. I know so many MLAs in here speak – get these questions on a weekly basis. Workers Compensation Board issues are tricky, for sure.

Again, I want to reiterate that getting the actual board in was a good first step. I think the committee learned a lot, but let's also keep going: the office of the worker advisor, former clients, medical society – because there's physicians out there who refuse to do workers compensation cases and that's a problem here in the province – and also employers. I look forward to seeing the committee keep going down that road and I encourage them to meet as often as possible so they can plow through that list because I know it's lengthy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member.

Also responding to the committee report will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to sit on this committee and do the important work that Islanders really demand. I think the report itself is good and we made some good recommendations and I do want to thank the Chair for that.

When it comes to the Workers Compensation Board and workers compensation issues, I think that the work plan that we set in February 2017 really has not been fully carried out yet. So I would consider this, really, an interim report, when it comes to workers compensation issues.

I was just looking at the Hansard or the meeting transcript from February, and indeed there are a number of different groups that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid had asked to come in and I will continue to push for those to come in. There are a number of different issues, especially the office of the worker advisor; I think would be a good one to come in. We've heard from Workers Compensation Board so we need to hear from the other side.

Another one of the key issues is the issue of land speculation which, of course, I was the one that brought that to the committee's attention and asked to have that looked at. It kind of grew from there, but really, in the end, is whether we're on a path where land will be so expensive and owned by nonresident Islanders that people who live here can't afford to own land. That's at the core of it and I hope that that's something that this review is going to look at.

It's a little unclear to me, and maybe the minister would like to clarify this at some point, is what the terms of reference are of the review of the *Lands Protection Act*. Is it just simply looking at whether corporations and individuals own land in direct compliance with the letter of the act? Or is it looking at whether there are loopholes in the act that could potentially be exploited or maybe are being exploited? Will it look at land-ownership less than five acres and see whether we have nonresidents that own less

than five acres in large proportions across the Island?

Will the review take data collected by the Department of Communities, Land and Environment and not just display it on a map in a colour-coded fashion, but actually provide it in an open tabular format so that we can get in there and we can really slice it and dice it and the general public can as well?

Will indeed the review look at removing barriers to openness and transparency, like the captcha on the corporate registry that means you have to go in and type in a little code every time you want to look at the –

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** – the shareholders and officers of a company? And, the corporate registry doesn't allow you to search by name. So you can't search by officers of a company and say, for example, if I were to search by my name, what companies I am a director of, for example.

Those are the sort of things that I think the review should look at. Hopefully the minister will at some point declare what the terms of reference are – of this review are. It's kind of – I think there's a lot of open questions. And also, when the review's going to start –

**Mr. MacEwen:** The timeline.

**Mr. Trivers:** – and when the review is going to be complete. That's very important.

Lastly, I just wanted to express my disappointment that, really, the committee has only met one time in 2018. We met one single time. If you don't count the in camera meeting where we considered this report, that would be a second one, but we met once in 2018.

**Mr. R. Brown:** You did a lot of work.

**Mr. Trivers:** So Mr. Speaker, we're approaching June here.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) report last fall.

**Mr. Trivers:** We're approaching half-way through the year and I just really, really feel

that, given the work plan that we outlined well over a year ago in February 2017, we should be meeting more often and we need to make progress and Islanders demand progress.

So I would ask the Chair to maybe take that into account and see if we can schedule more meetings and move ahead with some of the work plan items we have; and if the Chair doesn't feel that the work plan is robust enough to allow that, let's have another work plan meeting then.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member.

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

Shall the report of the committee carry?  
Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

I now will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

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

Hon. members, we are on page 79 of the Department of Finance. The economic statistics and federal fiscal relations section has been read, but not carried yet.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** Granted.

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

Hon. members, the last time we were reading, the request was made just to read the title and the total. Are we still in agreement to do that?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Take your time.

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

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Hi. It's Vicki Hamilton, CFO for the Department of Finance.

**Chair:** Welcome.

Do you have any handouts –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Chair:** – for (Indistinct)

Hon. members, before we get started, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries has some information that was requested by him when he was doing his budget. He would like to table those documents.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks, Chair.

The response to a number of questions; one from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, he questioned on how many lobster buyer licences were sold over the last five years. These numbers represent the number of buying stations depending on demand. Each

buying company can and often does change harbours where they operate. For 2013, there were 174 buying stations; 2014, 178; 2015, 188; 2016, 219; 2017, 192.

The second question that was asked to me in the estimates was from the Member from Rustico-Emerald: Are there any scientific research studies on the impact of oyster cages in Rustico Bay or any studies in general? There is not a specific study done on Rustico Bay, but there are many peer reviewed studies on the positive impact of oyster culture in the water. I did provide those studies to the Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Thank you.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Good job.

**Chair:** Thank you.

If we could just have that – could you give that to a Page. Thank you.

We also have information being brought back to the table from the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism from his deliberations on his budget estimates.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Chair.

I would like to table the handouts that supported the economic development and tourism budgets. I have that here. I also have responses to questions that were asked of us, the economic development and tourism during estimates.

**Chair:** Thank you.

If you could just give your documents to a Page. We will table those.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, the hon. Minister of Finance now has the floor.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Before I get started, we have some additional handouts, too; requests from the other day in estimates.

One clarification, too, I'd like to clarify, a response asked Wednesday. We were asked the Leader of the Third Party how much revenue we budgeted for the carbon tax and we mistakenly responded \$623,000. That was actually the cannabis excise tax. Just for clarification. I think it was one of the first questions.

We were also asked by the Member from Borden-Kinkora, I believe, that how can they also access the Conference Board of Canada data? Yes, the Conference Board of Canada material that we subscribe to is open the Members of the Legislative Assembly. They can do that, as well.

A list of reports produced by the Economics, Statistics and Federal Fiscal Relations division, the last year that are available. We have a list of those for you. We'll provide you with those.

I guess that's about it.

**Chair:** Thank you, minister.

If you have handouts to table, would you pass them to the Page? They will be distributed.

Hon. members, the first section has been read, but not carried.

Does anybody have questions on that section? Or shall we carry that section?

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) section.

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Chair:** No. We're going to that one next.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Shall the total of the section carry? Carried.

Office of the Comptroller

Financial/Accounting/Procurement

Total Financial/Accounting/Procurement:  
1,496,900.

Office of the Comptroller: 1,496,900.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) question on it.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Just on the consultant for collection services. What was the – what type of collection was that?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Go ahead.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** After we have exhausted all internal processes both within in the department, then it's turned over to the comptroller's office to try collection.

Then, it's turned over to a collection agency. At that point, the debt has already be written off and they receive, basically, they get to keep 25% of whatever they manage to collect for us.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

Is that 25% of what was collected then?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Yes.

**Mr. Myers:** That (Indistinct)

Who do you use for a collection agency? Do you have an RFP process or do you just –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We use several. It was a small –

**Mr. MacDonald:** I have it here. KC Collect!; Canadian Process Serving Inc.; Chris MacDonald Process Service.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** That's it.

**Mr. MacDonald:** That's it.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** Carried.

**Ms. Biggar:** Carried.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I appreciate the update on the \$623,000 from the cannabis excise. I'll ask the question again: Is there anything in revenue from carbon tax?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Zero?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Zero, okay.

I have questions on this section, on the comptroller section.

We know that when there's – in the year when there's an election, we have fixed date election laws, of course. When there's a year in which there's an election, the blue books are published in August rather than October.

I'm wondering when – how much time. Let's imagine, hard to imagine, just the outside possibility that we might have an early election. It might be called later this year, even. How much time would you require to get the blue books ready early?

Let's imagine, again, highly improbably, but just use your imagination and think that there might be an election in October for example. Would it be possible to get the blue books out earlier if you knew? If the writ was dropped and you knew that you had time?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I know that the date was moved back from January to October.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We changed that in the *Financial Administration Act*. Currently, the Auditor General is doing the work for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018. They have a workplan in place, right now.

I can't speak to their timelines. They are legislated to have the books complete by October 31<sup>st</sup>, at this point in time.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Would the office have the ability, have the resources to accelerate the program if, again, imagine there is an early election, and they could push it forward.

Could it, would it be possible so that Islanders see what the books are before the election?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I can't really speak to the Auditor General's ability to fast-track her work. That would have to be a question.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay.

Great. What is the possibility of always making, because we never have elections in the summer, of course. I know we moved it from January to October, and that's great.

How difficult would it be to move it from October to August, August 31<sup>st</sup>? Is that something that is being considered? Is it something that would be even feasible to do?

**Mr. MacDonald:** (Indistinct) ask the Auditor General wouldn't he?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Again, I think we're willing to work with the Auditor General in whatever way is feasible, but it really impact her timing and her staff resources to be able to do that. I can't speak to that.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** If the problem is with the lack of resources, would your department consider furnishing the Auditor General's office with enough resources so that they could, if that's all the issue is, so that they could have the blue books ready by August 31<sup>st</sup>?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** She doesn't reside under our budget. We don't give the Auditor General funds that would be a conflict. She actually – her budget resides under the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. Biggar:** Legislative management (Indistinct)

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay, I'm fine.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, where is the financing for the Mill River Resort? Where is that? Is that in here?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah, it's under – it should be under innovation.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** It's not – we don't have –

**Chair:** It's not in this budget?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** No.

**Chair:** No, it's not in –

**Mr. MacDonald:** (Indistinct) our budget.

**Chair:** – this budget.

**Mr. Dumville:** It's not in this budget?

**Chair:** Do you have another question?

**Mr. Dumville:** No.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thanks, Chair.

I'm just wondering, how is the preparation of Public Accounts coming along? About, approximately what percentage done would you say that is? With the October 31<sup>st</sup> target date?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** As far as I know, I think everybody is on task. I guess, the comptroller's office does their prep work and turns things over to the Auditor General and then they do their work.

**Mr. Trivers:** Given the large number of special warrants that have been issued, do you think that you're actually going to be able to achieve the estimated balanced budget?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah, I believe so.

**Mr. Trivers:** All right. I just wanted to get you on record.

**Chair:** Are you good?

**Mr. Trivers:** Great, thank you.

**Ms. Biggar:** There you go –

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) the others.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to go back to the question that the Leader of the Third Party had with reference to the Auditor General.

Would it be safe to say that the Auditor General has a fairly significant budget? A large group of people working. And that she would have more than one project, if I could call it that, ongoing.

In fact, as I understand it, she has a number of projects. So that if, in the off-set that an election was called, at whatever time, that, as with many other people and their businesses and their work that priorities may change and that she could take her – redirect her resources to do one thing if a priority came up.

Regardless, of whether it's an election, or whether it's another issue that comes up. Would that be a safe assumption to make?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Again, I –

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's hard for us to speak on behalf of the Auditor General and her office, but I assume that, but –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Well, Chair, I guess I bring that up in that a lot of the times it's not a matter of – and I know that I've heard it a lot in this Legislature: just go get more resources.

I think that as – when we're trying to be responsible about the dollars that we're spending on behalf of the taxpayers of PEI, that I would certainly be questioning the Auditor General about taking the resources and moving them around in terms of priority. Rather than always saying, well, we'll just get more resources. I don't think that's what I want to hear to go back and tell my constituents.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

**Mr. Myers:** Question.

**Chair:** Sorry, who had the question?

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Sorry, I was just – I don't know if it actually fits in the Office of the Comptroller, but I'll ask it anyway –

**Chair:** Okay. We'll let you know.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah. I mean, just looking at some of the handouts that we got back from the other section. And looking at the Conference Board of Canada ones.

Just a follow-up from the last because there's some really good information here that would be of great benefit to any MLA in here.

Did you ever look into the possibility of giving the MLAs a sign on to look at these reports?

**Mr. MacDonald:** That's exactly what that's for.

You can go in and access that information.

**Mr. Myers:** I can?

**Mr. MacDonald:** You can.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The minister made that statement, his opening statement, that you do have the ability to access this information.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay. It just doesn't tell me how to, here, I guess, but I can follow –

**Mr. MacDonald:** We can get it for you.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, great.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total of the Office of the Comptroller carry? Carried.

Top of page 80.

Taxation and Property Records

Administration

Total Administration: 3,964,000.

Total Taxation and Property Records:  
3,964,000.

**Ms. Bell:** Question.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from  
Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

One of the handouts that we do have is the grants in lieu of property taxes for this section with a total of \$1.9 million.

Can I clarify the process on this, which is that these organizations have to pay the property tax and then that property tax is given back to them in the form of a grant through this process; is that correct, minister?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Go ahead.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** That's not actually in this section. That is in general government section, but –

**Ms. Bell:** Oh, okay.

**Mr. MacDonald:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct) property taxes (Indistinct) property records, taxation. Okay, we'll skip that one.

Okay, so a different question, Chair.

**Chair:** Yes –

**Ms. Bell:** Did you want to go and come back and come back –

**Chair:** Doesn't matter.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Sure.

There's been much discussion around the amount of land purchased by the Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society, GEBIS, is that – which is, I believe around taxation and property records, I hope.

I was just wondering about the property tax on that land. According to section 3 1 (a) of the *Real Property Tax Act* an exemption applies to “every church and place of worship and the land used in connection therewith, and every church yard and every church hall used for religious or congregational purposes exclusively save only for occasions specially authorized by church authorities and for which no net revenue in excess of \$500 per year is received”

Could you explain which land holdings of GEBIS are subject to property tax and which are not?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I don't have that information – you don't have that information? But, I can say, from previous discussions that I believe it's just the land that the actual church sits on.

**Ms. Bell:** Okay.

**Mr. MacDonald:** But, that's –

**Ms. Bell:** So, that primary holding, minister?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Primary holding, yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** Would you be able to clarify –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Bring something back –

**Ms. Bell:** – that, for us –

**Mr. MacDonald:** – I should be able to, if –

**Ms. Bell:** That would be great.

**Chair:** Hon. member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, do you have another question?

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, sorry.

I just wanted to follow-up on that one. Where we have, Chair, there's a primary land holding, and then there is secondary or other land holdings that are associated with, but not specifically allocated for the purposes of the church.

Those other land holdings, if they're not specifically allocated, should be subject to property tax because they wouldn't be under exemption. Is that correct?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** Okay.

Minister, if you could provide that clarification, we would really appreciate it.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Property taxes and the assessments, it's a question I get quite often from constituents, especially those, who have moved to Prince Edward Island, either back to Prince Edward Island, or they're new Islanders. Because the property taxes are so much higher here, than typically where they have moved from in other places in Canada.

I was wondering if you could provide a breakdown of property tax revenue by location on Prince Edward Island.

For example, if you did it – I think by county would be too broad. Something, break down further than just by county. Maybe, by communities, that sort of thing.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We don't have that right here, but it may be something that we can bring back to you.

**Mr. Trivers:** That would be great.

One thing, I hear, of course, is people, who live in rural areas, they say, I mean, obviously there has to be road maintenance on the roads, unless, of course, they're on a clay road, they don't feel that they get as much road maintenance as they should. But, and then there's garbage pickup.

They've got their own sewer. They've got their own water. They're paying electric bills for their electricity. They just – they really want to figure out why their property taxes are so high.

To compound the situation, I think, and this is really my question is: my understanding is that a property is typically assessed only on sale, normally. You end up with cases where you have neighbours located beside each other and they compare property tax bills, and they have similar sized houses, but one

was purchased recently, a new neighbour moved in and their bills are much, much different.

That's a question that I get sometimes. It's really tough – I was wondering if you could speak to that and if you have any plans to help fix that problem?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I believe the policy, right now, is that if there's any work done to a house where they have a building permit then those things could increase the value of the property. Other than that, it's limited to the rise in inflation in any given year. Then, upon sale, then it is reassessed. But, not to penalize somebody if they're property value has increased and they haven't sold their home. That's why those measures are in place.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you.

Another problem is with having such high property taxes as compared to other jurisdictions. Actually, I'd like your comments on that.

How do you feel the property taxes on Prince Edward Island do compare to other jurisdictions? Because the message I keep hearing time and time again; people moving back from Ontario, from Alberta, from British Columbia, from Quebec, is that property taxes are much higher here.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Are you asking for an opinion? Or are you asking –

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm just asking if you have actually looked at like a jurisdictional scan –

**Mr. MacDonald:** I don't –

**Mr. Trivers:** – (Indistinct) property –

**Mr. MacDonald:** – have the other –

**Mr. Trivers:** – taxes (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** – provinces right in front me, jurisdictionally.

**Mr. Trivers:** Is that something that the taxation and property records department would have and you could bring back?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Sure. They should have it, yeah.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Could I just go back his first –

**Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – because you had an original question when you started. I just want to make sure we get the original question.

**Mr. Trivers:** My original questions is: Why are property taxes are so high on PEI?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No. At the beginning you talked about broken down by areas or something.

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh yes.

People, who live in unincorporated and rural areas of the province –

**Mr. MacDonald:** So, is it – you said, either communities, or regions or what –

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah, well –

**Mr. MacDonald:** – that’s all, I’m just –

**Mr. Trivers:** – I think –

**Mr. MacDonald:** – trying to clarify.

**Mr. Trivers:** – if you broke it down. I mean, I would like to see it broken down by community, would be ideal.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Okay, thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah. Like, if you said, maybe, based on the old school districts. You know, that’s sort of how the communities are organized; St. Ann; St. Patricks; you know, St. Marys.

The other issue with property taxes being so high on PEI is people, who inherit land or property or that have a house or it just be land, oftentimes, they may not have the cash flow and the income of their predecessors, who they inherited from. They’re low-income Islanders.

Really, the biggest thing of value that they have in their life is that property they inherited. But, with property taxes so high, they can get in tax arrears and they can lose that. It’s a case of, it really allows Islanders, who have money to continue to build wealth, and allows, or makes Islanders with low-income more apt to actually lose the little value they have in the land they own because they can’t pay the property taxes.

I was wondering if that’s an issue you’ve heard before and something that you plan to address.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I have never been – no one has ever presented me with any of those cases or scenarios –

**Mr. MacKay:** The shut-down Browns want to speak.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Both of them.

**Mr. MacKay:** Both of them –

**Mr. Trivers:** I would like to bring that up as an issue –

**Mr. R. Brown:** I just want to (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Excuse me –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Sorry.

**Chair:** Did you want to be added to the list? The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you.

There’s an excellent program available to Islanders that, it’s called the property tax deferral program.

If you’re a low-income Islander, or you’re an Islander –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Senior –

**Chair:** Senior.

**Mr. R. Brown:** – seniors, yeah. It’s available to seniors. If you want to defer your taxes, you go down, you fill out the application form. They will defer your taxes for the remaining time you spend in that

house. You get property tax free for as long as you're living in that house – in the house.

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) no way this government (Indistinct)

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Seniors, only seniors.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thanks, Chair.

Thanks for that intervention. That program is only for seniors though. Is that correct?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yeah.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm talking about low-income Islanders, who are not seniors, as well.

I just wanted to bring that issue up and suggest that, perhaps, you do look into that because it really, it means the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. I don't think that's the way we want to go with our Island.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I just want to ask a couple of questions about the Provincial Tax Credit Program. Could you explain the purpose of that?

Why it was created?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Which one?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** On property taxes, the Provincial Tax Credit Program.

**Mr. MacDonald:** You mean the grants in lieu provincial property tax?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** No.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Can you clarify what – do you know what –

**Mr. MacDonald:** We're not 100% sure what you're talking –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Sure –

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct) continue (Indistinct)

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – I'll pass over to the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, if I may?

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you.

I'll just give you details directly from the site. This has come up a number of times with constituents. It's a provincial tax credit that can be applied to the provincial portion of property tax on a non-commercial property. It's 50 cents per \$100 of taxable value assessment. You can qualify if you're the sole owner of a property; reside on PEI for 183 consecutive days, or co-own the property and 50% or more of the – it's basically that ownership of the property and the sole owner, but you must apply for it.

The question that we've been asked, sort of, where did this tax credit come from and how – you know, what is the eligibility? Is there any other eligibility around it?

No? Not ringing any –

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment has an intervention on that.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thanks.

I used to do a lot of computer work on the property tax system, so I know some things about it. That's the double taxation for non-residents. If you're a non-resident, you pay double tax. If you're a resident, then you get the credit to bring you –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) other ministers –

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** – you get a credit.

**Ms. Biggar:** No, (Indistinct) taxes. If you're a resident (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yeah, I know –

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) 50% (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) not (Indistinct) taxes (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Hon. members.

Order, order!

The Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture has an intervention.

**Mr. Myers:** Somebody else better answer this one.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Madam Chair, you just can't let people go in here.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, it's a 50% rebate. 50% rebate – we better be very careful to say that or the constitutional lawyers might be after me. A 50% rebate that Islanders get on their taxes, not double taxation for non-Islanders.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Double tax (Indistinct).

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. MacDonald:** You're talking about the non-resident one.

**Mr. Myers:** Most of it starts (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** I just don't know how this (Indistinct).

**Chair:** Order! Order!

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct).

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale has the floor.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

It is a provincial – according to the website of the province – it is a provincial tax credit. It is – you qualify it if you are a PEI resident and that you own the property that you are occupying. The questions that I have had is that it is not automatically applied – you must apply for it. The people I have spoken to have raised concerns around it – are that why is this not automatically applied?

Clearly, if there's confusion to this extent in the House about it, one can understand that perhaps there may be confusion in the public. So minister, it would be really

awesome if we could get some clarity on the scope of that because it is something that would be really great to be able to offer to constituents.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Certainly.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, minister.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Chair?

**Chair:** The Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) provide some insight on that, too.

The way this works is that when you purchase a property, you identify whether or not you are a resident of Prince Edward Island. If you're a resident, then it automatically applies the credit. If your status changes after that point in time, you're to contact the tax office. My recollection is, every year when you get your tax bill, that question is actually asked on the tax bills – whether your status has changed or not. If you are in contact with them and indicate that it has changed, then there's a process to go through to do that. There's a very simple application form that you fill out and your tax status will be changed. Even for non-residents that are moving here, you can apply once you've met the residency requirements to have that tax status changed as well.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you very much, Chair, and minister, for the intervention.

I would suggest that the feedback that we have had from constituents and the information available on the website may mean that there are certainly a number of constituents who have not received that tax. Perhaps because the process of it being applied on purchase took place at a certain point in time and prior to that, for instance in the case of my own residence, with my own mother – who does not receive this tax, is that the process of automatically applying it did not come into play until a certain point of time and she had bought her property prior to that.

There is also – looking at the information available on the website, a requirement that says: if you do not currently receive a credit under the tax program and wish to apply – though absolutely, a simple form is great, but a clarity of when is this applied, how can we, as the minister said, how can we make this as simple as possible and recognize that not everyone has the same set of information and that if we're able to put that extra piece out there into the public, that's only going to help our constituents who we are here to serve.

Thank you, Chair, for the time.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Chair.

This will go back to, perhaps, some of the questions or question asked by the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale. There is a requirement when any person purchases a property on Prince Edward Island, they work with a lawyer and there is a form that's required to be filled out by the lawyer. It is absolutely 100% definite. The lawyer is required in that form to confirm the home residence of the individual that's purchasing the property –

**Mr. Trivers:** You know that from (Indistinct) property sale.

**Mr. Roach:** – and provide the correct mailing address so that the tax can be sent to the individual who just purchased that property. That's the requirement that's done by – and it's a requirement for all lawyers.

I know that about 18 months ago, there was a letter sent from the Department of Finance to the legal society in Prince Edward Island reminding all lawyers of that obligation. Just for clarification.

**Mr. Myers:** Those lawyers need reminding.

**Chair:** Thank you. Shall the section –

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I just want to go back to – well it's still in this section. I know that we recently had the climate change action plan released and there was no carbon pricing – carbon tax component to that. It's still very unclear as to whether the federal government is going to be okay with that or not,

But let's imagine – again, I'm letting my imagination run wild here – that the federal government is not okay with that and we do have to start collecting carbon tax here on Prince Edward Island. Do you have any sense of how much that might cost this department in terms of setting up whatever is required to administer collection of that carbon tax?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay. Wow, I'm surprised because –

**Mr. Trivers:** No plan.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – we'll know before the end of this year. I take it from that, minister, then that there's nothing budgeted in this department to administer the potential collection of carbon tax?

**Mr. MacDonald:** That's correct.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay. Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry?

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I'll be tabling a report here – BC – and I'll just rate the title.

**Mr. Myers:** Is it a slideshow?

**Mr. R. Brown:** No.

Latest figures shows BC carbon tax emissions continue to rise despite a carbon tax. I'll be tabling that – where BC has a \$35 carbon tax and emissions in BC is continuing to rise. Our plan is the best plan and Canada should adopt our plan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Chair:** The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, you're tabling it?

Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Order!

Treasury Board Secretariat

Administration

Total Administration: 798,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Corporate Finance

Total Corporate Finance: 4,889,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Information Technology Shared Services

Total Information Technology Shared Services: 29,916,500.

Total Treasury Board Secretariat: 35,604,700.

Total Department of Finance 52,414,300.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thanks, Chair.

First of all, I guess I'll start with the grants handouts and I believe it was the Member from Morell-Mermaid and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters were asking about some of the grants here. I'm just curious: How come in the handout you don't just put in the actual consultant name instead of just putting 'consultant'?

**Mr. MacDonald:** There are no grants in this section, I don't think.

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, sorry. Professional contract services, not grants. Pardon me.

Sometimes I think of the two the same way for some reason. I don't know why.

I was just wondering why you don't put the name of the consultant in, instead of just putting the word 'consultant'.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We just summarize by category, but if you have a particular question on any line –

**Mr. Trivers:** Sorry, what was the answer?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Do you have a question on any particular line?

**Mr. Trivers:** My question is: How come you just put the word 'consultant', instead of actually writing in the name of the consultant in the handout?

**Mr. MacDonald:** We just summarize by category, is what she said, but you can see in the previous that we did put names of consultants in when there were three or four, so I'm not sure – is there anyone in particular that you're –

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay, so there's seven consultants that did work in Information and Technology Shared Services and on the floor here, I think some of them have come out already. Maybe I could just ask you to list them all again for the record – number 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Number 12 was Stantec – we discussed that the other day; number 13 was Joshua Bigley; number 14 is Ricoh Canada; number 15 is IMP Group Limited; and number 16 is IMP Solutions.

**Mr. Trivers:** Number 17?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Sorry. Number 17 is Bulletproof Solutions Inc.

**Mr. Trivers:** Number 18?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** LPR/ADR Inc.

**Mr. Trivers:** I really didn't get an answer to the question – why you didn't just include those names in the handout. Is there

somebody you're trying to hide? Is there a secret, or what's the deal here?

**Chair:** Category.

**Mr. MacDonald:** No.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** No.

**Mr. Trivers:** Well why don't you then – why didn't you?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, next time we will in the handout. That might have been just someone in the office. You just asked for these on Tuesday, right?

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay, I'm just looking for openness and transparency here.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think you're getting it.

**Mr. Trivers:** All right. The PEI fibre network backbone design report – we've already asked you to bring that forward – it's my understanding that that report has actually been completed for some time now. Have you shared that report with any of the ISPs on the Island?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I haven't seen the report as Minister of Finance. And she hasn't seen the report.

**Mr. Trivers:** All right, well, it's my understanding that there was actually an invitation-only meeting where ISPs were invited and had to sign non-disclosure agreements in order to see this report. Is that true?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Intervention.

**Chair:** We have an intervention from the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Chair.

Chair, the Stantec report is one of the key components as we're trying to identify how to encourage deployment of Internet services across PEI. We continue to work with all of the ISPs on PEI and with the draft report that we have from the engineering firm to find out what the best solution is around that. We have had ongoing

discussions with all ISPs because we know if we work together, we can get the high-speed Internet delivered to pockets of PEI that are currently underserved.

So we're continuing to work through that and use the Stantec report as a basis for that, as well as all of the planning that the ISPs have – they're planning for the next couple of years as we get a better understanding of where they thought the opportunities were and how we can help improve the business case that they can deliver better service right across PEI.

**Mr. Trivers:** Was the secret meeting by invitation only?

**Mr. Palmer:** I'm not sure about the secret meeting. Maybe you were at the secret meeting that I haven't been to a secret meeting.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay, I wanted to know – I didn't ask if you were there, minister. I said: Was the secret meeting by invitation only?

**Mr. Palmer:** I'm not sure about the secret meeting, but if you could get us some details around this secret meeting that you think you know about, I could check into it and see if there was anything, or maybe your sources are wrong – maybe there's not a secret meeting.

**Mr. Trivers:** Are you going to allow this report to be shared with the official opposition and other members of this Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. Palmer:** The Stantec report that we have is in draft and we continue to work with ISPs on that. My expectation would be that once we get closer to the end of that, we'll get a better understanding of what is in there because there may be – when it goes from draft to final – there may be some proprietary information from the various ISPs that we talk to.

Of course, being an Internet service provider is very competitive business, which we know, and they wouldn't be that eager to share their plans with their competition. So, as we work through this, we want to maintain that confidence that we have in the ISPs to share the information that they have so we can build the very best solution for

Islanders as far as high-speed Internet is concerned. So it depends what information is captured in that last report and understanding that the ISPs are our partners in PEI and they are a very important piece of this and we wouldn't want to compromise their business planning.

So I can't answer today on whether that will be completely shared because of the proprietary information from the various business partners that we have. We'll respect that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Is the report complete or is it in the draft form?

**Mr. Palmer:** It's in a draft form. The report that I have seen is in draft, and we are using that as the basis as we work with ISPs across PEI to help identify the underserved areas and finding ways to improve the business case for ISPs to deliver greater level of service in those areas.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think I said in the House that if I can take back, I think you – I can't remember who asked me the question.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah, thank you.

**Chair:** Rustico-Emerald, do you have any other questions?

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes.

Do you expect to incur more costs to produce the final version of this report Minister of Finance?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Not in our budget, no. Not in this budget.

**Mr. Trivers:** So just to be clear, this work on this report is incomplete. You already paid for it and you don't expect to incur any additional costs?

**Mr. MacDonald:** (Indistinct) this budget, yeah. That's correct.

**Mr. Trivers:** Since we're on the topic, when do you expect that work on the Internet backbone will actually commence?

**Chair:** Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Chair.

As we continue to work with all of our partner ISPs across PEI to find the best way to deliver this solution and build that plan, we'll be able to start work on it before the plan is actually complete; but once we understand where the foundational pieces of that would be in place, so we're eager to get at it as soon as we can. We're hoping that it'll be very soon because this is a dynamic industry as you know.

It's understanding where the underserved areas are and how best to deliver that service to them, and working with the private sector partners to improve the business case so that they can deliver that high speed service right across PEI .

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Is it true that this new Internet backbone has to be in place before the Bell Aliant contract ends, the current one, otherwise you'll either have no Internet access or have to pay exorbitant rates for Internet access?

**Chair:** Hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Palmer:** I am not aware that there's any drop-dead date on having solutions in place, and we continue to work with all ISPs to help with that residential and business component of Internet right across PEI in the underserved areas.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** So when the Bell Aliant contract comes to an end, where do you plan to get Internet service for the government entities that are connected to the current backbone that Bell Aliant – the one that you

gave them – that they use to provide the services?

**Chair:** Hon. member, we're talking about the financial part. Maybe those questions could be saved for Question Period. Do you have any –

**Mr. Trivers:** Can he answer this question, though, just a last one?

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** I have others on the speaking order. Do you have anything related to the financial part of the Information Technology and Shared Services?

**Mr. Trivers:** I do indeed.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Trivers:** I think this one – and maybe you'd care to answer this question, unless he doesn't want to answer it, doesn't feel like he wants to answer it.

**Chair:** It's not that he doesn't want to answer it. It's just that –

**Mr. Trivers:** I don't think he wants to an answer it.

**Chair:** We've got other –

**Mr. Trivers:** I don't think he wants to an answer it.

**Chair:** – people on the list. Do you have another question?

**Mr. Trivers:** All right. I'd like to ask about the corporate registry that I believe is maintained by Information Technology Shared Services.

I wanted to know when you're going to remove the captcha to that so that you can actually more easily collect the data as Peter Rukavina did with OpenCorporations back in 2008. He's changed it to ClosedCorporations because he can no longer scrape the data. This is something that you've had ten years to do now. When are you going to remove the captcha and when are you going to allow the search by name?

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Search by hotel, search by name.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** If you want to wait for a little bit, we have the man who can answer that here in a few minutes.

**Mr. MacEwen:** All motels in Sherwood.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Do you have –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** Even though ITSS is in the process of working alongside justice, it's actually justice's system, so I guess that's why the hon. minister said that you may be able to get that answered in a moment.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** So in April 2017, the Premier said that the data – because he was minister of justice at the time – said the database, indeed the platform is undergoing a significant revamp to be completed in 2017. Has that revamp been completed?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** If we ever get through this, we'll be coming on the floor with three different pieces of legislation that are required to activate the new database.

**Chair:** Excellent.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Will it remove the captcha, have the captcha removed and allow search by name?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not going to say –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Madam Chair, I'm not going to say exactly what the program

requirements would be, but by and large, there will be a different search base and search database and my understanding is that it will require humans to actively search it.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Rustico-Emerald, if you could –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) come back (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Thank you. If you don't mind –

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah.

**Chair:** If you don't mind holding those questions until those bills come to the floor?

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes, yes.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Trivers:** My question was what percentage of the money in this department is paid out in support and maintenance fees for software? What amount – I don't need a percentage, just what amount.

**Mr. MacDonald:** The whole department?

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We have computer hardware and maintenance.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The budget is 763.9 and then we have software and maintenance, which is \$6,115,500.

**An Hon. Member:** That's going to get you in trouble.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** How many licenses for the GroupWise, Novell GroupWise email software are you currently paying maintenance on?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I don't have that, but we can bring that back.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Rustico-Emerald, I'm going to give you one more question and then I'm going to move on to the list, but I'd be happy to come back to you.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you.

How much do you pay per license or in total even to Novell GroupWise for the hardware and software maintenance per year?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question. (Indistinct) too much.

**Mr. MacEwen:** The answer is "too much".

**An Hon. Member:** Too much.

**An Hon. Member:** What's too much?

**Leader of the Opposition:** GroupWise.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The company is actually Micro Focus –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Do you want to go back –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** – Software Canada. That –

**Mr. R. Brown:** – to the old days? Canada Post?

**Chair:** Hon. members –

**Mr. Myers:** Only you'd remember that.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** It's no longer Novell.

**Mr. Myers:** Before the rest of our time.

**An Hon. Member:** What is it?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Order.

**Mr. MacEwen:** What was it like when you started using computers?

**Chair:** Order. We're trying to hear the answer, thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) a punch card programmer.

**An Hon. Member:** Fortran.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The company is Micro Focus Software, and for GroupWise maintenance for government health and education the amount is \$220,000.

**Mr. Trivers:** Per year?

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's good.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

My questions are somewhat related and the number of these primary expenditures here are what look like support contracts, (Indistinct) contracts. Support contracts and maintenance contracts are some of the key software.

**Mr. MacKay:** You spend too much time at Three Oaks.

**Ms. Bell:** Chair, I just wanted to ask around the – if any of these contracts are on long-term? What are the terms of the contracts? Often with some of these you need to make a commitment to a longer term and what the kind of renewable periods are on those maintenance contracts and support contracts. Are they annually or are they for longer periods?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** It really varies.

**Ms. Bell:** Okay.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** If we can incur savings by going longer term or if we know we're going to maintain that software or hardware for a longer period of time, when we go out to tender we do ask for the option for longer terms to see if we can have greater benefit. Some of them are annual maintenance support. That's just the way that they work; but we do, if we can, by

going for a longer period incur savings. We try and do that.

**Mr. MacDonald:** There's somewhere between 120, 140 contracts, but a lot of them are moving to cloud-based, so it may – if that's what you're getting at (Indistinct) –

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, that's where I was going. We're seeing we're in a period of really rapid transition right now. It's really accelerated over the last 18 months or so: 24 months into cloud base, and that was – I absolutely get that the contracts becomes much more cost-effective over a longer term, but with software when the transactions are happening so quickly – yes, I did start with Fortran as well, and things have moved very differently now.

So that capacity to be able to kind of go with that transition is a big piece of how we can get to a different space with our computer systems. I know it's a large number of contracts. It's a large management piece in itself.

Just one more question on this – Minister, is there sort of a kind of plan internally to look at that from a strategic basis and how do we make that transition?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think they've already started. They already recognize the fact that that's where everything's moving.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacDonald:** So it's a pretty big – when you get 120-140 contracts out there in all those departments, it's a big move. So it's something like open data that we talked about earlier in the House. They're moving towards that. It does take time but it is in process.

**Ms. Bell:** That's great.

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister.

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

I just had a couple of questions. Quite a bit of it was dealt with. I had marked the

employee grievance consultation. What was that that about? It's in professional services.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I don't think that we should discuss individual grievances process about an individual employee.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not asking you to name anybody. I'm asking you what was it about. Was it a grievance against you guys and did you have to bring a lawyer in or is that a mediator or is that an HR consultant? You left it pretty broad there, so I do want to know.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I'm not 100% clear on what it was.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay. So what type of work does the company who you hired to do it do?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** We think it was a mediator that we brought in.

**Mr. Myers:** That's all I want to know. I wasn't trying to make it complicated.

I'm looking over your salary list here and I have a pretty good understanding of this neck of the woods in government. I see people who would have the name manager or COO or director type roles in here that their salaries add up to be over \$3 million just in management.

I'm just wondering your thoughts on that because it doesn't look like there's an enormous amount of positions below all the management. It's almost like 25% of your staff is management. Can you explain how that works?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think all the positions are obviously through the Public Service Commission.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I don't know, they're all classified position. I don't know what else I can say on it.

**Mr. Myers:** I guess the reason I ask is when you get to look at all in one page, it's pretty alarming. There's probably 40 people there

that make more than an MLA. Some of them make close to a cabinet minister's salary and I was just wondering –

**Mr. MacDonald:** What are you looking at? Because I don't see (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Myers:** The salaries?

**Mr. MacDonald:** So where's the ones that you're talking about?

**Mr. Myers:** Well, it's anybody who would be a level 19, level 20, level 23, level 24, level 26.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** You got 26 level 19s.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah. I mean, as far as, I mean, there's a manager there at 66 – eight – four-four to 83. Those are classifications for PSC, there's really –

**Mr. Myers:** No, I understand that.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** I know how the salary part works. I'm looking at the high number because they'll all hit the high number within five years, if they're not already there.

And, I just wonder, are you okay with –

**Mr. MacDonald:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** – you know, basically 25% of your staff making more than MLAs make?

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I'm just asking –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I can just speak to the type of work that they do. There's over 200 employees. They're managing software and hardware for all of government; 500 to 600 software systems; 11,000 desktops; 1,000 servers. There is a lot of work that's spread throughout. Management level supervise significant numbers of staff and resources and dollars, which all plays into

the rating that PSC gives a particular position.

**Mr. Myers:** I understand what ITSS does. I worked there for 10 years. I have a really good understanding of what they do. I just didn't realize you had that many chiefs until I looked at it from here.

It felt like it when I worked there, granted, that there were a lot of chiefs. There are very few people, sometimes, to actually carry out the function. I think they do have an important function to do it.

In some cases, you have 26 managers and then 27 analysts. I don't know – it's – the correlation doesn't make any sense to me –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We don't have –

**Mr. Myers:** – I do know that your advertising for jobs. I see that you're advertising for jobs. The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism shared it, that's how I knew. They're looking for programmers.

Are you having – is the reason why you have such a lopsided management to employee ratio is because you're having trouble finding employees?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** I don't think we have a lopsided (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** I'm not sure where we're lopsided.

**Mr. Myers:** Well, if you look at your BAS, which is your business application services. You have 26 specialists, consultant, lead supervisor, manager. They're level 19s, they top out at \$78,670, which amounts to over \$2 million in just consultant, lead supervisor, managers. Whatever they're called. They're probably project managers, just a guess. So, you have \$2 million worth of project managers in that department.

Level 17, which would be your senior resource, so the person that's doing – that's actually doing the work. They get paid \$70,000 a year. You have 27 of them. You have 26 managers and you have 27 workers.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I hope they're all doing work, for starters –

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, I'm just –

**Mr. MacDonald:** I can tell you, it is harder to get developers –

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, it is.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – program developers, as you know; well aware.

With all the IT business that's taking place on Prince Edward Island, as soon as they leave university or Holland College, they're being snapped up by major companies. It may have an effect on this, without a doubt.

**Mr. Myers:** I think part of the issue, quite frankly, is the wage.

To get a good senior developer, you wouldn't get one in the door for 70. You could get 70 anywhere. You could get \$70,000 anywhere as a programmer without even trying.

I think, I guess, the crux of my point is that maybe you're investing the money in the wrong people in that department. If you were able to – if those salaries were comparable to what the private sector was paying, you wouldn't be having any trouble attracting the people. I'll just leave it at that.

**Chair:** Are you okay? Good.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total Treasury Board Secretariat carry? Carried.

Shall the total Department of Finance carry? Carried.

Hon. members, we are going to move to the Public Service Commission, which is on page –

**Mr. MacDonald:** No.

**Chair:** No, sorry? We're not?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Employee benefits.

**Chair:** Okay, where is that? Oh, sorry. Okay, perfect.

Sorry, I jumped the gun on that. We're on page 82 under –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thanks for trying.

**Chair:** Yeah – under employee benefits.

Employee Benefits

Total Employee Benefits: 60,963,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** (Indistinct) general government.

**Mr. MacDonald:** General government.

**Chair:** Okay, sorry.

We're now moving onto general government on page 83.

General Government

Miscellaneous General

Total Miscellaneous General: 250,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Grants

Total Grants: 2,000,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I know we have a list here of the grants that were given out. I had an instance in my own district with the South Shore Watershed Association.

As we all know, the watershed associations will look after, protect and enhance land, which is owned by government, but leased to the watershed groups.

In this instance they had improved a pond, just outside of Crapaud, very significantly done beautiful work. At the end of it, just before it opened, they were going to get charged property taxes for this land, which they don't own and which they had improved.

There was a question, at the end, as to whether that could be for all – not just for this project, but for all watershed groups, whether we could institute this grants in lieu

of property tax. I don't know if that was ever instituted. I haven't followed up with the group recently.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I don't think it has been.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** I don't think it has been, that I'm aware of. I don't know. It's something to take into consideration, for sure.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay.

The other, about halfway down the list, here. Other non-profit organizations, \$223,000. That would not include then, any of the watershed groups on PEI? Or could you tell us who that is?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** There's certain criteria –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** There's criteria under the legislation that whether they qualify or not; submit their application.

I don't know if they have applied, and been denied or –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Do they actually own the land, you're saying?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** No, they don't.

**Mr. MacDonald:** They don't.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** They don't, but they are – they were going to be charged property taxes –

**Mr. MacDonald:** But you don't know if they were or not –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I don't. I'm going to have to follow – it certainly came in the bill, and there was some communication between Treasury Board, or with your department and the group.

**Mr. MacDonald:** All right. Can you leave that with us and I'll –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah, sure. I can pass you on the information, minister.

Thank you.

Thanks, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

I noticed that you budgeted \$2 million, but you actually have \$1,901,378. You actually have a little extra money in the budget here.

The reason I point that out is because in the Treasury Board document, the 19.01 grants in lieu of property taxes in schedule 1, it actually lists organizations that were sort of grandfathered in. There are 10 non-profit organizations. They don't meet the existing program criteria.

They include the Cymbria Lions Club, and the Hunter River Lions Club, which, of course, are both in District 18 Rustico-Emerald.

I was wondering if you would consider adding the North Rustico Lions Club to that list and allowing them to get a grants in lieu of property tax?

I think it would be fair. I think they're an excellent organization that provides tremendous value to the area. Seeing that the other two Lions Clubs in the area do – are on the schedule.

Would you consider doing that? I think you have room in the budget. I would love to hear just a simple: yes, we will take action. We will help the community of North Rustico.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) apply.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We will take it into consideration. But, if we do one, we may be doing a whole list. I would have to look into it and see how broad this actually is.

**Mr. Trivers:** Well, that's a really good point, minister.

I would love to see you do that for all those sorts of organizations across the Island. I don't believe we're talking huge amounts of money. We're talking about the property taxes for these non-profits for a year.

You've got almost \$100,000 in your budget. I think you could probably cover off a lot of the Island with that.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Government Insurance Program

Total Government Insurance Program:  
1,891,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Contingency Fund and Salary Negotiations

Total Contingency Fund and Salary  
Negotiations: 10,652,700.

Shall the section carry?

We have a question from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Just on the contingency fund, how many, for salary negotiations, how many contracts are due this year?

**Mr. MacDonald:** We're up for a minimum of five, I know of off the top of my head.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Eight.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Eight. –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** At least eight.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Eight in total.

**Mr. Myers:** Your contingency fund, that obviously doesn't cover – that just covers what? Like negotiations or is it actually cover if there are raises this year?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** It covers a multitude of things. We can't disclose any particular amount that would be related to salary negotiations outside of the bargaining process. We couldn't come here and say, oh, we have 1% or 2% or whatever the case may be. We couldn't disclose that here. That would be outside the collective bargaining process.

It's salary negotiations, as well as contingency fund budget.

**Mr. Myers:** What was the CPI this year?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** 1.8.

**Mr. MacDonald:** 1.8.

**Mr. Myers:** 1.8?

We hear government talk a lot about how the economy is on a tear and the GDP is growing. Those are types of things that unions love to hear right before negotiations because it means government has a lot of money.

1.8 being the CPI, that's the minimum that they're probably, would even look at. So, 2% is probably where they start.

Do you have any indications from the unions – I suspect they're looking for 3.4 or 4% this year because the economy is on a tear.

Do you have any indication from the unions that that's the case?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No.

**Mr. Myers:** None yet.

I'm, kind of, hearing out and about that the unions think you guys have a lot of money this year. Which is, I guess, one of the drawbacks of bragging about having a lot of money and a balanced budget is, in a year when there's collective bargaining agreements –

**Mr. Trivers:** Hanging out with Leo Cheverie.

**Mr. Myers:** – due. There are eight of those, so.

I'm just curious, if you think that that's going to be – have a major impact on your balanced budget, the fact that you have eight contracts due this year and the unions believe that you guys are flushed with cash because you've been saying so?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think that'll all come down to the collective bargaining and

negotiations. There's really not much I can say on that.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the Total General Government carry? Carried.

We are now on page 84.

Interest Charges on Debt

Interest

Total Interest: 108,164,800.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** How much money are you investing in sinking funds this year?

**Mr. MacDonald:** You know I was asked that in the House the other day?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We have \$11,800,000 that we are paying into our sinking funds this fiscal.

**Mr. Trivers:** Is that the only way that you're providing for the funding of – really paying off the debentures in the future, right now?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** If – provinces really have gotten away from doing sinking funds as a way to cover off the maturity of their debt.

The bond raters no longer look at that as increasing your rating by having sinking funds. If we were to go borrow money to put into a sinking fund, it would actually cost the province more because it would cost us more to borrow than the interest that we would earn on the sinking fund. It would cost more money to have sinking funds to cover off our debt.

**Mr. Trivers:** You're not using the surplus to put into a sinking fund?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We have our standard payments that we have to make on our past sinking fund commitments, but on a go forward – there are other avenues to invest your money that are better use of

funds than putting it towards a specific debt of a specific time.

**Mr. Trivers:** What are your plans to invest money so that you can actually pay off our debentures are they become due? As they mature?

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** Go ahead.

Do you want to repeat the question, please?

**Mr. Trivers:** What are your plans to pay off the debentures when they mature? I know there are a couple that are coming due. I think there's one next fall and then one next winter.

**Mr. Myers:** No plan

**Ms. Compton:** Borrow money.

**Mr. Trivers:** I think it's – there's about, I don't know, about \$20 million worth. I think, something like that.

**Mr. MacKay:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** I don't have the list in front of me.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We haven't borrowed money since 2014, I believe, so hopefully we don't have to.

We're trying to maintain a balanced budget each and every year that we produce a budget, so we will continue to evaluate on our year and on our economic growth. If we have to invest, we invest. If we don't, we don't.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm not sure the minister understands the question. This is money that has been borrowed in the past. The debenture is maturing and they're going to come knocking on your door – the door of the province – and say: Hey, we want – I think the amount's going to be about \$20 million within the next year. What are you going to do to pay that \$20 million? Are you just going borrow again, or what?

**Mr. MacKay:** Move another 400 into Sherwood.

**Mr. MacEwen:** \$200,000.

**Mr. Trivers:** You have the numbers in front you – I can't remember. I'm estimating \$20 million. Maybe you can tell me.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** As our debt comes due, you would do an assessment at that time of how much cash, or turnover, or whatever the case may be at the time that the debt is due.

**Mr. Trivers:** You have the debentures right in front of you there, I think.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** From last year's Public Accounts.

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah, I was wondering, those are coming due, is it in the next year?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Well, there's a range. Some – we have 10 year debentures up to 50 year debentures.

**Mr. Trivers:** But there are some coming due, though.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The first one I see here is September of 2019.

**Mr. Trivers:** Right. So September of 2019 is within this budget year, if I'm not mistaken. Is that correct?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** No.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Next year.

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, no, this only goes until April 2019.

**Mr. J. Brown:** How long have you been an MLA?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

**Mr. Trivers:** I just want to know what the plan is. It's only – it's just a year and a half away. I'm just wondering, I mean, I think you think you'd have a plan for that, you know?

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Trivers:** And we'll have to figure out what to do, eh? Yes.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Maybe we'll take that back to you when we figure out the plan.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay, thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll be honest, I'm not real familiar with how the government deals with borrowing, but I'm curious: What kind of rate would the government have for an interest rate when borrowing?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Long-term or short-term rate? Are you –

**Mr. MacKay:** Both, actually.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Short-term is 1%.

**Mr. MacKay:** One per cent, so, would that be on –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Long-term would likely fluctuate, but we don't have it exactly right here for you, but we may be able to get it for you. But it would likely fluctuate between the range –

**Mr. MacKay:** So minister, obviously the interest on the debt right now is – how is it ever going to be paid? It just seems to be increasing year after year. Has there been a study or anything done to see how long our province can maintain – with the population we've got – to try and service it?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, our interest is paid every year. It has to be (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacKay:** I realize the interest is paid every year. My fear is if interest rates go up. They're talking now that interest rates are potentially going to go up and what would an extra 1% increase do to the province? I'm just – like I said: I know the interest is being paid every year, but it's not going down any and at some point, we're going to have to deal with that problem.

I was just wondering if there were any studies or anything done to see how you might be able to offset future debt in the future?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I mean, we do have some, is it 10-year? Mostly – a lot of them are 10-years. 91% of them are all locked in, for starters.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay.

**Mr. MacDonald:** But, what's the other? In the short-term –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** Short term is only 8.5.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** That helps mitigate our interest rate fluctuation risk by having a small amount in short-term rates that are subject to fluctuation versus the long-term locked-in rates.

**Mr. MacKay:** I'm good for now, Chair.

Thank you.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Chair.

Just back to the interest that the province is paying. I see here with provincial debentures and treasury notes, are those both short-term or long-terms or various ones?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** Long-term. Debentures are long-term.

**Ms. Compton:** Long-term. What is the interest rate we're paying on those debentures right now?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Anywhere from –

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The last time we got issued a debenture was in 2015 –

**Ms. Compton:** Fifteen?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** – and the rate, at that time, for a 10-year was 2.35%.

**Ms. Compton:** 2.35? And, it says, use of bank lines of credit. I'm just wondering how many lines of credit we would have as a province. Are there varying rates on the lines of credit?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** We just have short-term borrowing –

**Ms. Compton:** Short-term borrowing, sure.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** – and like, which the rate does fluctuate. In this past fiscal, it ran around 1%.

**Ms. Compton:** 1%. Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Compton:** On more.

**Chair:** Sorry.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Chair.

The other thing listed here are loans from Canada Pension Plan. What would the interest rate on that be?

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** They range as well.

**Ms. Compton:** Okay.

**Vicki Hamilton CFO:** The last one was in 2012-2013, a 30-year and that was 3.624.

**Ms. Compton:** Okay, thank you.

**Chair:** Shall the Total Interest carry? Carried.

Shall the Total Promissory Notes for Pension Funds carry? Carried.

Shall the Total Interest Charges on the Debt carry? Carried.

Now, we're doing the Public Service Commission?

Are you done? Oh, thank you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** She's done.

**Chair:** Thank you. Have a nice weekend.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you. We're on page 154, I think.

Hon. members, permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** Granted.

**Chair:** We're on page 154 PEI Public Service Commission.

We'll allow our stranger to get seated.

Hi, could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

**Elaine Hardy Director:** Elaine Hardy, Director of Administration and Corporate HRMS and Payroll.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, if I could have your attention; we're going to be started the PEI Public Service Commission budget. We've just introduced our stranger. I'd appreciate your attention.

Thank you.

Do you have any handouts or anything?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Handouts will be circulated.

We're on page 154.

Management

Total Management: 279,400.

Total Management: 279,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

HR Management and Labour Relations

Total HR Management and Labour Relations: 3,331,700.

Shall the section carry?

Occupational Health and Safety

Total Occupational Health and Safety: 231,100.

Total HR Management and Labour Relations: 3,562,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Staffing, Classification and Organizational Development

Staffing, Classification and HR Planning

Total Staffing, Classification and HR Planning: 2,049,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.  
Employee Assistance Program

Total Employee Assistance Program: 348,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Language Training Centre

Total Language Training Centre: 209,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Staffing, Classification and Organizational Development: 2,606,300.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Administration, Corporate HRMS and Payroll

Total Administration, Corporate HRMS and Payroll: 1,077,500.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the Total PEI Public Service Commission budget carry? Carried.

**Mr. Roach:** Great job, stranger.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you.

Enjoy your weekend.

**Chair:** Thank you.

All right, hon. members, there is an adoption of the estimates script that we have to go through. I would ask you to bear with us.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair make report to Mr. Speaker.

**Chair:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Then, you need to – when he comes back, I'm going to read this –

Mr. Speaker, as chair of a Committee of the Whole House, I wish to report that the committee has gone into supplementary supply to be granted to Her Majesty and has come to certain resolutions which I am pleased to report to the House whenever it should be pleased to receive the same.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the report of the Committee be now received.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Chair:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee be now adopted.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Call the hour.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Extend the hour.

**Speaker:** The hour has been called.

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 29<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, at 2:00 p.m.