

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to rise today in the Legislature to welcome everybody back for another important day in this Legislature. I want to welcome all of those who have joined us in the public gallery.

I notice Karen Deagle, the mother of the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir. Karen Deagle and I started to work at the *Eastern Graphic* a long time ago, almost on the same day, long before the Member from Montague-Kilmuir was even a twinkle in her eye at that point.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Premier King: It's making me believe today that I'm a lot older than I hopefully look, but I think I'm reaching that – getting closer everyday with the look part.

I attended the graduation last night at East Wiltshire School, and I want to congratulate all of the graduates.

I also attended the Grade 6 graduation this morning at Central Queens School. An emotional day for all of our kids, it's the last of our three kids to go through Central Queens School, certainly sad to see the end of that part of our journey, but excited for all the graduates moving forward.

I believe the hon. member from Cornwall-Meadowbank yesterday made reference to the retiring principal at East Wiltshire School, Windsor Wight. I also wanted to add my congratulations and thanks to Mr. Wight, he was the principal at the school for two of our oldest kids who went there. First class gentleman in every respect and always put the kids first and was just a terrific principal and will be sadly missed but I wish him well on his retirement.

I had the pleasure last night to attend the celebration for year one of the Engaging

Island Women for Political Action Project hosted by the Prince Edward Island Coalition for Women in Government at Upstreet Brewery; it was a wonderful event. I know some of my colleagues from across the floor had gone through that program and I'd say it's a successful program in many regards, but certainly because of those individuals who are now within this legislature.

I did have the chance to speak with Becca Viau, I had a great chat about a number of things but she did remind me to remind all members that Melissa Peter-Paul has a Mi'kmaq Quill artwork display that's on at the Receiver Coffee shop down here on Victoria Row and if we haven't been down yet, I encourage all to go see it. I hope to do so this week, but apparently it's an incredibly impressive work that needs to be shared and I encourage all members to take that in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd also like to welcome everybody back and in particular, those in the gallery today. The Premier spoke of twinkles in eyes and today my wife Anna is here with our youngest son Dan, who just arrived from Toronto this morning.

Also from far foreign places, dear friends of ours from many, many years back, Sharon and David Esler are here today. They now live in Vancouver, but Sharon was a MacDonald from the Blooming Point area and it's so nice to see Sharon and David with us today.

I also see Gerard Deveau and Dr. Susan Hartley with us, welcome.

I want to make mention of a couple of things. In Crapaud, we just received news that a nurse practitioner has actually already started work there, Jennifer Wood and she'll be working, I believe, three days a week and this is a service which has been desperately needed in the South Shore area as the

Minister of Fisheries and Communities would be well aware.

It's wonderful that Jennifer is there, she will provide great service but this is less than is required to take up the patient base there. Anyway, I want to thank the South Shore Health and Wellness group who have been working so hard to secure front line medical services in the South Shore area. Ian Dennison in particular who chairs that committee and Lisa Gallant, I mean and everybody else who's worked to make that happen. So, congratulations to them.

Also congratulations to Sarah Keaveny-Vos who is a CBC reporter here on Prince Edward Island who does really beautiful and very unique and extraordinary work. Just this last week, there were a couple of stories which have gained national and even international, attention. She just won a Gabriel Award in Florida; I think she received it on Friday, for a beautiful story of kindness and inclusion and solidarity, which was inspired by a group of kindergarten students in your own home town Mr. Speaker, of Souris, where a little girl in kindergarten had her shirt on back to front, and one of the children in the class made fun of her. Two of the other kids turned their shirts around backwards and indeed the whole class did that. She did a beautiful story about that and won an international award for her journalism.

As she said of the students in Souris, they are from a community where people care about each other. That's how we roll in Souris, isn't that right, Mr. Speaker? Not just in Souris apparently because Sarah also had a national story this week about a group of women in Stratford from Our Lady of Assumption church, who knit shawls. Shawls for people who are ill or in addiction or in some sort of grief and these are prayer shawls, which provide comfort, not just physical comfort, but also emotional comfort. It's about people caring for each other and it's lovely that we do that, from the kindergartens in Souris to the elderly community in Stratford and I think it's what makes the community and this Island so special.

In the face of all the overwhelming challenges that we sometimes think about and hear about everyday in our world, it's

lovely to know that there are people here who's primary motivation is to care for each other and that's really what keeps my optimism going.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again it's a real pleasure to rise and welcome all to our public gallery today; it's great to see so many family members in the gallery of legislators that are on the floor of the House. It is a great opportunity to come in and see the work that goes on off the floor and it's great to have you in.

I want to begin by something that I neglected to do yesterday and that was referenced by the Minister of Health and Wellness that we attended together the PEI Sports Hall of Fame's 50th year celebration of commemoration with a new pen on Saturday.

I neglected to reference Paul F. Schurman who is an extreme driver for the PEI Sport's Hall of Fame. He's dedicated years and years and years to ensuring that it runs efficiently, that they have funds to do what they need to do year over year, so it's really great that Paul takes on this leadership role and makes sure that everything is running smoothly. He's got a great exhibit up in the Credit Union Place in Summerside, so I urge anybody that may be passing there to drop by and see the work that Paul and his team, his whole board has put together, it's really something to see.

Also, today on the way into work as I was leaving home, I stopped to see my granddaughter at the end of her driveway as she was waiting to go to school. This is the final day of school for students on Prince Edward Island. Not the final day for the teachers, I believe they go to Friday, but I do want to thank all teachers, all staff from our schools who, with great dedication, teach our young children from September to this week every year and do it with such grace and ability that maybe some of us wouldn't have to spend all day in a classroom with kids. I want to thank them for that.

I know my granddaughter was in a tough place today, she was extremely happy it was

the last day of school but extremely sad that she wouldn't be seeing her friends, some of them again, until the fall. I'm sure there are a lot of students feeling that way today, but there's probably a lot of students that are really excited that it's the last day.

So I do want to wish them all well and I want to once again, anybody that is viewing in, either from District 10 or from anywhere on Island viewing in today over their airways, I want to welcome them to the proceedings once again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise and welcome some friends into the gallery Cathy Campbell and her son Ridley. He was fortunate enough to finish Grade 3 yesterday so Glen Stewart Primary School and Stratford Elementary School finished up yesterday because they'll be moving classrooms as the new expansion is going to be opening in September. So they got an early dismissal bell yesterday and I got to watch a video of all the teachers waiving Kleenex's as the busses left the parking lot, well for the last time, which was pretty fun.

I'd also like to welcome Lisa Hughes to the gallery as well, Lisa is one of my constituents and someone I've known for a long time and I have an excellent friendship with Lisa that really has guided us both through, I think both through our university years, and our adult years and our parent years.

I just want to recognize they are both members of the Stratford School community playground committee which I'm going to be recognizing in my members statement a little later this afternoon.

Thank you and welcome.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

It certainly is a pleasure to rise today in the Legislative Assembly and to bring greetings to, not only those that have joined us in the gallery today, but also to those that may have been tuning in over the Internet or EastLink.

Last night, I had the immense pleasure of attending the 2019 Enriching Lives Gala event at the Delta and it was in support of PEI Special Olympics.

While there were many celebrities, (Indistinct) celebrities and actors and actresses in attendance last night, the true star power were those Special Olympians that were on hand as well.

The impact of Special Olympics here on PEI, I just want to read a couple of facts here for you. The impact in this past year: 659 athletes, 174 volunteers, 100 weekly programs, 640 competitive experiences, 18 official sports, 5 athlete leaders and 334 health screenings.

This was the largest gala in the history of this event and I'm glad to say that it was sold out, but even more importantly, they hit a milestone last night. They hit a record of the amount of money raised from this event and the lunch in Summerside.

The total for the day was \$256,550 and I just want to thank the generosity of Islanders for the support that they have shown our special Olympians here on PEI.

Last but not least, I'd also like to send out a special hello to a friend of mine and a constituent, Eileen Kelly, who I had a very special visit with this morning.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to welcome some guests in the gallery; we have Kimberly Enman who is the community coordinator for the Slemmon Park Residential Community and Shawn McCarville who is the president of Slemmon Park Corporation. It's wonderful to have them here today and I look forward to being able to share a little bit more about

the wonderful work that Kimberly does in the Slemon Park community during my members statement.

I also want to recognize Toby McDonald who is here, as well as Pippin Lock and Jessie who are here from Summerside, thank you so much for coming today. I'm glad that you were able to make it.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's lots of familiar faces in the gallery today, a special welcome to all of you. I'd like to say hi to Dr. Susan Hartley and Gerard Deveau, the Bevan-Baker family, Kim Enman and Toby McDonald who I didn't notice sitting back there.

I've been a little bit sad the last few days off and on, as I consider you know, usually I'm in school for the last few days and I was feeling like I was missing that energy a little bit. Until I remembered the sheer and utter exhaustion that always accompanies it, so I'm very thankful to be here today.

What came to my mind was an expression that the principal and vice-principal at Gulf Shore Consolidated, Maria Lavoie and Claire Caseley-Smith always take great pride in keeping the staff room really friendly and inviting, with a great sense of humor.

So there was a poster on the wall for me that said – but I'm going to apply this to anyone working in the education system, in the last few days especially – but we're like ducks, nice and calm on the top and paddling like crazy on the bottom.

So I usually, at 2:30 this afternoon, it hasn't been the last couple years but when I was at Westwood Primary, at 2:30pm this afternoon, myself, with all the other staff, along with the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank's wife Elizabeth, we would be embarking on a huge water fight as the school buses would leave. So I just want to wish all students a really great, fun, safe summer and I will mention the teachers on Friday when it's there last day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to welcome Shawn McCarville here today, Shawn's got roots back in Kinkora and it's always great to see Shawn, also Toby MacDonald. Also want to say thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for giving a shout out to the South Shore Wellness Clinic and the work that we Lisa Gallant has and now with Ms. Wood there three days a week, hopefully we'll be able to continue to expand that service and provide the South Shore residents a much needed service.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery here today and a special welcome to my mom who worked tirelessly on my campaign. Probably one of the hardest workers on it and probably one of the main reasons I get to sit in here, so special thank you to her.

Any ways, I'm really happy to have her here today and if you get a chance, anyone, I'd go speak to her, she's a very smart lady and definitely worth your time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly Thank you. It's a great pleasure to rise and I want to welcome all the guests here.

Lisa Hughes, who takes part in a few of our commonalities with fitness and stuff and all the people who have come to watch and take an interest in the proceedings here.

Just want to say a big shout out to the residents of District 14. I was out walking this morning and had a number of good

chats in the area. So I want to say hello to everybody out there.

Also, we were talking about twinkles in people's eyes here earlier and I want to say a big – my twinkle in my eye is my wife Eireann, who today, we're celebrating our 20th wedding anniversary. I love you and I'll see you later for dinner.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Tignish Irish Moss Festival

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's that time again, the 39th Annual Tignish Irish Moss Festival.

This festival was originally created by the community to raise funds to pay off the mortgage for the arena in Tignish.

Since then, the mortgage has been paid – actually it's been paid off twice – and many local organizations have also benefited from the proceeds. In recent years, a large portion of the costs of the new splash pad that's located in the Bicentennial Park were funded by the festival.

The success of this festival year after year is credited to volunteers. They give their time, talent and commitment to the festival. The impact of their dedication is beyond measure.

I am proud to say that I have been part of this festival since it began. Obviously, I was very young at that time. I started as a member of the youth committee and since have held all executive positions.

This year's schedule includes everything from a bubble run, to wine and beer fest from a Little Miss Irish Moss Pageant, to a family feud, to a beach cleanup day to Canada Day celebrations.

We have something for everyone, including the traditional Miss Irish Moss Pageant, horse pull, parade and fireworks.

This year's festival began last weekend and will continue daily right through this week up to Canada Day.

We welcome all Islanders and visitors to the Town of Tignish and once again, I want to thank all those who make this festival a success year after year.

Slemon Park-Kimberley Enman

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Much has been shared in this Legislature over the years about the successes of the diverse business community in Slemon Park. However, little has been said about the residential community and the incredible work achieved over the past few years making Slemon Park a wonderful place to live.

Leading the charge to build and connect the community has been community coordinator Kimberly Enman. Not a week goes by in Slemon Park without a fun activity or two planned and facilitated by Kim with the support of volunteers.

There's activities for children and families such as chocolate bar bingo, family karaoke, kids' crafts and games on PD days, holiday parties, a community barbeque and movies in the lecture theatre in Hanger 3.

There's also lots of activities for the young at heart such as weekly card games, crafts and knitting circles.

She's also organized a community garden where anyone can take part and everything grown in the garden will be shared with the local community.

As a side note, I have a couple of the community gardens bean plants growing on my kitchen table right now that really need to get out there. Sorry Kimberly, I have been a little busy.

When ideas are brought forward by members of the community, Kim will do what she can to make it happen.

One of the most popular community events is a weekly night of music called: The Shed. Every Tuesday evening equipment is set up in the Slemon Park hotel so that local musicians of all skill levels and from all walks of life can come together to play classical country and east coast traditional tunes.

This year for the first time Slemon Park hosted a community school. Kim worked with a group of dedicated volunteers to make this happen and it was a smashing success with seven classes and over 50 students.

The Slemon Park community is very fortunate to have Kim working with us and I hope she will continue to be a part of the community for years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Stratford Schools Community Playground Committee

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise today to recognize a group of dedicated parent volunteers.

The Stratford Elementary School expansion resulted in relocation of the existing playground at that school.

Much of the existing playground could not be used after it was disassembled. The portion of the relocated was fenced off due to the construction and safety.

This left the 1,100 children without a playground for the entire 2018-2019 school year. The PEI Home and School Federation recognized that the remaining equipment would be inadequate as Glen Stewart Primary School and Stratford Elementary School share that space.

As a result, 14 outstanding parents stepped up to the challenge of raising the needed funds needed to complete the project. The Stratford Schools Community Playground Committee was born.

Raising funds for a playground for 1,100 kids is a huge feat and it's not cheap. The cost of the project is \$300,000. The committee has worked tirelessly, they have organized silent auctions, hikes, yard sales, bakes sales, a barbeque, raffles, paver stone sales and community bingo's just to name a few.

Businesses in the community have been generous and the most endearing is the kid's involvement, some even donating their birthday money, their Christmas money, and the profits from their lemonade stands.

The efforts have paid off, although a ways to go, the committee has raised \$200,000. This will initiate the beginning of phase one, slated to be completed in time for the students to return in September, and what a celebration for the kids that will be.

Congratulations to the committee for reaching this incredible milestone.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Yesterday, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke was inquiring as to whether there's an evaluation of the changes made in the fee codes for walk-in clinics. The simple answer is yes, an evaluation has been done and this was a requirement of the Master Agreement.

I have here the MOU from the Master Agreement on the pilot project for the walk-in clinic fee codes, and I will table it during Tabling of Documents.

I also have some documentation here with regards to an overview of some of the things that were found in the evaluation, and I'd be happy to table that as well during that time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in response to Questions Taken as Notice from the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park regarding gender balance on boards. Information on corporate boards on PEI has proven challenging to access due to the lack of available public information.

Many companies on PEI are private not public, so they don't need to openly provide this information. There have been attempts to access this information in the past, but there is no way to force the private enterprise to share this information with government.

Nonetheless, a review of corporate boards on PEI by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government reveals that only 20% of the board members reviewed were women. Unfortunately, due to the challenging nature of contacting private companies to gather deeper information on board recruitment and policies, it is hard to access the potential for success with this category of board in PEI.

As Minister Responsible for Status of Women, I will commit to encouraging diversity in leadership and board compositions across PEI, especially as evidence shows that it is in a company's best interest. Diverse boards mean more successful companies.

Despite this challenge in the private sector, I am pleased that so far in 2019, 94 applicants have been appointed through Engage PEI onto government boards, such as Tourism PEI, the Seniors' Secretariat, Learning Partners Advisory Council and more. Of those 94 appointments, 52 or 55% of those women – were women.

This is a great start and I encourage all boards to achieve gender balance through social media, government advertising, and through the media we hope to reach more and more women to get them involved.

I look forward to engaging with the PEI Coalition for Women in Government and the PEI Business Women's Association on ways to encourage more women in leadership.

As I mentioned yesterday, I am pleased to commit to regular reporting on the prevalence of women on corporate boards

and will include this information in the next Women in PEI: A Statistical Review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was the Member from Morell-Donagh that had asked me a question about psychological assessments and education, and I have some information to bring back.

We've had 339 students on the list for psych-ed assessments, of which 30 of those will be completed by end of this summer. So, this year we've had 252 new referrals and closed 255 files.

Very important to note that in our recent budget, the one released yesterday after Question Period, we've increased the number of psychologists by 1.6 positions, and the wait time has decreased from 3.5 years just over two years ago, and we are on track to meet our target of less than one year by 2020.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: I also wanted to bring back a response to the Leader of the Opposition's questions. The Leader of the Opposition was asking about the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, which of course we amended later on in the evening yesterday.

In January of 2019, the past administration requested that IRAC complete a review of the current act and recommend possible amendments. And then just this June, this month, IRAC proposed that the act should be completely repealed and replaced with a new, yet to be named bill. So, IRAC has contracted an external legal counsel to complete a Canada-wide scan of relevant acts and regulations and are targeting the complete of a draft bill by the end of August. At that time, as previously mentioned, there will be a need for robust consultation with stake holders, including the opposition, using the draft bill as a starting point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In response to a question from Friday from the hon. Leader of the Opposition regarding the status report of the implementation of recommendations with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So I will be prepared to table a status report, just sort of outlining, in far too general terms what we've done.

I've asked my staff to go back with a list of, I believe, all 94 of the recommendations to find out the status of what has been done and the status of where they're at in the implementation phase. It has proven to be more challenging hon. leader than I would have initially thought; which leads again, further credence to the follow up question about putting somebody in charge to actually look after this on behalf of government.

So, I will table this in the tabling of documents section and I hope to come back tomorrow with the full report of where we're at with all recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: First question, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again I want to start by extending my gratitude to the ministers for bringing back such prompt and full responses to questions taken as notice.

Last year, the previous government announced sudden and very large increases in the amount that individuals would pay to stay in publicly run long-term care facilities. Increases of 30% or even 40% were proposed, amounting to an extra \$10,000 or more in costs per year. The fee increase was arbitrarily implemented without any advance consultation or notice.

Public review of PEI's long-term care policy

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: Will your administration put the previous administrations planned increases on hold until a comprehensive public review of PEI's long-term care policy as undertaken

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for that very important question.

More and more Islanders are faced with loved ones in long-term care and we know financially it can be a burden. I've been very engaged in this file, even before I moved over to the government side of the floor, as an opposition member and I've had many meetings with individuals since becoming the Minister of Health and Wellness.

I have instructed my staff to take an internal look at this and actually do a thorough analysis of it. I'm already on record in the media saying that I don't see us moving forward; past I believe it was the \$102 benchmark. But certainly when we have that analysis completed, I'd be more than happy to bring it forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

I'm happy, of course, to hear the hon. Minister's department is undergoing a review.

There are some really worrisome things about Health PEI's current policy in this area. I'm interested if this government is going to look into any of the policies that have caused upset and financial hardship to so many elderly Islanders and their families.

For example, it's not uncommon for one spouse to require long-term care, while the other may be able to remain in their home. Yet, Health PEI has a policy requiring spouses to cover any financial shortfall that may be incurred, obviously creating significant financial hardships for the spouses left at home.

To the minister: Is that one of the policies that you will be reviewing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, I've gone through this just over the last several years with my own parents, who, I was essentially their primary provider as I had a constructed in-law suite and moved them in with me. Subsequently, their health turned and my mom went into a long-term care facility in August of 2016, and subsequently my dad moved into a long-term care facility on August 27, 2018, so I know what the hon. member is speaking of. I've gone through this financial analysis when I had to meet with Health PEI to look at my parents' finances and review their taxes for the previous, I think two years.

It's something that we need to address with the federal government as well to see where the increases with regards to OAS and CPP and how that potentially is incorporated into their overall revenue.

I know I've talked a little bit longer than I should with regards to it being a fairly direct answer, but you know what, everything is on the table, we are prepared to sit down and analyze every policy with regards to this because first and foremost, we have to respect those that came before us and paid taxes here for many years on PEI and contributed to the social fabric of our wonderful Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

One of the other areas of concern is a combination of fees in the long-term facilities. They are sort of equivalent of the rent that many Islanders pay for their living spaces, the costs of which, of course, are controlled by the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission which limits annual increases for rental properties.

As we know, increases in long-term care fees are not subject to IRAC oversight or eligible to appeal, hence the 30 or 40% sudden increase that we saw last year.

Nursing home accommodations exempt from IRAC appeal

To the same minister: Why are nursing home accommodations specifically exempt from IRAC appeal?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: The unfortunate situation that we've gotten into here is that the rates were not increased at all since; I believe it was 2012, so they did fall behind what the private facilities were charging. That's just one of the areas that we're going to be looking at.

With regards to IRAC and how that falls into play, I don't have that information readily at hand and I'd be more than happy to bring it back.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Internal memos that were made available to *The Guardian* earlier this month reveal that at one point Health PEI officials had conversations in which the suggestion was raised that seniors in public long-term care facilities ought to be paying fees that more closely reflect the average rates paid by seniors in private care facilities.

Undoubtedly, such a change in pricing policy would lead to even further increases beyond those outlined publicly by the previous administration; increases in the order of \$20 per month.

Long-term care fees versus private facilities

To the minister: Will you ensure that Health PEI does not pursue a policy to match public long-term care fees to those charged in the private facilities?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'm extremely proud to be part of a new government led by this Premier and again, the common thread through the throne speech was caring for people. Completely went from the front page to the back page that was the theme of that document, was caring for people.

We have a new government, we have a new minister and I am committed to looking at this and making sure that any policy moving forward is going to be reflective of caring for people in a fair manner.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Of course, and I'm sure I speak for other members of this House, I was really pleased to see as part of the government's first budget that was tabled yesterday, a commitment to make available 100 new long-term care beds and facilities across this province.

However, as our elderly population continues to grow it's essential that government does everything in its power to ensure that more Islanders receive long-term care, not in facilities, but in their homes, wherever that is possible.

Investments into Home Care Program

To the same minister: What specific investments will your government make to the provincial Home Care Program to achieve this goal?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness

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

Again, as many of the other members and ministers on this side of the floor have done, we've recognized the previous administration and some of the great work that they've done previously to us forming

government. An example with that would be bringing in the paramedics, the EMS to help with regards to home care.

Again, I've worked closely with home care over my own parents' journey and they do provide a wonderful service. It's just another platform, it's another tool that we have to be able to ensure that our seniors are able to remain in their homes for a longer period of time and anything that we can do to support that, certainly this government is going to look at.

Again, caring for the people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I believe that achieving this goal requires a reconsideration of how health care professionals assess senior suitability for home care.

For example, where a senior is assessed is often a critical determinant in their trajectory through the long-term care system. Indeed, a 2017 report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that I will be tabling later today, entitled Seniors in Transition - Exploring Pathways Across the Care Continuum, it shows that seniors assessed by health care professionals at home are considerably more likely to receive home care rather than seniors who were assessed in a hospital setting.

Long-term care assessments re: seniors in own home

To the minister: What steps will you take to ensure that long-term care assessments are conducted in a way that allows seniors every opportunity to remain in their homes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, I am a huge proponent for the home care program and the wonderful work that

these nursing staff do and the advancements around the paramedics that we've incorporated into this as well.

Yes, the hon. member is correct. Home care is a wonderful program and we want to keep our seniors in their homes as long as we can.

Some of the evaluations, unfortunately, are done because of just the pure safety of seniors. Some seniors would like to remain in their homes longer than they can, but at the same time, we have to take their overall health and security into play.

Another very important component of home care is when we have the public health nurses coming in to do med reviews with seniors. That's a great program, because if you can ensure that the seniors are still living in their own homes aren't being overmedicated or mixing past and current medications, that's a real safety issue and I'm very proud of the work that home care works to do that.

But again, it's about caring for people and this government will continue to care for people and we will bring all the measures forward to ensure that our seniors have a dignified life.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Health and safety concerns surrounding the renovations and impacts of asbestos and other particular breaches that occurred at Three Oaks Senior High School in Summerside have been discussed many times in this House since the construction began, and many times by the current Minister of Health and Wellness.

Review of breaches during TOSH renovations

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Since being appointed minister, have you had a chance to look into this issue further?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I have had briefings on the issue and I know our deputy chief health officer has done a considerable amount of work on it as well, so yes, I have looked into it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On November 19th, 2018, the chief public health officer reported that they had completed a review of the breaches at TOSH and released a one-and-a-half-page summary of the findings that stated: There was found to be no significant student exposure to lead, dust or asbestos during the review period.

This, of course, is fantastic news and I, along with the concerned parents, awaited the release of the full report that would explain and confirm these findings. However, that report never came.

Review report at TOSH not made public

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why was a complete report not made public?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Probably because I wasn't health minister then, but I stand here today and I commit to making it public.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the first things I did after being elected as an MLA was to inquire into the whereabouts of the complete report of this review, essentially what was the review summary summarizing.

I have since been informed by a representative from your department – from the Department of Health and Wellness – that a formal report of this review does not exist, which would make it very difficult for you to bring forward.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Can you confirm that there is no formal report of the health concerns during the construction at TOSH?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I stand up and stand behind the dedicated health care professionals that work in our department. Not only the chief public health officer, but also the deputy, Dr. Sabapathy, and I would be more than happy to bring back further information on that tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The short summary provided offers a conclusion, but doesn't state how this conclusion was reached, what information they reviewed, what was the review period, what methodology was implemented, how they chose to exclude information, such as lived experiences of students and other firsthand reports.

Essentially, parents are being asked to simply trust that there was no risk to students.

Review of breaches during TOSH renovations (further)

Question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: Will you commit to an independent and comprehensive review to examine the impact and risks due to breaches and other issues that occurred during the TOSH renovations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I certainly will commit here today to going back to my department to find out where this report is, how comprehensive it is and bringing everything back. This government, just like the hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture did last week, when he made the announcement that any loans over \$100,000, versus what it was before for \$1 million, will be public. This government operates on a basis of open books, transparency and will continue to do that.

So I will bring back the information.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to hear that you will bring that information forward. I look forward to that, I'm uncertain as to what will be able to be brought forward as I've already inquired into this and there is apparently no full report. Should you find, as I've been told, that there isn't a complete report, would you commit to having a full independent comprehensive review conducted of the issues that happened during the TOSH renovations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly as the Minister Responsible for Health and Wellness, I will be going back to my department and I will be opening everything up and I will be demanding that all the documents that are within our department are made public, that you have my commitment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All parties in this Assembly have previously provided unanimous support for a motion brought forward by the current Leader of the Opposition for a basic income guarantee in collaboration with the federal government.

The official opposition identified a commission to develop a PEI basic income guarantee pilot as a priority during the election and in our negotiations with government prior to this budget. In the budget address yesterday, we heard a commitment of \$225,000 to develop a PEI secure income pilot.

Basic income guarantee pilot

A question for the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Is this government committing to a commission for the development of a basic income guarantee pilot, or something different?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

When we look at the budget that was brought down yesterday and certainly the importance that was placed on, whether it was housing, whether it was seniors, various aspects right across our department – I have to say poverty elimination, affordable housing, women's shelters, they are not items that are specific to any one individual party, we all share those concerns.

With regard to specifically the question that the hon. member has posed, we have committed to a secure income pilot program. Having said that, as previous administration has done, we have made representation to the federal government for a partnership on a basic income guarantee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member of Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is quite a difference between a basic income guarantee and a secure income. So, to qualify there has been significant and long-term work on a basic income guarantee

in PEI with a number of community groups and experts putting in many, many years of work.

Commitment of a secure income pilot

A question for the minister: Who was consulted in a decision to commit to a secure income pilot?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing:

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

The secure income pilot, certainly where it came out of, was with regard to the Poverty Reduction Action Plan and there was substantial consultation, right across the province, on the Poverty Reduction Action Plan, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member of Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But I'm going to have ask the minister again: Are you discussing the commitment of the funding for a secure income pilot, or is this funding for a basic income guarantee because we're hearing two different conversations on two different topics. I understand the minister's description of secure income pilot, but the commitment for funding as sought by the official opposition was for a basic income guarantee commission, not a secure income pilot.

Could the minister please qualify?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

Yes, we do have to go back to the consultations that were carried out in the putting together the Poverty Reduction Action Plan.

If you look at the number of different recommendations that came forward from that action plan, the number of ones that

have been acted on and are continued to be acted on, and whether we're looking at a basic income guarantee or whether we're looking at the secure income pilot program, we have to say that the consultations on both of them were extensive and happy that the previous administration did take that action in that direction.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to request that the minister please return to the House at his earliest convenience with a clarification as to the commitment for expenditure of \$225,000, the scope of that commitment, the steps that will be involved in rolling out that pilot, and whether there is a commitment to an independent commission and chairperson for same.

Speaker: The Minister of Social Development and Housing.

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes hon. member, I absolutely will.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Women's issues and women's health were two major concerns of Islanders I heard while campaigning and when speaking with people.

I know in the budget tabled yesterday under primary care, there's approximately an addition \$1.8 million allocated over last year's estimates and only \$1.6 million compared to last year's forecast.

However, that increase is shared amongst general administration, primary care program development, operations of provincially-owned healthcare centres, and the Women's Wellness Program. It's not clear if the Women's Wellness Program will be cut or enhanced.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness regarding the PC platform to promise and establish a PEI women's health strategy and \$5 million women's health fund. I reviewed the budget and could not find a provision for this fund.

Budget provision for women's health fund

Question to the minister: Could you confirm that the budget makes no provision for this promised fund?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I hate to sound like a broken record, but on this side of the floor we care for the people of Prince Edward Island and we have made a commitment.

No government is going to do everything in the first couple of weeks of the first year of their mandate. When you make a platform for an election, of course, there is a long-term plan to unfold over potentially a four-year period – hopefully a four-year period. That's what we're moving forward on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Well I'm glad the minister mentioned before analyzing every policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PC platform committed, actually, \$1.325 million in the first year. So I'm not sure I understand your answer. The health strategy – women's health fund in the first year, so this was in the first fiscal year.

Minister, why did your department in government decide a women's health strategy and funding was no longer an immediate priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

This government certainly didn't find or all of a sudden come to the conclusion that it's not a priority, it is a priority with our government. Once we get into our budget within the health department, I think the hon. member will see the many great things, the details within our budget of the programs and the projects that we plan to unfold here on PEI to support women.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know where the money is going, and we just don't understand why it's being allocated to different areas. It's apparent that the introduction of a women's health strategy and \$5 million women's health fund has gone to the bottom of the government's priority list now that the election is over.

Minister, could you give the House and Islanders a line of sight to when the women's health fund will be up and running?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

On this side of the floor, we made the conscious decision to put more emphasis on the frontline workers.

We've already talked about reinvesting a greater amount of money into primary care. That's something that the healthcare professionals here on PEI have been telling us that we need, is more of a focus on primary care.

We are investing and we will be investing into frontline healthcare workers to provide better care, not only for women but all Islanders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Premier: yesterday the government tabled a provincial budget, it is clear a number of PC platform promises were not addressed.

PC party campaign promises ignored in budget

Premier, could you inform the House who was involved in the decision to ignore many of the PC parties campaign promises?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is difficult sometimes to sit here sometimes and bite your tongue to listen to some of the stuff that gets tossed across here; obviously we're in a very new situation here on Prince Edward Island. For the first time in our history, three parties making up a minority government trying to do the very best we can to give Islanders what they want.

Everybody put forward ideas; everybody on my side is a little bit disappointed. There's many people on the Leader of the Opposition's side who are disappointed and we keep hearing time and again about the people who were in government for 12 years who didn't do what they said they were going to do who are now disappointed because things aren't in the budget.

We can't give everything to everybody. We are trying to strike that balance, we thought we did things here that we've never done before.

We got input from other parties, I don't know what each house leader says when they go back to their caucus but the house leaders met and we devised a budget that gave everybody a little bit of everything. A lot of people are disappointed, this is everybody's budget, this just isn't the PC Party's budget and if it was there would be a lot of things different.

If it was the Green Party's budget there'd be a lot of things in here that would be different. If it was the Liberal Party's budget – well, we've seen that before.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

In seven or eight priorities put forward and seeing part of one – I don't think that's very good collaboration.

Premier, you and your party made 120 promises in your party's platform during the election campaign.

An Hon. Member: 125.

Mr. Mitchell: You said in response to a question from the Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank on June 18th and I quote: There's a lot of promises in that platform we are not going to be able to do.

PC Party campaign promises

Premier, could you inform this House which of those platform promises you will not be able to do?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well there are a lot of platform promises in a lot of party platforms that will not get implemented and certainly not in the first year and I think that's reasonable for anybody to expect.

I've had lots of discussions with our internal caucus; many individuals here who are probably looking down right now would have liked to see us go a little faster with our small business tax rollback.

There are lots of people here who would have liked to see more things happen but there are lots of individuals on the opposition side who wished we would've done things a little bit quicker than what we're doing them and there are a lot of people from your party who feel the same way.

This is the first time in the history in Prince Edward Island that three parties have an implementation into a budget on Prince Edward Island which is a surplus budget.

You put forward your priorities, we have them written down, they're all in writing, we tried to do it the very best that we could for you, nobody from your side said: can you roll back the small business tax faster, they didn't say that.

We are just trying to do the very best that we can do, we think the end result is a pretty positive surplus budget that many people of Prince Edward Island are happy about.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Well, when a party makes political promises, they usually pride themselves in meeting those commitments.

Progress updates for PC Party campaign promises

Premier, will you be giving Islanders periodic progress updates on all of your 125 promises?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Well why don't we take all of the platform promises and roll them out who's got the most put in through. Let's roll it out, isn't that what we're here for? Isn't that what we're trying to do, to give the very best for Prince Edward Island?

Can I talk about rolling back the business tax? We've done it.

Can we talk about increasing the personal exemption? We've done it.

Can we talk about putting in a program for breast density for females suffering from breast cancer? We've done it.

I could sit here all afternoon and lay out the things that we've done –

Ms. Compton: – teachers.

Premier King: – teachers.

We said we'd get to 110 in four years, we're at 80 already, heaven forbid. I think we've done a lot of good things and you know what the Leader of the Opposition could stand up here and say: These are the things they put forward and these are the things are things that are in the budget.

The former minister and Leader of the Third Party could say: This is what we've wanted in the budget and it's there. I think that is a very good indication of how collaboration works and I can't wait to see how far it goes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Over the past number of weeks, I've been starting to hear from a number of people in my district and I'm sure other people have been getting their phones started ringing that are finding significant delays in the PEI home renovation program. They can't find out if they're getting approval or not.

Delays in PEI Home Renovation Program

Question the hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you tell us, are they behind on approvals?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question. It does give me an opportunity to speak very briefly about the home renovation program. Its provided tremendous support to households right across our great province as far as being able to carry out improvements, renovations and enable ones to stay in their homes, certainly for as long as possible.

Over the last year, the previous year, there were 500 applications in total. So far this year as I understand it, there has been upwards of 1300 and that, in it of itself, certainly shows the importance, the uptake of this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate the background on the program but that's not what I asked. I asked why – are we behind on approvals. We're in the middle of the construction season now, it's getting going – we know how hard it is to find contractors. I'm hearing reports that people are having difficulty confirming whether they've been accepted for this year's intake.

Question to the minister: How long is the current backlog for this program?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

I do appreciate certainly where the hon. member is coming from. We're endeavoring to have those backlogs in applications processed as rapidly as possible. My department has added additional staff for the processing and once again, endeavoring to have those applications processed as rapidly as possible.

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well the issue is, is that people are calling in and they're not getting a call back. They can't find out if they're approved or not. Construction season is short, contractors come and then they just move on to the next job site because they can't wait around.

Question to the hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing Minister: How are you going to fix this problem so seniors can get their homes fixed before winter gets here?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

Just to clarify on that, the home renovation program is not specifically for seniors as the hon. member has mentioned.

But just to reiterate, that yes, additional staff have been hired. Am I able to stand here today and say that all of these applications are going to be processed and information approvals and/or declines going out by a certain date? I am not.

What I would ask though of the hon. member, specific, and I'll put it out to everybody in the Legislative Assembly here that if there are questions coming forward from your district, from your constituents, please put them on to me. We will endeavor to get back as rapidly as possible with the answers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Municipal growth management studies have been completed over the last several years to look at amalgamating or annexing communities to create larger regional municipalities. In yesterday's budget address, \$2.2 million was committed for community growth initiatives. This seems to signal that this new government has adopted the approach of the previous Liberal government. This is confusing since many current government members were strongly opposed to the approach while in opposition.

Plan for local governance

A question to the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities: Could you clarify what your governments plan is for local governance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank the hon. member for the question.

We are presently in year two of a five-year agreement on the *Municipal Government Act*. Our staff are working with the different municipalities on their approach forward to

make this work in a more – we'll say, a more modern way.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We could not find a list of ongoing or upcoming studies on the provinces website. As several members of this government pointed out over the last few years while in opposition, it's important to local residents to know what's going on with these studies and they need to be engaged in that process.

Growth studies for rural communities

Question to the minister: How many growth studies will be undertaken with this \$2.2 million and will the minister provide a publicly accessible list to them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Well thank you for the question there hon. member. I will take that back to the department and come back with an answer for you tomorrow.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many small rural municipalities, as the hon. member mentioned, are struggling to adapt. We are actually two and a half years through our five-year plan, and they're struggling to adapt to the act's requirements.

Supports for rural communities under MGA

What additional supports will you provide to ensure that our rural communities can continue to operate under the MGA?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

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

The hon. member, I want to be very clear that this government is not looking in any way shape or form or enforcing any amalgamation or annexation across the province, and we are presently working with municipalities.

I can tell you there are no applications before the government or before IRAC on any further amalgamation, but our department will continue to work with municipalities as they go forward and guide them through the *Municipal Government Act*.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I and the Green Party support changes to the MGA, particularly in the process for engaging and involving residents in the decision-making process. We included these in our platform, for example: in calling for a plebiscite prior to an annexation or of an unincorporated area.

Changes to municipal reform process

What changes to the municipal reform process will this government be introducing particularly when it comes to how residents are engaged?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

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

Well the hon. member raises a good question. Since taking over this new role, I have instructed the staff at municipal affairs to look at the act, to look at what was said in the past.

We are engaged with different municipalities across the Island, and we are reaching out to different people that have approached the department on questions around that subject. We are working with the individuals and it is our plan to continue that consultation.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford your final question.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While in opposition, members of the government voted en masse against the *Municipal Government Act*, and later introduced multiple bills to try to amend it. I assume at this point that this government does not intend to repeal the act, but the minister can correct me if I'm wrong on that.

Does the minister and his government intend to present amendments to the MGA, and, if so, will they be in place before the current batch of growth studies are completed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

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

I want to point out right off the bat that when we were in opposition, we didn't vote for *Municipal Government Act*, but the opposition – or pardon me the third party did vote with government on the MGA.

We are right now engaged with municipalities across the Island, we are talking to the stakeholders, and we are looking at the MGA and how to proceed forward in that manner.

Thank you.

[End of Question Period]

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: I will call on the hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Plastic Bag Reduction Act

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks to the efforts of Islanders from tip-to-tip we are national leaders in waste reduction and recycling.

Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour féliciter les Insulaires. Nous sommes des chefs de file nationaux en matière de réduction des déchets et de recyclage.

Beginning July 1st, we will become the first province in Canada to stop the distribution of single-use plastic checkout bags.

The purpose of the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* is to reduce waste and environmental damage that results from single-use plastic bags. Islanders can take pride in the fact that we have the lowest amount of waste per person, and that we lead the country in diverting recyclable materials from landfill.

We are committed to being a national leader in waste management, and that includes the reduction in single-use packaging.

Canada Day, this weekend, marks the beginning of a six-month transition for Islanders and Island businesses to replace 30-million plastic bags with reusable or paper checkout bags. Single-use plastic bags are bags you would normally receive from a cashier at check-out.

We hope Islanders will choose to use reusable bags, they hold more and are more durable. In other words BYOB - that's Bring Your Own Bag.

Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I guess I should read my ministerial statements ahead of time.

For those who do choose to use check-out bags, businesses will be charging a minimum fee of 15 cents for a paper bag and a minimum fee of \$1.00 for reusable bags. These mandatory minimum fees will help Island businesses with the costs of transitioning from plastic to paper and reusable bags.

For years, the public have been telling government they want something done. This is a good first step, but it is only a first step.

We'll be talking with Islanders this fall about how we can handle other forms of single-use packaging.

Together, let's keep Prince Edward Island eco-friendly.

L'important c'est que l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard demeure un endroit écologique

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're days away from the enactment of the plastic bag ban, and that's great news. Businesses and consumers alike have been preparing for this transition, and it's contributed to a broader conversation around our throw-away culture.

It's surprising how something that originally feels like it might be a large inconvenience – having to remember to bring a reusable bag – quickly becomes second nature. It's a really good example of policymakers showing environmental leadership: a goal was set, a timeline was put to it, and then a plan was laid out on how to get there in that order.

As we're about to check this one off our to-do list, I'm reminded of the federal government's commitment to ban single-use plastics in 2021, and I'm happy to hear the minister say that's something he wants to start a discussion on in the fall.

On PEI, we don't need to wait until 2021 to get there either.

It's pretty amazing that our society has reached a point where the effort necessary to extract oil from the ground, ship it to a refinery, turn it into plastic, shape it appropriately, truck it to a store, buy it, and bring it home is considered less effort than just washing the spoon when you're done with it.

There's probably a pretty good business opportunity for distributing compostable food trays and packaging items. Necessity, after all, is the mother of innovation. We shouldn't be afraid to meet the challenges we face boldly.

I thank the former member who brought this plastic bag ban forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for this statement.

I was very pleased to sit in this House with Allen Roach, a former member of this Legislature from the Montague area, who led the passage of this Legislation as a private member.

This is proof that an individual backbench MLA can have a lasting impact, not only locally, but on all jurisdictions.

So the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* will come into force as stated on July 1st, so I urge all Islanders to get ready for this major change in their shopping experience. This will have a lasting benefit to the environment, and I'm sure will make all of us very happy in doing so.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Summer Programs at Island Libraries

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the best things about summer in PEI is the incredible programming offered by our 26 public libraries.

Un autre avantage de nos étés a l'Île-du-Prince Édouard est la formidable programmation offerte par nos 26 bibliothèques publiques.

And the line-up this summer looks better than ever. The TD Summer Reading Club, which kicked off last week in O'Leary, is Canada's biggest bilingual summer reading program.

Using the theme, Get Your Read On – pardon me, I lost my place here. Hold it one second, Mr. Speaker, I'm being too fancy here –

An Hon. Member: It's all yours (Indistinct)

Premier King: No rush, take your time.

Mr. Trivers: We got lots of time, lots of time.

Using the theme, Get Your Read On, – just as I'm trying to do here – the program inspires kids of all ages to explore the fun of reading and helps them build a lifelong love of reading. We're proud of our libraries which continue to offer more and more resources that help patrons learn by doing, as well as by reading.

Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I'm having a lot of troubles with this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience here.

For example, 18 libraries are offering hands-on technology programs for kids and teens in July and August through our partnership with Brilliants Labs.

The irony of it, I may attend one of those programs myself.

These programs will help young people to build their coding and digital literacy skills by learning how to use Ozobots, Makey Makeys, and much more. Perhaps even laptops.

Teen Summer Reading Club programs are being offered at the Summerside and Confederation Centre libraries in July and August. At these programs, youth aged 13-18 can enjoy activities like making ice cream, playing life-sized Hungry Hungry Hippos, and battling with robots.

For the second year, the Public Library Service is partnering with the Museum and Heritage Foundation to offer Discover PEI Heritage Passes.

Through this very successful program, Islanders can use their library card to borrow a Heritage Pass from 16 libraries, which gets them free admission for the whole family to visit any PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation location.

Several provincial parks will be hosting pop-up libraries this summer to help children maintain and increase their reading skills.

Je suis très heureux de vous annoncer que tous ces services et ressources sont disponibles aux clients en anglais et en français.

Reading during the summer is good for everyone, and especially for children who can lose up to a month of learning over the summer through what is known as the "summer slide." The good news is there is a simple solution to this problem – reading.

Best of all, libraries make reading fun and free.

I ask the members to join me in recognizing the great work of our library staff who are always coming up with great new ideas. And I ask you to encourage your constituents to take full advantage of the excellent resources being offered at our libraries this summer

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the minister remembers the good old days when we just had to know how to use a book?

An Hon. Member: She has a point there.

Premier King: It's true.

Ms. Bernard: As a teacher, parent, and now Legislator, I very much appreciate all of the services offered at all of our local libraries across the province, and I would also like to thank everyone involved in these: the people organizing them, putting them on, working with the children.

Continuum of literacy is so important as the minister mentioned as the summer slide really is a real thing, in particular when we have students who are learning a second language, we notice that even more. So it is important that we keep reading.

Even more pleasing is the fact that the library partners with the Centre for Equitable Library Access, which gives students who have print disabilities access to the same luxuries that the other students have.

Thank you minister for that statement, and thank you to all of our public libraries, and I hope you have a great summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the minister for that statement. It took a little longer than I thought, but it was well worth the wait.

Obviously this program plays such an important part in our young Island students – the summer program at the libraries. So it's a great source of education for our Island children, and, actually, it's also a great source of entertainment, as you mentioned some of those new technologies that are available for our young students who are very eager to dig in and learn and figure some new things out.

I know from my own personal experience, my granddaughters have used it in the past, and I know they'll be using it this summer now that school is out as well. I look forward hearing from them and seeing firsthand how things are going there.

To the staff of the libraries all across PEI, I wish them all the best. It's a broad range all across PEI. So to all the staff and the clients that will be using it, I wish them all the best this wonderful summer.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Rural Women's Business Centre

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

I got a book.

This morning I had the pleasure of participating in an important announcement aimed at rural business women. The Prince Edward Island government, in partnership with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Prince Edward Island Business Women's Association, is establishing a Rural Women's Business Center in Central Bedeque.

This new centre will increase the Business Women's Association capacity to build new partnerships, promote networking and

mentoring, and expand opportunities for rural business women.

For 25 years the business women's association has experienced a great deal of success in supporting women entrepreneurs. As a member-based not-for-profit organization it's been encouraging in supporting women to succeed in business endeavours.

It has inspired women to consider starting or expanding a business and has provided advisory services, training, and other supports that promote greater social and economic opportunities for women throughout Prince Edward Island. It is the only business women's association in the province with an Island-wide mandate. More than 450 entrepreneurs and business professionals are members in this association.

Rural women often face greater challenges in starting or expanding a business. They need opportunities to network. They need access to services and amenities and similar to all rural businesses, they need to be able to connect with the marketplace.

The rural business women's centre will help to overcome some of these obstacles. Research tells us that most women entrepreneurs are involved in small-to-medium enterprises. A recent report on small businesses found that 99.8% of Prince Edward Island companies are small-to-medium size and the number of women entrepreneurs in this category is growing.

It's good for our economy, good for PEI good for the province, and, best of all, good for women who are making a difference in their communities. Women have a vital role to play in our economy. We need to be able to ensure that women who represent one half of the population are able to achieve their potential.

This new rural women's business centre will help to address and advance the role of women in our society and our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is certainly welcomed news and I really look forward to hearing how this rural women's business organization can work out of Central Bedeque to reach all of our rural communities.

We know that when we empower women in business, we do not just empower individuals, we empower families and communities that many women are strong leaders in their communities and empowering them to move forward with their business ideas. We see creative, innovate things move forward that we might not see otherwise.

It's wonderful to see this investment, in particular, in collaboration with the business women's association that has already done such fantastic work and continues to do fantastic work on this Island to encourage and support women in these initiatives. I look forward to seeing how this unfolds.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for this important statement. Congratulations to the Bedeque area. That's a fantastic spot for this very warm and welcome – 450 members, outstanding number. I'm sure that number is going to rise. I look forward to watching how they do.

Providing support for women entrepreneurs in business is so important. It's especially important in the rural areas. Women can benefit from the supports as well as the mentorships of other female business people. I wish the initiative success and I look forward to becoming more familiar with the workings of this rural business centre – outstanding.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a study by the Canadian Institute for Health Information entitled Seniors in Transition – Exploring Pathways Across the Care Continuum and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Summerside-South Drive, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document – the status report on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action in response to questions taken as notice by the Leader of the Opposition and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I have a report for a committee to table. Did you want to move to that at this time?

Speaker: You can do that in Reports by Committees

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a copy of the MOU for the master agreement on the pilot project for walk-in clinic codes and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the document as well that I referred to with some of the evaluation from that MOU and the data that

was mined from that project and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said committee and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I would request unanimous consent to proceed to moving a motion of adoption of this report as well.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Your committee met on June 20th, 2019, to elect its Chair and to consider the report of the Special Committee on Committees adopted by the House on June 18th, 2019, which requested your committee meet to review the present committee structure of the Legislative Assembly under Rule 95 and to consider the advisability of making amendments to the makeup of committee membership under Rule 90.

As a result of its deliberations, your committee is pleased to make the following recommendations to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

1) That Rule 95 subsections (2) through (8) are deleted and substituted with the following:

(2) Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth with said committee charged with matters concerning education, heritage, culture, tourism, industry, labour, provincial infrastructure, transportation, telecommunications, immigration, rural development, municipal and provincial planning, and other such matters relating to education and economic growth.

(3) Standing Committee on Health and Social Development with said committee charged with matters concerning health, social programs, sport, seniors, justice and public safety, emergency measures, Indigenous affairs, Francophone and Acadian affairs, Status of Women, persons with disabilities, housing, charities, and the PEI Human Rights Commission and other such matters related to health and social development.

(4) Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability with said committee charged with matters concerning agriculture, fisheries, land, water, forests, wildlife, energy, natural resources, environment, climate change, and other such matters related to natural resources and environmental sustainability.

(5) Standing Committee on Public Accounts with said committee charged with matters concerning Public Accounts of the province, the annual report of the Auditor General, and fiscal management.

(6) Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges with said committee charged with the rules and standing orders of the Legislative Assembly, scrutiny of regulations, private bills, and the privileges of individual members and the Legislative Assembly as a whole.

2) Rule 90 be deleted and substituted with the following:

Rule 90.(1) The Committee on Committees shall appoint each committee an equal number of members from each recognized political party in the House itself, if such an approach is practicable.

Rule 90.(2) Each recognized political party shall have two members on each committee, unless a recognized political party has fewer than two members.

Rule 90.(3) Membership on a standing committee shall not exceed eight members.

In addition, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, I would like to say a few words.

First, I want to acknowledge the work of all members on the committee. It is rare, if not unprecedented, for three parties to come together to discuss radical changes to the composition of legislative committees with so much common purpose.

These changes are truly radical. They will actually eliminate interference from the Executive Branch or the Premier's Office in the functioning of legislative committees by taking away a majority government's ability to maintain a majority on legislative committees. This is a change that both the Green and Progressive Conservative caucuses have been advocating for for many years and it will significantly improve the legislative branch's ability to hold government to account.

However, in the interest in speaking up for the independence of legislative committees, I would like to publicly correct an assertion that I've recently seen in the press.

This is the insertion that the King government has given up its majority on legislative committees. At no point under the current rules could the government have had a majority on committees. Under the current rules, the committee structure would be three government members, two official opposition members and two third party members.

Only a majority government can control legislative committees, so the idea that the premier has voluntarily given up his majority on the committee is simply false,

he never had a majority to give up. But, this is not to diminish what we have achieved. The recommendations made in the report reflect the will of all three parties and a commitment to work together to improve the functioning of this Legislature.

What makes the proposed committee structure so radical; is not the effect that they have on the current government's ability to control committees, but on any future majority governments ability to control committees, any future majority governments ability to use its position to thwart the work of those committees, because under this new structure committee membership is balanced, regarding the representation of seats in the House.

Once again, I want to thank my fellow committee members for their commitment and their enthusiasm to implementing meaningful, long-term change and I hope every member of this Legislature will support the report of this committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Is there anyone else willing to speak to the report?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that Order No. 1 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move seconded by the hon. Premier, hat this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole House to take into

consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member of Tignish-Palmer Road.

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

We're going to start with Innovation P.E.I. and for those who are following its Page 35; we're going to start there.

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor. Is it permitted?

Would you please introduce yourself and your title?

Jeremy MacEwen: Jeremy MacEwen, Manager of Accounting.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, I just want to start off by thanking Jeremy for joining me here today.

Obviously, with being in opposition for four years and moving over to the government side has been a big eye opener. Certainly, I have a lot of respect for the staff in the department and what they do.

It's pretty remarkable when you get there to see the work they do. The staff – they're the ones behind the scenes that run government and make things happen. I want to thank everybody in the department for helping me so far.

Also members, some of the questions, if I don't have the answer I do have staff watching back at the office. You do have my commitment if I can certainly bring any of the info back, I certainly will if we don't have it with us today.

Chair: Okay members, I'm going to read the first part of this division. When I get to the end of it, then I'll open the floor for questions.

Corporate Management

Corporate Management

“Appropriations provided for administration of the Corporation.” Administration: 222,700. Equipment: 6,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 26,500. Professional Services: 50,000. Salaries: 1,053,000 million. Travel and Training: 46,000. Total Corporate Management: 1,404,200.

Total Corporate Management: 1,404,200.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you have been kind of watching this portfolio for the last four years. I'm just wondering, in general terms, when you went in there what was your expectation and then, you know, as a new minister what did you find out as far as the way things were running, as far as the finances, all that type of thing?

Mr. MacKay: The department runs well; everyone that works in the department obviously do great work in what they do.

The briefings have been pretty overwhelming obviously in this department because of the size of it over the last six weeks, so it's still a big learning curve for me.

There's quite a few different grants through the department that can be somewhat complex as well. I do find probably that we need to look at navigating a little better for the public in a sense. Like you say, for myself, going through them, they're quite complicated. So I can certainly imagine a small business out there trying to expand, and some of the hurdles there they're running into.

So I think that's something we're going to look at over the summer and into the fall here. We haven't had time really to look at what changes we can make that way, but that's going to be something that will be reviewed for sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, chair.

Thank you, minister.

My big first question is I guess you almost have to go with the status quo setup when you're starting and then assess things and then take a few months to see what's working, and what's not.

Then down the road, do you envision like a vision document or something, but is that part of the plan? Perhaps with Innovation is to say maybe we need to – I don't know how to describe it, but some sort of a way forward, a planning way forward to say, yeah, we like the way this has been working, no we're going to switch this up.

Obviously, with the other portfolio with the loans you made a decision right off the bat. As far as this is concerned, what kind of a timeframe would you give this area of your department to say you've got a good handle on things and maybe vision wise this is how we would like to go.

Mr. MacKay: Yes, definitely.

So like you say, when you're going through the department, you're meeting the staff – I haven't had a chance other than to sit with some of them one-on-one and the directors to sit with the staff and say, listen, these are the people that are dealing with it every day. What are some of the obstacles and hurdles you're facing? How can we improve on them?

So I think over the course of the next couple months, I plan on meeting with all the staff one-on-one, listening to them because a lot of them have been there for years and years and years, and see they've got some great ideas that maybe have never been implemented.

After we do that over the next two or three months, I'll have a better idea moving forward, but that is the plan, certainly, to get some feedback from everyone.

Mr. MacEwen: Perfect, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: I was looking at the salaries, and I was wondering you notice that the 18/19 budget forecast had dropped almost \$400,000 from the estimate and you brought it back up to the same amount even though we didn't spend it in the past year.

Can you explain a little more what is happening there?

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, member.

Yes, there were two vacant positions one was the CEO and the CSO position.

Mr. Hammarlund: Oh.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Is that is for questions?

Mr. Hammarlund: That's it for this section.

Chair: Okay, we'll move onto the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: I had a question similar to – on the salaries.

Who was the former CEO?

Mr. MacKay: The former CEO. Yes, that's right.

Jeremy MacEwen: The deputy had a duel role.

Mr. MacKay: The deputy minister, Keedwell, had a duel role.

Mr. MacDonald: Duel role?

Thank you.

Chair: That's it for questions? Okay.

Total Corporate Management: 1,404,200.

Shall this carry? Carried.

Total Corporation Management: 1,404,200.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Business Development

Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors

“Appropriations provided for leading the attraction of new businesses and partners to the Province which complement the provincial economy. In particular, firms are targeted in the aerospace, advanced marine technologies, information technology, bioscience and select manufacturing sectors.” Salaries: 1,097,600. Travel and Training: 72,000.

Total Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors: 1,170,100.

Leader of the Opposition: Question.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

It says here the description of the business attraction and emerging sectors that the firms targeted are aerospace, advanced marine technologies, information technologies, bioscience and select manufacturing sectors.

I am wondering how big those sectors are, those individual sectors are, in the context of the entire provincial economy in terms of percentage of GDP. and how many jobs they provide. I realize that's a large question and there's a lot of sectors there.

Mr. MacKay: I don't have that number, member, but I do think it's out there. I do remember seeing it here a couple of weeks ago, I believe. I will go back to the department and find it for you. I think we do have that.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, I look forward to getting that back, Chair.

I've heard that over the year IT and information technology has become a sort of – in our provincial environment here anyways, smaller and smaller overall slice

of the economic pie here, and I'm wondering, firstly, if that's true?

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Yes, member, I've talked to one of my staff members on that as well, as that was a similar question I had. There is certainly a decline for sure, but they believe it's on the upswing again so it's possible that it will be coming back. For what reason? I'm not sure.

And like I say, it was a brief conversation I had, but I do know there is somebody in the department that specializes in that and I can certainly ask a little more on that.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: My next obvious question was, after confirming that was indeed the case, was why? Why is that that I hear from you you're not really sure and people in the department have not given you any sense as to why?

Mr. MacKay: The department might know. It was a question I didn't go any further with, but I can certainly find out.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

So given that we've established that that part of our economy has been in decline recently, are you planning any future investments in order to help that sector grow because that's one of the places where location is really irrelevant, you know.

Mr. MacKay: Definitely.

Leader of the Opposition: With IT stuff we can do it, providing we have good internet minister, and we'll get to that another section.

So do you have plans to invest more money in that sector to help it grow?

Mr. MacKay: We truthfully, member, haven't gone that far.

Going back to Morell-Donagh's statement, like I say, the staff they specialize in certain areas and I think until we get down and really get into the core with them one-on-one and see.

Like I say, every week I meet somebody different, but the knowledge they got behind the scenes is tremendous. It's something I'm impressed with. They know their department, and once we get going and seeing where we're at with it and what's been done lately, what the numbers look like, then I'd have a better handle on it.

It would be unfair to say anything until that point.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

And I appreciate the gratitude you're giving for the civil service here, and I agree with you. They do amazing work.

Has there been any further discussion about a sector council for the IT sector.

Mr. MacKay: Not at this time with me, no.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks.

So what are some of the more recent tech companies that have started up here or relocated to Prince Edward Island?

Mr. MacKay: As far as the tech company, I'm not sure. I will get a list of that as well to see. How long would you like to go back?

Leader of the Opposition: Let's see three years.

Mr. MacKay: Three years. I will see if I can get that for you.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, minister. Sorry, Chair.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

I know there is a high turnover in that sector partly due to the nature of that's and not the PEI thing, that's just the nature of IT for sure. And carrying on from that, what's the success rate of the IT companies that come here to PEI? Any sense of how many make it in the long-term?

Mr. MacKay: No, I wouldn't have the exact numbers on it. Once again, I'll get whatever info I can towards that to you as soon as I can.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So going back to a comment I just made a second ago, we would love to have a balanced economy here, and I know you represent the rural district and I represent a rural district. Many of the members of this House do. One of the big barriers to economic development in my district and your district is the quality of rural Internet.

Mr. MacKay: Indeed.

Leader of the Opposition: So have there been any complaints from companies who have considered moving to Prince Edward Island? Or, is that considered by them to be a barrier to them actually moving here and establishing themselves?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, certainly, I would say that's been an issue. Obviously our transportation and living on an Island is another. With moving our goods with the price of fuel possibly increasing as well so, you know, there is a bunch of barriers there.

One thing, though, I've been fortunate enough to meet with some potential businesses and they love the Island.

I had a meeting yesterday with one individual and I started asking questions, like, why did you pick PEI he said: I just love it here. The people are hard working. They are friendly.

He gives a lot of credit to government as well. He says that the departments have gone out of their way to work with some of these businesses as well, so I definitely think the Internet is an issue and hopefully in the near future we're going to work together and be able to resolve that. But I'm happy to say

that we're getting great response from businesses that are here that want to expand, as well as businesses that want to move here as well.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

I accept that there are other barriers to people establishing businesses in rural PEI the lack of services, whether that be health care, or education, recreation. Not so much recreation, but retail opportunities, just things like that.

For a number of these companies transportation costs are not an issue because they are providing a product virtually. I know at least, off the top of my head, three or four businesses in my district for which transportation is just not an issue at all.

However, having reliable true high speed Internet absolutely is. So obviously, and, again, I know there is a section later on that we will come to regarding the provision of good, rural Internet, and I will be asking some more questions on it then, but have you had an instance, either since you have taken over, or has it been documented in your department where a business wanted to come and establish in rural Prince Edward Island but decided to move to either Charlottetown or Summerside because – or one of the other centres where they have true high speed, because they could not get high-speed Internet in the rural area?

Mr. MacKay: Since I took over, nobody has come to me with that. Now, I can't speak for the department itself. I can certainly go back and find out if anybody has reached out to them and expressed that. I have had public calls from people living in rural areas, obviously, but I haven't had a business call me direct.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm looking at the numbers from the 2018-2019 estimate to the forecast. Only about two-thirds of the budgeted money was actually spent. That's in the salary and the salary line, and I'm wondering what's going on there. Are there a lot of people who – anyway, I'd just like an explanation for that.

Mr. MacKay: So that was a decrease to realignment of four staff to business development division.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh so they just moved.

Mr. MacKay: That's correct.

Leader of the Opposition: It's there in the budget, it's just in another line.

Jeremy MacEwen: They just moved under a different division. You will see the business development increase there when we get to that.

Leader of the Opposition: And I realize – sorry, Chair. I keep doing that, my apologizes.

I realize particularly this year with the movement of departments and structure and things that we're going to find item lines which, you know, there is going to be a discrepancy and it's quite often the simple explanation is it's in another department. I get that.

I'm interested in the amount of dollars we spend per job created, because you often hear the news a government is spending so many million dollars and it's going to bring in X number of jobs, and sometimes if you do the math on that, you see that per job that's a pretty hefty expenditure of public funds.

I am wondering if you have particular parameters involved or whether you have any guidelines to support a decision where it's, you know, so many dollars spent and how many jobs are created consequently

Mr. MacKay: Good question, member.

I have yet to see any scale or chart or anything like that, but. But I will follow-up with what's here, but I will check in further to see if there is any a chart or anything that we can go by.

The business attraction division attracted eight new business investments to Prince Edward Island for projected employment of 123 positions, attracted six entrepreneurs for the startup visa program that is projected for 17 new positions, and supported five

business expansions for existing multinational companies that will create an estimated 339 new positions.

Currently there are 153 projects in the sales cycle at varying degrees, but I will go back, member, to see what the parameters are. I'm sure there is something there they must go by so I'll double check that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Just a final comment before I pass it on, Chair.

I had the pleasure with a couple of the members of the opposition caucus of attending a tour of Standard Arrow in Summerside. Man, what an impressive facility that is. Providing employment for over 500 Islanders now and just doing amazing work. I've been there before back when it was in a previous iteration, but what an extraordinarily impressive place that was.

I just wanted to put a shout out for that particular company and the work they are doing, and I know they receive ongoing support in terms of tax holidays and things from your department, but when you look at the job creation and the economic activity that flows from that place, just a very impressive facility. I just wanted to say that.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: I guess I've been around this for a little bit, too, and you seem to be pretty knowledgeable of the whole concept of development.

What do you see as a minister now and as – even as a former minister representing a rural community? I know the Leader of the Opposition talked about Internet and things like that, but what are some of the challenges in attracting larger sector projects to rural communities, I mean real rural communities whether that be Indian River or whether it's O'Leary-Inverness and places like that. Is it only Internet? Is that the only impediment?

Mr. MacKay: No, there is one right now that it didn't take long to clue in is if there's

nothing available to rent to buy – we’re at capacity right now. Slemon Park is full, our business park is full. We’ve businesses wanting to come to PEI and we have nothing for them.

I think that’s something we’re going to have to look at in the near future is to expand.

Chair: The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: So those companies that are thinking about coming here, they actually want a space. They don’t want to build a space, they don’t want to buy a property, they just want you to provide them a space?

Mr. MacKay: No, a bit of both. There is not a lot on the market for sale for some of that’s big operations that want to come. Some of them do. There might be startup businesses that are looking to expand from another plant or another facility that they do have. So, area does come to part of it, but the big thing is we have a shortage and it’s something that has been discussed a couple times around our table now to see what we can do to work towards getting there.

Chair: The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Where does the workforce fall into that category? Is that a factor from a business’s perspective that they don’t think they can find the workforce in certain spots?

Mr. MacKay: Definitely it’s a problem all through the country. I was in a meeting here about three weeks ago with some members from every province and that’s probably the number one issue a lot of them are facing right now is a shortage of workforce. It’s a country-wide thing right now. It’s definitely something –

Chair: The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: In some of the meetings I’ve had as the minister of agriculture, tourism, when you look at trying to attract – it seems like the department tends to always want to focus on: we’d like you to set up in Slemon Park, we’d like you to set up in Borden, set up in the West Royalty develop

– it seems to be a secondary opinion or view to say set up in O’Leary-Inverness, or Alberton-Bloomfield, or what have you. I think that’s a bit of a factor in this, because my argument has always been, well, workforce becomes one of your bigger challenges. Why would you go to an area where the unemployment rate is so low, versus going to an area where there is a workforce and now there is a secondary issue to that and I think it comes back to the old department of workforce advanced learning, getting more training and skill sets for people; it’s a bit of a chicken and egg, which comes first.

What’s your opinion and view in that as far as your department in trying to at least look at these other locations fairly quickly on in the search for a location?

Mr. MacKay: To be honest, member, the six weeks I’ve been there it’s been opposite. A lot of the staff have been looking in rural areas. Truthfully that seems to be where there, kind of, vision is. At the end of the day the cities are building up. There’s not much land there and they’re looking to expand outside the city.

Mr. Henderson: Well let’s say, water would be an issue, as well too, as and all those incidental services, but on the other side of it, I’m not really seeing much in O’Leary-Inverness as far as any new business start-ups as far as anything on a larger perspective. So, they may be talking that and that may be their first choice, but nothing seems to be coming of that. So what seems to be the reason why they always tend to gravitate back to the more urban centre’s again.

Mr. MacKay: It’s a good question. I can’t say, like I say in the six weeks I’ve been there, the staff – we’ve gone over it and certain things. Obviously the expansions and some businesses that want to come in – the group I met with yesterday, they would rather be out in rural PEI.

So, it’s something that they’re looking for right now, is to being out there. So I think the big thing for us right now is governing in the department, it’s to say: okay what can we do and the short-term to secure some of these businesses to come to PEI and find the facilities, maybe it is a rental space in

O'Leary and I think that's what we need to do is find out what is available because it seems like the calls were getting in, we don't have anything available. Maybe there's a spot in O'Leary that we don't know about that needs to be discussed.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness

Mr. Henderson: I would argue that if I just use O'Leary but in most places there probably isn't any buildings that are sitting empty, I think that's a reality. But there's probably land that's sitting vacant that could be developed as far as that goes.

So in your background it talks a little bit about information, technology, bioscience, but what's considered select manufacturing sectors? Is there something that you can be more specific on that?

Mr. MacKay: I don't have anything on that member, but I can check to see.

Mr. Henderson: Is there a definition around that?

Mr. MacKay: I'm sure there is yeah, but I don't have that with me.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: So I look at companies like Trout River Industries, now that's an example of a business that kind of started with just an idea, an initiative, it's now one of the largest employers in Western PEI. Its manufacturing live bottom trailers and it seems to be a general success with probably close to 100 employees. So that has been a pretty favorable – or I look at a company like H.F Stewarts that have expanded into the West Point Area. It seems like it can happen but it seems like there's other issues. We talked a little bit about the Internet, but what's your thoughts when it comes to three-phased power and trying to attract – and what's your department going to do to try to see what we can do to expand three-phased power out into the smaller communities, like West Point.

Mr. MacKay: That's a good question, I haven't had any – like I say in the six weeks I've been here – any calls on three phase. I

know when I was in opposition, I run into two businesses that were looking to expand that couldn't expand because of three-phase because of the cost of it. So that's definitely another issue. That will be something we'll have to look at for sure.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: I highly encourage you to do that because I know out in the West Point area, there's a number of larger – the largest sawmill on PEI is out in that area. H.F Stewarts probably employees about 30 or 40 workers, manufactured farm machining. All of them had to go into these roto-phases or create their own generators. I know that sawmill has its own generator to create its own power, not necessarily the most efficient and not necessarily the most cost-effective and climate change worthy way of going about it. I think you'd see more development occur out in those areas. I also have another sawmill that wants to set up in Lot 11 area, wants to expand his operation and three phase power is an impediment. So the program that's out there is totally inadequate as far as to really attract three-phase power out into the rural areas like that. So I'd really encourage you to kind of look a little bit at that.

I think the other thing I tended to see is that three-phase power becomes one of the challenges but the other is, is if you're looking at building a building today and it's something to do with food processing, and its failing that our own government had – the amount of departments you have to go through, from your department to the department of environment, to the department of communities to try to get a building permit and then you get into the federal government. If it's Health Canada, there's a whole lot of CFIA. There really needs to be an almost smoother process to try to have better collaboration with all these different departments.

So if somebody has an idea and they want to expand their product line and get into manufacturing food products as an example, its far simpler. If I look at a company, Annand's Clams up in my district – I mean they're employing probably about 50 people there right now and man, the challenges and the hurdles that they went through just to get

where they're at today, would discourage just about anybody I think. So I commend them for their perseverance in getting to where they needed to be but that included three-phase power too. We had to get three-phase power to their line so that they didn't have to shut down half their plant to keep the other half running, things of that nature.

So I guess I'm just saying there's a lot of issues that need to be done, I wish at god's speed in every way in trying to create this development, but I do encourage you to focus on the rural communities and making sure that there's opportunities because there is a workforce there.

Mr. MacKay: Definitely.

Chair: The hon. Member of Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thanks, Chair.

Aerospace has many different fascists to it, for example that the assembly (Indistinct) building the parts for it, servicing, maintenance, it could even deal with the devices that we launch into space. What aerospace services do we do here on PEI?

Mr. MacKay: Well we do a few.

So obviously we just had a good announcement yesterday with Tronosjet. We got actually a couple other ones that are looking here now. We have our operations in Slemon Park, which have made tremendous ground. I was in a conference in Montreal, and you don't realize how big of players they are until you get out of our province and realize, how in the global market we're competing. Our aerospace industry has a huge impact in through the Eastern states right now. The six Eastern States, I think there was about \$65 million in trade alone, which the aerospace contributed to a big part of that. So I know there's companies looking more and more all the time. What we really need to do is make sure we look after the ones we have and support them whenever we can.

Chair: The hon. Member of Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you.

So new areas; are we looking to attract those to PEI, like to expand what's already currently here.

Mr. MacKay: Definitely.

So, one thing I wanted to make sure, obviously my department has a lot of travel. We've got a lot of people on trade missions and my question was, are they worthwhile going? So back here I'll give you an example. Back here, two or three weeks ago, I was in one in Montreal and Bombardier was there and they're building trains right now and they can't find anybody to manufacture parts for them. They just can't find anybody in the country, there saying if we can get welders or anybody to build pieces for the trains – whether its hand railings or whatever it is right, so it completely changed my outlook when you're going there because there's so many opportunities in these shows in a sense and getting to meet other provinces and countries – and even with that little one there, we could expand something further, just for a trip to Montreal for a couple of days.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So is it correct that in aerospace, it's heavily subsidized? Like the federal government investment into the industry, are that heavily subsidized there as well?

Mr. MacKay: Truthfully I don't know that member but I'll certainly check (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Different jurisdictions are funding aerospace, so I've heard overall the US invests a significant amount into the industry, more than Canada. So has there been a challenge for government in attracting businesses to come here, based on funding available elsewhere?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, I certainly think there are probably challenges. We're all competing for the same end result, the same goal. One thing I've noticed is that there might be operations here that have operations elsewhere, so there might be

operations in through the Eastern States or an operation in Vancouver or BC. So, a lot of them, they might have six or seven different facilities throughout the country or internationally. Yeah, certainly it's a challenge you're competing with every other province and jurisdiction for the end result.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Compton: No, that's great. It's a new area for me so I appreciate that, thanks minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Chair.

Just as we're talking about attracting new businesses to the Island, you had mentioned a couple of the business parks were full. Can you just kind of talk about the Pooles Corner Business Park and if there's space in that or opportunity there?

Mr. MacKay: I haven't had an update on Pooles Corner. I know Summerside Business Park is full, with more businesses wanting to move in. Kensington's Business Park is full, with more business wanting to move in. It's a problem but it's a good problem to have because it shows that we're expanding. I'm not familiar on Pooles Corner but I will follow up with that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir

Mr. Deagle: I think there's good potential there. I think probably in the past, once you cross the County Line it was kind of ignored so, the business park is kind of – there is businesses there but not that many. So we'd like to have businesses there, so I think when you're pushing to attract new businesses, tell them that Pooles Corner Business Park is there, it's open, we'll take all the businesses we can get. So, if you could look into that, I'd really appreciate it.

Mr. MacKay: Hon. member, I know that Montague will be neglected no more with you at the helm.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, I'd like to go back to your capacity question, again. I know rural PEI, obviously, capacity would be a particular issue but I'll speak on an urban issue. I know there is private developers that have developed pieces and I know the developer calls it an industrial park. That's how I refer to it as well. It's in between the bypass and Sherwood Road.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: Probably pass it most days on your way in here.

So in regards to capacity issue, is there conversations with private developers to say, company X would like to come, they're going to make (Indistinct), you need to build them at this and this. What's your thoughts? Is that occurring, or not?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, I asked that same question here a couple weeks ago. The big thing that I think is holding some of these developers back – there is conversation, but a business that wants to come in, they might only want to sign a lease for a year, two, or three year lease, so it's a big responsibility for a developer to go out and build a five or six million dollar facility to service a certain business without the long-term commitment of a long-term lease. I think that's probably the biggest holdup right now with a lot of them.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: So is that something that you as minister, or you as a department, could actually hold a lease on a long-term and say: company X may not be work out, they might be here for a year, they might be here for two, but then there's always five more companies that: we'll take the risk, will stick our neck on that.

You build the building, we'll handle the lease and off we go to the races and bang, bang, boom, two new companies are probably around.

Mr. MacKay: Member, if it makes sense, we'll certainly look at anything.

Obviously we're going in this with a bold vision to look outside the box in a sense but at the end of the day, I want to make sure as the role as minister that I respect the taxpayers' purse as well.

I got to make sure whatever decisions I do make are the right ones, but anything at this point is certainly open.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: So the couple of developers that I'm aware of, you wouldn't mind receiving some kind of a reach out from them –

Mr. MacKay: Definitely.

Mr. Mitchell: – to say: they're here, we got the land, they've already developed the roads the power system, the water and sewer system. I think there would be some that would take you up on something like that.

If you could solidify, you know, the lease on it from the buildings, and I guess probably that's how West Royalty Industrial Park (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: I certainly don't mind having conversation with anyone.

Mr. Mitchell: Okay. Thanks for that.

Chair: The hon. Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much, minister.

I just want to make sure I got my (Indistinct) waste as well as the Member from O'Leary-Inverness and Member from Montague-Kilmuir member that we'll certainly take any development in Evangeline-Miscouche as well.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: And we do have lots of land there too.

Just had a quick couple of quick questions: (Indistinct) O'Leary-Inverness mentioned three phase power out in the rural parts of the province. What about Internet? Are you getting any fallback from that from

companies that might want to come here, that it's not –

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, we just had that conversation here a few minutes ago.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah. Obviously, I haven't had anybody reach – I have had public reach out to me on the Internet but no businesses itself. Like I say, I'll work with you if there are any ideas though.

I do find it amusing though, with you gentlemen in power for 12 years and you couldn't get it done and now you need it done –

Mr. Gallant: We had a plan.

Mr. MacKay: Well, I would love to see the plan. Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: Same plan.

Chair: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under your business expansion product development, what sectors do you target with that funding?

Mr. MacKay: It's a different section but when we get to that we will –

Mr. Gallant: Okay, we're going section by section. Okay, I'll wait for that, thanks.

Chair: Thank you very much.

The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank, Chair.

I was actually going to get to the investments that the previous government made in Georgetown, and East Isle Fabrication and Frontier Power Systems. I mean, that was a pretty major investment but worked out well in that area, in Kings County and the investments that they made in Aspin Kemp & Associates Inc. as well. That was kind of stepping outside the box because a lot of these companies, you have

to convince them to go and when you convince them, you've got to have a cheque in hand and that's exactly what happened, but it has worked out.

There are issues with companies not wanting to move outside the city centers and we have seen that over the years.

Working with municipalities, there are the Three P partnerships that could work on this. We've done it. We've just done it with 30-some or 20-some projects in housing. Why couldn't we do it as the Leader of the Third Party just talked about, holding the lease on some new builds or guaranteeing them for up to 15 years say, to get people to put things up?

And I'll stick my nose in too, but the Cornwall Business Park is in proximity close to the BioCommons Research Park, which is actually going to be full after National Dose Registry invests – what are they, \$65 million dollars?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: So there are options there for you, I think.

Mr. MacKay: There's definitely a possibility. That's something that you and I have discussed a couple years ago; the same type of ideas. The sky is the limit truthfully. If it makes sense, we'll certainly look at doing it.

The department is anxious. You know hon. member, when you were in the department, the staff worked so hard on certain businesses to get them here, right, and they need to finish them off. They put their time and effort and everything into them. So I know that they want to see them here as well. Whatever we can do to help that along, we'll certainly at look at doing it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: I remember when I was minister, it is tough to prosper or get some of these companies to come here. Our workforce, as we talked about, was Vector Aerospace at that time, but I mean they're 96% retention rate. That was the selling

feature for any aerospace or any company that would come here.

One thing I think is important and I'd stand behind you when you move forward with this file is the tax incentives and labour rebates. I can tell you right now, and I know we used to get criticized sometimes by, at that time, the third party, about the labour rebates and what have you, but if we're going to compete as a small province, there is no other way that they're going to get these companies here. Easily tracking IT companies, if you look at what Invesco has done here, I don't know, they must be up close to 500 employees now because they just did 150 –

Mr. MacKay: –with the expansion.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. It's easy to track them because we do have labour rebates and tax incentives for those small companies. So it shouldn't be too hard to get the numbers of who's here and who's not anymore. It's a very interesting file but there's a lot of hard work that goes into it.

There's one thing that I always thought is the measurement of the analytic on our successes of the travel, because it's millions of dollars of travel, and I think that's – as a new minister, you likely should make sure that you have a handle on that.

Mr. MacKay: Yes, thank you, member.

That's certainly been something that's been discussed with our new CEO, and I don't know how we do – we talked about maybe, when they travel, come back, to kind of give an update of who they have met with, what they have done, what's the chances. Because a lot of these times – it takes a couple years to get these companies here, right? A lot of it is building relationships, which I never really thought of before until it was explained out.

We might have somebody in the U.S. that takes a couple years to get here, but eventually they do get here. I think there's probably a way that we could track that better, to make sure that we're getting our money's worth by going.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Minister, can you update us on where we stand on the fabrication yard and what your plans are to –

An Hon. Member: The jetty (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: No not of the jetty, but actually the yard itself, because we do have 140 acres down there and we have been sitting on it for a long while.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah. So that's been a topic of conversation in my department as well, member.

Obviously, it's a piece of land with so much potential. The problem is to bring it back to the state it should be. With the environmental assessment that was done –, which the previous administration would know this – I'm told it's in the vicinity of \$2.5 million to tidy that section up.

We have lots of people with ideas that want to use that, but has there been anything set in stone?

The big thing is we're open to doing something with it but the \$2.5 million to clean it up, not everybody wants to tackle that, right? Like you say, I think you are going to see in the near future that there will be a plan made for that because it's a topic that keeps coming up. I know I have instructed my department to start looking at it. There are some groups, local community organizations as well. I know the Town of Borden has been in discussions a bit with my department.

It's certainly on the radar and hopefully here in the next few months, we'll have a better idea where we're going with that.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, and thank you for the answer there, hon. minister.

At the end of the day, if we want – you know, we have a piece of property and we need to make a commitment to clean the yard up and make it environmentally usable for the future. That's something I want to continue and see that it's pushed.

Mr. MacKay: Certainly minister, I'll do my best.

Mr. Fox: Get at it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you.

Just while we're talking about different areas for possible development, I just wanted to highlight something.

You mentioned that Slemmon Park is currently full. I'm not sure if that's the case or if it's close to full, but I wanted to make sure you were aware that just a couple of years ago there was a full business plan created that showed very clearly some areas where that business park could be further developed. That's already been laid out.

So I just wanted to bring that to your attention that while it's full now, there's lots of space to grow there.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, member.

I haven't seen that. But if the department has it, I will take a look at it.

Ms. Altass: Yes, it should.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: I'd just like to follow up on what, I think, has been a great conversation.

A lot of the conversation has been around attracting larger companies and I wanted to sort of follow up along the line of what the Leader of the Opposition was talking about in terms of those backbone services.

Much of our new economy as it evolves is around one and two and three-person positions and when we deal with the challenges that the Member from O'Leary-Inverness talked about with labour, it might be hard to find 100 people sometimes, but sometimes if you were investing in businesses where you need one, two, and three, and I'm just curious to know, are we as bullish or aggressive with our rebates and our incentive programs to attract businesses

of a smaller nature as we are aggressive with large ones?

Mr. MacKay: I don't think so, Premier.

I wouldn't want to say for sure, but from what I can tell we've always focused on big business. Yes, there is help for small business, don't get me wrong. But I do think the small business probably gets pushed on the back burner a bit. That's one thing I've noticed when I'm going through everything, whether it's from labour grants to tax incentives to even just funding and small business loans.

Our average loan and our portfolio in Finance PEI is \$340,000. Well, that's not small business. When we class it as small business, to me, that's not small business. I certainly think we can improve on that.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: Obviously when I worked for the former minister of, it was then development – it was in the late '90s and 2000s, I can only imagine how much it has changed now as the world (Indistinct) now with technology, et cetera, and it was a very competitive atmosphere then.

As the former finance minister, the Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank says, we end up sometimes fighting other jurisdictions and we move these things around. I think if we're really going to tackle rural development, I think it's incumbent upon us, not just as government, but the Legislature here, that we change how we actually go about building a stronger, more diverse economy.

Is there any intention within the department to sort of change how we attract companies and maybe put more focus on smaller enterprises?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, certainly some discussions and Premier, obviously I've had some ideas here that you and I haven't sat down one on one yet, but I have a couple ideas that I think would help push towards that when the time comes.

I do feel we've got a lot of opportunity in a lot of areas, and I don't really feel it's too complex in a sense. It's just a matter of

getting them started and I think over time, you'll see it grow. It's certainly something that I would like to sit down at some point and discuss with all my colleagues.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier King: That's good.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

Earlier this year, I had a constituent reach out to me regarding the ferry announcement and I know that that's obviously federal, but it does pose a really good opportunity for us if we've got transportation being introduced in between Nova Scotia and PEI that we should look at how we can contribute to actually producing that ferry.

My constituent reached out to me about the possibility of participating in the construction and the makeup of that ferry. I guess my question is: When a federal announcement is made, regardless if it impacts on us or not, but we have companies within PEI that could address that need.

Does innovation play any part in that by looking at the companies that we have within the fold to see if there would be a good match and to possibly support companies to reach out to that business?

Mr. MacKay: It's a good question. I'm not sure if innovation does that or not with the federal announcements. But I will find that out. It's a good idea.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Because this particular constituent is involved in clean energy and so he believes that there are great opportunities for us to actually implement a clean energy ferry and we've talked about this a lot in the House about building for the future, not for the past. So to put in a ferry that, you know, would be based on diesel, similar technologies, if we can move forward.

So anyway, I want to reach out to you and share with you this constituent's ideas, if that's okay –

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, and I'll certainly (Indistinct) with the department –

Ms. Beaton: – and if there's still an opportunity.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, to see if that's what they do. I'm not sure if they do. I don't see why it couldn't be done. It's possibility – if the federal government has an appetite, it's quite possible we could do it.

Ms. Beaton: Great.

I'm good, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

When we talk about marine technologies, I assume we're talking about Aspin Kemp?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Ms. Bernard: Do we have any other companies like that?

Mr. MacKay: I do think we – there is one that I believe is somewhat looking here as well.

An Hon. Member: There's one on Panmure Island (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, I thought there was a small one here. I can't remember the name.

Jeremy MacEwen: We haven't funded any yet.

Mr. MacKay: No, but I think there is another one. I'll double check. I do think if there's not another one, there is one looking.

Ms. Bernard: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: This wouldn't be something like building ships in Georgetown?

Mr. MacKay: No, that's been (Indistinct) discussion.

Obviously the shipyard is still owned by the Irvings. But I do know my department has been in contact on a few occasions with the Irvings to see if there is any appetite to do anything. That is of right now, it's the status quo. But I do know they do follow-up quite often with them.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: You're welcome.

The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

I have you on my list. Do you have any questions?

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you.

Just looking at this, and I think this has been a very, very important area, and I'm fully supportive of business development and this kind of area.

What is the funding comparison within this unit in comparison to, like, other regional provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick?

Mr. MacKay: It's a good question, member. I don't know. But we can check into that one.

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah, so what I'm getting at is are we being competitive with our friends next door? Because I think that we – I look at some of these numbers, and I think that PEI has a lot to offer and to attract businesses here.

So my question is: Looking at the global markets, this year we have to go out and attract people into Prince Edward Island.

I'm just kind of worried about the travel and training funding allocated with that, if employees need to – are you as a minister comfortable with the numbers on the paper here for travel and training?

Mr. MacKay: That's a good question, member.

I have got nothing to compare it to, right? So when the travel comes across my desk, I'd look at it to see. One thing I've come to find out that you need to be at a lot of these conferences because the rest of the world is at, right? You've got other provinces and if we're looking to attract business, we need to be there as well.

This department is one that's got more travel than any department and there's a reason why – this is one the very few departments that actually make money and look to grow, right? I do think we need to, over time, is really go through and get some feedback what we're getting out of these trips as well.

But like I say; I have only had one minister's trip to Montreal and what I witnessed; it was well worthwhile because I questioned the very first thing. But, just a couple of things we met - I got to get on an electric bus and it got us into conversation with – I talked to the minister of education – have we looked at electric buses, and to see what they were doing and we got down to the cost factor to see is it something to look at here as well. With bombardier as well, that's going to be a conversation that I think we'll probably end up, hopefully, getting something out of.

So, I can easily say that trip was worthwhile. But, I do think we just need to watch and make sure we get some feedback from the people that go and see what we're getting out of it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: I do believe this is an area that I'm very interested in. I would like to see our numbers increase in the future – future spending if it's spent in the proper area.

We talked earlier about infrastructure around Prince Edward Island. Some of our

infrastructure needs up to date to attract those companies.

Are there any two-to-three-to-four-year plans about how we can improve our infrastructure so we can attract more companies?

Mr. MacKay: There is nothing through me. I'm not sure on transportation itself if they have any plans that way.

Like I say, with conversations with my directors and so forth, this is how we learn. You listen to the staff and find out what roadblocks they're hitting, and every day, there is something new. It's to do something with it, right?

My commitment to them is, as soon as the Legislature is over with, we're going to sit down and I'm going to talk to each individual one and say listen, what are you facing here? What are some of the roadblocks we're dealing with here and how can we get through them?

So I do think over the next few months we'll be a little more knowledgeable on what the outcome will be on that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown- West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly That's great to hear and I know that Prince Edward Island has been very strong in this area and this field. I want to see us continue to do that in the coming years under your leadership and just know that I want to see this more than just tokenism. We want to make sure that Prince Edward Island builds into the future.

Mr. MacKay: Definitely, couldn't agree with you more, member.

Chair: Total Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors 1,170,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Culture Development and Growth Fund

“Appropriations provided for the Culture Development and Growth Fund.” Salaries: 175,600. Grants: 1,353,900.

Total Culture Development Growth Fund:
1,529,500

Ms. Bell: Chair, question?

Chair: The hon. Member from
Charlottetown-Belvedere,

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Could you tell us a bit more about the purpose of this fund and its alignment with the five-year cultural action plan, please hon. Minister?

Mr. MacKay: I've only had one briefing on it, so I'm not real knowledgeable on that member, to be honest, but I'll get some more information. I've talked to the staff on it and I've got a full new appreciation for culture after meeting with them for an hour, let me tell you.

You don't realize how much income it has in the economy. So I certainly got a commitment to them on a couple of issues.

One, which I know you'll be happy to hear, is the film industry. That's something that we plan on working on, we have the department working on, to see a breakdown on the tax incentive. We've had a couple film industries that want to come to PEI if we can provide the tax credit.

So were trying to figure out the numbers to see if it's even possible. I haven't presented this to my colleagues at all but it's something that they're working on. So I think they're excited, I think culture probably has been kind of felt like they've been left out of the loop a bit and we've got some exciting things I think you're going to see happen over the next course.

Chair: The hon. Member from
Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, that's really exciting to hear and I know the people involved in that file and in the department and they are the best advocates you could have for that activity, so that's really exciting. I also know that there are only currently two full time staff in that area and they desperately need the additional resources, so could you speak to,

potentially, the potential for additional salaries, to provide support for that department?

Mr. MacKay: It's possible. Like I say, I've only met with them for a couple hours. So I haven't really sat down one on one to see some of the issues and what they're dealing with, as far as the work load and so forth. But I certainly will commit to sitting down and doing whatever we can to make their job a little easier.

Like I say, I've got a whole new appreciation after talking to them. So, I'm excited about that.

Chair: The hon. Member from
Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

I'll advocate as much as I can for this and I (Indistinct) very quiet about it. But, the grants currently that are allocated in this go to a lot of different programming, a very diverse set of programming. This is a really broad file and the grants have remained stagnant, even though that Culture Action Plan is progressing. Though I understand that the commitment and budget and the limited envelope. This is a really relatively small envelope for an aspect of a sector that has really such an impact and is part of our Island story, as well as our economy.

Would you consider, or could you explain why we haven't seen a grant increase, or is that under consideration for the future?

Mr. MacKay: That's a good question.

I've got no reason why the past hasn't been done. As I'm going through the grant section with the department, one thing I noticed is it's almost like there's too many. They need to be more, I don't have the exact number of how many, but I think we probably have too many, we need to bulk them down a bit and make them a little more easier to navigate for the people applying.

Certainly I think it's something to look at. This was our first budget and in a sense, I wanted to get a really good handle on the department before I had my wish list to the Finance Minister, and over the course of the next few months, that's what we're going to

be looking at, we're going through everything.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Certainly minister, we don't want to ever say please cut programs, don't do that. But I appreciate the need to sort of understand before we begin to think about how we change. The arts community itself has had a challenge in the past and part of the reason this department or this division exists is in terms of addressing some of the challenges the committee has had in administering programs and grants, but has that arts community been consulted or would you hope to consult with them about what may work with for them as well?

Mr. MacKay: Definitely, like I say, the staff seem to have a real good handle on what's going on.

It's out of my comfort zone so I rely on the staff in the sense to explain to me what's going on, but certainly, whatever we do, we'll certainly consult them. I do think there is a big opportunity for growth with this. I know culture has kind of been deflected back and forth through government and different departments and I think, like I say, they've probably had a little bit of a disadvantage with the shuffling around, so I'm certainly going to commit to doing whatever I can to support that industry.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Certainly in the throne speech we've heard about the need to champion our culture and we've heard about it terms of sort of, consumption of our own products and services before we purchase and broaden that. It includes music, art and our skill sets here. When you spoke about investing in the film fund, one of the barriers to that community has been the lack of people able to work in the film industry because we've never had the training programs.

So, where we have in this case, a growth fund, which is very program-based or grants-based, is that there is a need to invest in other things that perhaps sit in other

departments that are related to culture like skills training, capital investment and certain areas that allow that growth to happen. Are you able to work, or is the capacity there to work across the spaces to kind of bring some of those things under the umbrella of culture.

Mr. MacKay: Oh for sure.

The best way I can describe it is, it's been a big whirlwind for me coming from opposition. You're so ingrained in your department, like you don't really know what's going on elsewhere because you're so involved with the department yourself.

But certainly, this is where you get ideas, bouncing them off one another. I find my colleagues there, they're open to new suggestions as well. Going back again to the film industry, I talked to a member from the government of Nova Scotia, not too long ago. They told me – because I asked – because I said we were looking at doing this here. I said: when you cut the funding in Nova Scotia, he looked and he didn't even let me get the words out, he said it was the biggest mistake our government ever made. And he said never, we're starting to get it back, but we lost. It was the biggest mistake. And that's a government that's been in there for how many years? And that's the biggest mistake they made.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown- Belvedere.

Ms. Bell: Its really encouraging to hear you say minister, because it is tough to admit sometimes when we see that and we know the has been a battle in terms of just establishing this. In order to see you have dedicated staffing, you know I'd just like to give a special shout out to Michelle and Shannon who are absolute champions, they're the best possible people to advocate for this place and I've had the privilege of working with both of them. I know that they will absolutely make sure that it's in front of you whether you want it to or not. I think that it's encouraging to here the level of commitment there is, so I'm finished with my questions for now.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Could you please permit me to go back, I thought I actually...

Chair: Yes, it was my mistake; I missed him on the list, if you don't mind.

Mr. MacKay: Yes, that's okay.

Mr. Hammarlund: So I was wondering, how do you select the industry sector that you want to grow? Or your support?

Mr. MacKay: As far as one sector you mean?

Mr. Hammarlund: Any sector. How do you go in – like the latest seems to be brewing companies for instance? I'm all for good beer, but how do you select where to go?

Mr. MacKay: I can't speak on behalf of the staff, how they do that. Obviously, there must be a formula they go by.

I think a lot of it probably depends on what's going on in the world and the economy today. We change every day, so I think a lot of it comes down to a lot of the travel they've done, the businesses they meet. You wouldn't believe how many connections we make, from taking a business from moving here to P.E.I., that takes other businesses as well from promoting. As far as the formula, I don't know how they would look at it but I can certainly try and find out for you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: So, the next question is, how do you prevent over-growth? I mean we saw that in the past in the golf course sector for instance. How do you prevent that, say with breweries or do you just let it go? Every house has his own brewery? I think that would be a good solution.

Mr. MacKay: No, it's a good question. I asked that a few weeks ago myself, and I don't know how you can – you know, when the economy is going a certain direction, everybody is jumping aboard, right? And when to stop is the question.

You've got great business ideas coming in and today they work, but in 10 years time they might not.

So the department does a great job of going through past histories, the future, what it looks like. They really do their homework, and they've been – it goes through a process. It's not just something that they look at and say yes or no, right? It's time commitment that goes into it.

They really do a good job of trying their best. Obviously, not everyone gets it bang-on, but I think they do a pretty good job looking to see what's going on in today's market.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: So, you know, I read enough business pages to know that the work you do is really important to attract business here. I'm wondering if you have – so according to the numbers, you are giving continual supports to any size company, ranging from the smallest to the biggest. The range of grants is really quite amazing.

Do you have a rescue squad for businesses that need (Indistinct) – like the recent metal fabrication company or for that matter, like Royalty Hardwoods down at Pooles Corner, was a thing that was going down the drain.

Do you come in and try to make (Indistinct) to that?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, definitely.

So obviously these are all questions I have asked the department as well. This is how I'm learning about it.

Certainly when a business starts to get in trouble, the department goes in and says, okay, what can we do to help this business out right now? So they'll look at maybe what's going on in the economy.

They'll look at their financials, how they're doing, is there anything they can do to improve it? They'll give them suggestions, and they'll do quite a bit of legwork with them and spend a lot of time with a lot of these businesses. This isn't something that

they say, okay, if you are not good in a month, we're throwing in the towel.

A couple stories I have seen that businesses have gone through that looked like they were going under in a sense, and in a year's time they flipped around because the department was patient and worked with them. So the staff do a good job of doing that. Obviously not all of them make it.

One thing I was really surprised is the success rating of a lot of the loans. Like, there's \$400 million in loans out with less than 1% that get wrote off. So the department is doing a great job.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: On rural development, I feel very strongly it's really important to get growth out there and obviously Internet and such stuff is really important.

I'm really worried about rural development. I have seen in the past too often that it involves a strip mall built outside the village or roads straightening like Morell, for instance. It used to be a beautiful little village; you slowed down, you had a meal in a little restaurant. There was a little museum there, and now you sort of just zoom through.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Mr. Hammarlund: St. Peter's is another place that hasn't really benefitted from the millions of dollars that Lawrence MacAulay brought in there.

So I'm just wondering if you're – I'm suggesting as a minister of tourism, you should look closely at where you spent the money and if it – like the places like Victoria, for instance which is an excellent examples of places where people actually want to live when they come there.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, certainly, a good suggestion.

Mr. Hammarlund: So how do you equate an environment outside of that? How do you avoid destroying one of our major tourist attractions, which is the rural landscape and still get growth there? That's my concern.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah. No, it's a good question.

I don't have the answer on it. We see a lot of rural communities expanding and expanding well.

My own town, Kensington, being one of them, right? For a little rural community, 16,000 cars a day go through the lights in Kensington. It's the hub of PEI.

We have seen businesses come in; Nature's Crop for example, was a company in the US that worked with the Bedeque development agency to come in. This year, they will have that building paid off, and they've been here ten years now.

So it is possible to do all that. I think you just need the right people in place, and the right direction, and you need the support. Obviously, the development groups go a long way in providing it.

So I think even though the rural communities – yes, they have challenges, but I certainly think they're not all bad, there's good news out of them as well. I think we could probably do a better job of promoting the rural areas as well. Like I say, that Nature's Crop, it's a phenomenal business that's been in business ten years now. Went to a little rural community and employs 20 people, and a lot of people probably don't even know anything about it, right?

And I think that's where we probably got to do a little better job, is promoting that good things do happen in rural PEI.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: So to what extent does your business support the kind of thing that crosses over almost being into agriculture, like, for instance one of the growing businesses like organic farming, which is by nature a small local rural business?

Mr. MacKay: I don't have a breakdown on what businesses. I do know that – don't quote me on this – it's approximately 63% of our loan portfolio is in rural PEI –

Mr. Hammarlund: Right. Right.

Mr. MacKay: – which is a big number. So I don't have the breakdown of what type of businesses they are, but that's where most of our business is in rural areas right now.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: I'm okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going back to the cultural development and growth fund section.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Ms. Lund: In the throne speech we spoke about the need to champion culture and encourage creative pursuits in young Islanders. I'm just wondering if any of that is represented in here?

Mr. MacKay: No.

Ms. Lund: Is there a grant specifically for this?

Mr. MacKay: No. Don't quote me on the grants, like I say the the grants were pretty overwhelming when I looked at them. I had a lot of questions, how confusing it is, right?

I think that whole grant structure does need to have a bit of a facelift on it because I'm sure the people applying for the grants are confused, right?

Ms. Lund: I'm sure.

Mr. MacKay: So, no, there's nothing in that as well. I know after talking to my department on that and with Michelle that it something that I think they struggle with too. So I think we're going to completely do an over look over the summer on that about how we can improve all that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate that. Is there somewhere else in the budget where I would find the way we

are most encouraging young Islanders to engage with culture?

Mr. MacKay: In the budget, no, but I can see if I can bring you back something on that as to what we're doing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Supporting Indigenous arts and culture is obviously an important part about genuine reconciliation on Prince Edward Island, and I'm just wondering how much Innovation PEI funding goes to support Indigenous art or culture.

Mr. MacKay: That's a good question. Do you have any numbers on that, Jim?

I don't have the exact numbers, but they would be in the handouts. I could see what the exact number –

Jeremy MacEwen: There's a culture/arts division there for the grants, they have all the listings that we gave out – recipient and amount. I mean, we'd have to manually go through it.

Mr. MacKay: We could do that today.

Ms. Lund: I'd be interested in seeing that, if its possible.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, no problem.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Are you able to tell me how many Indigenous applications came forward with this?

Mr. MacKay: I don't have that, but I can check into that too. Yeah.

Ms. Lund: And how many were rejected?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, how many came in, how many were rejected.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, chair.

Has there been any consideration towards the establishment of a dedicated Indigenous arts and culture fund?

Mr. MacKay: Nothing's been mentioned to me, but like I say, I've only been here six weeks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: That's all my questions.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Total Culture Development and Growth Fund: 1,529,500.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Global Trade Services.

“Appropriations provided for development of trade and export opportunities for Island businesses.” Salaries: 519,300. Travel and Training: 51,000.

Total Global Trade Services: 570,300.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Question? Do you have a question?

Ms. Lund: I do.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I've read that something like 80% of our exports go to the US, is that correct?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, it's quite possible. It's high. Yes. I'll get the exact number, but it does sound close.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

What are our present target markets?

Mr. MacKay: Our present target markets, where we're at now? I know we've been focusing a lot on the six Eastern states. So well, New Hampshire, Florida, Alabama. They take up about 65 million in our trade just in six US states there. With product aerospace being one. Obviously our potatoes, our seafood is big. Yeah. I'm always asking my department where else should we be, or where should we at that we haven't been yet, right?

Japan is one that we're talking on, that they feel that there is a big opportunity there.

An Hon. Member: China.

Mr. MacKay: – China, we are there now. Taiwan is another one that we have had a lot of business here, as of late. Obviously throughout our own country as well with our product, but we even with those six U.S. states alone, one thing I did notice, they know where PEI is at, but they took a whole new appreciation to what we had to offer, right?

One thing I found when I was there, they were interested in our story. They are amazed that a population of 155,000 people can be on the global map as big as we are. I took a whole new appreciation for it myself, because you just don't think of it. You take it for granted.

I noticed when a lot of people took the time to talk to me. It's a two-minute conversation, and then it's a 30-minute conversations and intrigued by our culture, our history. It was more – the seafood product being one that everybody knew about our lobster, but I think we still have a huge opportunity there as well to expand on, and the department is doing a great job working in the US but six states right now.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate that response, minister and now that you have mentioned China, I wonder if any of the diplomatic disputes are affecting our prospects there?

Mr. MacKay: Definitely are. Yeah, they definitely are. It's something that is concerning. I don't think it's going to get any better in the near future, which is another reason we need to look around the globe.

One number that surprised me the other day is our tourism numbers. Internationally one of our big businesses is Australia – out of all places, I never would have thought Australia. We have a lot of, Germany is another one, we get a lot of people from Germany which was surprising to me. I think we need to look inside the box a bit.

I know from talking to some of the department staff, they felt maybe their hands have been tied too long, that They've had some good ideas but it's always worked the way it was working and governments had never looked inside the box a bit. I think they have some good ideas. We just need to listen to them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Actually to carry on with that, the relationship with Trump's tariffs are also problematic, aren't they?

Do you have any concerns that the six key states could be impacted?

Mr. MacKay: No. I did, until I met with all the six states and they really understand the importance of Canada in the trade have with the U.S. and they are going to do whatever they can to have it (Indistinct) for Canada, no doubt in my mind.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: I'm pleased to hear that you don't see that impacting the bottom line?

Mr. MacKay: Nope, not after meeting with them.

Ms. Lund: That's interesting.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: When we talk about trade and export opportunities, what kinds of products are we looking at?

Mr. MacKay: Obviously seafood is big. It's probably our number one. Aerospace –

An Hon. Member: Potatoes.

Mr. MacKay: – potatoes. One thing I was – yes, we grow a lot of potatoes, but the market is huge. We grow some of the best potatoes in the world. We're at capacity now with our product.

A story – when I was in Halifax a couple weeks ago, I was talking to one of the members, and they had just come back from a trade mission to China and one of the business people they had met with wanted to buy all the seafood in Nova Scotia, every ounce of it. He said: I can't sell you all that. Well, I want it all.

The demand is there if we can provide the product. We know we grow some of the best potatoes, food, and seafood in the world and like I said, the aerospace has come to a whole other level, which has put us on the global map.

We're definitely in the right direction, but I think there's so much more growth opportunity as well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Chair.

Staying on the global trade services.

About a week ago, there was talk on the world market that pork was going to skyrocket because of the big demand across the world.

Now yesterday China is saying they are putting sanctions on pork and beef coming Canada. Is your department involved in that? That could be detrimental or how would that affect a small province like us?

Mr. MacKay: – truthfully, I haven't talked to my department. I heard on the radio the way down here.

That will be something I can go back to the department and see if it's going to affect any of the growers here.

Mr. Gallant: But that's something you would have people in your department on top of?

Mr. MacKay: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Thank you.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: You just mentioned we need to look outside the box on this file, and I think that that if we look outside the box, we also probably need to get outside the box. I'm not sure that the money allocated for travel and training with the global trade services is really moving ahead with the curve.

Are you comfortable with that number?

Mr. MacKay: Well, like I said, until I get down and meet with each individual staff member to see, you know, where their head's at and where they think we'll be going, these people specialize in this, right? They're educated, they've been in the business for years, they know where we need to be, right?

I think after I sit down and talk with each individual one, I think we'll have a better understanding where that would be.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: And what are some of the big events that you go to to drum up business in this. I know there's Boston, there's San Francisco, there's New York. There are different areas.

Are you familiar with anything in the past?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, obviously, I've just gone through a bit of the travel where they go.

A lot of times it's the directors that go and the staff that specialize on them, right? So this is where they come back and report to

the minister, and let us know what they've done. Every year changes.

You've got the faithful missions that work and you got to keep the relationship going and whatever.

One thing I've heard through the department is it takes time. Like when you get into some of this international trade, you develop the relationship and it could be something that takes two, three years before you actually see the end result.

Like I said, they seem to have a pretty good handle on it, and I think for me being minister, I just need to make sure that we're getting a good return for the travel we're doing on it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

Mr. McNeilly: Yes, I do believe this province has so much to offer the world, and you have my full support on – in this area, and I hope we can get everything that we need to market.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, member.

Chair: Total Global Trade Services: 570,300.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Page 36.

Business Development and Innovation

“Appropriations provided for delivery of information and assistance to businesses in Prince Edward Island. Specifically, assisting in the start up, expansion and diversification of Island businesses, and ensuring the long-term discuss of these companies.” Salaries: 1,119,200. Travel and Training: 57,000.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Could the minister explain like the increase in salary?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, that's the increase with the realignment of the four staff from the business (Indistinct). That was in the other section where we moved the four over.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: How many businesses would this division work with over the course of a year?

Mr. MacKay: Oh, huge, huge. I don't have the exact – and I will get it. Yeah, it's a big one.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Ms. Bernard: Travel and training, I notice has more than doubled. What is the reason for that?

Mr. MacKay: That's just due to the realignment of the four staff now that there's four new staff there that'd be travelling.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: So in this section here, would these be the type of individuals that would help take a local business and help them try to expand, help them try to find land to purchase and things of that nature?

Mr. MacKay: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: Are you very familiar with the property that the province owns at Mount Pleasant?

Mr. MacKay: Not at all, no.

Mr. Henderson: It's actually probably the largest parcel of land that the province would own West of Summerside, probably. So, yeah, it's the old fly-in airport there in Mount Pleasant.

Mr. MacKay: Oh yes.

Mr. Henderson: It has a visitor information centre on it.

But if a business wanted to set up there or to purchase a piece of land there, what kind of a process would they have to go through to acquire that parcel of land? Or, could it be

leased or what kind of arrangements could be made?

Mr. MacKay: Yes. What we would do is set them up with one of our business officers and basically sit down with them. They would present their plan and so forth and guide them through the path.

Chair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: I think I would encourage the minister to sort of look at that particular parcel of land within your department because number one, it three-phase power that is right there.

It's in a location that's one of the higher elevations of Prince Edward Island. So if there was wind farms or solar panels that might be possible for a particular business to start up. You've got the All Weather Highway right there.

You know, so there's a number of factors, but yet it seems to be nothing has ever happened there for some time. You know, I mean there's been a few tire kickers, I would say, during my time as an MLA but nothing – just kind of wondering why.

That's why I made the comment earlier. It seems they always keep driving them to Bloomfield Park or to Slemon Park or Borden.

Mr. MacKay: No, I'll certainly ask for an update on that hon. member.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I was just wondering about the workers in this division and the work that they do and what their relationship is with the local chambers of commerce across the Island. Do they work together, or is that like an ongoing relationship?

Mr. MacKay: I can't speak to that; I would think they have a relationship. These officers are the ones that deal with the business community directly, but I can't speak to that, I can find out.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I'd just be curious because it seems like there's some overlap in some of the work or maybe they work together, I'm just not sure, so I'd be curious to know how that relationship is, or if there's opportunities to develop more collaboration between this division and what's happening sort of in the local communities already.

Mr. MacKay: Sure, certainly.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Yeah, I had a question. Are you allowed to ask questions on the big hand-out here?

Mr. MacKay: I think so.

Mr. Hammarlund: First of all, I really appreciate the fact that we got this big brochure here. I just noticed that Innovation PEI grants itself a substantial number and I'm just wondering what's going on there.

Mr. MacKay: Yes, I asked that question this morning. I might let Jeremy – just with all the innovation grants. Just explain why it's like that. So that was the one we talked about earlier with, I believe, the consulting fees and so forth.

Jeremy MacEwen: So as you see, these divisions they don't have certain professional fees budgets. So if they have a good idea, like I'll take one, they went for the RFP for the broadband and they may have multiple companies involved in that. So we do an internal PA we call them, just like having an innovation fund PA that we would be out of that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. MacKay: So like a lot of consulting fees that would be.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well I noticed later that was like hundreds of what appears to be consulting fees, is that basically what?

Jeremy MacEwen: A lot of it is yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton

Mr. Hammarlund: So why didn't you write down who actually gets the money?

Jeremy MacEwen: It's not really a grant, it's an idea that the department has, maybe they want some advisory services in regards to the broadband fund, like I said for instance.

Mr. Hammarlund: Oh, internally?

Jeremy MacEwen: Yes, exactly.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: So it's really important that we see more women in the position of leadership in our business community. Does the government have a sense of how much innovation PEI funding is going to businesses and enterprises involving women owners?

Mr. MacKay: I don't have a break down with me but I can try and find out. Obviously this morning, the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities was at an event and that was some funding that we provided for them. So I can certainly figure out what the breakdown would be.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Would you consider establishing a dedicated funding source for women in business to increase the numbers.

Mr. MacKay: I don't know if the department would have a breakdown but yeah, I can see.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: So what's the government's policy on tax credits to well established profitable corporations, whatever?

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere?

Mr. Hammarlund: I'm being told that
(Indistinct)

Chair: Yes, okay, we will get to that.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-
Belvedere.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Ms. Bell: My questions are actually on the
program section, Chair.

Chair: Okay, the hour has been called.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

I move the report of the Committee be
adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from
Montague-Kilmuir that this House adjourn
until Thursday, June, 27th at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Everyone have a great evening.

The House adjourned until Thursday, June
27th, at 2:00 p.m.