

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: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to rise again today and welcome everybody back to another session of the Legislative Assembly. I want to welcome those who are gathered in the public gallery, so many familiar faces there, Robert Godfrey, of course, from the federation of agriculture, David Mal, Jamie MacPhail and Darcie Lanthier here as well and so many others, so welcome.

I want to make sure that we continue to pass along our best wishes to all of our fishers who are in the final stages of the spring lobster season, hauling traps. Our own Government House Leader is a little bit – Sue Turner of course, I know Sue was there, their so guarded, Sue, they wanted to make sure I didn't forget you but she's dedicated so much of her life to the Legislature and this party, so hi Sue.

I also want to pass along my condolences – we lost a very amazing Islander this week with the passing of Alma MacDougall, I worked with Alma for a number of years at the Mi'kmaq Confederacy, she was a pillar in the Mi'kmaq and Indigenous community. She certainly was a force to be reckoned with, she had a great smile, a tremendous passion, so proud of her family and so proud of her Mi'kmaq heritage.

To borrow a sentiment from my friend Gilbert Sark, she was a bright light for the community and that light has been extinguished and it's with sadness that I stand here today to pass along my condolences to the family of Alma and for all those who loved her. She certainly was an exceptional person in so many ways.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. I see Bethany Collicutt-McNab is back, this time with her daughter Jane-Marie, so welcome to you. Hi Darcie, it's lovely that you're here today, Darcy Lanthier. It's actually her birthday today so Happy Birthday to you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: I see David MacKay there as well and the representatives from the PEIFA, Robert and David and Jamie and John, thank you for being here this afternoon.

A couple of things, I'd like to pass on my congratulations to Laura Chapin who was just announced on Monday as the new co-host of Island Morning and she'll be sitting in the early seat next to Mitch Cormier in the studio there and it's really nice that she is going to be a regular voice in that early morning show. Mitch has been flying solo for quite awhile now, so I'm sure he'll be happy to have some backup there.

I also would like to pass on my personal condolences to the family and friends of Alma MacDougall, she died on Sunday and Alma was from Rocky Point in District 17. I came to know Alma, fairly recently, actually, when our entire office when we were the third party went to a series of workshops on cultural education here – one memorable one that was given by Alma herself.

Incredibly engaging, lovely, bright, beautiful woman and a real terrible loss, not just to the Mi'kmaq community but to the entire community of Prince Edward Island, I wanted to pass on my condolences and rest peacefully Alma.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise and welcome those to our public gallery today and of course, as was already referenced, we do

have a strong attendance from our agriculture sector on Prince Edward Island so it's great to have you all in the gallery today.

I also have to reference landing day today and I did get an opportunity to spend some time this morning in the early hours in the Member from Montague-Kilmuir's district down in Sturgeon there and helping my son-in-law land some gear and they're still out there today, they'll probably be wrapping up shortly this afternoon. I do wish all fishers well today on their final day of the season and hope that everybody's day goes very safely. It was quite calm, actually, this morning out on the water, so hopefully the rest of the day continues to be that as well.

I'd also like to mention a special event going on this afternoon, it's a hot dog social at the Malcolm Darrach Community Centre out in East Royalty and that's going to be hosted by Liberal candidate Karen Lavers for that district election that's going on out there.

Hopefully everybody can drop by, have a hot dog, say hello to your neighbours and spend a beautiful evening because it looks like it's going to be sunny.

As well, I, too, would like to pass on condolences to Alma's family as well, we did have some connections over the last number of years as I was an MLA and I'm very sorry for her family.

But I also want to pass on sympathy's to the family of Jacob Mol who recently passed as well, Jacob was a former educator of mine and many people from the Sherwood and Stratford areas as he was vice principal at Charlottetown Rural for many years, just a wonderful educator and has been living at the Atlantic Baptist in my former district for the last number of years. I often got in and talked to Jacob and it was always a great discussion because he had the same political views as I did.

To Jacob's family, all the sympathies and hopefully we'll get a chance to see them on the weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody from District 19 today. But I want to say hello to Sue Turner and her nephew who is visiting the province, welcome. Sue did a fabulous job upstairs in the office and if it wasn't for her, I know in a lot of cases I'd be lost and I really appreciate that.

Hello to Robert Godfrey, welcome to the House. I want to give a special shout to Jamie MacPhail and John. Over the last while I've watched Jamie on social media a lot and what he's done and their whole crew to promote ADL across this country and into the world market is phenomenal. I greatly appreciate what you've done for that industry and for ADL and our province.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand here today proud to represent District 8 Stanhope-Marshfield, proud and honoured.

I, too, as Minister of Agriculture and Land would like to welcome – I know everyone's welcomed you so far but – president John Wood of ADL, Jamie MacPhail, Mr. Mol president of federation and Robert Campbell and Abe Buttimer from the youth dairy trust. These people are doing great things; I'm going to make a statement later on today.

It must be extremely tough for dairy farmers to be in here today when the sun is shining. I know it's bothering me a little bit, but hopefully you enjoy the proceedings and welcome.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise and welcome everybody to the gallery.

I want to say that I had a great conversation with Jane Marie downstairs, and we talked

about maybe she's – I couldn't remember if she was getting or wanted a hamster. So good luck with either one of those. I think it's getting a hamster. Anyway, thanks a lot for that discussion.

I also want to say a big shout out to everybody watching from District 14.

As well today, I was up at the Bell Aliant Centre Pool and we talked a lot about lifeguards and the great job they do. I want to say hello to all the campers who converge on the Bell Aliant Centre Pool in the afternoons, and there's up to 300 kids getting active, socializing, and getting together. There needs to be about seven or eight lifeguards on duty for that.

So I want to say hello to all the campers up there enjoying yourself, getting fit, and all the lifeguards as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning, Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to rise today and welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and of course everyone to the gallery, the press, Sue Turner, everyone from the agricultural community, but especially Abe Buttimer from Abelaine Farms out in New Glasgow.

He's outstanding in his field and he's also outstanding from the crowd as you can see today over there in the back.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Yes, yes.

I wanted to give a shout out to the fishers who are hauling in today as well. Normally, I'm out with Joey Gautier and his crew. So I want to send a shout out to Jean Paul and the boys there too, and girls.

As well, I wanted to recognize Jessica Reeves who was named women agriculture person of the year by the Women's Institute.

So I wanted to give Jessica a big shout out as well.

Thank you.

Speaker: I also would like to recognize a guest, and it would be Sue Turner and her grandson, Jeremy Turner. I worked with Sue probably six-eight years, and we became real good friends over those last eight years, and I'm truly blessed to have Sue as a friend.

Also, in the Legislature here today, we have recognition from Tignish-Palmer Road who got Citizen of the Year for his volunteerism in his district.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I also got a little message to say that he's going to have a hard job keeping up to the last Citizen of the Year. I'm not sure on that, but that's the message that came down from Tignish.

We want to congratulate – anytime you get a volunteerism or Citizen of the Year in your community that means you are going overboard for what you do for your community. Tignish-Palmer Road, I thank you for what you do for your community.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

What's the Scoop

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to invite all watching online and listening in this assembly to check out What's the Scoop, a local ice cream shop in Montague.

What's the Scoop has quickly become, along with Gillis', the go-to spot in my district on a hot summer day. Whether you want frozen yogurt, ice cream, or a cold milkshake, What's the Scoop can provide it all.

Located in the recognizable neon-green building on MacDonald Road beside

Nabuurs Gardens, What's the Scoop is one of the few ice cream stands on the Island with a drive thru, which it's tempting not to go through the drive thru all the time – pretty convenient.

I'm told that they've introduced a new menu item this summer in honour of the Premier that's proven quite popular.

The 'Tide Turner' is described this way: "It's a bit conservative, but full of personality. This true-blue sundae will not disappoint. A combination of creamy vanilla soft serve topped with hot fudge, hot caramel, brownie crumble, and salted caramel truffles served in a Tory blue waffle bowl."

With exciting menu items like this, the 'Tide Turner' and great staff, I expect What's the Scoop to be a popular destination again this summer. All the best for a great season.

Surely to God, this should be able to at least get me a gym floor in Montague now.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier King: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: I think it will get you a gym floor because from what the education minister said, he does hold the answer to your question.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Student Housing

Housing continues to be a challenge for both local Island, and off-Island post-secondary students, including our 25% international student body. The changing demographics of the Island, including population growth, has meant the demand for housing often exceeds supply. As a result, students had to deal with the twin challenges; availability and affordability.

Holland College is to be commended for building new student housing, recently across the street from the Prince of Wales college. Last fall we had the pleasure of participating in an announcement with the University of Prince Edward Island committing to building a new 260 bed residence and we need to ensure those new residents are available year round to the student body.

In an effort to deal with scarcity of the student housing, the university recently entered into an innovative agreement with the Dutch Inn in Cornwall to provide its rooms for student housing beginning this fall.

Despite these efforts, the student housing crisis is far from resolved. I employ the government to give attention to this issue by working with the educational institutions and getting on with the election commitments such as, mobile rental voucher which has not been identified or explained by the government and delivery of 1200 additional affordable rental units.

I also employ the minister to expedite the housing project supported by the previous government. According to a June 25th DBRS report, bond rating report, part of their optimistic assessment included their belief that there will be a quote, an increase in funding for rent supplements and the supply of affordable housing.

The need for more affordable student housing is now, we can't afford to lose momentum on this issue; I urge the government to act now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Dr. Najmul Chisti

Mr. McNeilly: Today I'm honored to recognize a very special resident of District 14, Charlottetown-West Royalty, Dr. Najam Chisti. He, along with two other Islanders, Jeannette Arsenault and Leo Broderick, will receive the Order of Prince Edward Island later this year. These three Islanders were

selected from a total of 46 Islanders nominated to receive this award this year. The Order of Prince Edward Island is the highest honour awarded to a citizen of the province and is awarded annually following a public nomination process with recipients being selected by an independent 9-person advisory council.

The Honour was first conferred in 1996 to recognize Islanders who have shown individual excellence or outstanding leadership in the community of their chosen occupation or profession.

Dr. Chishti is a retired research scientist who took part in the advancement of Diagnostic Chemicals, later BioVetra. He has been the driving force for youth table tennis for over 32 years and the President of the Muslim Society of Prince Edward Island. He was instrumental in building the first mosque in Charlottetown and his commitment raised over \$800,000 for the project. This also led him to work, along with his wife Farida, in refugee settlement and integration into their new environment.

Dr. Chisti has been involved with table tennis for more than 40 years, as a parent, coach, and administrator and an elite official. Dr. Chisti was also instrumental on bringing the Canadian Junior Table Tennis Championships to PEI. They are being held July 4th through July 7th in Summerside. I am very pleased to stand and honour such a great man for his work and contribution to our great Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Response to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

You spoke earlier in your comments about the importance of volunteerism here on our Island and one of the biggest and most important volunteer communities are our firefighters. Timely responses to

emergencies can mean quite literally, the difference between life and death.

Many Island fire departments rely on pagers to alert their members to incidents and to ensure that response times are as quick as possible. We recently learned that the pager system relied on by 13 Island fire departments and provided by Bell was discontinued just yesterday and that these departments must now rely on text and email to alert their members to incidents.

Discontinuation of pager service for fire departments

A question to the hon. Minister of Justice and Safety and Attorney General: When did your department receive notice that Bell would be discontinuing this service?

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

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the member opposite, our department found out in – well it's been 10 years since Bell has said this is coming and last November the Department of Justice and Public Safety was notified and the fire departments were notified then. I agree with you, I have empathy for our volunteer fire fighters; they work hard to keep our Island safe.

So, last November and then January they were notified again. February we had a meeting. March they were notified again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So there were many warnings and notice given to the department that this pager system on which the fire departments rely was about to be discontinued.

Bell is actually required to give at least 60 days notice before discontinuing such a service. Reports indicate that discussions with Bell, as the minister just verified, surrounding the termination of this service have been ongoing since at least November of last year.

Replacement to pager system

To the same minister: Given the critical nature of these services and the necessity for a rapid and reliable communication system for members who provide these services, why has this vital part of the emergency protective system been allowed to lapse without a suitable replacement?

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

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker and the member across, I acknowledge that 13 fire districts haven't complied, but 23 have. The 13 that haven't, we are working with them and there is funding now through – it's a community matter.

It's a local government – fire departments are local government, and there is funding through Minister Fox's department, through communities, and we are working with those to help them get that funding together to get their systems upgraded.

I met with the Fire Marshal this morning and he assured me that all fires on Prince Edward Island will be – all firefighters are able to get called to fires today and he assured me that all fires would be taken care of.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Indeed, it's a municipal affair, but you're the minister of justice and safety, safety of all Islanders.

Many firefighters who work in places where cell phones are not permitted or – and we all know how very easy it is to accidentally disable your cell phone or leave it unattended or the battery runs down or some other incident.

Cell phone replacement for firefighters

So does the minister think that this interim measure of relying on our cell phones is an appropriate and safe way to protect

Islanders' property and indeed, potentially their lives?

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

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member across.

Yes, I know the importance of the hardest working people are these volunteer firefighters. They respond at a moment's notice. They hop up and go to the darest of darkest of situations.

Meeting with the Fire Marshal today it gave me relief that he told me that the matter is – he understands the situation and he's ensured me that all fires would be responded to in a timely matter and that gives me piece of mind.

We are working with the people that the fire departments haven't complied yet to get funding through Mr. Fox's department. Wellington recently got \$25,000 to upgrade their pager system, and so we're hoping that the 13 that are left of the 36 can obtain this. We'll fast track this funding, and hopefully it'll appease your situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm really glad to hear that the minister has met with the Fire Marshal and that there are communications between his department and the communities and fisheries department on funding to correct this problem, because if things were fine of course there would be no need to replace the system.

But the very fact that we're having discussions about having to update for those 13 departments who do not have the reliable system, tells us that there is indeed a problem.

Timeline for reliable system for safety of Islanders

Again to the minister: How long before we can expect all fire departments across PEI to be furnished with a comprehensive and reliable system that will ensure the safety of all Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities?

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

Thank you, hon. member, for his question.

I have actually been talking with the other department on this issue, and this morning I directed the staff of rural development to reach out to the 13 affected fire departments and find out actually what their needs are for going forward. We do have programs that are available and we are encouraging them to apply to the department if they require equipment upgrades.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As of late, every few days we're hearing about someone in Summerside who is struggling to find appropriate housing. The amount of cases that are in crisis, that is that are on the verge of becoming homeless, is significant.

Last week, we heard that 69 new units either will be or already have been built in Summerside. The nine seniors units that were already built and are already filled are great, but really cannot be counted towards alleviating the current backlog.

New housing units in Summerside

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you tell me how many of those new units are already spoken for?

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

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

I do appreciate that question from the hon. member. As I've said in this House before, anytime one family or one individual is homeless on this Island it's a crisis for them. And, if it's a crisis for them, we have to address it.

With regard to the exact number that the member has put the question forward on, I will take that under notice and I will get the exact numbers information for the House tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't take many phone calls to find out that the waitlist right now in Summerside is well beyond the 30 units that are planned for seniors and the 30 mixed houses.

Filling needs gap for housing

Question to the minister: I am wondering if we have any ideas on how we're going to fill the needs gap in the meantime for Summerside.

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

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

It is, it's a priority, our staff, whether it's with regard to the 1833 number, whether it's with regard to working with our community partners, Salvation Army, Bedford MacDonald House, Blooming House, these are all part of that big puzzle that has to fit together in order for us to address this and it is, it's an urgent need, I will certainly admit that.

It's been something that having been in this ministry, if you like, for the last seven weeks, I'll be honest, it's been a real eye-opener to me. With that, I fully realize the priority, but we do have to put on this, have been putting on it and will continue to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I entirely can appreciate that solving the housing crisis is going to take time, but in the meantime, as you said, we've had people who are in crisis which is why the last government brought forward the emergency shelter line for Charlottetown with the intent of expanding it across the Island.

Here we are six months later and I can't find any evidence that the emergency support system actually exists outside of Summerside.

Homelessness and temporary shelter

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Housing: Can you clarify whether or not people in Summerside facing homelessness can only receive temporary shelter if they're willing to be transferred to Charlottetown.

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

Mr. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, that is my understanding, hon. member. I will do a double-check on that and if there's anything different from that I will certainly inform the House tomorrow.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We don't have any shelters in Summerside, you just listed a long list of potential gap fillers that exist in other places, but none of those exist in Summerside.

There are many legitimate reasons why a person cannot be relocated to Charlottetown: jobs, support networks, child care are just a few that I could name.

We already know the need in Summerside is outpacing the amount of new units planned, so we need options. There's a lot of the province that isn't in Charlottetown.

Expansion of program for Islanders

Question to the minister: Will you actually be expanding this program to meet the needs of Islanders in the rest of the province as was previously announced by your department?

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

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

I appreciate the hon. members question. Being from the western part of PEI, yes, I appreciate that we need services right in our communities and when I say services, certainly right across the board, whether its shelters what have you. I would be more than happy to sit down with the hon. member to have a further discussion on this and if at all possible, that is something that as we move forward as a department, as the minister of this department, I would certainly be prepared to entertain and, again, to meet with, have discussions with the hon. member on.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Research has shown that students from a lower-socio economic background are less likely to attend university. Only 47.1% of youth from families in the lowest-after-tax income quartile attend a post-secondary institution as compared to 78.7% for the highest quartile.

Supports for low-income post-secondary students

Question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: How will your government support post-secondary students from low and middle income households?

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

Mr. Trivers: Sorry, can you repeat the question, please?

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

Ms. Bernard: I won't repeat all the stats, but how will your government support post-secondary students from low and middle income households?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We heard about the George Coles and how that's a big help to Island students –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – and it is a big help, people are very grateful to get the George Coles Bursary and it's helping a lot.

But, there's also an Island advantage portion that allows those with lower incomes to get topped up to help them and in fact, they can even be topped up to the point where they can get their tuition paid fully.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we did hear that announcement yesterday where the George Coles Bursary was upped to \$3,000, so it's currently only available to students pursuing their first post-secondary program. It offers the same amount to all students regardless of socio-economics.

That means a student living in absolute poverty receives the same amount as a student who is in post-secondary studies on a full scholarship or a student who was born into a wealthy family. In some cases, this bursary is giving money to people who simply do not need it.

Creation of program specific to low-income students

Question to the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Will you commit to creating a program specifically for low-

income students wanting to further their education through post-secondary studies?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding – and I will look into this just to be sure I've got this right, but the Island Advantage Bursary is exactly that program of which the member across is speaking, because it looks at low income and allows to top them up.

Now, the point is well taken that the George Coles is across the board and meeting with the UPEI Student Union, this is a concern that they have had as well and I would like to work with the member across to address that, but hopefully the member has looked into the Island Advantage Bursary as well.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have looked into that.

As we all know, we are currently experiencing a housing crisis on PEI. We have a large number of our population living in poverty and our climate is warming at an alarming rate. The skills of innovation and creativity and resourcefulness are more important than ever as we look for solutions to these ongoing problems.

At UPEI, we have graduate students doing phenomenal work. For example, Jordan Sampson, Dawson MacIsaac and Brett McDermott, who invented the self-turning cage for oysters in response to a problem given to them to be solved by Prince Edward Aqua Farms.

While there is some funding provided to students in the vet college at UPEI, Prince Edward Island is the only province in Canada that does not provide funding for graduate students doing groundbreaking, innovative research.

Supports for student research and innovation

Question to the minister: What is your government going to do to ensure we support the innovation and potential of graduate research?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, we do have some fantastic students and some real leaders in our province. Jordan Sampson is a constituent of mine and I know his parents well and he has really brought that school of sustainable design engineering to the limelight and the rest of Canada.

I would love to have some conversations with the member on this. I have to admit that this is not an issue that has been raised to me or within my department, that I'm aware.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Home care services are essential for many patients to recover from illness, stay healthy and generally maintain a high quality of life. These patients are individuals who are unable to go to the hospital or a medical centre for treatment, either due to physical limitations or barriers to transportation access.

After surgery or due to ongoing health issues, many home care patients require regular dressing changes that require specific bandages and supplies to complete.

Home care supplies for at-home patients

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are bandages, gauze, saline and other supplies needed for home care patients provided for all home care patients across the Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'd like to thank the hon. member for this question. It is a very important topic.

We talk continually about how best to treat Islanders and of course, hospital stays are becoming less long and we know for fact the research tells us, that people can heal better, can recuperate better and in a lot of cases, when they're in their own homes.

We have actually tested a pilot project with the mobile care integrated health program, where we do have health care professionals that's go out to homes to provide these services. I don't have the exact list of all of the different products that are supplied, but I'd be more than happy to get that full list and bring it back tomorrow.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In hospitals medical supplies such as MePilex bandages and other supplies used for wound care are paid for on and provided on-site at no cost to the patient. However, when inquiring as to whether these supplies are covered for home care patients, I have heard that some home care patients must pay for supplies out-of-pocket and this seems to differ based on the community you live in.

Home care patients and payment of supplies

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are some home care patients required to pay for their own wound care supplies and if so, which patients and which supplies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, when we have medical professionals such as EMT's or RN's going out to homes to help provide this essential service, certainly medical supplies are provided.

Again, I will bring back the complete list of all these supplies that are provided but if the hon. member has any specifics and she would like to share them with me, pertaining to a particular case or an Islander –

obviously we're not going to share names here in the Legislative Assembly – but if you'd like to have a sidebar afterwards and share that information with me, I'll certainly look into it and address any outstanding issues.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an issue that has been brought to my attention on a few different levels, both from people receiving care as well as those giving the care and the more I looked into it, the more mystery has sort of seemed to arise as to who was receiving what and when, and as I mentioned there might be some difference between communities, so I do appreciate the ministers willingness to look into this.

Home care patients, some of them must not only pay for their own supplies, but they also must locate and purchase these supplied independently. This can result in home care nurses being unable to provide appropriate and timely treatment and can also lead to additional costs for patients and long term costs for our health care system.

Coverage of medical supplies for home care patients

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: In order to ensure that all Islanders are able to access timely, appropriate and effective treatment, including the most vulnerable Islanders, will your department commit to covering medical supplies for all home care patients?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

In fact, this program that we're discussing here today, there was federal money that was provided to the province to roll out the MIH and I'm very happy and I'm very proud of the services that have been provided to date.

Many health care issues come with different complexities. It's impossible for me to stand here today as the Minister of Health and Wellness, to say that every single product will be covered.

Again, each individual, each health issue is a separate case. Again, if the member has any specifics that she would like to discuss with me, so that I can investigate it, I would be more than happy to have a sidebar so that I can look into the situation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

With you indulgences before I ask the question, could I please toast ADL with chocolate milk for the wonderful job they do.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, thank you ADL.

Today my question is to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture. Our province has had a string of four straight record tourism years. Lots of work has been done by the previous administration to build and maintain incredible momentum we've seen in the last number of years.

The PC platform makes over 120 promises, of which one is to establish a tourism development fund. The platform commits \$300,000 towards the fund.

Establishment of a tourism development fund

Minister, will you be consulting with the industry before this fund is established?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, hon. member for the question.

Yes, tourism has been on a boom here the last three-four years. It's phenomenal what we're seeing happening on PEI and we're

looking to expand it and take it to the next level.

Yes, I've already started consultations. We've had our first meeting with TIAPEI. We've also met with the new tourism board.

We're going to very aggressively, after this session is out and into the fall, start discussions, and yes, certainly we're open to ideas. A lot of the tourism operators feel like they haven't been listened to, and we really need to start listening to them and expand on their ideas and working together.

Thank you, member.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

Mr. Minister, as you indicated you will be consulting groups, so you'll be consulting more people in the tourism trade than, in either the Cavendish and Charlottetown area as you indicated.

Would the minister be consulting organizations like the L'Association Touristique d'Evangéline? Will they be consulted in this fund?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, member, and certainly if they would like to be consulted we can do that as well as all Island tourism operators. The more open to discussion, the better.

The department is looking forward; there's been some good discussion so far. Like I say, over the summer and into the fall, we're going to be very aggressively looking into this. So certainly anyone that's interested can feel free to reach out to our department.

Thank you, member.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, your second supplementary.

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

As a concept, it would appear the establishment of the tourism product development fund has great merit.

Timeline for tourism development fund

Minister: Will this fund be up and running before the tourism season begins next year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, member.

I'm certainly going to push for that. Obviously, things are happening now; the open discussions have already started. The problem we're in right now is that tourism season has started, so to get a lot of the stakeholders to the table right now is going to be a challenge. But as soon as the season's over with, we will be starting this and very aggressively looking into it.

So I'm looking forward to it, and I'll do my very best to have it ready for next year.

Thank you, member.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Social Development and Housing. The PC Party in the recent election promised to, and I'll quote once again: "launch a PEI mobile rental voucher program."

As the minister knows and acknowledges, there is a serious problem with housing on Prince Edward Island. I know many people who are anxiously waiting for this \$4.8 million program to begin.

Launch of PEI mobile rental voucher program

Minister: Could you provide the House with an explanation of just exactly how this program would work?

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

Mr. Hudson: Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do thank the hon. member for the question.

Certainly, there's a lot of great initiatives that were in our platform, and this was one of them. Are they going to all be realized within the first few months or the first year? No.

But with that, once my department – the great staff in my department are working on this as far as how it will be rolled out.

I just end up by saying that at the end of the day, we want to make sure that we get this right. Because as the hon. member stated, we have a housing situation, we have challenges there, and we do need to get these initiatives correct.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The PC Party indicates 1,300 Island families and seniors currently on the provincial waiting list are waiting. Students would also be eligible for this program as a few other questioners asked today.

As the minister said recently: the Island's housing situation is in crisis.

Will this program begin this summer to address the crisis identified by this minister today in Question Period and in earlier Question Periods?

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

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

I guess to reiterate again, anytime that one family, one individual do not have a roof over their heads, yes it's a crisis for that family or for that individual.

Look at the rental supplement program that the hon. member's government did bring in. Great program and great staff that administered that program. We need to build on that and the rent supplement program – it's going to provide a great foundation for us to move forward on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PC platform costs the program at just over \$4.8 million and the commitment was greeted very warmly by residents in my community. In fact, I've heard from Islanders who supported your party specifically because of this very commitment.

Cost of program to government

Minister, will this be an annual ongoing cost to government and will it be in the 2019-2020 budget?

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

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

I'm very pleased to hear that the hon. member say that aspects of our platform were warmly received. I'll have to say that when I was on the campaign trail that yes, our platform, it was very warmly received.

To go back to what I said in response to the hon. members first question, are these platform commitments all going to come about overnight within the first few months what have you, no they're not.

With that though, yes we need to get it right. The hon. member has great experience in government in rolling out of programs.

And I'll just say, I would love to sit down with him at some point, see what his suggestions, what his initiatives may be and we could sit down over a coffee – even better, let's sit down over a glass of ADL chocolate milk.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

An Hon. Member: Here we go

Mr. Deagle: Here we go, yeah.

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

Mr. Deagle: Here's the good ones.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with a constituent of mine Brooks Roche who lives with type 1 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetes impacts a wide range of Islanders from all ages. In the past, it has been referred to as juvenile diabetes, but four out of five people diagnosed with type 1 diabetes are actually adults.

Islanders living with type 1 diabetes

Question to the health minister: Do we have a sense of how many Islanders are currently living with type 1 diabetes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We certainly do have those stats, I don't have them currently here with me today, but I'd be more than happy to bring them back tomorrow.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For people with type 1 diabetes, the use of an insulin pump is vital to helping manage their condition. Currently the province covers the cost of insulin pumps for Islanders under 25 years of age.

Cost of insulin pump

Question to the health minister: Roughly how much does it cost to equip a patient with an insulin pump?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Currently the cost is approximately \$6,300. I'm looking forward to getting on the floor with my budget to discuss some great initiatives that my department is coming forward with to support individuals that do have diabetes. Until we get to my budget, unfortunately I can't announce those here at this time, but I'm proud to sort of give a glimmer of hope that people are going to be very pleased with the announcement.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Use of an insulin pump is proven more effective in managing conditions than injecting yourself several times a day as many people living with diabetes must do.

Better management of conditions and symptoms leads to lower health costs, fewer emergency room visits and long-term complications.

Coverage of insulin pumps to all Islanders

Question to the health minister: Will your department work towards covering the cost of insulin pumps for Islanders of all ages, and not just those under 25?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

As a new government here on Prince Edward Island, obviously we're listening to the concerns of Islanders and while the time I spent in opposition, seven of the eight years I was the health critic, I certainly had many opportunities to sit down with Jake Reid from the Diabetes Association of Canada. Matter of fact, I'm meeting with Jake, I believe it's next week – and that's

one of the measures that they're obviously advocating for very strongly.

While I can't commit to that today, it's something that our government will seriously take into consideration.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have to return briefly to something that was said by the Minister of Health and Wellness regarding supplies for home care patients.

This might not be an exact quote but he said something along the lines of: we have to look at individual cases and individual needs.

I just want to point out the overwhelming majority of patients receiving in-home treatment for wound care are seniors. Many face issues with mobility or lack of access to reliable and affordable transportation. Many are on a fixed income and regularly struggle to make ends meet.

I want to also highlight that those who are able, so those who don't face any barriers to traveling to a health care centre or a hospital to receive their wound care treatment are able to have all of their supplies covered.

Quality of care for patients

A question to the minister: Should home care patients receive the same quality of care as those who have the means and ability to travel to a hospital for treatment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

What I said, and the hon. member is mostly correct on that, is I said I will look into the situation, I'll look into what's provided and what's not provided and I'll bring that back.

Just over the last two days I've been dealing with one of my own constituent's who's mother was released from hospital, they

want to care for her obviously in their home and they went to try to get a bed, a proper hospital bed and unfortunately, there's a six to eight week waitlist right now to order a new one, so they purchased a refurbished one. Unfortunately, after 48 hours the bed had a malfunction and it's not currently in a useable state.

So I'm working closely with that individual right now to try and source something, whether it's through the Red Cross program or if there's a program through Health PEI that we can find a suitable bed for her to use but as I said, every issue, every health care situation has its different complexities.

Whether its supplies, whether its drugs and those are all situations that individually we need to look at. As a government, within our thrown speech, from the front cover to the back cover it reads a common thread all the way though, caring for people and that's what this government is committed to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are all aware of the strain placed on our healthcare system s our population ages.

We heard in the budget address that we will see a new orthopedic specialist to alleviate the growing wait times for hip and knee replacements. This is welcome news as the current waitlist is approximately two years long.

New orthopedic specialist

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: When can we expect the new orthopedic specialist to start seeing patients?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We do have a currently orthopedic surgeon who just finished his residency; he's actually been here a few times as a locum and has actually been performing surgery.

I'm happy to announce that my deputy minister met with this individual last week. Made an initial offer, there was some complexities with this surgeon coming because his partner is also a medical professional, so we're trying to match that up to see if we can get both of those individuals who are and would be repatriated Islanders, which is a win-win, right?

But right now, we're looking at potentially September, having a brand new orthopedic surgeon in place working here on Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: That's great news.

There has been a lot of focus on orthopedics and rightfully so, there are other areas that have incredible wartimes within our healthcare system.

Last July, it was reported the wait time for cataract surgery, for corrective eye surgery was 316 days.

Current wait times for Islanders in need of eye surgery

A question to the minister: What is the current wait time for Islanders in need of eye surgery?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, that's information I'll have to bring back.

I just want to go back to the orthopedic side of it again, too, for a moment. I had the great pleasure last weekend of meeting with the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. They had a national conference here and what they're doing is advocating for more emphasis, not more emphasis but additional emphasis put on physiotherapy so that in many cases you don't have to go forward to have a hip or knee replacement when possibly physiotherapy can match that.

But with regards to the cataract surgery, yes, I'm troubled that the wait time has been quite long. It's been a building number for the last number of years, we're working hard to reduce that and I will bring back the exact data on that tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was reported that health PEI was studying what the ophthalmologist requirements for PEI was.

A question to the minister: Is there a need for any additional ophthalmologist on PEI and if so, what is the government doing to recruit them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Well, right now we are still conducting that research and we're doing everything that we can to reduce the wait times. If we discover that another specialist is required to come here to PEI, then we will go through the proper procedures and we'll direct retention and recruitment to start that process right away. But until we have the full review done, we can't do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I heard from multiple constituents that it is now a 24-26-month period before they'll be able to get their corrective eye surgery.

Wait times for corrective eye surgery

Question for the minister: Do you think 24-26 months for seniors to get their vision corrected is acceptable?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, I do not.

I think it's deplorable, to be honest, and one of the measures that we've put in place, and the previous government did it as well, is to try to eliminate some of that backlog, is we have brought locums in and that's another measure that we're looking at doing, until we have the full determination whether or not we need to recruit another fulltime professional to provide this service.

Locums can provide that as well, but as we get there, we'll make that decision.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would suggest that an increase in the last – less than a year, 316 days to over 24 months, would be kind of evidence enough that we need to do something and need to do it right away.

In the throne speech it states: Our seniors should never feel alone or unsafe.

Waiting over two years for corrective eye surgery seems contrary to that statement. There are real consequences to seniors, including threatening their ability to maintain their drivers' license.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is this government's plan to resolve the unacceptable wait times for our Island seniors needing eye surgery?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, I'll repeat, what we're doing is an internal review right now to see why the wait time is to the degree that it's at. Again, as I said before, I think it's deplorable that Islanders have to wait that length of time.

My parents themselves, seniors, they had to go through this process. I talked to seniors

all the time on the doorsteps during the last election and this is something that I want to solve and something that will be solved.

In the measures that we're looking at is bringing locums in, which can help alleviate some of this wait time. This is an important file and we're doing the necessary work on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Previous governments have had many opportunities, including Canada's 150th anniversary, to partner with the federal government to establish a provincial museum. Islanders have continued to ask political leaders, including during this past election, to support this important undertaking and look for any opportunity to make their dream of a provincial museum a reality.

Options to establish a provincial museum

A question to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture: Will your government commit to exploring potential options towards the establishment of a provincial museum?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, hon. member.

That conversation has already started in my department about three weeks ago. I met down with the appropriate staff to find out where it was and with the previous administration, how far they've taken it.

What I did find out along the line is it seemed to grow some legs and then it hit a wall. Grow some legs, hit a wall. We've got artifacts, history, the pride of PEI in a warehouse somewhere and it's a shame and I think it needs to be looked at.

Our government is going to look at it and continue to look at it. We're doing research on it right now. I have no timeframe of when it will be back, but we're doing our best to see what we can find out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

McCain Fund Round 2

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Borden-Carleton is the gateway to Prince Edward Island and a major contributor to the provincial economy.

In 2014, the town was dealt a devastating blow when McCain's announced they'd be closing their Albany plant. After the closure was announced, McCain's partnered with Innovation PEI and the town to create a \$2 million fund to spur economic development in the region.

This first round of grants was announced in 2017. Recipients included; MacDougall Steel, Silliker's Glass, the Town of Borden-Carleton and others. But, not all the funding was committed, so in 2018 a second call for proposals was issued.

Today we are pleased to announce that three businesses and the town have had successful applications into the fund.

The Town of Borden Carleton will receive \$247,000 for phase one of their master plan. Both Bernard's Welding and Island Gelato will receive \$25,000 each to expand their operations.

A third business will also receive a sizable grant to help with upfront costs.

We will be announcing that grant in partnership with ACOA and Finance PEI next week.

These grants have proven invaluable to residents and businesses in the area. Dozens of jobs have been created and nine businesses have benefitted from the grants. The fund has also assisted the town with its

long term planning needs as it prepares to draft a new master plan.

I congratulate all the recipients for their successful applications to the fund. Their work has provided tremendous benefit to the town and the surrounding region and I look forward to seeing these projects take shape.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's wonderful news for Borden Carleton. As an architect I'm particular pleased that a lot of the funding is towards a town plan for the area, there's nothing like a plan for the future to spark worlds in the long-term, so congratulations.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

The McCain food adjustment fund as the minister indicated is aimed at funding businesses and initiatives in the Borden-Carleton area. It's a good fund and it continues to help businesses with initiatives in the wonderful community of Borden-Carleton. I share the hope that the initiatives announced today will be a benefit to the businesses and I thank the minister for his statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mental Health in Agriculture

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank those who are here this afternoon. David Mol, President of the PEI Federation of Agriculture, Robert Godfrey, Executive Director of the Federation, Jamie MacPhail, Corporate Secretary of ADL,

John Wood, Board Chair of ADL and Abe Buttimer, Dairy Youth Trust.

I appreciate you joining us in the House for this statement. Mental health challenges can touch every single one of us, directly or indirectly every day. It also impacts those in the agriculture community. As a farmer and father, I know mental health is not easy to talk about, especially in this business.

It takes courage to acknowledge that you need support. Farmers are known for their strong characters, so admitting they need help is difficult. Mental health challenges not only impact the farmer, some problems extend further and affect home life. This topic is close to my heart.

That is why we are working with the industry to support, Island farmers, their families and their farm employees.

This will give them access to the support they need and deserve in difficult times. This past season was tough for many producers. The stress of having your own business can be overwhelming. The Farmer Assistance Program is where farmers, their families and farm employees receive confidential and professional counseling services. This program had a lot of uptake last year and was very successful. To support this program going forward, our government is working with the PEI Federation of Agriculture, ADL, Farm Credit Canada, PEI Dairy Trust Fund.

Through this collaboration funding has been increased to \$32,000 for 2019. The program is free for members at PEI Federation of Agriculture and the NFU. This service is accessible 24 hours a day.

A few of the services available include; stress and anxiety, alcohol and drug misuse, couple and marital counseling, depression and family and parenting concerns.

We hope this collaboration moves us forward in removing the stigma around mental illness in the agriculture community.

The department is also ensuring its front line staff those in the field with the farmers, are trained to provide support. The staff will receive Mental Health First Aid to help them

recognize any signs of mental health issues when on a farm.

Our government, in collaboration with industry and the federal government will continue supporting mental health initiatives to benefit our hard working and valued Island farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you minister.

We talked about this when we first met actually in your office about the need for supports for mental health for farmers. We do know that a lot of farmers, a lot of people in general don't even know when they're having mental health issues and when you're constantly under stress, whether it's to do with economics, whether it's to do with weather, whether it's to do with getting your crop in, or equipment breakdowns – the list goes on and on.

I look at a farmer as somebody who is a constant ongoing problem solver. Just when you think you got one step forward something else comes up and for anybody to deal with that on an ongoing basis is extremely difficult and I'm so happy to hear about additional supports for farmers.

As you know, it is near and dear to my heart, my family is – they're a family farm as well and sometimes you just don't know where to turn. So I think the government absolutely needs to support farmers 100% and I would love to work as well through this initiative – I just think as much as we can give because at this point of time, we all depend on farmers. We just need them and we need them healthy and we need them to be able to function.

So congratulations on this announcement, it's an excellent initiative and thanks for being here because really, without you, none of us would actually be here, so I really have a lot of appreciation for this announcement.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And thanks to the Federation for Agriculture and ADL and the other people here in the gallery here today to support this initiative.

Certainly as a former famer and I guess I'm still a farmer myself and I always will be at heart, agriculture is a business that carries with it a lot of stress.

I certainly want to emphasize to the minister that this program is also for the farmers, their workers and as well as their families so I think that's something that might have been omitted in the contact there but I certainly understand the stress that many of our farmers go under when it comes to trying to put a crop in. It was extremely challenging fall of last year. We're still trying to get some of those situations addressed with programs like AgriRecovery and crop insurance, some of those issues.

As well as even this spring was a very difficult time, and as some of our hay farmers are trying to find out, it's not real easy to try and get your hay crop in and weather with like we seem to be having more recently.

Also, when it gets into issues around marketing and some of the finances that we deal with as farmers, it's a real challenge. Sometimes those challenges can become a little bit overwhelming and sometimes our farm community doesn't always think rationally when it comes to issues that have to deal with that and that's really good that they have an opportunity to reach out and get some supports and help.

I certainly want to commend the minister for expanding this and adding more money to this particular fund. It's unfortunate that we have to do that but I think its incumbent upon the department of agriculture to provide those supports when they are required.

The other thing that I wanted to – it sort of tells about the success of this program because it's been around for some time and even my own family has encountered some

support from this back when we were farming.

But I think the other thing is is that this program was so successful that we've actually enhanced it and offered it to our fishing community. I know the minister of fisheries would be very supportive of that as well.

So I think that's a testament to the importance of this particular program and increasing it to \$32,000, I think we should have whatever's required as sort of the caveat to that number.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Financial Update and Bond Rating

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and it's great news I've got.

A bond rating is a grade given to a bond by various rating services that indicates its credit quality. It takes into consideration a province's financial strength as well as its ability to pay a bond's principal and interest in a timely fashion.

I am pleased to note that since the release of our budget the Dominion Bond Rating Service (DBRS) noted the province's finances are in good order with economic revival underway supported by exceptional population growth.

In addition, with such a positive outlook, DBRS has said that they may raise the province's rating, which is currently rated A (low) with a positive trend, before the fall.

DBRS has noted that PEI's debt ratios continue to steadily decline and that with a small surplus the province routinely outperforms budget and debt projections.

Our positive bond rating signals to promote potential investors that PEI is a wise choice for their money. We have also received feedback on our recent budget from various financial institutions.

CIBC notes that PEI is fiscally well-managed and our credit profile has been on an improving trend since 2017/18.

ScotiaBank says PEI's near-term economic outlook has improved considerably since the release of last year's fiscal budget.

They have also taken note of our commitment to more accelerated debt repayment over the longer run, combined with tax relief measures and call this a "wise first step for this government in its maiden budget."

RBC says the province is in an enviable position, both economically and fiscally. They also note government spending is focused on important issues while maintaining surpluses.

And finally, BMO says PEI is leaning on a strong economy and revenue gains and they note that from a fiscal perspective, the province continues to look good.

We are very appreciative of this positive feedback. The Island economy is performing very well and we have hardworking Islanders and Island entrepreneurs to thank.

The fiscal stability this has created will provide flexibility to meet our ongoing needs in priority areas.

As I have said, our budget is both responsive and responsible: responsive to the priorities and pressing needs of Islanders and responsible in making wise investment, for both the present and into the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very encouraging announcement.

A higher rating would mean government would pay less interest on debt. Interest payments on our debt are the third highest expenditure after health care and education.

The percentage of our budget that we spend on debt is still too high.

Credit to the previous government for putting us on this path and credit given to the current government for keeping us on it. Our bond rating has been stable for a long

time, and has been seen favorably in the last – in the recent months.

Financial markets, however, like stability, which is not always what you would describe a minority government as stable. But this House is in a unique position.

We've only started this collaborative relationship recently and we need to make sure that it continues; so good governance, transparency, responsible fiscal management, negotiating in good faith, are all necessary.

When it costs less to service our debt, those funds can be used to improve the lives of Islanders. That's a real benefit to all Islanders, so we're going down the right path.

Thank you for bringing this forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the kind words from the governing party and the Minister of Finance.

It's good to hear the bond rating agencies continue to maintain confidence in the province's fiscal situation. This confidence, of course, was built on sound economic fiscal management by our government, the previous government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: I was reading, actually, the DBRS report this morning, and there's a couple things that stood out. One was the direction of fiscal policy is largely unchanged, and I credit the governing Conservatives for keeping that direction going.

The incoming government finds itself in an enviable position with the province's finance in good order and an economic revival underway supported by exceptional population growth.

PEI finds itself in a favourable position. In recent years, strong international migration and improving retention rates have led to strong population and economic growth.

So I guess the Liberal leftovers aren't that bad after all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: But how long, this government with its 120 plus promises, will be able to maintain our rating in good standing with bond raters remains to be seen.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) by the look of it.

Mr. MacDonald: I can tell you from past experience, the release of the budget is extremely important to the bond raters, but the implementation of the budget is the key to our sustainability.

I wish the minister well and I thank her for her statement.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table and it's answers to questions from my budget estimates yesterday that I had left to answer and I said I'd bring back and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning, Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table some information about the Island Advantage Bursary for low and middle-income students – lots of good information here, as well as some information about the Debt Reduction Program that allows –

An Hon. Member: That's a good program.

Mr. Trivers: – that postgraduate students who are studying and living on PEI to write off their debt to help with their graduate studies and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by command of her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Risk Management and Insurance Annual Report for 2017/2018 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table response to questions from the floor regarding Innovation PEI budget from June 27th, 2019 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

No other tables?

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Bill No. 3, *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act* read a first time.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These amendments relate to the enhance net metering. Changes will allow farmers and municipalities to put their own renewable generated power against their electric bill on multiple metres and enhance net metering will expand clean energy resources.

It will be good for the economy. It goes hand in hand with the solar program that we're about to roll out, and it goes hand in hand with what I talked about yesterday with energy prices and supporting our farming community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the –

Speaker: Oh, sorry. We have to read the order.

Clerk Assistant (Reddin): 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 Minister of Health and Wellness, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole

House to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the Deputy Speaker, and Citizen of the Year, will you –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

A request has been made to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

Could you state your name and title for the Hansard, please?

Michele Koughan: Michele Koughan, acting director of finance and corporate services.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Members, we left off on page 59 on production development. That section was read and we were entertaining questions on it.

At this time we will continue with any other questions.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Yesterday I was asking for a breakdown of the tree species that we're planting. I'm wondering if we're ensuring that we're planting a wide variety of native species to account for climate change.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so my understanding talking with the staff at Upton Road at the nursery and primarily the watershed groups that do a lot of the planting, believe it or not, is that yes indeed that is the goal.

They look at especially the location of the land at where they're planting the trees and they make sure that the species match that and in many cases it's a focus on trying to rebuild that Acadian forests and bring back many areas that way. Not always the case, but in general that is the case.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I'd estimate that a million trees would probably reforest about 250 acres do you know if that's about accurate, minister?

Mr. Trivers: A million trees, 250 acres, well let's see. I happen to have an answer for that here.

Ms. Lund: Fantastic.

Mr. Trivers: Based upon the standard planting density of a thousand trees per acre, it would be about a thousand acres.

Ms. Lund: A thousand acres, okay that's more –

Chair: Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

That's less dense than I would've appreciated but I appreciate the answer on that, thank you.

I would like to know what our current deforestation rate is so we can compare what we're doing to what we're actually taking away. Do you have any information on that?

Mr. Trivers: So the excellent staff in my department has got back with an answer for that as well.

So the rate of deforestation in acres is – well, between 2000 and 2010 PEI lost 18,700 acres of forest to other uses such as agriculture and or development – deforestation.

The next corporate land use study is expected to get underway in 2020, as you know that happens every 10 years, I think we discussed that before. In fact, the answer

is: We won't have the current statistics until that study is completed.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

So taking that under consideration, does the idea of just planting a thousand acres really seem like a good carbon sequestering plan when we are deforesting at a higher rate?

Mr. Trivers: Well, thank you.

That's a good point. Just as you said when you were defending your bill down here, that's not the only thing we're doing of course to help with our environment in particular when it comes to carbon sequestration but yeah, that's a really excellent point we should probably try and wrap that up either wrap up the amount we're planting or try and decrease our rate of deforestation the corporate land use study in 2020 is going to be very, very useful to help determine some of those metrics.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Given the point of this program is for carbon sequestration, recognizing that we're actually losing trees at a higher rate than we're planting them, I think that is cause for a significant concern.

Is there any room to move on this either by putting in place some sort of regulations around deforestation or ramping up this particular program or necessary to wait another year?

Mr. Trivers: That's a good one. So I've been working with my director in the forestry side, Kate MacQuarrie and as well, listening to Islanders.

There was actually a great Facebook discussion that came out of a post talking about the carbon capture tree planting program and it was suggested that, if you have forested land, especially old growth forest, that perhaps you get tax break or maybe not even pay taxes on that land as an incentive to leave it forested.

We did some calculations on that within the department and I don't have the number figure off the top of my head, but it looks like it's something that could be feasible within the realms of possibility budget-wise. So that's something that we'd be looking at bringing up in the future for sure, yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Just based on the conversation we're having right now I would say not only would it be feasible it would actually be saving you money because the trees are already in place.

Instead of deforesting at a higher rate and reforesting and having to wait for them to reach maturity before we see the full benefit of this, leaving the forest as it is probably a wise plan are you considering revamping any of your forestry policies?

Mr. Trivers: I really like your approach, member, to do that it's a total cost calculation to find that out and perhaps we haven't done enough in the past so yeah, thank you that's great. We'll definitely look at that and move forward.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: If you'd like to go on to someone else you can and I can come back on the list later.

Chair: I'll move on to the hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

Question: In the section do we have hedgerows and hedgerow replacement, a project for that? Is that where this would reside?

Mr. Trivers: That's correct, yes.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you.

Can you tell me how many hedgerow projects that are covered underneath this section? How many do you do annually under this section?

Mr. Trivers: We'll have to get back to you with that information. Sorry, I don't have that at my fingertips.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Are we leaving this section today because I would like to know is there a plan to expand that program and I'm assuming not if it's not identified in the section how much we're doing currently. Or is that hedge row program even continuing?

Mr. Trivers: Well if you would like what we could do is conditionally pass the section upon us bringing back that information for you.

I'd be happy with that, Chair, if you would.

Chair: What we can do here with we can move on and I don't have to call the question on this particular section and we can come back to it.

Ms. Beaton: Okay.

Thank you.

Chair: If that's what is decided.

Ms. Beaton: (Indistinct)

Chair: Do you have more questions?

Ms. Beaton: No, you can go ahead.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Is this the section that the Upton tree planting farm is in?

An Hon. Member: The nursery.

Mr. McNeilly: The nursery, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: That's correct.

Mr. McNeilly: In that when we're talking about planting is there any way that we can look to – with a million trees planted and stuff, a lot would come from that area, correct?

Mr. Trivers: That's correct.

I'd say pretty much 100%, yeah.

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

Mr. McNeilly: With that, is there a way that we could look to in the future maybe give more resources to that area? It seems like it's a jump. It might put a lot of – I know that area is in my district and I know there have been some stresses from the staff. They're worked pretty hard. They do a lot of good work.

Is there a need, in your opinion, for more staff moving forward in the next two few years?

Mr. Trivers: Well, thank you.

So I met with nursery staff and had a tour of it and there definitely are opportunities to expand and improve and then there has been some undertaking in the past years. Michele, do you recall any details on that? I might have to get back to you on the details.

Michele Koughan: Under the low carbon economy fund there has been an increase in the casuals that we're hiring in that area to be able to ramp up that tree planting or the nursery side of creating those trees or planting those trees, but I think we'll go back to Kate and she can provide us some additional information.

But, there are more casuals that have been hired to help with that program, for sure.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah because I think it's important in the next little while.

They've done an amazing amount of work and, I'd be all for our giving them some more resources to further our community efforts to plant more trees and the good work they do.

Maybe I might suggest it might be an area that there's a lot of new MLA's and maybe it might be an area that we get a tour as a group and I'd be glad to host everybody there and maybe Montague-Kilmuir can bring some ice cream too or something?

Mr. Trivers: That's a great idea, in fact, didn't I offer that last time I was on the floor? I think. Anyway, yeah definitely

Mr. McNeilly: Okay, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: For sure, let's do a tour, I'll set that up for you. I will proactively set that up. Make a note of that, we'll get a tour –

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty? That's it, okay.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: I see more than \$189,000 for grants that weren't there previously, can you tell me a bit about those?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I think I can. So, this was mostly due to accounting so I'm going to let Michele explain that.

Michele Koughan: Last year we had the low economy fund budgeted in professional services, this year we moved it to grants, so we got isolated a bit. Then the funds would be spent, either in casual or in equipment and materials needed to perform that or get that project up and going.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you Chair, I appreciate that.

Just one more question on this section. Are we providing trees for urban municipalities under this one million tree project, or is it specifically for acreage planting?

Mr. Trivers: To my knowledge it would be for both. It's where trees are desired, in fact there's even a small number that are sold retail, believe it or not.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

Under this section, local landscape nurseries, can you tell me what that entails, in the description of it, its watershed enhancement and local landscape nurseries?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so the nurseries do sell a small portion of what they produce, for local landscaping, I think, is what it's referring to there. Is that your understanding as well? We can double check that but I think that's what it is. I remember on my tour, yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Ok, I'd be interested in how much of that? We do have local businesses that actually grow trees and I'm wondering if we're in competition with that, or?

Mr. Trivers: In fact, that was one of the questions I had when I did the tour. I was a little concerned (Indistinct) competing. It's a very small number and they assured me that. In fact, in some cases what we do is we supply some of the local businesses and then they resell them. So, we're like, the nursery is the supplier to some of the retail players on that. I'll get the full break down for you though just to make sure we have the facts straight.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Any other questions? Ok, we're going to move on to another section.

Fields Services

“Appropriations provided for the sustainable management of 75,000 acres of public land and financial and technical assistance to private woodlot owners.” Administration: 31,700. Equipment: 9,600. Materials, Supplies and Services: 127,300. Professional Services: 200. Salaries: 1,988,800. Travel and Training: 173,300. Grants: 750,000.

Total Field Services: 3,080,900.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I would love to know how we're defining sustainable management of our woodlots, could you answer that for me, minister.

Mr. Trivers: Ok, I'll read you the description I have here, but I might come back to you with a fuller description.

So monitoring of the growth and health of the provincial forest, modeling of forest management options, delivery of forest management treatments to achieve multiple benefits from the forest through tenders or provincial forest section crews, building partnership with community groups and periodic public consultations, leadership in forest fire management for all lands and then the managing provincial forest delivering forest education and technical information programs for youth and the general public, and public access to maps at the district office. So that's a broad range of services.

Now in terms of what sustainable management means, I better get back to you with a formal definition of that from the department, as opposed to speculating.

I do know that, some of the information that I've learned, is for example, a long line of your last comments about deforestation. Believe it or not, foresters are getting less for their product now, than they have in the past. Unless it's really high grade hardwood, it's not even worthwhile to cut it down unless it's for fire wood is what I'm being told.

What they're doing in some cases is clear-cutting for pulp and paper, and they're really not even making much money on it. So it goes back to your point of encouraging them to leave it as forest and I think that's where were going in terms of sustainable management as well.

So leaving it as forest and then and making sure – I had a forest management plan done on my property 12 years ago or so, and what we did was we targeted where some trees should be cut out to allow other ones to grow and really produce that Acadian forest style. That's what was going on and I'm up in the hills of New Glasgow so that would make sense but let me get a fuller explanation for you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

So, minister, I'm just trying to get a little bit of clarity here. I heard you say that foresters are not getting a good return for product. I'm wondering if your version of sustainable management falls more on return on investment for what we can get on a dollar per basis of products we cut down, or the idea of maintaining those forests to their true Acadian heritage. Were there two different trains of thought there?

Mr. Trivers: Like I said, I'll get the formal description from the department but I would say it has to be balance between the both of them. There's probably room for that with selective cutting within forest, so that you can maintain that old growth but still take some without and use that for economic benefit.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Can you tell me what percentage of this budget goes towards plantation forestry?

Mr. Trivers: Plantation forestry? Meaning, like the big plantations with, say white pine that's growing and then harvested through clear cutting, is that what you mean by plantation forestry?

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I think typically we would use that term to mean for clear fields or forest space and then put in soft woods, pine, white spruce, you would probably spray it down to prevent the hardwoods from growing up.

Mr. Trivers: I'll get back to you with that, I would think it would be a very low amount. Some of the trees are produced at a nursery or a lot of the trees when we're doing that reforestation go back into that, but they're not given free of charge for reforestation there. There would be a subsidized amount from my understanding, but let me get back to you on that, I'm kind curious myself now as well. I think it's a low amount though.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I'm under the impression that part of some of the programs that exist to encourage private woodlot owners very much center around this plantation style of forestry, is that something you can confirm?

Mr. Trivers: Michele do you have any input on that?

Michele Koughan: So would you be referring to the Forest Enhancement Program that we have under this budget?

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Yes, thank you, Chair.

Michele Koughan: So there's \$750,000 in grants that are given each year and it provides financial grants to woodlot owners to assist in sustainable management of their woodlots.

The grants are available for treatment, such as preparation of forest management plans, thinning, strip-cutting, patch-cutting, shelter wood harvesting, planting, site preparation, enrichment planting and acquisition of technical advice.

Woodlot owners must have a forest management plan to qualify for assistance under this program. Does that answer your question or would you –

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

So does any of that go to the plantation style of foresting?

Michele Koughan: I'm not 100% sure on that; I'd have to ask that question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Do we have any idea of what percentage of hardwood versus softwood that we're planting?

Mr. Trivers: I would say – I'll have to get back to you with that. I'm sorry; I don't have that in front of me.

It's probably a higher percentage of soft wood than it is hard wood. I know I was just reading through here and – okay, here we go. So what we have is the J. Frank Gaudet Tree Nursery 2018 shipping summary that gives you the breakdown and it looks like using that we'd be able to calculate fairly readily.

I can probably table this document for you if you'd like a copy.

Ms. Lund: Sure.

Chair: Is there permission to table that document?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Earlier, minister, you had referred to treatments that we can provide forests when you were reading your definitions.

What kind of treatments were we referring to?

Mr. Trivers: My understanding of that would be things like selective cutting. But I will verify that with the department. We didn't really delve into the details of the treatments themselves.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Does that include spraying in forests?

Mr. Trivers: I will have to get back to you on that. I really don't know.

Yeah, my guess would be no, but that would be a guess at this point.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I have actually heard that we have a program where we spray glyphosate in our forests to discourage the growth of hard woods and to allow for these plantation forests to grow up.

Can you confirm that?

Mr. Trivers: We will confirm that for you, member.

Glyphosate as in roundup?

Ms. Lund: You got it.

Mr. Trivers: Wow.

All right, we will check into that for sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Can you confirm for me, minister, if you personally believe using roundup in our forest would be part of a sustainable management plan?

Mr. Trivers: Personally, I'm not a big fan of roundup and what it does to the soil because it really kills the soil.

I was talking to a watershed alliance the other day and they're looking at a piece of fowl land and a land where roundup was used and it was pretty clear what it did to the organic matter.

Now that said, and I think the Leader of the Opposition agrees with this, as per the environmental forum during the election, that when it comes to the use of those sorts of herbicides and pesticides like, an immediate phase-out isn't possible.

So personally, what I would like to see is a way to gradually phase that out without – to allow our agriculture industry to continue to operate.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

But, I'm not talking about agriculture in this instance. I'm particularly talking about forest management practices and I'm just wondering if you think that glyphosate is part of the sustainable forest management practice?

Mr. Trivers: Personally, I would like to eliminate it, yeah.

I want to talk to the department and find out if they're using it in their forest management treatments, how they're using it and verify the information you have there, yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

As I'm sure you're aware, a healthy forest is a complex ecosystem and we have a vast amount of species of plants, shrubs, flowers that are very much native to our province.

I don't see glyphosate or spraying practices in our forests as being part of contributing to that ecosystem, so I'd love to know, minister, if you do in fact find this to be the practice, can I assume you'll be phasing it out pretty quickly?

Mr. Trivers: Well, as you know, you're a big fan of doing the total cost calculations so that would be my first step, is the total cost calculation and see what the cost of phasing it out would actually mean in the bigger picture and then pursue it from there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Actually, the benefits of forests are vast and extend well beyond the value of turning those trees into lumber. They provide complex ecosystem services like flood prevention and soil retention and groundwater recharge and filtration – all services that, while free, would have absolute tangible benefits and would have exorbitant costs if we actually had to pay for them.

Therefore, the benefit of this like 'big picture' thing that I've been talking about as smart, particularly in the context of climate

change, I would love to know – I see a big budget for training in this area.

Would you consider training in ecological forestry management?

Mr. Trivers: That's a two-part question.

The first one I just want to respond with – the staff here on Kate MacQuarrie's team and in this case the section we're looking at right now, I think, is Mike Montigny, the manager, they're experts in forestry. This is what they've been trained in. This is what they do. They're also a very ardent and passionate environmentalists, so whatever plan they come up with, I believe, will take into account a full range of costs.

Now in terms of providing training, what was your question? It was training to whom?

Chair: the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Other provinces have ecological forestry plans and we actually see them really commonly in Europe where they look at the full scope of the benefits that forests offer and what a healthy forest actually looks like, instead of just imagining it as its value being what it can produce in timber or lumber; the whole picture of it.

An ecological forestry plan would be quite different than what we're doing currently and I wonder if you have ever considered offering training for your foresters in ecological forest management.

Mr. Trivers: So I would be very surprised if the staff within the department doesn't already have that training. I would be surprised if they didn't, but maybe that is the case.

In terms of offering it to foresters within industry as a whole, that would be apt to be something I would have to take under advisement. Maybe, perhaps, what we need to do is look at our post-secondary institutions to see what kind of courses they could offer and see if there is a demand for that.

So I'll take it under advisement, for sure.

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

Mr. Henderson: Minister, when I talked a little bit about the climate change numbers yesterday, a change in the targets I talked about a property that the province owns in Milo, that’s in the west in my district, and due to the some of the impacts of climate change and extreme wind conditions there is a real blow out of trees that have occurred there. It was a managed forestry property.

Are you aware of that issue and are there any plans? Because my concerns at this point, and it is of the community, is that it’s a fire hazard so there is a significant amount of trees that have blown out there and I will go with the assumption that they’re going to die when they are tipped right over and the roots are out of the ground and when you get that volume of them and it’s right beside the highway, chances of something happening could be problematic.

A forest fire would be not something we would want to have in that part of my district, for sure. So I’m just wondering if you have any plans for that property and I would think that you’re going to have to act fairly quickly on it just based on the fact this occurred last fall but those trees will, by this coming fall will be pretty dry and crispy and ready to be a fire hazard.

Mr. Trivers: I’ll definitely have the department look into that particular property, if they haven’t already, and I’ll see if I can get a briefing on that and report back to you, for sure.

I know I’ve had that report, I don’t know if it was this property they were talking about but other foresters have come to me and said: We’ve seen trees being toppled by wind. And they were talking about management practices where they’re required to leave a buffer around a field, for example where they were clear cutting in the centre and perhaps the buffer needs to be wider so that the wind speed doesn’t topple the trees and this sort of thing.

So that would be a longer term and I know that within the department those are the sorts of policies they review on a regular basis, an ongoing basis, really. Let me get a briefing on that and see if I can get back to you.

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

Mr. Henderson: Well one of the things I would encourage is about the issue of planting trees and in this particular case, and we’ve seen it – I know the Mill River golf course had a significant – those trees got to their positions of maturity and when those winds come through they tend to all break down so there needs to be a good age range of our forests and that – you try to keep it in somewhat of parcels, like whether it’s five acres or two acres or 10 acres or whatever.

So that is something that I would encourage you to, when you’re doing for forestry management – I’m not against the planting of trees – you want to have as many trees – but that issue around the age and trees getting to their level of maturity and then blowing out, that’s not an advantage.

When a tree dies then it actually becomes a carbon giver to the environment, versus taking out, so I think cutting trees and getting them out of the system isn’t always a bad situation, versus just letting them decompose and contribute negatively to the carbon climate change issue.

Thank you. I’m done.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So I am just looking here in the estimates book around field services for various woodlot owners and, you know it’s a big number there, 759,000. I’m wondering how many different woodlot owners receive grants under that umbrella?

Mr. Trivers: Let’s just check to see if we have that number at our fingertips.

So we’re just looking here and – oh okay. Yes, so in fact we just have some updated figures that are written into our books today. Michele, go ahead.

Michele Koughan: There were 107 management plans in 2018/19. However, I can’t, unfortunately, tell you how many individual woodlot owners benefited from that, but we can get that information for you.

Ms. Altass: Okay.

Chair: The Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Can you explain to me the difference between the management plan and the individual lot owner then, so each management plan does not necessarily (Indistinct) per lot owner.

Michele Koughan: I'm not 100% sure on that, on how that program is run and whether a management plan is done annually and then they gets the benefit of the grant or whether it's every couple of years, but I could find that out.

Mr. Trivers: It's probably just what you think, right? So if you have a woodlot and you have a management plan for that woodlot, but you have an owner that owns multiple woodlots, they could have multiple management plans.

That's why it's not necessarily a one to one, but my guess – we will get back to you – but my guess is it's roughly around one to one. So the number of woodlot owners would probably be less than the number of management plans. That would my guess.

Ms. Altass: Okay.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Along those same lines, I'm also wondering how many applications or plans are denied grant funding through this program, and what some of the reasons for that might be, how you make those decisions while you're looking into it if you want to check?

Mr. Trivers: Yes. That's a great question.

I do have here in the notes saying that the incentive program offering a low interest short-term loan was discontinued in 2015-2016 because there wasn't any update.

So something tells me there's probably not a lot of people that are turned away. I don't think we're running out of money in that

area as there is not a lot of pressure, but we'll get back to you on that.

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

Ms. Altass: Is the forest enhancement program in this section? Yes, it would be?

Michele Koughan: That is forest enhancement. The \$750,000 grant is the forest enhancement program.

Mr. Trivers: That's what we're talking about right there.

Ms. Altass: Oh, I see. That's what that is.

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

Ms. Altass: So how recently has the forest enhancement program been reviewed?

Mr. Trivers: I don't know that. I'll have to get back to you.

I'll tell you that once, you know, we're seven weeks in here and I know just like a lot of the other ministers, my intention is to go through the entire department and then find out when the programs have been reviewed, and, if they haven't been reviewed recently, take a look at them.

See what the uptake is. See how many people have been turned away. Make sure we have the right amount of budget allocated.

That's something that unfortunately, given the time frames, we haven't been able to do for this budget, but again, I can assure you that we're dealing with a department here of really solid professionals.

They would be reviewing the programs I would think themselves. If there was one that wasn't having good uptake or where there was great demand, they'd be letting the minister – it would have been a former minister – know right away and then so we could address those issues.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering are Islanders who participate in the Forest Enhancement Program generally told about their ability to enter into a conservation easement under the natural assets protection act.

Mr. Trivers: Sorry can you repeat the question again?

Ms. Altass: Yes. So I'm wondering if Islanders who participate in this program, this Forest Enhancement Program, are generally told about their ability to enter into a conservation easement under the *Natural Areas Protection Act*.

Mr. Trivers: Give me one second; I just want to grab my briefing book. I got a tip from a former minister there might be some information in there.

You know what; let me get back to you on that.

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

Ms. Altass: Well, you know, along those lines as you're looking into it then I'll give you a few more things to look into.

Mr. Trivers: Sure, sure.

Ms. Altass: If that's all right.

I'm just wondering approximately how many hectares of land were put into conservation easements under the *Natural Areas Protection Act* last year?

So that's another question – I wanted to ask about that.

Mr. Trivers: I think that's in a different section.

Ms. Altass: That part's in a different section. Oh, okay. So we can come back to that after.

Mr. Trivers: That's why, I'm looking for the information and I can't find it because it's a different section.

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

Ms. Altass: Okay. So everything related to the *Natural Areas Protection Act* would be in a different section is what you're saying – No, just this particular part about the conservation easement.

Michele Koughan: The conservation of land being protected is under fish and wildlife, which is two sections out.

Ms. Altass: Okay. All right, perfect. So something to look forward to.

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Ms. Altass: All right. I do have another one.

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

Ms. Altass: Is it possible to attach a dollar value to the amount of field work – sorry a work field staff does related to evaluation, designation and conservation of wetlands?

Is that in this section, no?

Mr. Trivers: That is a very good question, member.

I don't know if we could attach a value to that. It'd be interesting to try to do that.

I know a lot of that work is done by the watershed groups, of course, but also that work is spread out. You've got environmental officers that are going out and doing a lot of that work who wouldn't be in this area.

Let's just see if we can slice and dice the numbers for you in that way to find that out.

Ms. Altass: Okay, yes.

Mr. Trivers: What's at the root of your question? What are you –

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering how much focus is put onto the creation or expansion of wetlands and whether that's a priority area. How much of the resources in this department are allocated to that and why that might be.

Mr. Trivers: Right. So that the creation and expansion of wetlands is something that's done – I don't know if there is a focus on that per say. I know we got an environmental agriculture officer so if there's soil erosion that goes into a wetland they might address it there and sometimes they might have it dug out.

There are definitely environmental officers that go out and they enforce rules about development within wetlands, but I would have to get a better answer back to you on the budget associated with wetland management or any initiatives we have to create wetlands or maintain them.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Yes. That would be great to get that information, and I'm just wondering if you're aware of the importance of wetlands as natural carbon sinks? Is that something that you're aware of and the impact that they have.

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Ms. Altass: Would it be a priority in your mind then for this department to ensure that we're moving that? Making sure –

Mr. Trivers: Well, you know, that's the funny thing about the word 'priority'. If you make too many things a priority then nothing's a priority. So I'll take that under advisement.

I think on that note, what we have is a Climate Change Action Plan that's in place and I wanted to bring that up in the debate. The hour got called the other night, and there is actually a lot of work being done within the department already to address climate change.

It's really interesting because if you look at the carbon pricing or carbon tax that was brought in and the way it was brought in with the add the four cents to fuel, take the three cents away, and then you end up with that one cent. Then any revenue that came in you give back through the registrations and licenses.

Really it's not helping with the carbon sequestration or reduction of carbon emissions.

Ms. Altass: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: So the great strides that have been made, – and in fact we're on target for that 1.4 right now – have all been done outside of a carbon tax really. So the department's doing some great work in this area.

So thank you for bringing up the idea of wetlands as a great carbon sequestration (Indistinct). I'll see if we can maybe add that in as part of our Climate Change Action Plan if it's not already there.

Mr. Mitchell: Pardon me?

Chair: Intervention from the Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. minister is probably aware of this, but Ducks Unlimited is a group on wetland conservation that has a strong close relationship with the department and I'm sure that's been maintained. Tom Duffy is our Canada rep; he does a lot of work with the staff within the department too.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you Leader of the Third Party.

Of course, the Leader of the Third Party was the minister of environment at one point so he worked closely with these groups. Thanks for your good work, especially with Ducks Unlimited.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: Just one more last point here.

Since we're mentioning yesterday or the discussion around that, I would just say it's lovely if we're heading toward that 1.4 target; however of course if that's not going to get us to a livable future I don't see that as you should be too excited about

Mr. Trivers: Be excited, be excited.

Ms. Altass: But, around wetlands, I wonder if you're looking into that to see if we're measuring how much carbon we capture each year as a result of the work that you are or are not doing, hopefully are doing, to expand or improve our wetland functions.

Mr. Trivers: Believe me, there's a lot of work being done and yes of course, it is being tracked.

There's going to be a progress update on the Climate Change Action Plan that I'm hoping we'll be able to get it out before the end of this sitting. I've directed the department to be very, very clear on specific actions that have been taken and the amount of carbon reduction that has occurred because of those actions.

It is exciting and there is a lot of action happening and a lot of action being taken and is being done without carbon pricing really. It's great; it's amazing what's being done.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I really appreciate the handout that you tabled just five or 10 minutes ago on the hardwoods and softwoods, and I'd just like to ask a couple of questions about it.

I know that this is a shipping summary but I assume it does correlate fairly closely with what's stuck in the ground ultimately. If you look at this you see that actually 96% of the trees we ship are softwoods and only about 4% are hardwoods. It's significant.

Mr. Trivers: It's a lot.

Leader of the Opposition: It's huge – many, many more and I'm wondering whether that ratio corresponds to what the historic and traditional make-up of an Acadian forest is. Is that the typical percentage you would have 96% softwood and 4% hardwood in an Acadian forest?

Mr. Trivers: I don't know the make-up of an Acadian forest off the top of my head but intuitively I would say your question is leading towards: that doesn't seem like an Acadian forest would be that heavy on the

softwood, there would be more hardwood. I think that's the point you are trying to make.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I don't know the answer to my question, either, but I suspect you are right and I tend to agree with you that probably historically and traditionally I have always imagined an Acadian forest is principally hardwoods. That may be a misconception of mine –

Mr. Trivers: I want to correct your numbers. It's about 91% if you take the total softwoods over the total, so about 91% are softwoods. I just did the calculation.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. I won't argue your math on that. Total softwoods – well, I am going to argue your math on that.

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Total softwoods are 685,559 –

Mr. Trivers: All right. You are right. I am wrong, yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes!

[Laughter]

Mr. Trivers: I must have mistyped something here.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

Sorry, I guess what I'm getting at, we have this romantic notion that the department is replanting through the programs that we have, the Acadian hard forest that we all feel so dewy eyed about, but it looks like that's not what we're doing at all. I'm wonder whether if we do – and a forester would know this, what historic percentages are, whether we could have that reflected in the trees that we send out from the Frank Gaudet nursery.

An Hon. Member: Could be related to that new facility they need.

Mr. Trivers: Well, I mean that's something to look into, for sure. It probably has to do with the demand as well. As well as what it takes to grow the different variety and species and how much it costs to grow a red oak versus a white pine. So it's probably not a simple answer as to why the mix is what it is, but that's something – that's a great question.

I am very happy to get a briefing on that, and I would share that briefing with you, for sure.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate that, minister.

One other question regarding species that we're planting here; as climate change accelerates and the comfortable boundaries of where trees can happily grow, move, you find that trees that were perhaps at the very southern range of where they could comfortably grow no longer can because weather patterns are changing and generally it's becoming warmer and I am wondering whether we are anticipating that and planting trees that are more towards the northern end of their comfortable growing range so that as climate change progresses – because trees are around for a long time, certainly the hardwoods are.

You want to plant the tree that has a potential life span of 200-300 years in a place where the climate is going to support it for that long. I'm wonder that's been taken into consideration in the trees that we're planting.

Mr. Trivers: I don't know the answer to that question, and that will be part of the same briefing note I would get back to you on. Why do we have the mix of trees we have in terms of species and whether that is impacted by demand? What are people asking for? Our projections of what species would do well as temperatures rise due to climate change and also costs to grow.

There will be a number of other factors beyond that as well. I can tell you that white pine and white spruce are they are, indeed, Acadian forest species, they are in that mix, probably not to the same extent here.

By the way, run that number again. I don't know – there is something not adding up for me.

Do the 68,559 over the 74,997 and it comes to 91% – anyhow.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh you're including –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm sorry, Chair.

You are including the native shrubs in that which are not part of the tree –

Mr. Trivers: Oh I see what you're saying.

Leader of the Opposition: So the ratio of hardwood to softwood is what I was talking about.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, okay very good. Not the shrubbery.

Leader of the Opposition: Anyway.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you for clarifying that.

Mr. Mitchell: Education minister.

Mr. Trivers: I thought I was going crazy. Math is the one thing I thought I was certain of. All right, here we go.

Initially, we're planting white pine and white spruce as these species would do well in field sites is what it says here because it's open fields that are primarily being replanted. They're also expected to do well under the projected change in climate. So white pine and white spruce do well in the rising temperatures and then once the trees are established and shade out the field grasses other native tree species can be added in.

Indeed as expected, of course, the experts in the department have a strategy, have taken this into account and that's how they are rebuilding the Acadian forest.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: In my experience if a tree is left to its own devices and you turn your back for long enough you

turn around and white spruce naturally will populate that space. They just like – that's what they do.

I am wondering why we haven't a plantation program or a planting program that includes a tree which will naturally reforest an area by itself for free.

Mr. Trivers: Well, my not being a forestry expert, I would have to look into how quickly that would happen, as you say, for it to be able to reforest itself. You have to plant the initial trees in the area to begin with, and probably it repopulates faster if you go and plant the whole field as white spruce.

That's a good question, and again, we've got forestry experts, right, here in the department and the strategy that they would have come up with it, if that's what they are doing, it will be based on solid, evidence-based science and that sort of thing would be one they would be all over because they are all about efficiency and spending money in the right places.

If you look at the budget and I will openly admit it and I think that's where some of the questions were going earlier, it would be nice if the nursery was bigger and we were doing 2 million trees a year. So they do a lot an awful lot on a small budget and they do a fantastic job that way.

That said, I've talked about briefing notes and bringing this back and bringing that back and then a tour of the Upton plantation, the nursery, maybe what we need to do is have the tour and then do a Q and A and a briefing session with the experts present that day. They have a really nice facility there where they do training that we can all sit in; they've got all the white boards and the information.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, in fact that's what we should do. We could have a field trip for the Legislature over to the nursery, we could finish off the budget estimates there.

Mr. MacEwen: The snow will be on the ground before we get through this.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I mentioned a minute ago about changing weather patterns and invasive species are an extremely expensive unwelcome addition to our environment here and out west of course, there's been tremendous damage to the natural forests that grow there. Are there any particular concerns here, regarding pests that will be introduced to the area as climate change kicks in?

Mr. Trivers: I have not been made aware of any that we're looking out for, I mean, where I grew up the Spruce budworm was a really big, big problem. As far as I know, that's under control on the Island. I just don't have the knowledge to answer that question. It hasn't been brought to my attention yet.

Again, the forestry experts are the ones who are watching for these things and as part of that briefing maybe at the nursery that's something we could talk about. Maybe the former minister has an intervention there?

Chair: (Indistinct) intervention –

Mr. Trivers: He was looking at me like he had something to say.

Chair: You're on your own.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm good, thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Minister you we're just saying how you believe that the forestry experts who have put together this plan have used evidence in creating it, recognizing that more than any other species here is the white spruce, which is as the Leader of the Opposition correctly identified, a field will turn into, essentially on its own.

Do you have any concerns that that make our forestry plan particularly vulnerable? What if we have something introduced that causes harm to that particular species, then it

looks like 80% of the trees you've planted will be wiped out, does that seem like a very diverse –

Mr. Trivers: To be clear, its white pine and white spruce that are initially being planted.

Ms. Lund: I'm looking at your white spruce, I see 388,000 of that tree planted, which is just substantially more than any other single species, white spruce.

Mr. Trivers: Yes and we've also got 84,000 eastern larch.

Ms. Lund: Which isn't even close to 388,000.

Mr. Trivers: But if you add up the arch and the white pine and the black spruce together, you know, and the balsam fir, there is a large portion that is the white spruce but I would have to do the math here, its maybe half.

Anyways, I would say – I mean that's a great question, again, I put my faith in the forestry experts and if they're saying the good strategy is white pine and white spruce, and then we'll get those established, shade out the field, grass and put other native tree spaces in. I'm sure they've done their research but that's a great question. I think this briefing is going to be amazing, it'll be a great field trip for us, we're going to have a lot of fun that day.

Mr. Mitchell: You're going to learn a lot.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I will say that when we're doing research and we're making a plan, the goal is incredibly important. So if we don't know what the goal is with our forestry plan, the mechanism by which we try to solve that problem could be vastly different.

If the objective is to grow a forest as quickly as possible so that we can cut it down for lumber, we would plant white spruce. If the objective is to create an Acadian forest that provides valuable ecosystem services and maintains soil, we would do something different. So I would love to know what

information your foresters are using to assess the appropriate pathway. What is their criteria, minister?

Mr. Trivers: Well as far as I know, it's based on my briefings so far. We're talking about rebuilding an Acadian forest, this is a strategy they came up with, they're the experts. Let's talk to them and you can give input. You seem to have quite a bit of knowledge in the forestry area, so let's do that. I don't know if this is going to happen here on the floor, we are going to be here until the snow flies, I think if we keep going down this path.

Chair: Intervention from the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: One thing that came to my knowledge when I did the portfolio that a lot of our property on Prince Edward Island is owned by land owners who probably inherit it, so they're really unsure what their forest should be. So there were some discussions between the PEI Forest Association, and the department and staff to help educate.

In a lot of cases land owners really aren't sure, first of all what's on their property, second of all, what they should thin out or change. That was a couple of years ago now, I don't know what they reaped from those discussions but I'm sure, because in all honesty, for probably close to 20 years things have been kind of stagnant.

So I think there's some, I'll say, rejuvenation in interest for that. So when you go back you'll probably find out there's been several meetings, a lot of people are now excited about changing what's wrong with their property.

I'm hoping you'll be very pleased to see what's come out of those discussions.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, member.

There will be a number of criteria that are guiding us, including requests for trees, including the goal of establishing the Acadian forests.

I mean, you can go out and you can say: this is our plan and this is what we want you to do. But in the end, people own and manage

their property, so your point about education is a good one as well.

I think if land owners are educated – and that’s what the member was saying, as well the hon. Leader of the Third Party – then, they will move in a direction that’s probably best for everyone.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you Chair.

I’m just going over this and I agree that what people choose to do on their private property is something that they can entirely do. Education is part of it but it’s not ours entirely to manage. But I also see there’s 75,000 acres of public land that we’re talking about in this and I would love if you could actually report back to the House at a future time on what criteria they are using to assess how we should be managing these properties.

Mr. Trivers: Great, thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

One more question for you, minister, on this section. I would love to know if there’s ever been any attempt from government to put a total economic value on the ecosystem services provided by our forests?

Mr. Trivers: You got that Michele?

Michele Koughan: I don’t.

Ms. Lund: You can get back to me on that.

Mr. Trivers: It might not be tomorrow.

Ms. Lund: You can tell me whether or not if it’s ever been attempted. I don’t expect you will be able to value those ecosystem services by tomorrow, but I will wait for your report on that minister.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Resource Inventory and Modeling

“Appropriations provided for the collection, analysis and interpretation of land use inventory information and trends.”

Administration: 4,500. Equipment: 5,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 5,900. Professional Services: 7,500. Salaries: 386,800. Travel and Training: 11,500.

Total Resource Inventory and Modeling: 421,200.

Shall the section carry?

Ms. Lund: Question.

Chair: A question from hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

I see the resource inventory and modeling has gone down in funding, although admittedly not by much, but I’m just wondering if this decrease is a reflection of progress that we’ve made in completing an up to date inventory of the provinces natural resources?

Mr. Trivers: So your question was, why did it go down?

Ms. Lund: I’m wondering if it is indicative of the fact that we have come further in completing an inventory of our provinces natural resources?

Mr. Trivers: No, not exactly. It was entirely in the salaries line and that’s because we’re trying to fill a forestry tech position and there’s been a delay in filling that, that’s why the numbers are down.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

When was the last survey of our total forest area conducted?

Mr. Trivers: That was 10 years ago.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

So the state of the forest report was the last survey done, from my understanding.

Mr. Trivers: That's correct; that's my understanding.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmont.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Are we currently in the process of redoing that?

Mr. Trivers: So, member, the next one is planned for 2020. We do know that there are about 800 permanent inventory plots across PEI, and we do measure about a third of them every year.

Ms. Lund: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: Let me see here. I might be able to get you some interim numbers on that. Let me see if the department has interim numbers for you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair. This is my last question.

How close are we to having an up-to-date forest cover map available to the public?

Mr. Trivers: I don't know that. I'll get back to you.

Ms. Lund: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this session carry? Carried.

Fish and Wildlife.

“Appropriations provided for the administration and management of various programs designed to conserve, protect and enhance the Province's fish and wildlife resources.” Administration: 26,500. Equipment: 11,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 174,000. Professional Services: 32,500. Salaries: 727,300. Travel and Training: 50,000. Grants: 237,500. Total Fish and Wildlife: 1,259,300.

Question from the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Minister?

Mr. Trivers: Over here, yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Would the minister ever consider providing fishing license, angling license to anybody over 65 for free on PEI?

Mr. Trivers: That's a great question.

I know that the Minister of Fisheries and Communities that was something he was advocating for at one point.

I don't know. I don't have the costs of that in front of me, but, I mean, let's face it, that would be the barrier would be the cost, I think. If the costs were low enough, it would be something to consider, and I don't know if you remember what any of those costs were?

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. Aylward: It's the right thing to do (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: A lot of pressure to do announcements like that.

Mr. Aylward: Breaking news.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So I'm just wondering, first of all, are you familiar with the federal government's Pathway to Canada Target 1 initiative?

Mr. Trivers: No.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering if this funding – if it's going to help Prince Edward Island meet its objective to protect 7% of the total area by 2020 as part of the federal government –

Mr. Trivers: That's what she's talking about.

Yes, I am familiar with that. Yes.

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

Ms. Altass: So will it? Will this funding help us reach that objective?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, and, in fact, we're actively pursuing that right now.

We're looking at primarily land that's owned by the government that's being leased out to farmers and looking at the land that's least suitable for agriculture and most vulnerable and trying to basically take that out of production and do things like reforest it or to put it back to whatever the proper state it would be in naturally.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So what percentage of revenue from hunting and fishing licenses goes toward grants administered through the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund?

Mr. Trivers: It's 100%, isn't it? I believe –

Ms. Altass: 100%?

Mr. Trivers: Let me double-check. I think it's all the funding – 100% of it goes there.

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

Ms. Altass: If it's 100%, I'm just wondering so how many projects will be funded then through the revenues gathered?

Mr. Trivers: All right. Well let me just check that. Do you see that in your grant handouts at all?

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

Ms. Altass: Well, I didn't see it. I don't know.

Mr. Trivers: Let's see here. Okay.

So there's a number of different projects. One would be the Wildlife Conservation Fund.

Now, I just want to make sure that that's where that funding goes.

I think that 175,000 goes into wildlife conservation.

Yes so if you do look at your grant handouts, you should have a breakdown of grant expenditures by organization, right?

Ms. Altass: Okay, yes.

Mr. Trivers: So what you are trying to figure out is that 175,000, how is it split between those organizations?

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

Ms. Altass: Well yes, how is it split? Are you saying that it's split between evenly over all of those organizations listed here? Is this a direct, you know, correlation between those revenues and what is in this book?

Mr. Trivers: That's my belief. Let's see here. Let me just double check, because there is a number of projects, right?

There is the Wildlife Conservation Fund. There is the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre, the Earnscliffe Pheasant Preserve, and then there is the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Fur Institute of Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada.

We even gave a little funding to the University of Saskatchewan, if you can imagine that – \$4,700 and that was part of our funding grants to wildlife conservation groups.

Now trying to draw that direct line, I believe it's out of that 175,000.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So the list you were just reading from, is that the complete list then of projects? I mean, that would tell us how many or is that just some examples of –

Mr. Trivers: That's the complete list. That's the complete list that I have here.

Ms. Altass: That's the complete list.

Mr. Trivers: But actually, there is firearm hunter safety training and there is a Wetland Conservation Fund.

The Wetland Conservation Fund may be the one you are really interested in.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Something else that is a little concerning or confusing; it doesn't appear that there's been a government report on the total state of PEI's wildlife made publicly available since 2007, is that accurate?

Mr. Trivers: So just to be clear what you are asking; you are saying the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund Committee? Which group are you talking about?

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

No, a government report on the total state of PEI's wildlife. So there is such a report that is from 2007 but there's been no, as far as I could find, updates to that since 2007.

Is that true?

Mr. Trivers: That sounds right to me. I'd have to check that out.

Are you suggesting you'd like to see an updated report?

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

Ms. Altass: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Trivers: All right.

Ms. Altass: Why do you think that that's the case, that there hasn't been any update to that?

Mr. Trivers: That is a very good question. I don't know the answer to that. Probably has to do with use of resources and the priorities, most likely.

Chair: The Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, would you consider allowing veterans in PEI and seniors over the age of 65 or 70 to be able to fish for free like they do in other provinces? Ontario has a model and there are other ones that are doing the same thing.

Mr. Trivers: You know, minister, that's a great question.

Chair: The question was asked a few minutes ago by Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. Trivers: The Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank just asked that question.

Mr. Fox: He actually supports it, too. So I'm going to pose the question again.

Mr. Trivers: I'll ask you. I don't have –

Chair: The question was already asked.

Do you have another question, minister?

Mr. Fox: Well, I'm asking about veterans.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: I can ask you because this was looked at before, I don't have the numbers in front of me. Do you know if it was ever costed out how much that cost?

Mr. Fox: No, but would you be willing to look at that as a department?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, for sure and if it's a reasonable cost, I don't see why we wouldn't do it.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Minister, just a little bit about the federal *Species at Risk Act* and what potential impacts that might have on

the Province of PEI, and whether you're considering putting together a PEI endangered species act?

Mr. Trivers: At this time, I'm not aware of any talks to do that. I can go back to the department. It hasn't come up in my briefings yet.

I don't know, perhaps in your work when you were in government as a former minister it had, but I know there is some Environment Canada funding where they are looking at species at risk like the Bobolink, right; forested landscape species at risk, so for example the bat problem. I don't know if we have actually decided to prepare a list of endangered species on PEI.

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

Mr. Henderson: I guess one of the issues that the federal *Species at Risk Act* has very far and wide implications on management. I do have some concerns about what might happen with the right whale issue that is – that's more of the minister of fisheries and the impacts it would have on, say lobsters or whatnot.

I just was wondering how knowledgeable you were on the *Species at Risk Act* and what potential implications it could have on the province of Prince Edward Island land owners because it's wide reaching and that's probably for a good cause or a good reason.

I just want you to be aware of it and I think you may want to consider looking at something that is more provincially related to PEI and how it is, sort of, at least sets forth the very particular protocol should one of those species at risk are on PEI and what happens, the difference between public and private land and that kind of thing.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks for the head's up there, member, and great collaboration.

Mr. Henderson: Good, thanks.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I think that's a fantastic point. The *Species at Risk Act*, yes, we are very much in support of that idea.

Do we at least have an updated inventory of the province's species currently at risk?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, sure. I mean, I can go and request that, and, again, I think when we – when we meet with the department I think this is going to be a day-long session –

Ms. Altass: Lots of ice cream.

Mr. Trivers: We're going to have a great time talking to the experts – you're going to have all your questions – we are within the budget, these are great budget questions because maybe we need to spend more money to put together this list and address this. I don't have the information to drill down into that right here at my fingertips.

Let's have that, let's ask the questions, and let's dig into that and I look forward to it.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I am wondering, of course, that's an important discussion we have here in the House and –

Mr. Trivers: True.

Ms. Altass: – and on our field trip as well, but I am wondering about what mechanisms are used to inform the public about species at risk and when a new species is added to the list?

Mr. Trivers: I will have to get back to you about that. Do you know, Michele, any insight on that one?

Michele Koughan: No, that would be more of a program question rather than a budget question.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Thinking about other things that, you know, might be included in a complete report on

PEI's, wildlife and the state of our wildlife, I am wondering about assessments of the impact of land use and climate change on the province's wildlife. Do we have any sort of report that has been done on that, any sort of assessment?

Mr. Trivers: That may be part of the Climate Change Action Plan. There might have been numbers put together on that. I think that's why it would be so great if we could have a dedicated standing committee we could look at climate change and this is part of getting that complete costing together and understanding the full impacts to make sure that's the total. That would be a great question for the standing committee, I would think.

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

Ms. Altass: I think that's it for now for me.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bernard: Do we have a sense of how much departmental funding goes towards fish stocking?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, fish stocking. I think we do have an answer for you on that one.

Yes so we're looking at that here, and it's under materials, supplies and services there is an animal and plant health/protection line and we have increased spending to \$60,000 for this budget.

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

Ms. Bernard: Do we have a provincial strategy for increasing native fish populations through stocking?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I believe we do. I think it's all part of this program. We work together with the fish hatcheries like the Abegweit Biodiversity Enhancement Hatchery, it's the main one. Let me get to the department and see if we can give that to you.

Ms. Bernard: Okay.

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

Ms. Bernard: How much revenue is generated each year in fines related to hunting and fishing offences?

Michele Koughan: That would be through justice and public safety, not through our department.

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

Ms. Bernard: Okay.

How much do we spend each year on precautionary rabies vaccination and management?

Mr. Trivers: Rabies vaccination and management? I don't know the answer to that. I would say it's probably not a large amount. I do have a line item here that is labeled drugs and vaccines with a \$500 amount.

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

Ms. Bernard: Is it possible to attach a dollar value to the amount of work staff does to create and enhance habitat for species at risk?

Mr. Trivers: It may be possible. Again, that's a pretty in-depth question that gets deep into the program. I think that's one that would be great for our field trip, and thanks for getting it on record here in the legislature, though, and we can talk about that later.

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

Ms. Bernard: Okay, so the annual economic cost of invasive species in Canada is estimated to be somewhere between \$13 and \$35 billion. Is it possible to attach a dollar value to the work field staff does related to the control and prevention of invasive species?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I would say it is. Now, let's just see here – invasive species. I'm sorry, I'm going to have to get back to you on that one. It depends as well. So you

are talking about probably – it might fall under fisheries or agriculture depending on the type of species you are talking about because typically it's plant species or species, water species.

Ms. Bernard: I'm kind of –

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

Ms. Bernard: Sorry, Chair. I am wondering if we see this amount increasing as climate change makes it more susceptible to invasive species.

Has the department ever considered developing a provincial invasive species strategy?

Mr. Trivers: Well, you know, I can double check on that one. I would say there probably is at the very least an informal strategy for handling invasive species. We'll get back to you on that, and if it's not within this department, it would be either within department of fisheries or department of agriculture and I am looking for an intervention, guys, if you have any information about invasive species. I don't know.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

The last question I have, what supports does the department give to community groups or watershed groups actively engaged in the control of invasive species. It might not be your (Indistinct) –

Mr. Trivers: Okay, I don't think there is any money that is specifically geared towards invasive species and the work watershed group does in that area.

The watershed groups are, for the most part, fairly autonomous and they do a lot of work in several areas, mostly in enhancing, of course, our waterways is what it's all about, but they decide what projects they want to do and then do that work. That would be a good question for the PEI Watershed Alliance, right?

Most of the time when we get funding for watershed groups we don't say: here's the

funding, we want you to do this. There is some project-based funding, but not for invasive species that I am aware of.

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, chair.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Climate Change Secretariat

“Appropriations provided to administer the Climate Change Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to address the current state of the Environment, and to administer the Federal/Provincial Low Carbon Economy Fund.” Administration: 14,500. Equipment: 2,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 6,800. Professional Services: 570,000. Salaries: 411,900. Traveling and Training: 60,700. Grants: 278,100.

Total Climate Change Secretariat:
1,344,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party?

Mr. Mitchell: So minister, has there been a change in the leadership in the climate change secretariat file?

Mr. Trivers: Do you mean, do we have the same director in place?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, so is the same person (Indistinct) that file?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, so Erin Taylor is still our manager of climate change. Todd Dupuis is the executive director. As you know, we've been in here for seven weeks and were looking at what's being done in the department, especially in this area and now that we even have climate change in the department title.

As I talking about earlier, given the federal funding available and the fact that really none of the carbon tax money is actually available to reduce carbon emissions, they've done a fantastic job. I think so far we're continuing to review the Climate Change Action Plan and as far as I know, there would be no reason to change the leadership.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm not suggesting you do, I just thought there was a change perhaps at that level. So those conversations with the federal government are ongoing, that Climate Change Action Plan that was developed 24 months ago or so, they are still following the bulk of that I guess at this point?

Mr. Trivers: Oh yes, that Climate Change Action Plan is still what we're perusing and what we're following. What I asked is that we update the plan and both, to change some of the wording and also to give examples to make it a little more plan language. That was some of the feedback we were getting, not so much following the plan but the general public was looking at it and saying: I'm not sure what action this really is?

It looks like how we're doing is talking about what change we should make, but in fact there's real actions underlying that.

As well we got a progress update, like I was saying earlier, that hopefully we can table maybe even before the ending of this sitting.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: That's good to hear, those two individuals that you mentioned are quality individuals that I'm sure are doing a great job. What I heard then is not accurate, they're still leading the file and I'm sure they'll do a great job of it.

Mr. Trivers: That's correct.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

We've increased our professional service budget significantly here; do you care to tell me a little bit about that minister?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so that's primarily as a result of that building Regional Adaptation Capacity and Expertise, the BRACE program, which is really now rebranded as Climate Sense – that announcement they made the other day.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

The line item for grants increased as well, what will the new grants allow for?

Mr. Trivers: All right, so the new grants, oh yes, so this is primarily looking at the agriculture project that we're doing with the low carbon economy fund. So most of this funding is going to work with – I believe this is the project for the best practices working with the federation of agriculture and the watershed groups, as well as the department and the potato board.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Could you explain a little bit about that particular project, minister?

Mr. Trivers: You know what, I'll take that back. I'm getting confused with the other one that was under the watershed. Let me just see if I can dig this one out.

This report, I always get these two reports mixed up. The federation of agriculture was looking at best management practices for reducing GHGs, which makes a lot more sense in this section and they came up with an excellent report with best management practices to do that, in farming.

So this is year two of that project and what are they doing in year two, I can get back to you with a full description of the project.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, chair.

What is the overall timeframe for that project? You said we're two years into a – how many years is (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so the agricultural best practices project is going over five years and we're just completing year two and then going into year three.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Is the department providing any oversight or input on the guidelines that this project puts forward?

Mr. Trivers: I would say yes, I'm not sure what you're getting at there?

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: I'm just wondering in what sort of capacity the relationship between the department and the federation of agriculture is on this particular project.

Mr. Trivers: So the department for all of these projects is a partner. There's always a lead from the government that's working with them and actively helping within the projects.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

When any other stakeholders be involved in developing the guidelines?

Mr. Trivers: In this case, let me see who's on the committee. I'm not sure who is involved with that project; let me see if I can find that here.

Definitely. I carried around that report with me for awhile too; (Indistinct) I don't have it here. Definitely the federation of agriculture is taking the lead. Our department is involved. I believe those are the two main partners, I can double check. Is there any particular stakeholder groups that you hope would be involved with that?

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Sorry for that, the first thing that came to mind is the National Farmers Union as another major body that's responsible for providing some support for farmers, I thought that might be another group that could be involved.

Mr. Trivers: I'll check to see if the NFU has been engaged in that project at all, not to

my knowledge, but I can double check that and see.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: So this department administers the low carbon economy fund, correct?

Mr. Trivers: It is.

Mr. Howard: So what's the total funds that are being administered?

Mr. Trivers: Ok, that's a big question. So I've got a break down here, I'll tell you what, I'm going to take a picture of this and send it to you. How does that sound, can I do that?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Trivers: Sorry, clerk.

I would love to table this for you so you have that information.

Mr. Howard: Perfect.

Mr. Trivers: Can I do that?

Mr. Howard: Absolutely.

Mr. Trivers: I would love to table this whole book but there's information in it I'm not allowed to.

Chair: Are you tabling –

Mr. Trivers: I want to table this –

Chair: – at this time?

Mr. Trivers: I have to do it later.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: So are there specific goals or targets that we're trying to hit with the administration of that low carbon economy fund?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so the Climate Change Action Plan is what is really guiding on the way that's being spent. I know member you've been asking some questions, particularly around solar and some in Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, some of the projects they have there. So efficiency PEI is the ones who actually administer the projects, but the funding comes through this department.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: So you guys would have the total of what comes in and they would see a portion of that, and might go to other departments for other climate change initiatives, this goes across all departments correct?

Mr. Trivers: That's right.

I'll give you an example from the document I'm going to table here. So, efficiency PEI is reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment through enhanced energy efficiency and fuel switching, which you're very, familiar with.

Federal, \$23 million, provincial, \$23 million and we're expecting to reduce by 144,732 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030. But I'll give you this document.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Trivers: But they'll give you this document.

Mr. Howard: Very good and do we know if those statistics have us hitting our goal of currently 1.4 megatons?

Mr. Trivers: My understanding and what I have seen so far is we're on track for that, and to your point, I mean, I know the member beside you there has a bill on the floor, too, amended to 1.2 as the target.

The department looked at it and said: man, can we meet that? How much would it cost? What could we do? They were digging into that to see what they could do, and it would be extremely difficult and very costly, but that's a discussion we could have.

I'm hoping that maybe I can get some of that information that I can table in our discussion if that bill ever comes back to the floor, too.

Your question was whether we're going to meet the targets and the answer is yes.

Like I said, we're going to have that progress update and it should give exact progress on all the different parts of the Climate Change Action Plan.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Does this department also administer the build Canada fund or is that through infrastructure and energy?

Mr. Trivers: I believe the build Canada fund is through TIE, but, Michele, can you confirm that?

Michele Koughan: Yes, the build fund is through the Efficiency PEI program. The revenues come through our department.

Mr. Trivers: Oh they do? Okay.

Michele Koughan: Yeah. We (Indistinct) have 24-25 million. They have to record the expenditures. We have the two programs in our department is the reforestation program as well as the agriculture best practices program. We have the expenditures for those.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Very good, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks.

Minister, you said something very interesting there: your department has been digging down on the possibility of what it costs to get to 1.2 as opposed to 1.4. I didn't get exactly what you said but very expensive, I think, was the term you used.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, it would require – and I said that in the House in response to Question Period – it would require sacrifice

by Islanders and be expensive but right now it's very, very high ball.

My point, just to clarify as well that we have got experts in the department who are – these are the people who have been living and breathing climate change and federal programs and monies and targets and how we get down to do this, and that's one of the reasons I would like to get this to standing committee so we can get the experts in.

We have them within our grasp here so they can present to the standing committee and talk to you about what a 1.2 target means and all the costs that are surrounding it so that we get a full picture before we go and change the legislation.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Is there any possibility, minister, of you making those – because – let me back up before I ask the question.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: How much it costs to reduce our carbon emissions depends on which strategy we employ to get there.

Some mechanisms are much more expensive than others. Some are much more effective than others. So I would be really interested in the calculations that you just alluded to, which strategies the department is showing a preference for when you make a comment like it's going to create a great deal of burden for Islanders and cost a lot of money.

Is there any possibility you could table the information that on which you are making those comments?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, I mean, I will look at that. As you would probably be aware of, there is a whole ton of assumptions right now.

It's kind of a going through and creating a living document with a bunch of assumptions both on federal funding versus provincial dollars and targets

and everything else to come in with their estimates.

I will see what I can table. I will see if we can get something together that – you know, I – there might be something. There might be something. So I can show some of the work that's being done, but my preference would be instead of tabling that document and then say: We're going to hold you to that document this is what you said.

I would like to have that discussion in a standing committee so it's really a work in progress, right? As opposed to being the government said this and now – that's why they are reluctant to release that information, I would say. I think I can release some of it, at least.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, I appreciate that minister, and I had a talk with Todd Dupuis at the environmental awards ceremony that we attended a couple of weeks ago and he mentioned that his department is working on it. He didn't give me details of course or anything –

Mr. Trivers: No, no.

Leader of the Opposition: – but he did say they were thinking about this and I was glad to hear that.

I think both sides want to send this issue to standing committee for discussion and for me the discussion should be around – we know what targets we have to reach. Let's find the most effective, cheapest way of doing that, so I have no issue with us discussing that in committee but I think we need to do it in the context of the stricter targets, the real targets of 1.2 rather than 1.4.

I don't disagree with the notion. I know you prefer not to adopt those real targets before you go forward.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, and for one thing, I mean, in the legislation itself it's tied directly in the clause to carbon pricing, right? And so there is a preference given to that and that may be very well be the best way.

That was what was put forward by the stranger on the floor the other night is carbon pricing would have the lowest cost for the greatest amount but also on the floor they say what kind of carbon pricing are we talking about to reach that, and of course there was a lot of waffling around and didn't want to give those numbers because, I mean, if you look at the parliamentary budget office for Canada, they're talking like a 24 cents a litre, if you look at their numbers that's what we're looking at.

Those are the sorts of numbers I think we need to get on the table and really understand and like you said have an open, honest dialogue with Islanders before we change that target, right? I mean it's easy to say: Yes, we have to meet that target otherwise there is going to be destruction and death and it's the end of the world as we know it, but this is a really, really important issue and Islanders really, really want us as members to make sure our taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely.

They would like to see a full breakdown of the costs by the experts to show that if we're going to pay 24 cents a litre on gas then we better be able to back that up very, very squarely.

The fact we have been able to make so many strides to the 1.4 target really, in essence without any carbon tax money at all and not even the impact of a carbon tax for people to use less fuel means maybe there is a way to get there that is cost effective without a carbon tax. So tying that in the legislation to carbon pricing is what worries me and one reason it's there is no political motive here or very little. We've got to send that bill to committee to die, that kind of thing. That's not what we're doing here.

We want to get everything out in the open and have a very fulsome discussion before we change the legislation.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Just to clarify when you say the PBO, parliamentary budget office recommendation in order for a carbon tax to meet the entire carbon emission reduction by itself with no other measures in place is an increase of 24

cents over 10 or 15 years, depending on how you measure it.

So you're looking at about 2 cents a year. So, you know, it's important that we don't suggest to Islanders that the price of gas is going to go up 24 cents tomorrow if we were to adopt a carbon tax –

Mr. Trivers: Right, no.

Leader of the Opposition: That's just not, not even close –

Mr. Trivers: It's a good point to make.

Leader of the Opposition: The other thing is, and this is a question, minister, have you in all of your research regarding the various options that are available to reduce carbon emissions, be they incentives, be they regulation, have you ever come across anything which has claimed to be as cheap or effective as a carbon tax in reducing emissions?

Mr. Trivers: You are making an assumption first of all that I have done all this extensive research into that, which I will admit I haven't.

Leader of the Opposition: You're the minister for climate change.

Mr. Trivers: The good news is my department –

Mr. Deagle: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Donagh.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning and of Environment, Water and Climate Change, that this House adjourn until the 4th of July at 2:00 in the p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Everyone have a wonderful evening.

The Legislature adjourned until Thursday, July 4th at 2:00 p.m.