

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's wonderful to be back in the Legislature today, especially on this beautiful sunny day. We've got some great friends here in the gallery; I see that the Leader of the Third Party has some special guests.

I'd like to mention Louise Martin and her daughter joining us. Louise does a great job on CBC and on *Compass* and it's great to have her here and it's great to see you instilling in your daughter political aspirations, maybe.

I hope everyone has a wonderful day and enjoy your weekend.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody back for another beautiful day in the Legislature, absolutely, and outside the first summer weekend, beach weekend coming up and of course the big festival up in Cavendish. So, I hope everybody who's planning to go to that has a wonderful time.

I'd also like to welcome everybody to the gallery. It's lovely to see Louise Martin and her daughter, Sophie, here. You were talking hon. member about political aspirations, and I understand that Sophie in the recent election represented the Green Party in her school and she won.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: So she's already more accomplished than I am; very, very impressive.

I see Bethany Collicutt-McNab is here again; lovely to see you, Bethany. Today she has with her, James David Bernard, so really

nice to see you two, and of course, Bonnie, and her family; lovely to see you too.

I hope everyone has a lovely, warm PEI weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Certainly, it is indeed very special for me to rise in the House today to welcome some very special guests, and to be honest with you I didn't even know they were coming. They surprised me in a big, big way when they got here this morning.

So with me in the gallery today is my lovely wife, Bonnie, my two very special beautiful granddaughters, Callie and Jessie Mitchell, and a special visitor today is their grammie on the other side, Donna Kelley. I think they cooked this up a few days ago and left me out of the know on this one so really special to have my two granddaughters in the House today.

So what that means is that I'll be giving my questions to the other hon. members at the back, and I'll be very well-behaved today.

It's also good to see Louise Martin and her daughter, Sophie. I'm assuming what the Leader of the Opposition meant was that you won on your first time. I think that's what he meant by that. So it's good to have you both in the House.

I've been out to do a lot of interviews with Louise the past number of years. She's very tough, tough questions, but hard-hitting, getting to the point. So it's great to have you in the House today as well.

I, too, would like to mention to the beautiful day it is today, but the beautiful weekend that is ahead of us.

As well, I took a few moments to look at the Weather Channel this morning. It looks like it's going to be an extremely beautiful week coming towards us next week, so to all this weekend whether you're going to the beach, whether you're going to the Cavendish

Beach Music Festival or whether you're just cutting your grass it's going to be a wonderful weekend. I hope everybody gets out to enjoy that.

As always, to all that are watching in from home today, I certainly hope that you have a great weekend as well and that you enjoy the proceedings today here as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome. I rise and say hello to everybody in District 19 this morning, but I also want to say hello to Sophie because I was informed this morning a minute ago that she has – wants to be a Page possibly coming up. So maybe she could start today and help us out where we're a little bit short staffed there.

I want to recognize this young man here. When he came in this morning I noticed him wearing a nice hat. He's wearing a Boston Bruins hat which actually the hon. member over there would probably appreciate, but welcome to the House and have a good day.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'd like to first and foremost just welcome anyone that may be tuning in on the Internet or on EastLink today. A special greeting to any constituents in District 6: Stratford-Keppoch that may be tuning in.

A special welcome to Louise Martin and her daughter, Sophie. Louise and I have become very good friends over the last number of years and in various ways have been supporting each other and it's wonderful always to see you.

I'd also like to send out a special birthday greeting to one of the essential services here in the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Trevor Campbell is celebrating his birthday tomorrow. Trevor, of course, is the manager of broadcast services and technology, and

we couldn't look our best of course unless we had Trevor helping us out.

Also, there's a very, very big celebration tomorrow at The Mount. Blanche MacAleer, mother of Wes MacAleer, is having a 100th birthday celebration tomorrow, and I look forward to attending that at The Mount.

Last but not least, I'm actually traveling today to one of my favourite parts of Prince Edward Island. I'm going to the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road's district.

I have some meetings scheduled up there this afternoon with the folks from the Health Centre, as well as the Community Care Coop. Always love getting up to that neck of the woods, stopping into Eugene's to see what's happening, and have a standing reservation always at Shirley's Café.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to everyone in the gallery. I'm not going to start mentioning names because there's so many of you, I don't want to miss anybody, but welcome and thank you for being here. And welcome to all of my colleagues.

I thought that perhaps I was going to find out that I was related to the Minister of Health and Wellness, because I too am heading to Tignish-Palmer Road for the weekend to celebrate my Arsenault family reunion so tonnes and tonnes of cousins and relatives.

I missed the last one, my mom and her sisters plan it every four years. I was doing my masters in counseling and there was a hurricane in Nova Scotia at Acadia so I wasn't able to make it home.

So I'm very much looking forward that, so I just want to welcome all my cousins from near and far who are on the Island today, and say have a great weekend to constituents of Charlottetown-Victoria Park. I will not be back until Tuesday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too want to recognize some of the gallery as well. Normally I don’t have many from O’Leary-Inverness, yesterday I had three, and today I have one. So James David Bernard is here from the community of Lennox Island and it’s great to see him here.

I’m pretty sure Bethany’s father, Harvey, will be watching the proceedings here so it’s good to get on the record that James David was here.

I’m not sure, necessarily James David’s political affiliations, maybe he’s trying to figure it all out, but his sister, Michala was actually in one of my campaign photos. I sort of used that as leverage for some of the Collicutt family to say you know you got to support Michala if nothing else.

So anyways, also Louise Martin and her daughter, Sophie, all the best in your quest to become a page. You will find it a very interesting experience should you be successful in getting that designation through your school.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not very often a Page gets to bring their greetings.

I’d like to also welcome everyone to the gallery here today. Especially my mom who’s usually always watching online and sometimes sends me a text saying: Why would you say something so dumb?

But I want to rise today to congratulate a good friend of mine from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Richard Kent and he was married on this past weekend to his wife, Brooke Anderson. They were married at Brooke’s parent’s house, an apple orchard in Duncan, British Columbia, on Vancouver Island, which I’m sure was very beautiful.

I just want to congratulate them. I know them well through refereeing soccer and refereeing with him at numerous national tournaments. I just want to congratulate him. He’s a good friend of mine and an even better referee.

Congratulations to them and everyone have a good weekend.

Thank you.

Speaker: Hon. members, I’d just like to stand also and welcome everyone to the gallery.

I love it when we see our youth in here. That’s our future sitting here with us today. When I was their age, I had no idea I was going to be sitting here speaking out to them. Our youth today have no idea what’s in plan for them.

Louise, I want to welcome Louise here. Louise was good enough when it’s take your student to work day. I always went out and visit CBC and Louise always gave us the tour of CBC. So I’m glad she took her daughter with her to work today to see us at work.

Sophie I know how you feel. There was three elections in my school, in my district. The kids had three elections and I won all three elections at my school. So I know how you feel. I know I have – I’m sure I have a vision that you’re going to be into politics when you grow up.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Rocky Point Wharf

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

I used to live in Kelly’s Cross-Cumberland, and, without moving an inch, I find myself as a resident of New Haven-Rocky Point. Rocky Point is a beautiful corner of my district renowned for many things, including most recently being the home of Brian Francis, PEI’s first Indigenous Senator.

It takes over – a little over half an hour to row from the Charlottetown waterfront to the remains of the ferry wharf at Rocky Point. The ferry service to Rocky Point was the last of the three serving the city to close.

The ferries crossed the three rivers giving access to the interior parts of the province and making it easy to get from the country into the city, Charlottetown. Ferries ran from Charlottetown to Southport across the Hillsborough River, to York Point across the York or the North River and to Rocky Point across the West or the Eliot River.

The first to disappear was the route to Southport which was no longer needed after the building of the Hillsborough rail bridge in 1903. The ferry to York Point was discontinued a few years later but the Rocky Point Ferry was in regular service until the early 1960s when the West River Causeway was built providing access for those who lived along the south shore.

The wharf area remained in use by local fishers and recreational boaters until very recently, but it has now deteriorated into disrepair with a public notice being posted just this spring warning local residents to stay away, do not trespass. Most harbours and wharfs fall under federal jurisdiction, but the Rocky Point wharf was handed over by DFO to the province back in the 1970s.

Many people from my district have expressed concerns to me about the safety of the current situation as the wharf continues to break apart and pilings and metal rebar become detached.

Of particular concern is the potential danger to small craft in this area, hitting one of these loose pilings. It is my hope, and that of residents of this area that the wharf be cleaned up and all materials removed to ensure a safe and environmentally sound area in order that we can all once again safely enjoy the beach in this area and the water.

I shall be submitting a written question to the Minister for Transportation, Energy and Infrastructure to this effect later today and look forward to this government's commitment to provide a safe and clean area for Rocky Point residents and indeed all Islanders to enjoy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Food Insecurity

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Household food insecurity is insecure or inadequate access to food due to financial constraints. The experience of food insecurity can range from concerns of running out of food before there's more money to buy anymore to the inability to afford a balance diet, to going hungry, missing meals in an extreme cases not eating for entire days because of a lack of food and money.

In PEI a staggering one in five households are food insecure and over 65% of those households are waged or self employed. This persistent need is filled primarily by a wide range of community organizations, including many that are entirely volunteer run and led, one example is the PEI Food Exchange, a registered non-profit volunteer organization.

The food exchange was formed in 2013 after the first proof report on household food and insecurity was issued. From there website: Concerned that PEI, a province famous for its agriculture had some of the highest rates of household food insecurity in Canada, a small group of citizens came together to determine what could be done to empower individuals to increase food security for themselves and their communities.

One of their many initiatives is to organize volunteers called gleaners to harvest non-commercial crops on Island farms. They harvest approximately 10,000 pounds of fresh produce every year, which is shared between the people who help with the harvest, with social service agencies and with farmers themselves.

The food exchange also provides gardening and food skills workshops, including some that were supported by the Department of Agriculture, an information on local food sources.

Volunteers like those at the food exchange provide thousands of hours of labour and expertise to fill critical gaps in our social

support system. From the parents who serve breakfast bagels at our schools to the GEBIS monks and volunteers who bake and deliver fresh rolls across the province every week.

This is typical of our community, who always steps up to help those in need but poverty is not the sole responsibility of the community to address or solve, government has a responsibility to safe guard the common good. It is government that makes budget decisions, raises funds through taxes and fees and decides what resources are given to social programs, which programs to support and who to listen to.

Real action on eliminating poverty begins with government acknowledging the scope of the challenge and its responsibility to take that challenge on. We can't continue to be comfortable with the assumption that community can and should step in to shoulder an increasingly heavy burden, because one day they may not be able to and then the true cost of poverty on our own will be unavoidable.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the countless volunteers who show up everyday across the program, who give their time, expertise and resources to those who need it most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Unpacked Zero Waste Store

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wearing the many hats I wear for the various roles in my life, both personal and professional realms, I meet and work with the most resilient, strong, creative, innovative resourceful women.

The sort of women who set a goal, figure out the how's and despite the challenges and barriers that come, they rise above to meet that objective. I'm so blessed to have these women as role models.

One such woman is Britannia Willes. Britannia moved to PEI from British Columbia almost a year ago.

I had the pleasure of meeting her while I was campaigning, and we became fast friends. She shared with me the fascinating details of living life that is waste free.

Even more interesting and sad to me, was hearing of the barriers she faces in trying to live that low ecological footprint lifestyle on the Island.

Britannia is a life coach who helps people in their relationships. She believes that we all have a part to play in this world with ourselves, others, and the planet as it pertains to relationships, sustainability, and responsibility.

Fast-forward not even three months since I met her, and she is now in the process of combining all these beliefs and passions and is opening a new show in Charlottetown called "Unpacked" where one can shop for various items that come package-free.

She says our hope is that once Islanders see what's possible in terms of zero waste shopping that they are inspired to continue making choices that favour the health of our planet. She believes there are small but powerful choices we can all make as individuals to better the planet, and she is leading by example.

They are having a fundraiser for both Unpacked and Climate Action Network Canada on Saturday, July 13th at the Sugar Skull Cantina from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. There is a great lineup of local talent planned, and I am told tickets are going fast.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Okay.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are questions taken as notice from the budget estimates, perhaps this is the wrong time, but there are answers to questions in the Legislature. Just to highlight some of them.

There's one on about the donation of used fire trucks. No one's actually contacted the department from the Island and the trucks are greater than 30 years old.

There's other ones here about whether the nursery sells to the public and competes with the private sector. The answer is no. We do have trees on consignment for private nurseries like Van Kampen's, Doiron's, Earthform, Jewell's, Island Pride, Nabuurs, Kool Breeze, and John's Greenhouse.

We do not use herbicides on the 75,000 acres of public land we manage. A small amount is applied on private lands under the Forestry Management Program, only and if where needed.

In 2018, 70 hectares .02% of PEI's forested land received some glyphosate treatment. That's a product that's usually used on agricultural land.

There's several other great responses to your questions. I did want to highlight one more while I'm standing.

This was with free fishing licenses for seniors and veterans. They are currently free for those over 60, but there is a \$20 wildlife conservation fee. If you're over 65, it's a \$13 wildlife conservation fee and 100% of that goes to conservation work.

We don't have any free reduced options for veterans, but this could be done and we're working out logistics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. member, anytime we have responses to questions, it's from Question Period, not budget estimates; just a little reminder for next time for any of the ministers.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But they were great responses, thank you.

Although the official opposition has stated vigorously and repeatedly that we are disappointed in the amount of money pledged in the budget to the priorities that we have brought to government, one item I personally was glad to see receive some funding was for midwifery.

Many people have been advocating for the establishment of midwifery services on PEI for decades, and I believe that this is actually the first time that dedicated funding has found its way into a budget. For that, I am indeed grateful.

According to the budget, this year's allocation of \$150,000 is and I quote: "to allow these services to be appropriately established consistent with current and anticipated demand."

Midwifery services on PEI

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Could you tell the House exactly what that statement means?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I've spoken several times during this session with regards to midwifery services and in the past when I was in opposition, I'm certainly looking forward to having this service provided here on Prince Edward Island.

There is a process that needs to be followed. We need to ensure that when midwifery is fully operational and introduced here on Prince Edward Island that it's just not done haphazardly.

There's consultation to be taken with, obviously, the college of physicians, the PEI Medical Society, we have to determine how it's going to be introduced, if there's going to be employees of Health PEI, if it's going to be user pay. So there's many issues around the introduction of midwifery here on Prince Edward Island.

But as the Minister of Health and Wellness, I'm extremely proud that I'm going to be the

minister that will finally be able to make this happen here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Midwifery services include, pre conception, anti-natal, delivery and post-delivery care and they've been shown to be cost-effective and to provide the type of continuity of care that a first class health care system is striving to provide, not just when it comes to child birth but in all areas of care.

This year's funding is presumably only the beginning of a strategy to make midwifery services available to all Island women who wish to use them.

Wait time for fully-funded midwifery services

To the same minister: How long can Island women expect to wait before fully-funded comprehensive midwifery services are available to them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, as I mentioned, we're going through a process this current period of time with regards to the consultation to see how it's actually going to be integrated within our health care system here on Prince Edward Island.

Standing here today, my goal as the Minister of Health and Wellness will be to have midwifery introduced, fully operational, available at the very latest, January 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I mentioned yesterday that I had a really satisfying answer, that one almost beats the one that I

had yesterday. I'm absolutely thrilled to hear that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: 2020 is under this budget.

Leader of the Opposition: Studies have repetitively shown midwifery to be both safe and cost effective. A recent evaluation of the midwifery approach to maternity care in Ontario noted that midwives have lower intervention rates, fewer readmissions to hospital and shorter hospital stays and there is much money to be saved, up to \$800 per midwifery attended hospital birth and almost \$2000 for home births where that is appropriate.

Midwifery services availability to Island women

To the minister: With such obvious benefits to the provincial person, to mothers and babies, does he envisage midwifery services to be available to all Island women, who desire to have them, regardless of where they live on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, this is all part of the process of consultation with our other health care services here on Prince Edward Island. We can't just simply say you know what: we've got two, three midwives, go out and provide the service. We need to ensure that they're integrated correctly and properly with the other health care service providers here on Prince Edward Island.

I know Susan England has just recently dropped off some documentation to my office and we're in the process of scheduling a time that, myself, as the health minister, can sit down with Ms. England and her association so that we can work through some of these details as well and I certainly look forward to that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Indeed, Joyce England, has been the primary advocate for this for decades here on Prince Edward Island, represents BORN PEI and came to us prior to the election, the most recent election, with a very clearly, articulated and laid out, fully costed plan, which I assume is what the minister will receive.

You mentioned in the answer I loved so much a minute ago minister, that January 2020, which actually falls within this budgetary year. I see that only \$150,000 is currently devoted to midwifery. Does he imagine that that amount of money is actually going to provide the beginnings of midwifery services to Island women here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

That would be my anticipation to start with. Yes, obviously January is still in this fiscal year which would then be leaving us three months.

Again, when we sit down and have this collaborative consultation process with the association, with the college, with the various societies, we'll have a better determination of exactly how many midwives would be required here on Prince Edward Island, what the regulations are around them, how they're going to be integrated with the other health care service providers.

And until we have those stages done, it's impossible for me to answer precisely, exactly, how many we're going to have, where they're going to be.

But once we've worked through that process, I'm very confident that Islanders will be very pleased with the rollout.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The documentation that Joyce brought to me last year indicated that in order for us to have a fully-funded comprehensive midwifery service here on Prince Edward Island, it would cost about a million dollars a year.

User-pay for midwifery services

One of the statements made, again, in the answer I loved so much, I'm starting to love it a little bit less now – was you mentioned user-pay, could you elaborate a little bit on what you might mean by that? A user-pay for midwifery services seems like an odd statement for a health minister to say.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, as I said, we have to still go through this whole consultation process with our current health care providers. Currently on Prince Edward Island there is approximately 1,400 births annually here on Prince Edward Island and currently, as well, our compliment of health care professionals, OBGYN's etc cetera, are more than capable of handling that number of births.

Yes there is a request to have midwifery here on PEI, I'm extremely supportive of this service, I always have been and I will continue to be. But until we have all the details around how midwifery will be introduced, integrated in our health care system, it's impossible for me to answer specifically, precisely today on how that will be rolled out. It's a process and we're working through that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Can I just get a confirmation though from the minister that when he used the word user-pay he's not suggesting that for Island women to access midwifery services that they will themselves have to actually pay for that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, as I've said, we are working through a process currently right now and until we have all the details and we've had all the consultation with all the health care providers here on Prince Edward Island in addition to the midwifery association, I can't specifically answer that question.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Wow.

One health service that was not include in the government's platform or in last week's budget was an expansion of dental services to those on a low-income, including elderly Islanders and also to broaden the services that are currently available to people on social assistance.

There's a large gap that exists for many Islanders who have dental needs, yet have no private coverage and insufficient funds to access even a basic level of dental care that they need to be comfortable and healthy.

Basic level of dental care for all Islanders

Question to the same minister: Does government have any plans to expand dental services so that these Islanders who are falling into that gap are offered a basic level of dental care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Again, as the new Minister of Health and Wellness here on Prince Edward Island, seven weeks in, there's many conversations going on.

Just recently, I've met with Dr. Joanne Stewart who was a dental practitioner in Stratford and we're talking right now about an issue that she's brought forward to me

that I never really thought about before and it's with regards to our seniors when they go into long-term care facilities.

Quite often, their dentures are in very good shape, their teeth are in very good shape, but unfortunately, they don't receive a dental the care in long-term care facilities that perhaps they should.

I know my father, himself, when he was a resident of one of these facilities I had to take him out to a dentist to have some work done.

The association is looking forward to sitting down with me to share some of their ideas moving forward and I look forward to that opportunity.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I appreciate the segway. Currently our public dental services are available to all children under the age of 17 and I'm personally aware of how important that is and how valuable a service that is – the societal benefits of giving every Island child the opportunity to enter adulthood in good dental health.

Demographic changes, however, indicate that increasingly more of the demand for dental services will fall on the elderly. A segment of the population more likely than ever to have retained their own teeth and who, often as they age, lose whatever dental coverage they may have had prior to retirement.

Dental care for elderly

To the same minister: Has any thought been put into shifting some of the emphasis of publicly funded dental care to that demographic?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The simple answer to that question is: no.

We're in very early days of this government. Again, I've been minister for seven weeks now. I'm having discussions, consultations with the dental association. You just finished asking very important questions around the child dental program. Roughly we have about a 52% uptake on that program. I'd like to see that higher because dental health is – as you would well you know dental health is a very important aspect of an individual's overall health.

But until I'm able to get out and actually sit down with the dental association to see what their thoughts and recommendations are to speak internally with the public dental program, I can't give you any hard fast answers, but it is a file that I'm working on and I look forward to bringing some results back.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every year in our Island schools grade three students write literacy and math assessments. Throughout the year we work on building the foundations of literacy and numeracy skills. Students are supported with guiding visuals, such as anchor charts, word walls, number lines, alphabets, whatever it is that they need to learn and grow.

At all times the teacher is circulating working one-on-one with students and in groups. When it comes time for the assessments, we must remove all visuals and we are not allowed to help them, should they need it.

Results of literacy and math assessments

A question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Could you please tell us what data the results of these assessments provide?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, assessments are an area that we're looking at very closely in the department. As you know our deputy minister comes from a strong education background and has been involved in advocating in this area before.

So the data is meant to provide direction for improving curriculum and learning practices like the ones you talked about and provide professional development for teachers where needed.

I can say the direction of the department is we feel we've collected a lot of data, it's time to step back and put that data into use to do exactly what its supposed to do.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I taught grade three, I felt a lot of pressure and was relieved to move to a different grade level the following year. I loved the age group, they were fun, engaged and creative.

As an educator, I both understand and implement best practices in my work, yet found myself under the stress doing the complete opposite and taught to the test in preparation for these assessments. Because it was my job, I already knew where my students would struggle and where they might find success or not.

A question to the minister: Do you believe we require a formal assessment to gather this data?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question and it's a hot topic of debate among teachers, as well as department staff.

In order budget when we get on the floor here very soon, I'm looking forward to it because we are doing a reorganization of our department. What we're going to do is take the silos where we have curriculum and assessment and really delivery and we're going to try and focus them in.

So if you're a grade three teacher, we're going to try and put the assessments held by the department, in the day-to-day classroom level so that the teachers have input as well and can use those. And we don't go through this big provincial common assessment, one off. That's the vision and I look forward to getting the members input into exactly how we do that.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are examples of jurisdictions all over the world who are leading in the field of education, Finland for example. The mission of their system is to graduate happy humans, who know themselves, their strengths, their talents and their challenges. They have a whatever-they-need approach from the time they enter school until around the age of seven or eight years old, a truly child-centered approach.

They take the time to build relationships and grow a love of literacy, numeracy and community. The goal is that they will be on an equal playing field to achieve individual success, whatever that looks like for them. They begin academics at the age of eight, so no academics before then unless it's an interest for them.

Grade three assessments and learning needs

A question to the minister: If teachers already have that data, would the money we spend on grade three assessments not be better spent on meeting the individual leaning needs of these students?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, of course, the member is correct. There are lots of jurisdictions that do different things.

In Alberta, I became aware recently that they do a common assessment at the beginning of grade three to assess how much the students know to help the teachers when they go into grade three instead of trying to

do that at the end and then apply it to the next class coming up.

I think what you're going to see in our department is we are going to be putting the grade three assessments on hold so that we can actually go and address it at the classroom level for the next year at least.

Again, I'm looking forward to working with the member who has a lot of experience and I think it's going to be an exciting time for teachers and for students.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders are concerned about the state of their Island's water resources. I heard at many doorsteps during the last election, and I would be shocked if I was the only one, there was unprecedented public engagement throughout the consultation of the *Water Act*. Furthermore, this government has repeated their catch phrase in this Legislature 'it's about people.'

Water withdrawal regulations

Question to the minister: Do you feel that the water withdrawal regulations released yesterday are an accurate representation of the concerns that you've heard from Islanders?

Speaker: the hon. Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the department has done a fantastic job of putting these regulations together. It was a little unclear to me as to why the previous administration held onto them so long because my goal has been, all along since the very first week that I became minister – and I said it publicly – was to release these for public consultation because we want to make sure that, indeed, they do reflect the priorities of Islanders and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I went for a really interesting drive yesterday morning. I joined approximately about 50 other Islanders in the Kensington-Malpeque area, which is District 20, to tour holding ponds in that area. To say that there's concerned people in the area would be an understatement.

Holding ponds in Kensington area

Question for the minister responsible for environment: Could you tell us a little bit about those holding ponds in the area?

Speaker: The Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, you'll know from the media yesterday that really right now there's very little, if any, regulation that's applied in a formal sense to holding ponds and I asked the department to look into and get me a list of all the holding ponds that we have on the Island because that wasn't information that was tracked.

There are about 19 holding ponds and in some cases, they're very large. As I stated yesterday, it's the public perception, and there's a lot of reality to that, that these holding ponds are built really to skirt the high-capacity well moratorium by combining low-capacity wells acting like high-capacity wells and filling a holding pond.

We are taking action, both in my department and the department of agriculture, to address this situation to make sure the proper regulations are in place, to make sure we protect the public interest in water and in land.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I'm happy to hear this.

It would appear that the design of these holding ponds are for the purpose, as you mentioned, to skirt around legislation set out by the *Water Act*.

Yesterday during a briefing on the water withdrawal regulations, the minister

informed the opposition caucus that public funds have been awarded to complete work on some of these holding ponds. I also understand that this government has plans to stop this funding.

Cancellation of government funding for holding ponds

Question to the minister responsible for environment: Could you please tell me when this government will officially cancel the program?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, indeed, it was brought to my attention that in some cases – and I couldn't tell you the exact mechanism of how that works – that's of course, the minister of agriculture's portfolio, but in some cases there is funding that's provided to farmers that may be applied to holding ponds and we are going to stop that funding as soon as possible.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Social Development and Housing and the minister responsible for West Prince.

Several months ago, the province issued a request for proposals respecting a 30-megawatt wind project. Now, I'm assuming, or I heard, there were three proposals put in, one from western PEI, one from Irishtown area, and the other one from Eastern Kings.

Status of RFP proposal for wind project

Minister, could you update the House on the status of this RFP?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the member for the question on wind. Finally, we're getting some questions about wind here and it's great that he sees how important it is. I know from

past experience that he has spoken highly about our wind facilities here on Prince Edward Island.

Gail Shea before him thought it was very important. The hon. minister of housing, he thinks it's very important and he's been after me on this issue quite a bit.

We do bring over \$21 million worth of revenue into the province with our wind farms, and we produce clean energy while we do it.

On the RFP that we put out, there are sites that are being considered. At this point, we expect to have some announcement on the RFP process by close to the end of summer.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

O'Leary has a business organization that is represented in the West Prince area representing the proposal that was put forward. They did a lot of background work, they spoke to the landowners, they had them signed on.

They have all the assessments ready. So they're ready to go ahead with this project.

Minister: Is your department – could they meet with this organization before you make that announcement, before you make your decision. I'm assuming a decision hasn't been made yet.

O'Leary business and wind project

So would you meet with this organization in person so that they could discuss the reasons why West Prince should be chosen?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So yes, I would love to come up and meet with them.

This is a file that, as you know hon. member, in this House I've talked about with much excitement since I've started seven weeks ago.

I think there's a lot of opportunity for Prince Edward Island to deliver clean energy to Islanders.

We have over 73 megawatts of clean energy that we produce now. This project is going to bring on another 30 megawatts. As I spoke about in the House, in the not too distant future we're going to bring on another 40 megawatts.

We're going to have an opportunity to bring all kinds of clean energy online for Islanders. We all should be excited about that.

It's great to show leadership as this government has for a number of years on wind energy and as this government has in a number of years for environmental issues and the sustainability here in province.

So I'd be more than happy to go up and meet with the group up there, and hear what they have to say and tour the area. If the hon. member wants to join me, that would be fantastic.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is going to go to the minister of health, but first I want to kind of talk about the seven weeks in thing.

Hopefully in the next – today might be a little bit of a graduation maybe we can start to look at next week calling it two months, and start talking along those lines. I'm going to show you that the government is quite capable of making decisions.

My question today is about priorities. In 2018/19, Health PEI spent less \$1.5 million on corporate services. That is the bureaucratic centre for Health PEI and pays for CEOs and others. This year's government is budgeting more than \$2.2 million for the same office.

That's about three quarters of a million more.

Would the minister of health explain the large increase?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'd be certainly happy to answer that question when we present the health care budget on the floor.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: The minister of health served as the critic for eight years so he should have a basic understanding of the importance of every dollar spent.

In the same day the department of health spent a little over \$1.7 million on health recruitment and retention – retention is an extremely competitive market in our country for doctors and is becoming increasingly crucial.

Health recruitment and budget

This year's budget for health recruitment and retention is up only \$279,000. Given the need to recruit and retain healthcare professionals recognized by all Islanders, why such a small increase?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

First and foremost, I'd like to correct the hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty. I wasn't the health critic for eight years; it was just shy of seven years.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: At least he didn't say seven weeks.

Mr. Aylward: Exactly.

With regards to recruitment and retention, yes, it is an extremely important aspect of providing health care on Prince Edward Island.

I'm very proud to state that we are going down the road process of actually engaging the medical society of Prince Edward Island to get them to actually get the doctors to help in the recruitment stage.

More importantly, on the retention side, we know that's extremely important. I harped about that for a long time when I was health critic.

There's many things that we need to implement to ensure that we're retaining our doctors here. We've just released an RFP for an EMR and that's one of the things that the doctors have been asking for and we're moving forward in that project and that will help with retention.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our caucus priority is health.

Central bureaucracy and primary care

My question again is to the minister about priorities: Why is Health PEI getting an increase for central bureaucracy that is three times the size of an increase for recruitment and retention for primary care?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, I look forward to having a fulsome conversation and discuss and debate on that when we bring our budget to the floor.

Hopefully that's next week, that's totally up to the people across the floor. Looking forward to sitting at the table and presenting our budget; can't wait.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aylward: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Kings County Memorial Hospital is located in my district and is relied on by people all through Kings County. The hospital is almost 50 years old now and there have been some badly needed repairs done there over the last year or two. The laboratory area is currently in the process of being renovated.

Further repairs for KCMH

Question to the health minister: Is there any further repair work planned for Kings County Memorial Hospital this coming year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

KCMH is certainly (Indistinct) important to providing health care in the Kings County region. Certainly it provides excellent care for residency in around the Montague and surrounding areas.

It is an older facility. I believe it was built in the early '60s. Over the recent years there's been priorities put into replace the emergency backup generator, emergency transfer switch, upgrading the medical gas system and upgrades to the roof, all of which were essential.

I'm working and my department is working very closely with the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to do an analysis on this building and to see what needs are based on.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On April 6th last year my predecessor asked the now Leader of the Third Party, then the health minister, about a structural assessment of the KCMH and the potential

for improved ambulatory services there to serve all of Kings County.

My predecessor secured a commitment for those to be looked at.

Documents and reports of assessment re: KCMH

Question to the health minister: I don't expect you to have this information at hand so could you bring back any reports or documents completed on these commitments?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Working in conjunction with TIE we'll certainly look internally to see what documents are there and if those reports are complete, I'd be more than happy to bring them back and table them.

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

Mr. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As KCMH gets older, the repair bills will surely grow so it would be good to know what our needs will be in the short, medium and long-term.

KCMH plays an important role in the delivery of health care now and has the potential to do more with the right mix of services, staff and infrastructure.

The health centre and hospital have outgrown themselves; there is a significant need for a new facility, one which could potentially have a hospital, primary care, home care, community mental health and public health, all under one roof.

New facility for Kings County

Minister, would you commit to having those needs assessments complete before the capital budget process this fall and perhaps we can get a new facility in Kings County.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

When it comes to the delivery of health care here on Prince Edward Island, it's paramount that it's done properly.

I've stated here in the Legislative Assembly over the last several weeks of my intent as the new Minister of Health and Wellness that we need to look at possibly new ways of delivering health care here on Prince Edward Island. That process is going forward now, we're again, sitting down, meeting with health care providers, having consultation to see what areas we might be able to improve on.

With regards to the infrastructure of KCMH, yes, I've already stated on record that it is an aging facility that needs to be looked at and once I have an opportunity to sit down with the staff from Health PEI – sit down and meet with the folks from TIE, we'll certainly see where that assessment is.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to step back just a moment and as I've mentioned during the briefing the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change had let the opposition caucus know about funding for some holding ponds coming out of government and when I asked the minister if he could tell me when they would seize that program, the answer was as soon as possible.

Funding for holding ponds

I find that a very vague statement and I was wondering if the minister would mind elaborating a little on that for us.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, member opposite, thank you for that question.

The funding apparently came from my department through the CAT program, the Canadian Agriculture Partnership program. It's reviewed every year, that will become in a review now and there will be no more funding going forward because of the announcement yesterday so I'll share with you that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: I am happy to know that this funding is not going to continue but I will pose another question to the minister.

Current spend on holding ponds

Could you please share with Islanders how much money has been spent on holding ponds?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker and member opposite, I acknowledge your concern, I also campaigned on the fact that I protect the Islands water and I will continue to do that. I acknowledge the important of agriculture and water on PEI and we are reviewing that now and I don't know how much money was given out. I'll have to take that back and I'll come back with that answer. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do have the budget estimates coming up for the department of agriculture so I guess that would be a heads up on that one, minister.

The minister has said that the government will inspect – I actually sent this out to the environment yesterday, said that this government will be inspecting these existing holding ponds.

Impacts of holding ponds on residents

Question to the minister responsible for environment, will you be talking to residents that live in the vicinity of holding ponds to see if they have experienced any impacts?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Thank you so much for that question because – let me first of all say any islander that has an issue they feel with their water, their well, they see it in a waterway, please, please report that into the department of the environment because we want to go and look at it. Over the years, there has literally been a handful.

This is like the past 30 years, of reports that have come in about let's say, wells running dry and this sort of thing. So if there is an issue, please report it.

When the staff goes out to do the inspection of the holding ponds, their initial pass is with the cooperation of course of the holding pond owners, identify the amount of water that's coming into them and were going to focus on trying to understand the volume of water that's being used and then we can use our mottos to know if that's having a negative impact to start off with.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday I heard from residents that at least two wells have gone dry in the area where holding ponds have been constructed.

Impact to residents re: dry wells

A question to the minister responsible for environment: What will the government do to help these people?

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That situation where they should immediately contact the department of environment. We will respond very quickly to that, we will go look at their situation, evaluate it and find out the cause of the wells going dry. There's a lot of reasons why they could go dry, including anything as simple as a pump gone bad but if they

feel it's due to the holding pond, we will research it and get to the bottom of it.

Speaker: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As long as I've lived on Prince Edward Island, the province has worked on bringing the National Building Code, also known as the NBC to PEI. It looks like it's actually happening now, in generally its good thing for PEI to meet our national standards of building, after all, we want buildings that are safe to live in, protect is from fire and collapse.

One aspect of the code however disturbs me and that is the requirement that the wood used must be kiln dried and grade stamped. This illuminates the use of wood cut and milled locally. I know that this requirement is a little bearing on building safety, as a matter of fact the Royal heritage building on PEI was built using local, ungraded and not kiln dried wood, including this building and the Province House.

National Building Code and use of local wood

So my question to the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture: Will you make sure that PEI's adaptation of the NBC includes permission to use local wood so that local businesses, housing, and milling local wood can thrive?

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

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and member opposite.

The building code falls under my department in the land section.

We're very excited about the building code coming out and it's a long time coming. It's going to be so important for the construction business and homeowners to have this code come in.

Your question about the stamped wood, the kiln dried wood, that's for housing. You can

still build smaller structures such as storage facilities, mini barns with unstamped wood.

It's a liability issue that it has to be kiln dried and stamped.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well thank you for the answer.

Just being able to build a shed in the backyard doesn't quite do what most rural Islanders traditionally do, which is to go out and cut their own wood to build their own house.

In addition to that, using wood as a construction material is an excellent method to sequester carbon as the wood in the building often stays there for hundreds of years. This is a much more effective strategy than chipping or burning the wood, which sends all the carbon dioxide contained in the stand immediately into the atmosphere.

Use of local lumber and creation of jobs

Question to the minister: Will you emphasize in Cabinet that using local lumber is a far better strategy for sequestering carbon and also create local jobs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will acknowledge the situation. I'll mention that through Cabinet, but as the minister of land and with the building code under my department, it's important that the liability of structures be held.

Stamped wood is important for the liability of construction business and the industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well thank you for your answer.

I am an architect. I've built and supervised many buildings, and it is not really a liability issues per say. There are many other ways.

You can, for instance, locally inspect the wood. Just look at it. That's what they did in the old days. If there was a knot in the wood that shouldn't be there, they just discarded it as simple as that.

Anyway, nevertheless replanting forests appear to be one of the strategies for this province to sequester carbon, yet, we see forests cleared for lumber harvesting, blueberry fields, potato fields, subdivisions, and woodchip harvesting.

Net increase in carbon and reforestation

Question to the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change: How exactly is the government going to ensure that there will be a net increase in carbon sequestering wood?

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

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

That was a rather lengthy preamble to the question, so I hope I can remember everything that was in there.

I'm getting a little confused because the previous question was about cutting down trees for lumber, and now you're asking how we're going to make sure we have enough forests to sequester carbon.

So as it was pointed out in budget estimates, based on the numbers from the 2010 report we're actually deforesting faster than we're populating the forest. As well, we know that keeping existing forest is more important than planting new forest. So those will be the guiding factors we use to prepare our strategy for reforestation on the Island.

I look forward to the member's input on that.

In 2020, we are going to have a report – we'll add updated numbers on how fast deforestation has occurred on the Island and then we'll be able to prepare an evidence-based, science-based approach to forestation on the Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your final question.

Ms. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday during Question Period, the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank made this House aware that the Attorney General has filed a notice of intervention in the case of the constitutionality of the federal carbon tax that's before the Supreme Court of Canada.

When asked on the substance of that intervention, the Premier said, quote: In this particular case, we're just reserving the right to participate if we need to at some point after the decision is brought down.

The Supreme Court of Canada is the highest appellate authority in the country and I can't understand how the province can participate after a ruling is brought down.

Constitutionality of federal carbon tax

Question to the Attorney General: What position is the province intervening on and are you willing to commit to tabling the factum and other materials that you are providing when ready?

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

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, members opposite, it was just – I was informed the process of the legal system to hold themselves into interfere status and that's what we are doing. It's just a process. It's not meaning that we're involved in it, it's just – that's the part – I'll take any other information back to you next week.

Thank you.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

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

Basin Head Reopens

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On an absolutely beautiful day like today, I am so happy to rise and share that Basin Head is now open.

Some Hon. Members:

Mr. MacKay: After a temporary closure last month for safety reasons due to structural damage, the dredging of the channel is complete. Barricades have been removed from the wharf, and life guards are on duty.

I appreciate everyone for their patience and understanding during the closure of Basin Head.

I know it wasn't great timing, but safety is our number one priority at our parks.

Thank you to Minister Myers and the staff in transportation, infrastructure and energy for your leadership in quickly addressing the safety issues of the wharf and thank you to our federal counterparts for your support in dredging the channel.

It's a perfect beach day today and the weather is looking fantastic for the rest of the weekend.

As Minister of tourism, I am very excited knowing that we can kick off the summer season by reopening beautiful Basin Head for Islanders and tourists to enjoy with their families and friends.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you.

I think I agree with the minister. It's a wonderful thing that that particular feature is open again. It's a favourite hangout for both my children and grandchildren, as it is for many other children and adults on PEI.

I think it competes with being one of the most popular features on PEI. I think it's worth noticing that this particular feature, jumping off the bridge into the channel, not only was prohibited and discouraged for a long time, maybe there's a lesson there. Maybe we should look at what people actually want here, so here we have a feature

that is easily one of the most popular one on PEI and yet, no money was spent on it. Actually, money was spent on signs saying people couldn't do it.

But anyway, I think it's great that the province is taking the right approach and clearing out the channel instead of putting up fences so people can't do it.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

Basin Head is one of the key destinations in Eastern Prince Edward Island and it's renowned for its singing sands beach as well as the fisheries museum, and it's also been named number one for beaches in Canada.

It's an important anchor to tourism in the Eastern part of the province and it's closure for wharf repairs and dredging has been a setback in the area. It's good to have that work has been completed at Basin Head and things are up and running again.

I thank the minister for the update.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

IWS Grants

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat awarded grants to ten community groups for projects aimed at helping to empower Island women and girls. The groups have developed a wide range of inclusive leadership programs for women and girls with different lived experiences from across PEI.

Projects like these are an important part of creating a more equitable, diverse and inclusive place for women, girls, and gender diverse people.

I want to commend each of the recipients for their passion and dedication to this cause, your work is changing lives.

In 2019, recipients and projects include:

Action Femmes - Sommet des Femmes 2019; PEI Business Women's Association - Effective Business Leadership Advancement for Women in Rural PEI; the Sierra Club Foundation - Wild Child PEI - LeadHERship Nature Program; Cooper Institute - Migrant Worker Woman: Challenges Beyond Borders; East Prince Women's Information Centre- Taking the Lead; PEI Coalition for Women in Government - Commemorating Island Women's Political History; Women's Network PEI - Still Visible: Bringing Senior Women Together; Sport PEI - Leading by Values; PEI Association for Community Living - 'For Me Fridays' Caring for the Caregivers; and CHANCES Family Centre - CHANCES Community Kitchen.

I also want to recognize the representatives who are in the gallery today from some of these groups: Margaret Magner, PEI Business Women's Association; Grace Kimpinski, PEI Association for Community Living, Randell Duguid and Jillian Kilfoil is here from Women's Network PEI; Dawn Wilson from the PEI Coalition for Women in Government; Andy Lou Somers from East Prince Women's Information Centre; Vanessa Murphy from CHANCES; Gemma Koughan, Sport PEI; and Marie Burge from the Cooper Institute.

I also want to recognize Michelle Harris-Genge of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat and the wonderful work she does. This work is incredibly valuable. I am pleased that we have put forward an additional \$100,000 per year in the Interministerial Women's Secretariat budget for grants to community groups.

I want to congratulate each of the groups that received funding this year and wish them all the best in their projects. I look forward to hearing about their success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bernard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That certainly is wonderful news, great announcement. These groups do crucial community work and without them we would be hard-pressed to fill those roles so

thank you for all you do. I don't like having my back to you.

This funding is crucial for operations. As I said, it would be hard-pressed to fill their shoes if they weren't doing this crucial work. I would love to see it go a step farther and see them provided with operational funding so they're not scrambling every year to start a new project around a new theme when their work could be continued and they could have a little more stability in there, but wonderful news.

Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Indistinct) Women's Secretariat is important to ensuring women issues are given the attention and focus within government and the community.

The grants announced today are welcomed and should help advance concerns of women. I look forward to learning more about the work of the secretariat and its initiatives and want to congratulate all the recipients, as well as I know they're an incredibly talented, talented group of Islanders working hard for other Islanders.

Thank you very much.

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

Centre for Climate Change and Adaption

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today with UPEI and the government of Canada we announced a \$20 million investment to address the challenges of climate change. The provincial portion of this investment is \$4.8 million. The new Canadian Centre for Climate Change and Adaptation will be a 45,000-square-foot research facility in St. Peter's Bay, Prince Edward Island.

The facility will house a state-of-the-art climate research lab. There will also be a living laboratory. The living laboratory will give researchers unlimited access to nearby

wetlands and coasts that are directly impacted by climate change.

We all know the value and unique natural environment in Eastern PEI. We can all agree that this is a perfect location for a climate research facility. Once complete, the facility will support climate education programs at UPEI. As a result of this investment, we will also prepare future generations of students to reduce climate change impacts.

This is also an important opportunity for rural Prince Edward Island. This facility will showcase the beauty and importance of St. Peter's Bay. It will showcase eastern PEI and our whole province as world leaders in the environment.

Climate change is a challenge we are determined to face head-on. It's about being collaborative, it's about being prepared, and it's about investing in our future.

Partnerships like this puts the needs of our environment first, while also benefiting our economy, our communities, students, and all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great announcement, that building and that organization is going to do great things for PEI I'm sure, PEI has a wonderful climate program already and expanding on that is a great thing.

We are using an infrastructure fund here that prioritizes clean environment, strong communities and economic growth, so I was just wondering, this seems like the perfect place to start for a net-zero build or even a net-positive build.

Is this building going to be having some net-zero things built into it, because it just seems perfect for it.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly it's very evident in this Legislature the importance of climate change. It's been a hot topic in all of our debates and certainly this is a very welcome announcement from that perspective.

I think I've heard many times that climate change is considered the challenge of our time, so this announcement of a climate change centre certainly is welcome news for Prince Edward Island and I certainly want to appreciate the hard work that the MP for Cardigan has done, as well as the minister, in getting this across the line.

I certainly look forward to hearing more details on how this may be applied to some of the locations in my area. Whether that is Cedar Dunes Provincial Park., whether it's Conway Sand Hills in Lennox Island, all have done a lot of work in dealing with some of the impacts of climate change.

But I also will reiterate that I have heard these types of things before. I do recall in the past there was an announcement in the throne speech where a climate change centre was going to be established in West Prince and that didn't materialize. This time, it looks like there's some money. It's good to see the minister allocating \$4.9 million towards this.

I wish him all the best and hope to see it materialize.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table some responses to questions placed during budget estimates and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Land, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Honourable Member, by command, I beg leave to table the 2018 Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island and I move that the report be received do lie on the Table.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committee

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Mr. Trivers: I believe we do have some government motions to introduce, the whip has (Indistinct) to achieve our deputy Premier if I could beg your indulgence for a 30-second delay here, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Is her paperwork on the table?

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) first order of business be brought before the House.

Speaker: What is it?

Mr. Fox: Estimates.

Speaker: What?

Mr. Fox: Consideration of Estimates.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to chair Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I beg that this House now do resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant and supply of Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, Chair please.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Mr. Fox: Chair, I also have some answers to some questions that were asked by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke yesterday.

Chair: Sure.

I'll ask the stranger to please state your name and title for record.

Mary Kinsman: Mary Kinsman, Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

Chair: Thank you very much.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Hon. member, yesterday you asked about the 2018 statistics. My understanding is that DFO has them, I do not. I can bring them back to the House at a later time for you if you do so wish.

Next thing, as I stated yesterday, you asked a question in regards to fees. I have had conversations on that regard in the last week or so. The last time the review was actually done was in 2015 and the actual last change to a fee structure was 2007. So as I stated, that is something I am working on.

The next thing is on the marine stewardship council. Currently there are no other fisheries exploring that certification into the department within the province.

Further to that, in regards to, you mentioned a board in Newfoundland and the pricing there of the lobster, the department actually came back to me and stated if you compare the fishery so far in 2019 spring, compared to the fishery prices in Newfoundland, our prices are actually more than what they are getting over there recently. So I think that answers all your questions that you asked and I believe Chair, the last time we were on aquaculture.

Chair: So, hon. members, we left on page 84. Marine Fisheries and Seafood Services, that section was read.

Any further questions?

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Yes minister, I have a question just regarding some of the issues that we've been dealing with, with the Town of Alberton, when it came to disposal of seafood waste and I know the Farm Practices Review Board was involved in that particular case. I recall there was some research done or a study that was going to be done in trying to deal with this seafood disposal waste from a number of the plants in the west. Has there been any feedback on that particular report?

Mr. Fox: Actually no, I actually did talk to some fishers in regards to the waste product in other communities and the department is looking at that but I haven't got the copy of that report. I can bring that back when it's recorded.

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

Mr. Henderson: Would there be any interest in forming or developing some sort of one location that could hold that, that would be properly ventilated and then allow farmers to come and get that waste. I just sort of wonder if that might be a potential solution because you're talking – I think there's four or five plants in the west, then you also have mussels and things of that nature that there may be some opportunities there to develop from a composting perspective or maybe even tie it in with Island Waste Management.

Mr. Fox: I am prepared to reach out to Island Waste Management and I'd also at the same time reach out to the Department of Environment and bring them into the conversation. That's a good suggestion hon. member.

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

Mr. Henderson: And just one other one, when it comes to marine fisheries and regulatory services, I'm sure your deputy minister would be well aware of this one and it's the fish plant down in Howard's Cove wharf. There's been a number of issues that have materialized there regarding the right of way, the ownership and the ability to maintain that site in a relatively clean state.

The process Jonah crab and there's a number of other crab that they – rock crab primarily as well. But I would urge that your department keep a pretty close eye on that, I know last year there was a lot of issues that were brought up and they've agreed to move forward in a better fashion, but just something that needs to be watched fairly closely.

Mr. Fox: Thank you very much, I will.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

First, I just want to thank the minister for responding to the questions from yesterday, I appreciate that.

So one of the things that the minister had mentioned around this was that there's currently no other fisheries seeking these certifications from the Marine Stewardship Council and I'm just wondering if this is maybe, it could be a bit of a chicken and an egg situation, so maybe no one is seeking this because they don't have support to do so.

So I was wondered if you had considered that and if there might be some, even just outreach to see if: hey, would you be interested in some support from government in considering that as a possibility.

Mr. Fox: I'll take it back to the department, I have no problem reaching out to industry and I've been doing that quite consistently over the last four or five weeks now. But I have no problem having the department reach out to industry on that.

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

Ms. Altass: That's it. Thank you.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: This department says it supports the commercial fishing industry through strategic research, science and advocacy. Are we even monitoring oxygen levels in the Gulf of St Lawrence, for instance?

Mr. Fox: We're actually doing a lot of testing by the department biologists of Kensington Road and they're on the water quite regularly taking different water samples and doing other scientific research. I'm actually starting in the next couple weeks; I'll be learning that practice and more on what they do. So yes we are doing water testing, clarity and all that kind of stuff.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

So do we go out into the lobster grounds for instance and test the waters down where the lobsters are or are we just doing some surface testing. Do you know the details?

Mr. Fox: I'm not quite sure the depth they go to and I can't give you the exact location because they have different locations round the province, but I can find out and come back to you with that answer.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

The reason I ask is because there was a study released that shows that the oxygen

levels are dropping drastically in the Gulf of St. Lawrence because waters are warming and driving the Labrador current up and within the not too distant future, a generation or two, we might have no shellfish industry left here on Prince Edward Island in the Gulf in any case, so I'm just wondering if that's something that this department would be on top of.

Mr. Fox: Well I'd actually say the opposite hon. member. From what I've been told, in my briefing, is that the work of the aquaculture sector across the Island is actually improving the water around PEI and actually I'm glad to hear that. What I'm being told is by the biologists and by the staff and by actually, industry themselves, that our water around PEI is actually improving.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

I've been speaking with aquaculture too, as well and I'm not talking really about the water quality and filtering out the water in the shellfish too. I'm talking about having enough oxygen for any life of shellfish included to breath. So it's really the lower depths and what not. There's been a study released and it was talking at the Federal level of declaring an emergency in the Gulf of St. Lawrence because we might see it completely (Indistinct) of life in 10, 20, 40 years, depending on the rate in which climate change drives the Labrador Current which is rich in oxygen, North out of the Gulf of St Lawrence and allow the oxygen pour Gulf Stream to take over.

So that was the jest of the study and it just seems like something that we should have a lot of information on if it's going to just completely wipe out our industry.

Mr. Fox: Well thank you hon. member, I'll take that concern back to the department and come back with an answer.

Mr. Howard: Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services

Mr. Howard: – like something that we should have a lot of information on if it's going to just completely wipe out our industry.

Mr. Fox: Well thank you, hon. member.

I'll take that concern back to the department and come back with an answer.

Mr. Howard: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services

“Appropriations provided for the operation of services associated with seafood buying and processing as prescribed by the *Fisheries Act* and the *Fisheries Inspection Act*. This section also supports the commercial fishing industry through strategic research, science and advocacy.”
Administration: 5,600. Equipment: 300.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 15,500.
Professional Services: 6,000. Salaries: 500,000. Travel and Training: 46,100.
Grants: 2,275,400. Total Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services: 2,848,900.

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

It looks like the future fishers program was under budget by \$50,000 this year. So I'm just wondering has uptake decreased?

Mr. Fox: That's right and actually – thank you hon. member – actually the demand for new applicants varies from year to year. At this time we've actually – the intake is lower so we've actually budgeted lower to compensate for that, but we do have money within the department in case the intake increases.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Has there been any evaluation conducted to determine why there was a drop in uptake for this program?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Actually, reduction to this grant is primarily due to the existing license holders choosing to stay in the fisheries resulting in lower number of enterprises for sale, and thus the access to get into the fisheries is actually low.

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

Ms. Altass: Just to clarify, is this program specifically for lobster fishers only, or is it – does it go beyond that or just the one fishery?

Mr. Fox: Yes, it's only for lobster.

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

Ms. Altass: So is there anything offered for other fisheries similar to this?

Mr. Fox: Actually when we get farther in the budget, we're actually coming up with two new programs to assist people.

Ms. Altass: Two new programs?

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

Ms. Altass: Oh, I look forward to that. Wonderful.

So I'm wondering about the fisher assistance program. Can you tell me a little bit more about this program?

Mr. Fox: Yes. The fisher assistance program is a service that provides confidential and professional counseling to PEI Fishermen Association members and their families.

The actual program was actually launched in 2018 and is continuing and the service provided by Atlantic employee assistance provided has a range of issues, stress, alcohol and drug misuse, bereavement, financial concerns, et cetera. A program promoted to the PEIFA AGM, and all six local associations and their quarterly newsletter promotes this.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for that explanation, the description.

So I'm wondering – I couldn't find the spending line for this program. Can you show me where it is? I might be missing it.

Mr. Fox: Yes, it's within line 4299, which is miscellaneous grants. And this is a program that supports available – program funds available to support various industry projects and research initiatives in the marine fisheries.

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

Ms. Altass: Okay. How much money is actually allotted, then, for this specific program?

Mr. Fox: \$5,000.

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

Ms. Altass: And has there been any evaluation to see if that is sufficient to meet the needs?

Mr. Fox: Right now, it is efficient. We review our programs as they go from year to year and as the intake or the decrease is actually applied to it. So it's sufficient.

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

Ms. Altass: Okay, just because I think this is an important point. So I just want to make sure. So you've not found that anybody has been unable to access this who's wanted it because there hasn't been enough funding?

Mr. Fox: No.

As I said previous, member, we have money within the budget that we can reallocate. If the intake is higher, we can accommodate.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So I'm wondering about the lobster resource monitoring program. So how much money is allocated for that program? I also don't see that here.

Mr. Fox: Yes, actually that monitoring program is actually built into our staff. So it's a requirement of them doing their task of them to go out and conduct that. You're not actually going to see a separate line for that. It's just part of their staff or part of their, you know, their work schedule on a daily basis.

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

Ms. Altass: Okay, I'm wondering then, so which staff are – what does that fall under in terms of what – not names, I guess, but who's responsible for that program?

Mr. Fox: Actually we have a director, a manager, a fisheries technician, administrative assistant, a lobster biologist, a provincial fisheries inspector and a second provincial fisheries inspector.

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

Ms. Altass: And so those, all the people you listed, they are responsible for this program, as well as several others is what you're saying?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I have one last question here. Just wondering about revenue from sales of licenses to fish farms, fish peddlers, and fish processor licenses. Does revenue from the sale of these licenses go directly towards supporting fisheries or does it go into the general revenue?

Mr. Fox: It's just basically a one-off.

Ms. Altass: What's that?

Mr. Fox: Just basically a one-off. It's not a money – it's not there to generate money. It's basically to pay for the administration of the services.

Ms. Altass: All right.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Marine Fisheries and Seafood Services: 3,467,200.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Agriculture Division

Aquaculture

“Appropriations provided to manage and support the sustainable development of both the aquaculture industry and the estuarial shellfish fisheries.” Administration: 15,600. Equipment: 11,300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 62,700. Professional Services: 23,100. Salaries: 657,000. Travel and Training: 65,700. Grants: 928,100. Total Aquaculture: 1,763,500.

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Ms. Altass: So how much has the province invested in aqua bounty, loans and/or grants?

Mr. Fox: We don't do any loans within this department.

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

Ms. Altass: Oh, okay so grants? Any grants from this department?

Mr. Fox: No.

Ms. Altass: Nothing like that?

Mr. Fox: No.

Ms. Altass: Oh. What department would those be through then? Just so I can note to ask later.

Chair: Intervention from the hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

Mr. MacKay: That would be through our department, and I believe – I'll confirm with you tomorrow – but I think it was 2.7 million was that loan.

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

Ms. Altass: Can I ask a question about the intervention?

Chair: Sure.

Ms. Altass: That was a loan to – ok. All right. Yeah, you confirm that and we'll talk about that later, I guess.

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

Mr. Henderson: Minister, I see from some of your grants that you have a grant to the PEI Shellfish Association for \$100,000. That's been pretty consistent for the last while.

Can you give me an update of the state of that organization and the value that we're getting out of that investment? It's the shellfish enhancement program under 4266. It's \$100,000.

Mr. Fox: Yes. The program's conducted by PEI Shellfish Association through a grant provided by the department of up to 90% of projected costs to a maximum \$100,000.

Under the program, PEISA carries out activities in the public shellfish industry such as shell spreading, seed collection, broad stock enhancement and oyster relay. The program is to increase their sustainability of the commercial fishing beds by fishers.

I can also tell you that I've met with the Shellfish Association several times now and they've had me out in the waters in a couple areas and they're actually looking at some new technology to help improve their quantities from areas that they haven't been actually fishing from.

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

Mr. Henderson: Do you feel that, for that amount of money, that we're getting the

value back into the public fisheries? I mean, I'm hearing that, in general terms, the public fishery we're seeing some of the bed declining, numbers on beds and mortality rates seem to be a bit of a factor.

I'm certainly a believer in the public fishery and I feel that the public fishery has a future and I think in the throne speech they mentioned some funding for coming up with new markets and things like that, so maybe you can elaborate a little bit on that from a budgetary perspective, how much money has been assigned.

Mr. Fox: So I am aware of the mortality rate that you're talking about. It is a concern in some areas and as you're probably aware, we have peaks and valleys as industry goes, or as the actual marine life moves, they grow and they die.

But I did have a briefing with Mr. Bob MacLeod and a few others, and I was informed of a piece of equipment they're interested in trying and it has to do with some of the oysters that are in bays, that aren't actually marketable. This new technology might be able to make it so that product can be marketable and it's based on a high pressure system. But we are working, I'm actually working quite closely with that organization lately and learning how we can actually help them.

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

Mr. Henderson: So you suggest that the shellfish association actually purchase one of those high pressure, hyperbaric, meat extractors and look at it to market a meat market, are you saying?

Mr. Fox: I'm not suggesting anything, but I am encouraged in what they're telling me that, that organization or a different industry is looking at that type of machine.

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

Mr. Henderson: Do you feel that the shellfish association has been fairly successful on collecting seed and oysters to then be eventually spread? Because now I'm hearing last year they didn't have a very good spat catch and yet the industry did

have a pretty good spat catch, so I'm just kind of wondering what your thoughts are on that and is there some oversights the department can provide them to have better success?

Because if they don't have another better success this year you start to wonder if that's a viable way for that organization to provide oysters to go out onto the public beds.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

I'm actually really encouraged by what I've heard from the industry and from the shell fishers and how they want to move the industry forward. I think I made a statement the other day that I'm interested in telling the story of what our fishers are doing across the Island.

I will support the fishers and I'm willing to meet with them anytime and if they have ideas that they want to bring forward on how to promote the industry or enhance it or improve it, taking into account the environment and the climate change or how the beds are, then my door is open.

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

Mr. Henderson: The last thing, also under grants you have the quality oyster aquaculture program and in that one you've put 95,000 of the departments money and I think there's about through the Atlantic Fishery Fund, another 105,000.

How did that program go this year, any thoughts on whether if that's going to be funded again next year because once again, that's usually a pretty pertinacious issue between the public fishers and the aquaculture guys?

Mr. Fox: Actually that program is ending; however, I'll let you know that we actually put in 95,000, ACOA put in 350,000 and Atlantic Fisheries Fund put in another 350,000 with that.

So the industry was provided with around 725,000 for the total program of \$1.5 million and I've got 1.450 was used to contribute a contribution towards eligible project expensive and 70,000 for the

government contribution reusable or costly, you know, the program delivery.

So it was actually established hon. member in 2008 and we believe it's time to, the program has actually lived its life. So we're coming out with two new programs that we think will be better.

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

Mr. Henderson: So one of the challenges I faced when I was in the same chair. What happens with ACOA when they turn around and their offering those same dollars to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, you're saying you're going to decline that program for aquaculture harvesters in this province?

Mr. Fox: We also have the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. We have two new programs that we're working on and we're rolling out, so we believe the program or a similar type program will handle the needs.

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

Mr. Henderson: Ok, well I guess that probably wraps up my questions for now.

Well done.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, we had a little chat earlier this summer, or spring I guess it was, about the closures of the shell fishery as a result of the leakage or the problem in the Hillsborough area.

I'm wondering whether you have any sense of what the cost was that to the shell fish industry and I know hat fishers were able to move to other areas but it was right at the beginning of the fishery and that's not a real good time for people to be approaching on others, so I'm wondering if you have any sense on that?

Mr. Fox: Thank you hon. member, actually I was notified on that Friday what had taken place in the Hillsborough River.

I immediately reached out to the town of Stratford, had a conversation with our staff, I was breached by the deputy, had conversations with Stratford officials on it. I also had phone calls into Saturday from fishers and talked with them about it. I did have a couple of concerns. I think we must protect our fishery and I believe that the fishery should be given advance warning if possible that there is something possibly happening to affect the fishery.

So with that, I didn't reach out to you, immediately after you phoned me and advised you of the situation on that Saturday. On Sunday, I reached immediately into the City of Charlottetown and immediately of the Town of Stratford and asked for a meeting as soon as possible to talk about this issue and the effect it does have on the fishery.

That meeting did take place, we had a very productive meeting, I expressed my concern that the fishery is very important to PEI and we must make sure we take all steps to protect the fishery and that the fishers are notified as soon as possible about what's going on in the water.

Subsequent to that, there have been other conversations I've had on the issue about the Stratford sewer situation and the effect it has on the fishery.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

I wanted for the record to say how grateful I was for your quick response when I contacted you that day and for obviously the quick, the other things you did very rapidly to reach out to Stratford and people in departments and so on.

I wish we had the same sort of commitment to rapidity and dealing with this situation in Stratford because this is going to happen again, you know it's going to happen again, it happens every year repetitively.

I'm wondering and I realize it's not your department minister but I'm wondering what sorts of excursion you are using, what pressure you're using to make sure this is resolved as soon as possible because this is your department, these fishers are your responsibility.

Mr. Fox: I can tell you that during the meeting I was very forth right in and that action needs to be taken. We are talking about an industry that's very crucial to this province and I will put the fishery first.

I think that we need to have serious conversations with all involved on a clear path and direction going forward.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Those are lovely words minister and I appreciate that.

Do you have any sense, though, as to how long it's going to be before this situation is definitively cleared up so that the fishers in that area can sort of take a deep breath and relax and know they will be able to go out in the water?

Mr. Fox: No, I do not.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks.

One of the other concerns when it comes to the oyster fishery is siltation and you'll remember from a couple years ago when we both sat on this side of the floor and there was a heavy rainfall around a project in the North Tryon area, in the Tryon river and heavy siltation.

Again, a very important oyster fishery for a number of local fishers there, I know that you were also deeply concerned regarding the Cornwall perimeter highway when there was siltation there. So in consultation with Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, I'm wondering whether you have asked that department to improve or increase the measures they take to mitigate for siltation and situations that we both have concerns about.

Mr. Fox: Thank you hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I've never had any conversations in this new role with TIE on that topic, and filtration and how it affects the – in regards to that major capital project, I've never had any conversations.

But I have had conversations on the broad issue of protecting our fishery and what these runoffs can do to the fishery and how it affects our fisheries, and those talks will continue, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, and on that note, we all understand that weather patterns are changing and these sort of torrential rain falls are happening more and more frequently. We used to call them one-in-100-year storms and they're not that at all anymore. It's almost an annual event.

I'm wondering whether you, in your responsibility as fisheries minister, will be pushing the transportation department to look at – Well, you know what? The mitigation measures that we have in place currently were designed for the past – clearly the future. I mean, we have instances of course with farmers as well, finding that measures that would have been perhaps appropriate and would have mitigated problems 10 years ago or 30 years ago are no longer doing that.

So are you approaching, again, the transportation minister and saying: Look, I want to protect my fishery and we need to up what we're doing here in terms of mitigation?

Mr. Fox: I think that's understood by both the minister and myself. I think that neither one of us want to see anything, any hurt to the environment or a fishery or anything. I have trust in the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and I'll have further conversations with him.

Leader of the Opposition: In Victoria – it's in your district now, minister, but up until a few months ago it was in my district – we have Halibut PEI.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: And I realize – I think the minister for economic growth is actually just out of the room just now, but I want to ask you whether you're aware of – you would not know the amount of the loans, but there are loans and grants to that company. I'm wondering if you have a sense of how they're doing and what the business is producing.

Mr. Fox: No, I haven't.

Actually, I think it's within the next two to three weeks I've actually got a tour coming up with that. The department actually reached out to them back, I think – I want to say a couple weeks ago or something like that, and expressed that I wanted to be brought up to speed on it and have a tour and that is forthcoming.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm glad to hear that, minister. It's been a couple years since I was in the facility. They did a big expansion, of course.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, that's right.

Leader of the Opposition: I really hope things are going well there. It's a fantastic concept.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: And when the minister returns to his seat, I'll just keep talking for ten seconds and then I'll ask the minister if he has any details on the amount of money that we have either given to Halibut PEI and Victoria-by-the-Sea either in terms of grants or loans.

Do you have any sense? If I can ask for an intervention from the minister.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

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

Mr. MacKay: Sorry, I don't, but I can ask my department to bring something back first of the week.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, minister. I appreciate that.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the senate report 2016 which made a recommendation for increasing the leasehold of aquaculture here in the Maritimes, specifically obviously on Prince Edward Island.

A long time ago, the province delegated our authority over aquaculture to DFO. That was way back in the 1920s, but I think it was reaffirmed in 1987 or around about then. So this expansion, this recommendation to expand the leasing acreage of oysters in our estuaries comes from a federal level; and I'm wondering who in the provincial – in your department is speaking to the federal government about that recommendation and whether you agree with it.

Mr. Fox: Actually, I have no knowledge of this report. I have not been briefed on this report, but I will go back and get information on the report and find out the answer to your question. I will bring that back to the House.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. I mean the report did – and there's some maps associated with it, it's a while since I've looked at it, but the recommendation was a pretty significant expansion of the acreage of particularly the surface leases that we have here.

Those surface leases, of course, involve the plastic bags and there's certainly some potential issues with that – among them, shading of eelgrass habitat. When you expand the lease, essentially they cover almost the entire surface area, and I'm wondering whether you have any concerns about that sort of expansion on – well, there's a number of things. I'll start with eelgrass, the health of eelgrass.

Mr. Fox: I'd have to go back to the department to get an answer. I know the deputy would more than likely be involved with that, would have knowledge of the report, and more than likely the director also would have knowledge. As I say, I will go back. If you want to table any written questions in regards to that –

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

Mr. Fox: – I will get you the answers on them questions from the department.

Leader of the Opposition: I'll do that, minister. I appreciate that. So we'll put together a series of written questions for you. I guess in some ways I'm relieved that you're not aware of this which suggests to me it's perhaps not imminent, that this proposed expansion from the federal level is not something that has happened here.

Can I ask you a related question on – because most of the, in fact, almost all of the oyster fishing at the surface fishery is done in the estuaries and bays across the Island here. With the improvement in anchorage, there are some places where those surface lease oysters are being grown outside the estuaries, actually in the tidal areas offshore, where the currents, of course, are not so great. I'm wondering whether you have had any – if there's anybody proposed that on Prince Edward Island or whether that's something you know.

Mr. Fox: No, no.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, I'm fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

In the budget estimate information we have here on page FC and EDA-121 we've got agriculture and fisheries research, innovation and growth program for a quarter million dollars that's brand new. Can you tell me a little bit about that program?

Mr. Fox: What page is that on?

Mr. Howard: FC and EDA-121.

Mary Kinsman: I think he's talking about (Indistinct) – do you have a note number?

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mary Kinsman: Excuse me, is there a note number right beside the (Indistinct) –

Mr. Howard: I've got 4271 in the column under – note 27.

Mr. Fox: This is one of the new programs I've been talking about. It's RIG, research innovation and growth. The RIG program was developed to provide PEI fisheries, aquacultures and seafood processors with an opportunity to conduct small, short-term applied research and development projects.

Mr. Howard: So I've been speaking to an oyster farmer, I suppose, recently enough here.

We were speaking to what you were talking about earlier there, that they've actually improved the water quality and whatnot, whenever they're in the area. It also happened to come out in our conversation that it marries up quite well with when they're in an area of intense agriculture when there is nutrient runoff coming that the oysters themselves can clean up that area and prevent the blooms of eelgrass and the like that would cause toxic situations and cleanup in areas.

So is using that kind of – would this program be helping them to go out and try to do those kinds of things?

Mr. Fox: Yes. So fishers, harvesters and growers and seafood processors and associations, they represent the seafood industry. They are eligible to apply on this new program and there's a maximum funding for (Indistinct) the program of up to \$20,000, up to 50% of the total eligible project cost.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive?

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair. That's good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Chair.

On that same page, under note 27, there's a miscellaneous project funding for 150,000. Could you elaborate on that? What kind of projects would be funded under that? 4299 is the –

Mr. Fox: 4299?

Mary Kinsman: That's the genome project, Minister. That's the genome project.

Mr. Fox: That's actually the genome mussel project. What we're doing as a department, we're participating with (Indistinct) Atlantic Limited, and also DFO and industry, in a three-year project from March of this 2019 until 2022.

We're basically going to investigate advantages from hatchery-produced mussels and we'll study genetic traits that can improve growth, survival and meat yield.

Mr. Gallant: Over on page 65, there's about \$200,000 additional grants. I understand and we certainly appreciate the importance of this aquaculture industry.

When you travel around the country and around the world, you see our agriculture product is great; but you got an increase of 200,000 there.

Could you explain what that is? Is there something new coming down to help the industry?

Mr. Fox: The total budget – Mary do you want to comment on that?

Mary Kinsman: Sure, what's going on – the total budget for grants there increased by 135,000 from last year to this year, there were two p[rograms] that we ended and we talked about that. Then there is two new programs, one being the RIG program that we just talked about and then we have the, it's called PEI FACTA, it's a fisheries and aquaculture technology program.

Also what's happened in this account, last year the Genome project was – sometimes these net-out so last year the Genome project was 100% funded, \$200,000 was all provincial. That ended because we provided our funding. This year it's \$150,000 that's offset by funding from Genome Atlantic, so you're seeing some offsets there but basically the new program was funded by the two programs that were terminated.

Chair: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: I just had one other question to the minister. I know it's federal and

provincial, but these leases on the waterway and is stuff, is that all federally regulated?

Do we as a province, or do you as a department, have any say in where leases are and where right of way leases?

Mr. Fox: We were (Indistinct) DFO on it, so of course we sit on committees on them, and we're in discussion on how the leases are managed, where they're at, all that stuff. We work very closely with that.

Mr. Gallant: So you have input on where a right of way – you would have an input where a right of way would maybe go through a lease?

Mr. Fox: That's right, we do.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So the management of the list of species shellfish species that are legal to raise in the province is that under this division, keeping track of that? Sorry the list of species legally allowed to be raised, shellfish in the province, is that list managed by this division?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Ms. Altass: So how regularly does the division add new shellfish to the list or consider adding new shellfish?

Mr. Aylward: My understanding there has never been a request beyond what we're actually involved in now in the industry, to get involved with.

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

Ms. Altass: So does the public have the opportunity though to review proposals for listing any new species or bring forward proposals? What is the process to do that?

Mr. Fox: If any industry or person wants to come forth with a proposal, of course the department will look at it, in consultation with DFO.

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

Ms. Altass: I am wondering as well if this division has any procedures in place or allotted funds just in case there is some sort of potential ecological impact for any accidental introduction of non-native aquaculture species into the province, do we have any plans to deal with that?

Mr. Fox: I can come back with that answer.

Ms. Altass: Okay.

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

Ms. Altass: Great thank you. I appreciate that.

I just wanted to refer to a story that was in the news recently. So June 29th, on the CBC website about the high occurrence rate of nutrient level increases near finfish aquaculture sites here on the Island.

So the article says that these increases have led to a decrease of oxygen in the water and caused die-offs sea grass which provide important habitat for the province's native fish species.

Which division is – sorry what is this division to make sure that these spikes in nutrient levels happen less often?

Mr. Fox: Hon. member I would have to come back with the answer to that question, I'm not familiar with the article on the 29th of June, I'll have to come back –

Ms. Altass: June. 29th, so we can –

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, just one more question.

I'm wondering about who owns the name on Malpeque Oysters?

Mr. Fox: I would not have a clue. I would have to come back with that.

Ms. Altass: I am just wondering, I guess come back with that. I am wondering if

there is any sort of quality management around oysters produced under that name or any other name, how that process works in term of the quality of the oysters produced, if we are checking any of that.

Mr. Fox: I will take that question as noted and bring back an answer.

Ms. Altass: Okay.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, do you have a question?

Mr. McNeilly: No.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

Related to what the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke said, nutrient level spikes coming near some of this aquaculture and other forms of aquaculture being able to address nutrient spikes and prevent this, is any research or analysis or funding to encourage these types of things to exist together so in a the problems mitigated by the other grower?

Mr. Fox: Not that I'm aware of.

I would have to bring that answer back, but I can tell you, if anybody wants to bring forth a proposal for the department to look at for possible funding on a research project, we can look at it and see if it applies to any program available.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

When you answered me about the RIG program, Research Innovation and Growth program, it was 50 percent funding for someone to attempt a project is that correct?

Mr. Fox: Yes, up to a maximum of 20,000.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Mr. Howard: Thank you, Chair.

What I was speaking about earlier with run-off from aquaculture creating extra nutrients in our waterways (Indistinct) – everybody is aware, it's an issue we have to try to deal with. According to the fellow I was talking to, oysters can solve that problem or help us solve the problem, but they are probably not going to want to pay 50% to go in there and do that.

Would there be any chance that the department would look at providing full funding to send these operations out to clean up areas?

Mr. Fox: I would have to take that under advisement.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Just curious, I know when we were in government there was a lot of discussion around cold storage. I am just wondering if there are any monies available for cold storage in your budget, and or I know we made announcement under the McCain fund.

I think that's where some of that discussion transpired from. Has there been any demand or is there any funding for cold storage?

Mr. Fox: My understanding of the Atlantic fisheries fund, there is no infrastructure money available in that. I've been contacted by a couple of interested parties in the expansion of cold storage. The information has been passed on to them.

They should contact the Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture to discuss that. Within our department, there is no funding available.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: Another question. I talked to a couple of mass oyster fishers, and they can't keep up with the demand on what they are trying to do with their market.

Who regulates is it DFO or is it the province or combination thereof – who regulates the expansion of oyster farms?

Mr. Fox: That's a joint conversation between our department, and DFO. My understanding also liaison on there, or further conversation with other departments like CFIA, and those organizations also.

Chair: The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

Mr. MacDonald: That's fine, thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Aquaculture Division: 1,763,500.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Rural and Regional Development Division

Rural and Regional Development

“Appropriations provided for the collaboration with community and business leaders across Prince Edward Island, as well as existing development organization to ensure coordinated approaches to regional growth opportunities.” Administration: 29,000. Equipment: 4,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 16,400. Professional Services: 10,000. Salaries: 1,296,800. Travel and Training: 45,300. Grants: 2,650,900.

Total Rural and Regional Development: 4,052,400.

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

Ms. Altass: I'm wondering about what changes have been made to this division in the transition to being a standalone department to being incorporated as a division?

Mr. Fox: Basically we're responsible – as I said, we are responsible for the collaboration and community and business leaders across Prince Edward Island to promote rural development across PEI we sort of believe that it's fit well with – on the community side of things, if you look at rural development the fisheries mostly spread across rural PEI so it's a good fit.

Of course in our rural, we a tremendous amount of small communities and towns, and of course they fall under the *Municipal Government Act* and other community and municipal affairs. It's just a proper, new place to combine the role.

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

Ms. Altass: I appreciate the rationale for this shift.

I am wondering if there have been any changes or what the impact has been from switching from a department to a division? If you can describe if there's any staffing changes, any reorganization, what did you have to do to make that happen, how did you navigate that?

Mr. Fox: No, basically it's a Crown corporation and with that the staff there have been involved in the programs that they deliver for a number of years, so they're very familiar with that. There's no change to the way programs are being delivered across the province. I am undertaking a review this fall, or looking at how can we enhance or improve the deliverance of services coming into the next season of the year. It was a little bit hard to look at that this year, due to the time of the election and the budget process, so I basically knew that would be the status quo for now going forward and we'll review in the fall and look at changes possibly in the spring.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

Recently, myself and my colleagues here from Summerside area were into the Summerside Access PEI and they had showed us an area of offices that had been dedicated to the Department of Rural and Regional Development and now they're all empty, so that seems to indicate there was some change, I guess, in that. But otherwise, did the staff – they all just get moved somewhere else or?

Mr. Fox: No, our staff that actually deliver the programs have not moved. My understanding in Access PEI and I can be corrected if I'm wrong, but was there was a

variety of offices in there that we're available to ministers and their staff with the previous administration.

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

Ms. Altass: So what we were told, I mean that was actually another area of offices and this was a whole other. We went into this room and there were several offices that we were told had been for the department of rural and regional development that are now empty, so I was just wondering what that was all about? They seemed pretty uncertain of what was happening there with that space.

Mary Kinsman: We had a suite of offices there for the minister so that was office space for him and his administrative staff, and we had some swing offices so when staff were in that area they would go there. We no longer have those offices but our EDA staff, they're still there, in their area there. The minister's office is no longer there and his administrative support and a couple of swing offices, but the EDA staff are still there.

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

Ms. Altass: So I mean over the years, this division, department has gone through a lot of changes, it kind of got shifted from place to place, so I'm wondering have these shifts affected the work of this division in any way from what you've seen?

Mr. Fox: I'm really confident in how our program directors deliver the programs they do. This staff is highly dedicated to providing the appropriate program to the appropriate individual with the appropriate applicant. So kudos to them for what they do because they really place people where they need to be and in conjunction with the business applications coming forward or the needs for different community groups.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So I'm wondering about, there's a national gathering of rural development officials hosted by the Canadian Rural Revitalization

Foundation, is that something that you're familiar with?

Mr. Fox: I've been made aware of that yes.

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

Ms. Altass: So I'm wondering is this something that you're planning to continue to participate in in the future.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

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

Ms. Altass: So what would be your hopes for participating in this, why do you see that, what is the value of it? I'm not saying there isn't, I'm just wondering if you could describe what you would like to see out of that experience.

Mr. Fox: First two questions versus two answers. This just popped in my mind here. If you look at the previous administration, actually in that area we actually had, I think it was four ministers in total, working out of Access PEI. There was, I think, there was four ministers I think working there, so they all had office space to go back (Indistinct)

But I think something I've said for the longest while is, if we have a strong rural Prince Edward Island, with strong rural communities and strong rural towns, they really help to grow the City of Summerside and Charlottetown. So I think in my mind, my direction is that we are going to grow and work on helping our rural communities and our rural industries, grow to their fullest potential possible and I think that message has to be continually brought forward. I don't want to take away from any little part of PEI in rural PEI. They have so much to offer in so many different capacities and ways and I think that anytime we can promote that and move that agenda forward I think we should do it.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So you would see them the primary role of attending this, you know, being a part of this

revitalization foundation to promote rural PEI. It seems like more of a learning opportunity, I'm wondering what sort of things you're hoping to learn through that experience, what your goals are?

Mr. Fox: Any time we have a chance to go to a conference or go to, or partake in any of them type of events, there's always the opportunity to learn of course and there's also the opportunity for us to express our vision and our path forward.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So I'm just wondering is this included in the reduced travel and training line that's there?

Mr. Fox: Any travel or training would come in that area. That's a moving target. I think one thing that we saw and I think actually the travel around that department last year was actually less because of the meetings and conventions or events were actually closer to us then than what they were. So the need for raised expenses was actually lower than what they were supposed to make.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

On a different topic here just a little bit, so what I'm wondering is the government continuing or planning to continue the regional economic advisory councils?

Mr. Fox: Very good question hon. member.

Actually, there was a yellow sticky pad on my desk this morning to remind me, I have been made very much aware of that and actually I entered into the conversation back awhile ago when I was getting into the department. I wanted to learn how these economic groups work and how they function and staff are actually planning on meeting with and we're just trying to make up the competition, whether it'll be me and the Chair's of the zones or of the areas, or will it be the whole thing. So we're already underway.

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

Ms. Altass: How much is currently budgeted then for the operation of the regional economic advisory councils.

Mary Kinsman: The councils, they do this without being paid a stipend and they signed up that way. When you saw a reduction in travel that was because they hadn't been claiming any – they could claim their travel expenses and they haven't been, so there really is, other than the cost for the meetings, that's basically our cost for the group.

Chair: Anymore questions on this –

Ms. Altass: You can move to someone else if you'd like.

Chair: And I'll come back to you if you want.

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

Just want to touch base, the *Municipal Government Act*, is this a section that we will –

Mr. Fox: Not yet, no.

Ms. Beaton: Pardon?

Mr. Fox: That's not in this section yet.

Ms. Beaton: That's not in this section yet, ok, I'm going to hold my question then.

Mr. Fox: Sure.

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

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah, just a couple questions. You mentioned before rural promotes urban economics and I do believe that's true, just wondering about the cities. I get a lot of questions from people that live within Charlottetown, that work in rural areas. Their businesses promote and they go out and they work in rural areas. Some questions that there might have been, some questions on whether or not they're well supported or supported as much as the rural

businesses might be. Do you want to touch on anything? Am I in the right section for that kind of a question?

Mr. Fox: So if I understand your question hon. member, are you suggesting that people in the urban areas are feeling they're not getting the same opportunities as businesses or rural development is providing to the rural PEI?

Mr. McNeilly: Yeah, well if they're working and servicing, just because they live in an urban area – sometimes, for example, I have two people that between there 500 meters apart and they basically do the same thing. The person who identified as the rural area, gets subsidies, access to employee subsidy and they're doing the same thing just because of where they live. Have you heard that before?

Mr. Fox: I can understand – no, I haven't. I can understand it.

I would equate that to no different than if you have the City of Charlottetown policing up to a stop sign and that resident gets to call the police right away and outside then he's waiting of course for the RCMP. So I can understand your –

Mr. McNeilly: Exactly. Yes.

Mr. Fox: It's something I will think about, yes.

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

Mr. McNeilly: It was just something that brought up and it's something that I look at the development of Charlottetown. There's only – we look at 10 or 15 years down the road, the City of Charlottetown will be quite a bit bigger, and we'll tap into what's considered a rural area now.

So you know, those types of things that I'll be looking forward to talking about in the future.

Mr. Fox: Yes, sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well I'm a great believer in the rural development, but this being eight weeks into this, I have a difficult time to understand where's all the grants going?

I was looking at the – what do you call this big book here, and I find lots of grant receivers, but there is no listing of the funds. What's the reason for the funds not being listed? Generally speaking, what are the grants going towards? And why was there a sudden spike in the actual use that was followed up with an increase for the estimate for 19.

Mr. Fox: If I'm right, I think you're asking for the list of where the grants go to, right?

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: I'm sorry, didn't hear that.

Mr. Fox: I think if I understand you hon. member, you're asking in regards to that \$2,285,000.

Mr. Hammarlund: That's right, yes.

Mr. Fox: You're asking where that is actually going to?

Mr. Hammarlund: Yes.

Mr. Fox: In 2018-19, there were 121 projects, basically 93 were under community revitalization; five were under inclusive communities; seven were for economical growth; and there was also 16 for the Community Capacity Building Fund.

The Marine Rail Park in Borden-Carleton, they actually got contribution of roughly \$75,000 for a project value of \$420,000. These are just some examples. The Maple Leaf Curling Club, they received a newcomers initiatives. Abeqweit First Nations, they received some funding.

I do have a list. It's very long and extensive of where different groups across the province in all three counties receive funding.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: No further questions.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

So, minister, you might recall in Question Period a couple of weeks ago, I had asked about the \$2.2 million that was budgeted for growth initiatives. And in those questions – from the answers I gathered that the money is not for community or municipal growth studies, that it might be for growth initiatives.

Can you clarify exactly what that \$2.2 million is actually going to go towards?

Mr. Fox: It basically focuses on the following outcomes, you know, we are looking at how to revitalize the community. Get it back up to how do you say it; more active, an active community, right?

I look at the community of Kinkora. You know, right now they've taken on a project by themselves to build an outdoor rink arena ice surface that can be utilized for multiple events. So it's to revitalize the communities, so they're not having to travel to other communities that might offer that – have that service.

There's also increased population growth. So, yes, there is the book there. You know, inclusive communities, so getting people to be more inclusive.

Economic growth within that area itself, or in that rural community. Community capacity-building. Increase the strategic capacity of rural communities to identify solutions for complex problems that they might be having, by providing help to development strategic or organizational plans and increase organizational capacity.

Then of course we have the community revitalization part of it. You know, which is to enhance and revitalize rural communities so that they continue to be strong, and prosper.

You know people move to – I hear in Kinkora a lot, people like to move to Kinkora, because they have a post office.

They have an elementary school. They have a high school.

So I think it's very important to make sure these small little communities are vital to our overall commodity and social, you know – growing of our province.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you for that.

So, initially the Rural Growth Initiative is a one-year commitment. Can you tell me what current commitment is for the program? Is it another one-year extension or is it a multiple-year commitment?

Mr. Fox: It basically just continues year after year. We look at the program, you know, on needs basis for the next. Is what we're projecting for this year sufficient for the upcoming budget? You know, it's a moving target to be honest.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Is the intent that it will remain at about \$2.2 million per year?

Mr. Fox: I can't give that answer at this point. As I say, it's a need basis. If we find the intake this year was the same as previous years, we'll try to keep the budget the same. If there is more intake into a program, then we review and look at what we can do to improve it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

During the previous assembly, the now Leader of the Opposition pointed out that some of the projects funded under the Rural Growth Initiatives were actually located in urban areas, including Charlottetown.

Can you tell me what percentage of the program is being spent in urban areas?

Mr. Fox: No, I cannot.

Actually that was brought up to me back awhile ago. I am reviewing that and looking

at it. The idea behind the rural and regional development program, as I understand it, was for rural PEI, and that is under review.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Okay, so I'll look forward to that percentage.

That's good, Chair, thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

While you're going through the process of looking at the regional economic advisory councils, their composition, objectives, you know if you're going to do any – make any changes to those or how they function. I'm wondering are they going to continue to meet in the meantime?

Mr. Fox: Oh, yes.

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

Ms. Altass: Under the previous government, the boards reported directly to the Premier, is that still going to be the model in the interim then?

Mr. Fox: I'm not quite sure how they reported in the past. I can only tell you that I'm actively engaged. I have started actively engaging with this board, and I will continue with that.

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

Mr. Fox: If you have any – sorry, Chair. If you have any suggestions or anything you want to have a discussion on, I'm open to that.

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

Ms. Altass: That's great. I appreciate that.

I'm wondering about, as well, if any of the advice, what comes out of these councils is made public in any way?

Mr. Fox: I'll have to come back with that answer.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

So I guess while we're on this topic, I would just say that we have found that through research and polling and from our engagement in the communities that health and wellbeing are our primary concerns of Islanders and I just wonder if you've considered broadening the mandate of these councils beyond just economic goals?

So perhaps one of the things that you might look at or you might already be looking at in – when you're considering these councils might be the goals and objectives, and broadening that.

Mr. Fox: I'll take that under advisement.

Ms. Altass: Thank you.

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

Ms. Altass: That's it for now.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Rural and Regional Development Division: 4,052,400.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Municipal Affairs Division

Municipal Affairs

“Appropriations provided for the oversight of municipal government, advisory services and training and including equalization grants and municipal services tax credits for municipalities.” Administration: 10,000. Equipment: 3,000. Materials and Supplies: 9,800. Professional Services: 105,000. Salaries: 574,500. Travel and Training: 8,100. Grants: 28,933,700. Total Municipal Affairs: 29,644,100.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So in this section, what sorts of supports are provided to small municipalities to help them with the implementation of the *Municipal Government Act*?

Mr. Fox: One second, I want clarification on something.

Your question?

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Under this section, I'm wondering what sorts of – what supports are provided for small communities to help those – sorry small municipalities to help those municipalities come into compliance with the *Municipal Government Act*?

Mr. Fox: I think the big thing about the *Municipal Government Act* is it's coming in in stages. A lot of things that are going to be required are not actually coming into effect until 2022. Okay?

But I can say that we have a very small staff over there. They are very actively engaged in talking with community leaders and mayors and councilors and CEOs on how the *Municipal Government Act* is going to apply to them and what they have to provide.

The idea behind municipal affairs is to provide good governance, and proper governance to ensure that proper governance is actually being applied across these rural communities, so our staff is very open.

I can honestly say that in the last six weeks, whatever the week is, I have actually been – our staff has been contacted by various communities on what does this actually mean? How is this going to affect us? We're meeting with them. We're talking with them.

I've got meetings, I think, next week or the week after with Three Rivers and some of the communities down east want to meet with me on *Municipal Government Act*.

We are there to guide and we're there to help and support and answer questions, and our staff is doing that. So, you know, we

have a lot of resources that we can bring to the table to try to help.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

I come from a very small municipality just over 200 people in it, and we've actually had municipal affairs – we've contacted them multiple times, and we've had them come out and speak to us during our community council meetings on numerous – at least two I believe it was three occasions – to try to help guide us through this.

We are a municipality that is surrounded by unincorporated municipalities, and, as you're aware, part of the *Municipal Government Act* is to annex or amalgamate into larger-sized communities.

When I asked during Question Period, what would be this government's process, given that there were objections to the *Municipal Government Act* when this government was in opposition, so, I'm interested in knowing the issues that this government had when they were in opposition, and it was voted against, right?

So, I'm interested in understanding what parts of the act in opposition were not something that this government was favourable of?

Mr. Fox: It's a very fair question, hon. member.

When I was sitting in opposition, there was things that was in the *Municipal Government Act* that were of concern to me. I can see looking at both sides you know, from the side of the small community, to also the government, I believe there is compromise.

I am willing and will be working this fall on the *Municipal Government Act* and I want to have conversations with municipalities. I want to have conversations with their leaders.

Thank you.

I want to have conversations with the actual staff on the MGA, how we can possibly

make some changes to it to take into consideration the concerns that were raised by the different groups.

I think it's very healthy, too. I think it's a good exercise. At the end of the day, we want to have good governance across the province of Prince Edward Island.

I believe in that. I believe it should not be just a government-driven agenda or policy or guideline. I think it should be a comprehensive conversation between municipal government, the unincorporated areas have to be taken into account.

I can tell you point blank, I will not be forcing or am interested in any sign of forced amalgamation or forced annexation. I think we need to work at this together. I think we can. I'm hearing that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thank you, Chair.

I am encouraged to hear that especially for the unincorporated communities, which I have a couple of them in my district. I'm sure everybody else in the room have lots of them in their district if they're not in an urban area.

If it is not about enforcing amalgamation or annexation, what is really the expectation of communities around PEI in the next five years then to actually come into compliance if there's not really the expectation that they will have to amalgamate or annex?

Mr. Fox: I'm saying not saying municipalities are not going to have to comply. I'm saying that we're going to provide good governance across this province.

I am saying that our staff will work with municipal governments in communities to ensure that good governance practices are put in place.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So for the unincorporated communities, I won't call them municipalities, for the unincorporated

communities, how do you propose engaging them to become part of this process?

Mr. Fox: I think you have to understand also that Municipal Affairs, basically, only encompasses, or takes care of, any small communities that is actually under the *Municipal Government Act*.

I think the area of unincorporated areas is another discussion that cannot be left out also, but you know, that falls under other departments, and I think that as I say, it has to be a joint conversation.

I totally believe that all citizens that are affected by any change should be somewhat involved in the process. And I will listen to them, and I think that our conversations coming up in the next two or three months will be pushing that forward.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So I understand that they are not covered under the municipality act, but the challenge for communities that are covered under the municipality act that are completely surrounded, or for the most part surrounded by, unincorporated communities, who is that incorporated community supposed to reach out to if they're looking to form a larger community within those unincorporated communities?

Because there's no mayor. There is no council. There is no leader in those communities. Really it's talking – what we've been instructed to do, in Alexandra, is to talk to our neighbours. But, which neighbour do you talk to?

Do you see the issue that I'm kind of getting at when you are covered under the municipality act, so, for those communities that are struggling, because I understand not all Island communities are struggling to work within the *Municipal Government Act*, but there are some that are.

So my question is – we've had people come out from the department to try to help us through this. That's the direction we got, to do 'a', a study on – like a population study around our community, and like I said, we know what our community is, but we don't know those communities around us, but the

surrounding communities are unincorporated.

Who do we talk to when they say talk to a friend or talk to somebody in the community? That's a challenge that we're under right now with the act and the way that it's laid out today.

So what – I guess – what supports for communities that are struggling to actually comply are there other than asking the department to come out to talk to us during a council meeting, and to kind of get those kind of supports?

Mr. Fox: I think that any community that has any concerns or has – are worried about one concept or one idea behind the *Municipal Government Act*, if they can write their concerns down, send them directly to me, I will ensure that the answer is given or you know, I will personally ensure that I will point them in the right direction to get their answer, their concern answered.

Ms. Beaton: Okay. No I have another question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford. I'm going to give you one more question. I'm going to move on, but I will come back to you.

Ms. Beaton: Okay.

So, when you say – for the population studies, actually, you know what? I'm going to let you go to somebody else because I want to do the series all together.

Thank you.

Chair: Sure, thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I see under salaries, so the budget forecast, there is a reduction from that to a budget estimate there. Is that due do a vacancy, or was that an intended position eliminated, that reduction?

Mary Kinsman: I'm not seeing a reduction there.

Mr. Mitchell: Am I in the wrong spot? Did you reduce salaries?

Mary Kinsman: Our original budget last year, it was 563,400, we actually overspent.

Mr. Mitchell: But wasn't there an intention for another position or was there a vacancy within this?

Mr. Fox: No, we're totally fully staffed hon. member.

Mr. Mitchell: Ok, I thought there was an intention for another individual there.

Mr. Fox: We're under contract, so there are only term employees.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party?

Mr. Mitchell: So currently – I think you made reference the other day that there's two regions of PEI that are currently having conversations about coming together as larger municipalities.

Mr. Fox: No. There's no applications before the department right now to any further amalgamations or talks.

Mr. Mitchell: I understand that but having the conversations in the department would be, as the hon. member mentioned, usually as part of those talks. Did you (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I'm not involved in any conversations. I've had a few communities reach out to me and want to have meetings, Three Rivers being one. They want to have a conversation with me about, basically, what's taken place in the last year or so.

Mr. Mitchell: So was there one around the Argyle Shore area or something like that?

Mr. Fox: No, not that I'm aware of.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: Also to some of the comments that you made earlier, so are you suggesting that we may see amendments to the MGA by this fall perhaps on some of those things?

Mr. Fox: There's a possibility.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know, would that be subject to some kind of public input?

Mr. Fox: We'll be doing consultation? Yes.

Chair: The hon. leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Mitchell: No that's good for now.

Chair: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thanks Chair.

As the member would know, in your previous role, you we're at a few public meetings that I attended; is your department in a process of helping some of these smaller municipalities that couldn't provide two-year financial statements, with some funding or with some help to do that. Or are you giving them some leniency under the new act?

Mr. Fox: Yes, actually, I think I signed three orders yesterday allowing for extensions on the reporting of their financial documents into the department. I got to be honest hon. member, I'm actually encouraged. A lot of places have reached out to me and had conversations with them and I'm not hearing a lot of opposition, I'm hearing the one to listen to and possibly the one for us to look at some tweaking of the act or some minor changes to it, or depending on the size of the municipality, you know, some kind of leniency between two communities. I got to admit, I'm encouraged.

Chair: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: It's good to hear that and as you're aware, there was come concerns from my area. Everybody thought at the end of the day it was a good thing they just had concerns about some of the issues in it and could they have some leniency and I was glad to hear that 2022, is when a lot of things will, they have until then for things to role in.

Thank you, minister.

Mr. Fox: I'll just add one final thing there, Chair.

I've been dealing with one area for the last month on a regular basis and I got to give these people credit. They're really working hard at making things work within their area, I'll say, and it's very positive.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, minister.

Chair: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: Thank you.

I'm concerned about landscape in general, as the minister of agriculture pointed out earlier this morning or yesterday. Landscape is really a treasure that's why people come here and probably the minister responsible for tourism will agree that it's one of the key elements of our whole tourism industry.

In the past, the province has largely avoided being responsible for the landscape that is letting strip development, houses being built, highways gone amuck, whatever, not really done any complaining and there's already many, many places on PEI that you used to drive around a rural road and you see beautiful, beautiful landscapes, where now you can't see the landscape anymore because there's like a row of bungalows along the road.

Now the government is passing on the responsibility of the landscape to the individual municipalities and I think it's probably a good thing.

Mr. Fox: Thank you hon. member, great question, but they do not fall under this department whatsoever.

This department totally deals with governance of municipalities under the MGA. I would say that anything of what you're talking about would actually fall under communities, lands and environment and the ag.

Mr. Hammarlund: Well I haven't quite finished my question.

Chair: The hon. member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. Hammarlund: I believe planning and all kind of other things comes under the municipalities (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: No.

Mr. Hammarlund: I stand corrected, sorry.

Chair: Charlottetown-Brighton, (Indistinct) not under this division, so do you have another question?

Mr. Hammarlund: No, that was it.

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

Ms. Altass: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just noticing the bulk of transfers to municipalities through the equalization grants and the rural property tax credit are – they seem to be both up. The description of the later says this is part of a five year MOU with the municipalities. I'm just wondering if you could give a bit more detail about that MOU, what it entails in terms of future funding to the municipalities.

Mr. Fox: I'm going to try to answer this as best as I can. There is a Memorandum of Understanding in place and it actually involves the City of Charlottetown, Summerside, Stratford, Cornwall, Alberton, Georgetown, Kensington, Montague, O'Leary, Souris, Tignish and the Town of Borden-Carleton actually opted out to sign that memorandum. This has to do with municipal funding which ends on March 31st 2022 and there's possibly room for a one year extension on that.

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

Ms. Altass: So will these expenses continue to increase over the terms of this MOU.

Mr. Fox: That's a question, you have to take in effect the real property tax credit, you have to take in property values, assessments, there's a whole bunch of things that come into play there. So I can't honestly say which way it's going to go.

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

Ms. Altass: So there's no sort of, so you can't guess at –

Mary Kinsman: Yes I do believe over five years the expectation is, that as the assessments go up these will go up, these grants will go up, yes.

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

Ms. Altass: So is Borden-Carleton the only municipality that opted out of this?

Mr. Fox: Yes it is, according to my knowledge.

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

Ms. Altass: I'm curious as to why, I don't know if you can answer that, I'm just wondering what, if we're not meeting the needs of that particular municipality?

Mr. Fox: I'm actually asking the same question and I'm waiting for an answer. If I can share it, I will share it.

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

The hon. member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Thanks, Chair.

So I'm going to go back to the supports for municipalities to implement the *Municipal Government Act*.

My understanding is that there is a population study that municipalities would be required to do in order to identify amalgamation I guess and planning. Do you have any idea of how much a typical study like that would cost a municipality?

Mr. Fox: No I do not.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So not knowing, is that something the department can provide?

Mr. Fox: We can come back with an answer.

Ms. Beaton: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: I'd also like to know how much funding from the department there would be to assist the communities to do that population study.

Mr. Fox: We do not provide any assistance in funding for population studies to my knowledge.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: So if there's not supports in that method, I guess I'm just struggling a little bit when you talk about unincorporated communities (Indistinct) incorporated communities and how those incorporated communities are supposed to grow into larger municipalities. How are they supposed to understand the population that's in those unincorporated municipalities? Is it strictly through them financing a study on their own and paying for the full pop?

Mr. Fox: That would be my understanding.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Do you feel the government is providing sufficient resources for those small municipalities? When you think about the tax bases of those small municipalities – I'm not talking about Stratford, I'm not talking Charlottetown, I'm talking about the 200 residents, when you think about the tax base and what the cost of one of those studies would be, do you think that's appropriate support for implementing the *Municipal Government Act*?

Mr. Fox: I understand what you're saying. I'll have to take that under advisement.

Ms. Altass: Okay. I'd appreciate that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

So we're only about halfway through the five-year implementation of the *Municipal Government Act*.

Mr. Fox: Year two.

Ms. Beaton: Yeah, about halfway through, right? I think we're two and a half years if we split hairs, we're two and a half years. I can ask my CAO, but as we go down this path, you made a statement earlier that you're reviewing – because I do know you voted against the *Municipal Government Act*. Now you're making reviews to go through the *Municipal Government Act*. Do you see foresee that there's going to be any changes?

Mr. Fox: I want to be very clear. I believe proper governance is needed, and there needs to be regulations and an act in place to provide proper governance for all municipalities across the Island. I believe in that.

Was there things in the *Municipal Government Act* that I did not believe in or had concerns with? Yes, there was.

With that, I am asking the department and we are looking at having that conversation I spoke of, on how can we improve the MGA going forward? That's what I'm engaged in right now.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: I appreciate that. I guess my concern is around the cost to the municipalities to implement the *Municipal Government Act* and if its foreseeable changes to the *Municipal Government Act* prior to the five-year period being up, but they've already complied to this point, and it's cost them some of their taxpayers' money, at what point do they trust there is not going to be any changes so they're going down a path that is unnecessary cost to them?

Mr. Fox: It's my understanding right now that the changes that are in place right now, given the timetable of the MGA, it's actually in steps right?

If they are talking about the requirement for an office to be open for 20 hours a week, well that's not until 2022. If you're talking about the requirements of that CEO at this point, well the requirements now are different than down the road. I would say

we're in a work in progress, and I'm reviewing – are moving forward.

I can understand your concern, what you're saying that if a municipality goes in, spends money today, and something changes tomorrow, will they be compensated for what measures they brought into effect in previous? I can't answer those questions at this time.

Chair: The hon. Member from Mermaid-Stratford.

Ms. Beaton: Do you have a date on which you expect to have your review complete?

Mr. Fox: No, I do not. I can tell you, it is the first thing actually I'm working on, you know, I would say I'll be very much engulfed in it, (Indistinct) probably in August.

Ms. Beaton: Okay, that's good, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Yesterday in Question Period minister, I brought up the issue of the 13 fire departments –

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: – who need to upgrade their pager systems. Your question in the last one, on behalf of the minister of justice, you mentioned that you encouraged all of those departments to reach out to you, to apply for those funds.

I know that in the Evangeline area where they did recently upgrade, the cost was about \$25,000. If you do the math on that, 13 fire departments, times \$25,000, you're north of \$300,000. I'm wondering whether that is budgeted in your department to actually provide all of those fire departments with the full funding that they require.

Mr. Fox: In actual fact, hon. member, that falls under rural development and that section has been passed (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Can you expand just to tell me?

Mr. Fox: There would be no funding within the municipal affairs department to actually deal with your questions, because that's – under governance under this section. I will go back and say –

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate that.

Mr. Fox: I will say that under rural regional development, I did direct the department to reach out to the municipalities or them fire departments that had concerns on their equipment and for them you know to find actually what the status is and if our department is able to provide some type of funding, if they make an application in the department. That has been started.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate that. I want some more clarity though, minister. We know actually how much it costs in Evangeline, \$25,000. I was just speaking to the fire chief in Georgetown just last night, estimate \$27,000.

So we know what the cost is, again, multiplied by 13, we are at 300, \$350,000. Is your department fully budgeting making that money available for those 13 fire departments so they can purchase that.

Mr. Fox: Under the programs within that department, applications can be submitted on a 50-cent dollar. That's the guidelines, and the things of the program, so if they have got a quote of \$25,000, do the math divided by half they can make an application for that. I did ask the question, do I have discretion in increased funding allotments? I do. But it will be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So, okay, if we have that total then to be between \$150,000 and \$175,000 that your department will have to make available – it's all very well for you to say they can make an application, but if they make an application and it gets denied, that's useless, and this is something that needs to be upgraded immediately.

Can I get a commitment from you that that 150,000 or \$175,000 will be available from your department if those fire services –

those fire departments come to you with an application?

Mr. Fox: I will tell you this: that protection of a life, and property, has always been first in mind. Okay?

I will look at any application before the department when it has anything to do with emergency services, the sole goal is to provide protection of life and property first.

Leader of the Opposition: Again, nice words, minister, but not much comfort for those fire chiefs who are having to upgrade a system –

Mr. Fox: They will be given priority over other applications that were in the department if they come forward across my desk.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: If you're willing, minister – and I think it's fairly easy to yes, no answer – will those funds be available when those fire chiefs come to you with an application for 50% of the funding to upgrade their pager system?

Mr. Fox: I can tell you that I did reach out to the hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture and I wanted to get in touch with Bell Canada to find actually out what systems are required.

I'll make a commitment, if the fire department needs 50% dollars to put pagers on the ground, to protect life, to make sure that our communities are protected, then applications will be looked at first.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: They'll be looked at first, and that's great.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Will those –

Mr. Fox: I can't say it another way. Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Will those applications be honoured?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you minister, I appreciate that.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Total Municipal Affairs Division: 29,644,100.

An Hon. Member: Carry the department.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Department of Fisheries and Communities: 39,243,600.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Fox: Did you just carry the department?

Chair: No.

Mr. Fox: Oh.

Chair: Total Department of Fisheries and Communities.

Mr. Fox: Oh.

Chair: Nice try.

Employment Development Agency
Management

General: "Appropriations provided to administration for program delivery, budget management and payment processing. Administration: 7,500. Equipment: 2,700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 300. Salaries: 169,900. Travel and Training: 6,000."

Total General: 186,400.

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Mr. Deagle: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that this House adjourn until July 9th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend, everybody is rushing me out.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, July 9th, at 2:00 p.m.