



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of Prince Edward Island**

**Official Report of
Debates and Proceedings**

(Hansard)

Third Session of the 67th General Assembly

Friday, 29 May 2026

No. 37

The Honourable Brad Trivers, Speaker

Published by Order of the Legislature

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Friday, 29 May 2026

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests	1841
Statements by Members	
Georgetown-Pownal (Representing District 2)	1846
Charlottetown-Belvedere (Importance of Advocating for Women’s Health)	1847
O’Leary-Inverness (Community Hospital – O’Leary)	1847
Oral Questions	
Leader of the Opposition (School transportation safety)	1848
Leader of the Opposition (Canadian unity)	1848
Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park (Gender-based violence strategy)	1850
Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park (Pay equity)	1851
Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park (Education and Early Years funding) (further)	1851
O’Leary-Inverness (Disposal of specified risk materials)	1851
Leader of the Third Party (Fiscal management) (further)	1853
New Haven-Rocky Point (Maritime Electric) (further)	1854
Summerside-Wilmot (Energy drink regulations)	1855
Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke (Homeschooling oversight)	1857
Charlottetown-West Royalty (Access to primary care) (further)	1858
Leader of the Opposition (Prescription renewals for seniors) (further)	1858
Tabling of Documents	1859
Orders of the Day (Government)	
Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure	
Workforce and Advanced Learning	1859
Employment Development Agency	1873
PEI Student Financial Assistance Corporation	1877
Legislative Assembly	1878
Finance and Affordability	1882
Employee Benefits	1892
General Government	1893
Interest Charges on Debt	1896
Recorded Division – Report of the Committee	1898
Second Reading and Committee	
Bill 17– Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026	1899
Bill 18 – Loan Act 2026	1900
Third Reading and Pass	
Bill 2 – An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act	1901
Bill 3 – An Act to Amend the Private Schools Act	
Bill 4 – An Act to Amend the Education Act	
Bill 5 – Wills Act	
Bill 6 – An Act to Amend the Children’s Law Act	
Bill 7 – Intestate Succession Act	
Bill 8 – Presumption of Death Act	
Bill 9 – An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act	
Bill 10 – Veterinary Profession Act	
Bill 13 – An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act	
Bill 11 – An Act to Amend the Registry Act	

Bill 14 – An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act	
Bill 16 – An Act to Repeal the Chiropractic Act	
Bill 15 – An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act	
Bill 12 – An Act to Amend the Real Property Act	
Bill 19 – Charitable Lotteries Act	
Bill 20 – An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act	
Bill 17 – Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026	
Bill 24 – An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act	
Bill 18 – Loan Act 2026	
Bill 25 – Government Reorganization Act	
Bill 22 – Public Sector Pay Disclosure Act	
Bill 26 – An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (No. 2)	
Bill 27 – Supplementary Appropriation Act 2026	1902

Orders Other Than Government

Third Reading and Pass

Bill 104 – Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act	1902
--	------

Orders of the Day (Government)

Royal Assent

Bill 2 – An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act.....	1903
Bill 3 – An Act to Amend the Private Schools Act	
Bill 4 – An Act to Amend the Education Act	
Bill 5 – Wills Act	
Bill 6 – An Act to Amend the Children’s Law Act	
Bill 7 – Intestate Succession Act	
Bill 8 – Presumption of Death Act	
Bill 9 – An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act	
Bill 10 – Veterinary Profession Act	
Bill 11 – An Act to Amend the Registry Act	
Bill 12 – An Act to Amend the Real Property Act	
Bill 13 – An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act	
Bill 14 – An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act	
Bill 15 – An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act	
Bill 16 – An Act to Repeal the Chiropractic Act	
Bill 17 – Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026	
Bill 18 – Loan Act 2026	
Bill 19 – Charitable Lotteries Act	
Bill 20 – An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act	
Bill 21 – Combative Sport Commissioner Act	
Bill 22 – Public Sector Pay Disclosure Act	
Bill 23 – An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act	
Bill 24 – An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act	
Bill 25 – Government Reorganization Act	
Bill 26 – An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (No. 2)	
Bill 27 – Supplementary Appropriation Act 2026	
Bill 100 – An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act	
Bill 103 – An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act	
Bill 104 – Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act	
Bill 105 – Financial Literacy Week Act	
Bill 200 – An Act to Amend the St. Dunstan’s University Act.....	1904

Adjourned	1905
------------------------	-------------

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
67th General Assembly
Third Session

Lieutenant Governor – His Honour the Honourable Dr. Wassim Salamoun, O.P.E.I.

Speaker – Hon. Brad Trivers

Clerk – Joseph Jeffrey

Deputy Clerk – Emily Doiron

Clerk Assistant – Samantha Lilley

Parliamentary Counsel – Vacant

Director of Parliamentary Research – Ryan Reddin

Legislative Librarian – Laura Morrell

Sergeant-at-Arms – Gordon Campbell

Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms – June Ramsay

Member and Party	Constituency (District)	Other Responsibilities
Arsenault , Gilles (IND)	Évangeline-Miscouche (21)	
Bell , Hon. Zack (PC)	Charlottetown-Winsloe (10)	Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning Minister responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs
Bernard , Karla (G)	Charlottetown-Victoria Park (12)	Third Party Whip
Bevan-Baker , Peter (G)	New Haven-Rocky Point (17)	Third Party House Leader
Burridge , Hon. Jill (PC)	Stratford-Keppoch (6)	Minister of Finance and Affordability
Compton , Hon. Darlene (PC)	Belfast-Murray River (4)	Minister of Land and Environment
Croucher , Hon. Robin (PC)	Souris-Elmira (1)	Minister of Education and Early Years
Curran , Brendan (PC)	Georgetown-Pownal (2)	
Deagle , Hon. Cory (PC)	Montague-Kilmuir (3)	Minister of Health and Wellness
DesRoches , Tyler (PC)	Summerside-Wilmot (21)	Government Whip
Dillon , Susie (PC)	Charlottetown-Belvedere (11)	Deputy Speaker
Dollar , Hon. Kent (PC)	Brackley-Hunter River (15)	Minister of Housing and Communities
Henderson , Robert (L)	O’Leary-Inverness (25)	Opposition Whip
Hudson , Hon. Ernie (PC)	Alberton-Bloomfield (26)	Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy

Member and Party	Constituency (District)	Other Responsibilities
Lantz , Hon. Rob (PC)	Charlottetown-Brighton (13)	Premier Minister responsible for Indigenous Affairs Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs
MacEwen , Sidney (PC)	Morell-Donagh (7)	
MacFarlane , Matthew (G)	Borden-Kinkora (19)	Leader of the Third Party
MacKay , Matthew (PC)	Kensington-Malpeque (20)	Government House Leader
MacLennan , Hilton (PC)	Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke (23)	
McNeilly , Gordon (L)	Charlottetown-West Royalty (14)	Opposition House Leader
Perry , Hon. Hal (L)	Tignish-Palmer Road (27)	Leader of the Official Opposition
Ramsay , Hon. Barb (PC)	Summerside-South Drive (22)	Minister of Social Development and Seniors Minister responsible for the Status of Women
Redmond , Hon. Jenn (PC)	Mermaid-Stratford (5)	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence
Simpson , Carolyn (L)	Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park (9)	
Thompson , Hon. Bloyce (PC)	Stanhope-Marshfield (8)	Minister of Agriculture Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General
Trivers , Hon. Brad	Rustico-Emerald (18)	Speaker
Vacant	Cornwall-Meadowbank (16)	

[The Legislature met at 10:04 a.m.]

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, everybody, and welcome back. Welcome to everybody watching online and welcome to our guests in the gallery. We've got Donnie MacKinnon with us here this morning.

This year, Ringette PEI has introduced a new award called the Mark McLane Memorial Award. The Mark McLane Memorial Award honours the life and spirit and the extraordinary dedication of Mark McLane, beloved member of both the ringette world and his wider community, and obviously, good friend of those of us here in this House.

[10:05 a.m.]

I want to congratulate Donnie MacKinnon on winning the Mark McLane Memorial Award this year.

[Hear, hear!]

Hon. R. Lantz: We started this session with a lot of tributes to our colleague, Mark, who we miss dearly. I think it's very fitting that we're seemingly, perhaps today, ending the session by recognizing this award, and Donnie, you should be very proud to be the first person to be recognized with this. We really appreciate what you do for your community and for the ringette community, so thank you very much.

Last night, many of us were able to attend the Lady Ball in support of Ovarian Cancer Canada, and what a night it was. I want to give a big shout-out to the Minister of Finance and Affordability and my principal secretary, Shelley Christian – they did a fantastic job of walking the runway; they looked very glamorous – along with a great auctioneer. The Minister of Agriculture and Justice and Public Safety brought a lot of energy, and I think at one point he had a husband and wife bidding against each other on an item.

It was a great evening supporting such an important cause. I want to thank everyone involved for planning and executing a terrific event; it's certainly an event you don't want to miss. If you've never been, I really encourage everyone to go.

And I have to recognize that we had a really big contingent from our caucus there last night, and when I got up to say my remarks and recognize everyone, in my panic not to miss anyone, I did get all of our caucus members, but I failed to recognize the Leader of the Third Party and the MLA from Charlottetown-Victoria Park. That was not intentional; I know that they're big fans of the event as well. It was a great night, and I really enjoyed it.

Finally, as we appear to be nearing the end of the spring session of the Legislative Assembly here, I want to thank all the Pages, of course; everyone who works here at the Legislative Assembly; all of the clerks and everyone in the Speaker's office; all the commissionaires; everyone up in the government members office – Janet, Adam, CJ, Mary Ellen, Donalda; everyone from my office, of course – Pat, Shelley, Dean, Emily, Danielle, Andrea, Crystal, Cindy, and Patrick. Thank you so much for all you do.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you. You've certainly settled into your role, adapted to this role, and you've been conducting yourself honourably and with respect for the role itself, for the chair, for the Assembly; you've done a great job. So, congratulations on getting through your first sitting here as well.

Thank you very much. Have a great day, everybody.

Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all those who are watching online. Welcome to our guests in the gallery today. Donnie MacKinnon, welcome and congratulations on the award. Well deserved.

I want to also take this opportunity, whether today is our last day or next week or the week after, just to stand and thank all involved in the

staff here at the Legislative Assembly for doing such a great job of supporting us and, with security, keeping us safe. We truly do appreciate it. I do want to send a thanks out to the staff on our floor, of course – Ronnie, Shreesh, Madison, Stacie, and Nicole – for all the great work that they do to support us and get us ready for the session and throughout the year.

The Lady Ball was mentioned, so I do want to send out my thanks and congratulations to all those who organized and who participated in this event. I did notice on Instagram this morning that there was a West Prince participant in it. It was Della Sweet. Della is formally from Tignish, Della Gaudette. She's a cancer survivor herself. She does a tremendous job of volunteering and being an advocate for many, many events up west. One of the things she did for Tignish was their family had donated and then created a walking park in Tignish in honour of her niece, Sydney Gaudette.

[10:10 a.m.]

But she's known for – and the Member from O'Leary-Inverness would say the same thing – Hockeyville. Definitely one of the (Indistinct) on that. But she is a volunteer and an advocate for anything going; she will not say no. So, it was really nice to see her on the stage last night and to get recognized.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to a very productive day in this House and wish everyone all the best. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you and everyone in the Chamber this morning.

Welcome back for another day of debate, perhaps the last one for a little while. Welcome, Donnie, to the gallery. Congratulations on your award. Great to have you here with us today. Welcome to everybody watching online.

This morning, I had the opportunity to join cancer survivors, students, and staff at Kinkora Regional High School for their annual survivors breakfast, which then leads into a full day of Cancer Relay for Life activities, usually outside but today they're going to be inside. They're going to be walking inside in the gym and around the school to raise money for cancer.

I've touched on this event before. They do a tremendous job out there bringing the school population together and raising money for cancer. As I was leaving to get here, the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty was going in. He does the pump-up, gets them all excited out there, and I'm sorry to have missed his usual excitement getting the day going.

Last night was an incredible evening at the Lady Ball. It was the third time I've had the pleasure of going, and it's an incredible event. Congratulations. The Minister of Finance did a wonderful job, and the Minister of Agriculture and I guess former Deputy Premier did a tremendous job...

[Laughter]

M. MacFarlane: ...up on the stage, and through his efforts, did a tremendous job getting the bids up into the thousands of dollars. You got me on my feet a little bit to get the bids up. I got the bids up, but the prices got a little bit out of hand for the third party, sadly.

Just a couple of quick events I'll highlight:

At 1935 North Freetown Road is the farm of Barnyard Organics. Sally and Mark Bernard are hosting a swallow safari tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. Stroll around the farm and see how the barn swallows, tree swallows, and cattle all work together. I know the Minister of Agriculture would be interested in that and why it matters to have that symbiotic relationship between the species on the farm. Five dollars a person – just a donation.

Also tomorrow, Islanders for Proportional Representation are hosting an event at the Charlottetown Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon – sorry, it's Saturday, June 13th. So, not Saturday tomorrow; Saturday, June 13th at the Charlottetown Library. It's a chance for people interested to learn more about electoral reform and the work on proportional representation. Everyone is, of course, welcome.

Something was recently shared with me, Mr. Speaker, that I wanted to highlight very quickly. I think it's important just to give recognition.

Retired firefighter Gabriel Edgcomb from the Kinkora fire department recently was acknowledged in the news for saving the life of Barry Fraser in Alberton. It just turned out that Gabriel was up there, I think doing a private

purchase. I think he was just purchasing a sink, if I read the article correctly, and he happened to be there, and Barry Fraser had a cardiac event. Because of the timing, because of the skills that Gabriel Edgcomb had as a retired volunteer firefighter, he managed to save the life of Barry Fraser.

I just want to give that recognition out. I'll always stand up and recognize the important, incredible work and training that our first responders have, and I think it's important to do so. So, a big recognition to Gabriel and what he did for the Fraser family.

Finally, I would also like to give my thanks, as we may wrap up today, to all the staff in the Legislature: clerks and their staff, the Pages who have worked so hard here throughout the sitting, to Greg in the parking lot keeping everything in order out there, Gord and Trevor and all the security staff, Stewart, the audio-visual team – everybody who makes this whole place tick.

Finally, I'd also like to thank the people who make everything tick for us on the fourth floor in the third party – Katie, Michelle, and Sue – for all the great work they do to keep us prepared and on our game here in the Legislature.

With that, I wish everyone a great day of debate here today.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to take a moment to extend my sincere congratulations to Terri Wood, an executive administration assistant in my office who is retiring today.

[10:15 a.m.]

Terri began her career in public service 32 years ago in Premier Catherine Callbeck's office. Since then, she's worked across five departments alongside seven deputy ministers and more than a dozen ministers. For the past 16 years, she has been a valued and dedicated member of the Education and Early Years team. After an exceptional career in public service, I wish Terri all the best as she begins this exciting new chapter in her life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome Coach MacKinnon to the gallery today. Our daughters are within the same age bracket. My daughter actually played for Donnie last year and I spent a lot of time with Donnie last winter. I'm not sure who took over the cooking duties this year, but anyhow.

I was very pleased to see that the ringette community brought in the Mark McLane Memorial. They couldn't have picked a better individual to receive the first year. Donnie and Mark, having a daughter the same age, and seeing Donnie and Mark's commitment to the ringette and to our young people through the years.... The ringette community couldn't have picked a better person. Donnie puts his time and effort into it, and when Mark was there, Mark and Donnie were never too far apart.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well deserved, Donnie.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and recognize everybody watching from home, especially those in District 2 Georgetown-Pownal.

I rise today to recognize a very special constituent in Georgetown-Pownal: Mr. Jackie MacDonald of Georgetown, who just yesterday rang the bell for his final cancer treatment. Jackie is a staple to the community of Georgetown. He's not too far away from the rink. I'm sure he's sharing this special moment with his granddaughters, Kendall and Kristie. I wish Jackie and his entire family all the best as we go forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you.

I would like to say good morning to my colleagues and staff and our Pages, Jada and

Connor who are here with us today – thank you for everything that you’ve done for us this whole sitting; they’re not in the room at the moment – and everybody tuning in online from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and all around; and Donnie MacKinnon, congratulations.

I also wanted to just say some quick happy birthdays. Today is a popular birthday day in my world.

Sadie Cusack is celebrating her 11th birthday. She says she might go bowling tonight. I hope that you have a lot of fun on your birthday, Sadie. Happy birthday.

My dear friend, Heather Lea; she’s a school counsellor. We did our masters in counselling together.

And of course, I’ve already mentioned this, but today is Gracie’s 18th birthday. I just wanted to wish her a very happy birthday. That’s my daughter. She wants nacho dip for her meal, so I’ll be making some nacho dip this evening and celebrating her birthday.

With that, I wish everyone a great day.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Artificial Intelligence.

Hon. J. Redmond: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It’s certainly a pleasure to rise today and welcome all my colleagues back to the House, to those that are tuning in from beautiful District 5 Mermaid-Stratford, and to our gallery guest, Donnie MacKinnon, who I know well from college days and from the ringette world. As already has been mentioned, he is a perfect fit for the award for Mark McLane’s memorial.

Quickly, I want to remind and invite everyone to Sunday’s IG Management Walk for Alzheimer’s where we’ll walk for those that are living with dementia – my mom – for those that care for and have loved ones that support those living with dementia – my dad and my family and everyone that has to do that in the world – and those that are being remembered. Please come out and join me and a great community on Sunday to walk for a great cause.

Thank you.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank everybody for all their efforts in making this Legislature continue to serve. I don’t think we were the longest-running Legislature session yet, but we’re close.

Back home in O’Leary-Inverness, I do want to wish a happy 100th birthday to constituent Ada Ellis. Ada still lives in her home in West Cape. For those that might not know the connections here, Allison Ellis used to be a member in this Legislature – I think he was Minister of Forestry – and that would be her brother-in-law.

[10:20 a.m.]

Also, as you might note, Mr. Speaker, I have my potato tie on today. In the riding of O’Leary-Inverness, we have the Canadian Potato Museum and the PEI Potato Blossom Festival, but tomorrow, May 30th, is the International Day of Potato. It’s recognized by the United Nations for the reason of the potato’s importance to the world’s nutritional, economic, and environmental importance.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Hon. J. Burridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for giving me this opportunity.

I want to take a little time today to recognize my deputy minister, Denise Lewis Fleming, who is retiring after 30 years. She is hard-working, she’s dedicated, she’s excellent at what she does, and the last couple of years have been very difficult.

Sometimes, we get into the budget process, and we try to think, how are we ever going to get to the end of this and get all these pieces together? Denise manages that. She does an excellent job, and we are all going to miss her, but like any good leader, what she has done is she has built a fantastic team. We will benefit from that team she has built for many years, and all Islanders will benefit from that.

There’s many within that team. I always hesitate to start naming names, but we all know Jordan McNally on the floor – excellent. He will be a

key member of the team, and being as it's a budget session, I thought I would focus on the budget team in Jordan, Sonya Cobb – I did do a list, just to be sure – Cindy Harris, who's a secretary to the Treasury Board who has heavy involvement in that, Tanya MacGuigan in my office keeping everything straight, Janice Fogarty on the comms side, Kelly Dunn, and Sarah Watson, who doubled in her duties yesterday.

As I was in here, I couldn't go get my hair and makeup done for this Lady Ball last night, so Sarah packs up a makeup case and comes over here to GMO after the session to, I guess, bring me up to par in some way with everyone else that was going to be running that catwalk, and she did an amazing job. Sarah is quite a little talent – quite a little talent; she's a big talent – and she can do anything.

I just wanted to do a little shout-out to the team that Denise has built over time, and a thank you and a sign-off to Denise Lewis Fleming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Land and Environment.

Hon. D. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say hello to everyone, everyone in District 4. To the Pages and staff, thank you for what you've done for us and continue to do. Mr. Speaker, for you, you're doing a great job, and I enjoy watching you try to walk that middle line because I know how difficult that is.

I just wanted to mention about the Lady Ball last night. Marg Brady, who got up and told us her story about her journey with ovarian cancer, is from Murray Harbour, and she did a great job of sharing her thoughts and, really, her challenges through that battle. I think she's a nine-year survivor now, and she did a great job.

To my seatmate, who did a wonderful job as well – I'm going to keep going. It's the last day, maybe.

[Laughter]

Hon. D. Compton: This is my 23rd sitting, as it is for the Members from Kensington-Malpeque and Morell-Donagh, you, Mr. Speaker, and the Member from New Haven-Rocky Point. This is our 23rd sitting. We've never sat in the real

Legislature. That's my line all the time. We've never sat in that building over there, which is hard to believe, but there's always hope. Whenever we rise in the spring, I always think, "It's so long until November," but it comes around so very quickly.

[Laughter]

Hon. D. Compton: I'm just saying.

To you, Donnie, congratulations – such a wonderful award – and to our friend, Mark, I mentioned him last night to the hon. Leader of the Third Party because he asked me about a phrase I used when I was waxing poetic the other day. It's "jiggery-pokery," and he didn't know what that meant. I can say Mark loved that phrase so much. Whenever we were talking about something, he would say, "What's that? What do you say, Darlene? Jiggery something?"

Anyway, I looked it up after we talked, and it is Scottish origin, they think. So, I'm hoping – waiting – for the Leader of the Third Party, for questions today; I'm hoping he uses that word, but I don't know whether it'll happen. It was a bit of a challenge.

Have a great day, everyone. Enjoy your summer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thank you so much.

[10:25 a.m.]

Right on cue. That's a beautiful little segue because I stood up today firstly to thank everybody in this room – this room in which many of us have spent many, many, many hours and may not be back in again to perform the function we're doing today – but mainly because it certainly has the feel that maybe we're going to finish today. I don't know; I just get that sense around the room.

There was a time a couple of weeks ago when we thought we actually might finish a little earlier than this, so my wife, Ann, and I promised to take the two grandkids who live here on PEI for a sleepover last night, which we did, not expecting to have to be here in the morning. So, to Freddie and to Percy, hi. I hope you're not up to any jiggery-pokery in the hills of Bonshaw...

[Laughter]

P. Bevan-Baker: ...because it means naughtiness, is what it is. So, I hope they're not doing that. Hang in there, Nana; I'll be home soon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to take just a second to thank everyone – the Pages, staff, yourself, all the members – for such an incredible session, and to those watching at home and to those who are at home who are healing from illness and surgery, all the best to you.

Congratulations on your award; very well deserved, I'm hearing.

Tomorrow in East Royalty is the John Andrew Memorial Fishing Derby. All are welcome. It's free, it's family-friendly, and it's happening at Andrew's Pond North tomorrow. All are welcome.

Also, congratulations to you, Denise. We took a program together at UPEI many, many, many years ago. All the best in your endeavours.

To Terri Wood – there is no one else quite like Terri, and I wish you all the best, Terri. You were a rock star the whole time that I was there with you. Enjoy those grandbabies. The history that's walking out that door is incredible, but you know what, you deserve it. Enjoy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Well, members, since the stopwatch is away, I thought I would stand up as well.

[Laughter]

Speaker: When you become the Speaker, you're elected and you head right to the chair. You're dragged, literally, to the chair. It's a lot harder than it looks than when you're sitting on the floor. Of course, you guys have been really great to work with because of your cooperation, so thank you very much for that.

But the Office of the Clerk really does a great job in supporting the Office of the Speaker, so I especially want to thank the Clerk and the Office of the Clerk, plus all of the many people behind the scenes that make the Legislative Assembly work. Many of them have been mentioned today, but there are some that you never really see too much. They do things and make things happen that, really, in many ways, allow us to do our job and represent the people of Prince Edward Island properly.

Thank you to everyone at the Legislative Assembly. Let's have a great day in the Legislature, if indeed it is the last day. We shall see.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-Pownal.

Representing District 2

B. Curran: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we approach the conclusion of the spring sitting, perhaps, I rise today to mark the end of my very first session in this Legislative Assembly. It has been an incredible privilege to sit in this Chamber on behalf of the people of Georgetown-Pownal.

Over the past weeks, I have learned a tremendous amount. I've learned about the unexpected complexities of the legislative process, the fast pace of daily debate, and the immense work that goes on behind the scenes to move PEI forward.

Above all, this session has reinforced what matters most. I have learned that the true heart of this job isn't found within these historic walls. It's found at the doorsteps, the kitchen tables, the family farms, the rinks, and the community halls in District 2.

Everything I do here is driven by the people of District 2, and I want to say a profound thank you to my constituents for placing their trust in me and for their continued guidance over the last few months. Every question I have asked and every concern I have raised this session has come directly from the kitchen tables and small businesses of my district.

I also want to extend my gratitude to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House staff for keeping us

on track and helping a new MLA find his footing.

[10:30 a.m.]

As the House rises – we hope, or perhaps – I am eager to get back full-time working on the ground, to roll up my sleeves, listen to my neighbours, and ensure our communities have what they need to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

Importance of Advocating for Women's Health

S. Dillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise to speak about the ongoing importance of advocating for women's health, an issue that requires not only our attention but our sustained commitment through funding, research, and education.

For far too long, women's health has been underfunded and, in many cases, misunderstood. Conditions that disproportionately affect women – whether related to reproductive care, unexplained pain, or the stages of a female's life – haven't always received the level of investment or focus they deserve. This gap in funding directly impacts outcomes, access to care, and quality of life. It is important that we invest in knowledge because when we empower health care providers, we strengthen our system and, most importantly, we give women the confidence that their concerns are heard and taken seriously.

I encourage all members of this Assembly to continue championing policies that strengthen the advancement of women's health care, ensuring equitable access, research, and supports that reflect the realities that women face. Let us work collaboratively, building evidence and life experience to drive meaningful, lasting change. Together we are responsible, and we have the opportunity to create a healthier future for women across our province.

Let us continue to champion policies that prioritize funding, expand access, and deepen our understanding, because when we invest in women's health, we invest in a stronger, healthier future for everyone.

Thank you.

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

Community Hospital – O'Leary

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Community Hospital in O'Leary employs approximately 150 persons delivering the most up-to-date medical services to patients. It's the best example of a rural health care delivery model in the province, with 39 long-term care beds, one respite bed, 13 acute care beds that focus on palliative care, convalescent care, and restorative care services, physio, and occupational therapy.

They have a health centre where four to six family doctors can practice, mental health and addiction services, regional home care, and other mobile services. They have a lab for bloodwork diagnostics, X-rays, and virtual medical services, and they have a simulation bed where medical professionals can access training on the newest techniques. Most of all, they have an ambulatory care service that provides day services to residents who require treatments so they can stay at home and be productive.

But where this facility is vulnerable is, as of today, there are 25 vacancies for a variety of health professional positions. They include a nurse manager, speech pathologist, five LPNs, four occupational therapists, four RNs, one radiology clerk, one homecare nurse, one medical radiation technician, two physiotherapists, two nurse practitioners, one doctor, one maintenance worker, and one medical director. That's as of today.

The other issue that's concerning is admitting those awaiting long-term care into acute care beds. This underutilizes the staff's capabilities and impacts morale.

The facility is in great structural condition, but it's not the building that provides the services; it's the health professionals within it. Health care delivery is based on competent health delivery by trained professionals along with the technology and resources to deliver those services. It's important that Health PEI and this government make sure that this health care delivery model is respected at Community Hospital in O'Leary.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, a PEI family suffered an unimaginable loss. Our thoughts are with the family, the student's friends, classmates, and everyone in the community who is grieving alongside them. While nothing can be done to undo what happened, we have a responsibility to ask whether there are lessons to be learned and changes that could help keep our children safer in the future.

School transportation safety

Question to the Premier: What steps can government take, working with families, school staff and transportation officials, to help prevent a tragedy like this from happening again?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

There's nothing I disagree with in the sentiments of the question. I think the Leader of the Opposition is correct that we need to use this opportunity to look at what we might be able to do differently. Student safety is paramount. It's important.

[10:35 a.m.]

What happened is a tragedy. Our Island roads are busier than they have ever been, and this tragedy took place on a very busy highway on Prince Edward Island. I think it's important for us to take a look at this and see if there are lessons that can be learned to improve student safety and to try to prevent anything like this from happening again, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

School transportation is one of the most important services that government provides. There is always value in looking at where improvements can be made. The summer

months provide an opportunity to assess routes, gather feedback, and make changes before students return to school in the fall.

Question to the Minister of Education: Will the minister commit to engaging bus drivers, transportation staff, parents, and local communities this summer and explore practical measures that could improve student safety at pickup and drop-off locations across Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question. It is a very, very important topic.

Our focus currently is making sure that our school community gets through this awful tragedy, but having said that, conversations have already started. I had a half-hour conversation with one of my policing buddies in the parking lot at Gateway Park in Souris about this very thing and collecting his thoughts on it.

Absolutely, I will commit throughout the summer to reevaluate all of our routes. I have great trust in the staff that we have over at the PSB, and the experts there, but these tragic situations – if something good can come out of it, if something safer can come out of it, we certainly will be looking at all of those options.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prince Edward Island only gets the opportunity to chair the Council of the Federation once every decade or more. It's a position that comes with influence, responsibility, and an opportunity to bring premiers together with difficult issues that may arise. At a time when questions about national unity are growing, Islanders are entitled to know how the Premier of Prince Edward Island is using that position.

Canadian unity

So, question to the Premier: What specific action has the Premier taken as chair of the Council of the Federation to bring premiers together on the issue of Canadian unity?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, it is a very important privilege and an honour for Prince Edward Island to be hosting Canada's Premiers here in Prince Edward Island this summer – a very important role at a time of questions about national unity. I've been putting a lot of thought into this and as we approach that date, as I continue to have conversations with my colleagues about Prince Edward Island's role in confederation and the history of the unity of this nation. Delegates, of course, came to Charlottetown from across Canada to discuss the future of the colonies of this country. They came here with different grievances, with different interests, but they decided that Canada was stronger united.

I think that it is very fitting that this meeting will take place in Charlottetown this summer and that we'll be able to have these important conversations about Canada and our future and the vision that the founding fathers had here in Charlottetown about a united country because I believe this country is stronger together.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier often speaks about the importance of cooperation between governments, yet one of the most important responsibilities of the chair of the Council of the Federation is helping maintain cooperation between provinces themselves.

Question to the Premier: Does the Premier believe the chair of the Council of the Federation has a responsibility to speak publicly when actions taken by a province risk undermining Canadian unity?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the chair of the Council of the Federation has the responsibility to speak on behalf of all the premiers of this country. Yes, there is an important issue about national unity that all of us need to speak up about. I believe that Canadians want this country to remain united. Alberta is an important province in this country. I believe that Canada is stronger with

Alberta in it, and I believe that Alberta is stronger in this country, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As mentioned, Prince Edward Island helped build this country. Many Islanders are surprised that the Premier, as chair of the Council of the Federation, has had so little to say while discussions about separation continue to make headlines right across Canada.

[10:40 a.m.]

Question to the Premier: Can the Premier point to a single public statement, other than just now, that he has made defending Canadian unity in his role as the chair of the Council of the Federation?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important conversation that all Canadians will be having over the coming months. It's alarming to me and many Canadians that we're again immersed in this discussion. I can't be more clear: Canada is stronger with Alberta as a part of this country, and Alberta is stronger as a part of Canada. Forty million Canadians standing side by side is important at this time.

When we're talking about breaking up this country, it only makes us weaker. It makes us more susceptible to being divided by those that we're trying to negotiate with under very difficult circumstances internationally. This is not the time to talk about division; this is the time to talk about unity, and I will continue to champion a united Canada.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Compass reported that a new women's shelter for Indigenous women will be opening on PEI, which is very welcome news. It also stated that they will welcome other women as well. They will open six new beds, and some for children.

Nationally, an estimated 699 women and 236 children are turned away from domestic violence shelters every day across Canada, and PEI is not immune to this. Anderson House itself acknowledges that it must raise 30 percent of its operating budget each year just to keep the doors open, and the higher cost of living has meant more of its funding goes to maintaining basic shelter operations, leaving less for the support of survivors.

Gender-based violence strategy

Question to the Minister of Housing: Can the minister explain why a province-wide emergency shelter with 18 beds, which depends a lot on charity to survive, is considered adequate response to family violence on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work hard to meet the needs of people who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances. If the beds at Anderson House are full, we're willing to jump in and accommodate. Nobody gets turned away and we try to work as fast as we can to help them make their situations better.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In September 2024, the federal and provincial governments announced nearly \$6 million each to help gender-based violence survivors with housing costs through the Canada housing benefit. While that is incredibly welcome, housing support alone is not a strategy. A comprehensive gender-based violence strategy requires prevention, accountability, and coordinated services from tip to tip. Nova Scotia has one. The federal government has one.

Question to the same minister: Can the minister tell this House whether PEI has a standalone, comprehensive, gender-based violence strategy with clear timelines, dedicated funding, and measurable outcomes? If not, when will it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

Hon. K. Dollar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that would fall under the Status for Women. We're going to continue to work with our partners and do everything we can. We're going to continue to do what we've been doing and help support people that find themselves in unfortunate circumstances.

Thank you.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, and I appreciate the minister taking the questions on behalf of the Status of Women.

Nova Scotia declared intimate partner violence an epidemic in September 2024. New Brunswick followed in June 2025, and just this week, Newfoundland and Labrador became the third Atlantic province to make this declaration, establishing a task force and committing to concrete action. PEI now stands alone as the only Atlantic province that has not taken this critical step.

Question to the Attorney General. Can you please tell this House: Will you commit today to formally declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic in PEI so that Islanders who are living in fear know that their government takes this crisis as seriously as the rest of Atlantic Canada?

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Domestic violence is a very serious matter here in PEI; we're not immune to it. It's one of the worst things that we deal with here on Prince Edward Island. If we can do anything to prevent it, to slow it down, to eliminate it, the Department of Justice and Public Safety will do that.

[10:45 a.m.]

One of things that we have started is the domestic violence therapeutic court, which I invite the member to join me someday. We'll go to one of those court sessions to see how the upstream approach to dealing with this is working and I think making a difference here on Prince Edward Island.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, I would love to join you for that.

Statistics Canada reports that in 2025, women in Canada earned 88 cents for every dollar earned by men. The gap is even wider for racialized and Indigenous women, who earn as little as 78 to 79 cents on the dollar. PEI women are not exempt from this reality. What specific measurable steps has this government taken toward pay equity – not just general statements of support, but concrete legislation or policy actions?

Pay equity

Question to the Minister of Finance and Affordability: Minister, can you tell this House whether or not the wage gap on PEI has narrowed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think I would have to take a deeper dive into that to be able to competently say where it sits right now.

I know, as a province, our earnings are up. I think that more people are participating in the workforce, but to be able to dive into the details of where the gender difference is, I would have to take that back and put some work into it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, minister. I appreciate that.

The East Royalty Elementary School was announced last July to great excitement in my district, a 650-student facility next to Lucy Maud Montgomery, where construction is underway – we look at it every day – and completion is targeted for 2028. But the fiscal reality has me a wee bit nervous about that. PEI is projecting a record deficit of more than \$410 million for '26-27, and more than double the \$183.9 million originally projected. We know that cuts are necessary, and I'm concerned about the progress of the school.

Education and Early Years funding (further)

Question to the Minister of Finance and Affordability: Will you absolutely confirm today that the East Royalty Elementary School will not face delays, defers, or descopes because of these cuts?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Hon. J. Burridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the East Royalty School, it's already in the works. It started; RFPs are out, they're worded, the money is in the budget. Right now, it's a matter of just the construction process. But as far as this government is concerned, we're moving forward with that. The only delays I would suspect, if anything, are construction delays if that happens. But money is in the budget, and everything is moving forward on that school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Back in 2003, the cattle industry has been dealing with protocols relating to BSE, more commonly referred to as mad cow disease. One specific rule is the 30-month age verification based on dental regulations and another is the removal of specified risk materials, or SRMs, which includes the removal of disposal spines and brains of our cattle over 30 months of age.

Disposal of specified risk materials

Question to the Minister of Agriculture: Where in Canada are PEI's overage cattle unusable byproducts being disposed of currently?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2003, Prince Edward Island has had to send their renders to Quebec at a great expense.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: That's very good, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that.

Yeah, Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec – they have to go to the Sanimax rendering plant there. The Atlantic Beef Products plant in Albany has been paying significant money each year to dispose of these materials by hauling them to Saint-Hyacinthe for incineration. We all know how much fuel and transportation costs have gone up.

Question to the Minister of Agriculture: What do you estimate it cost to the beef plant and the industry to dispose of these materials annually or per head?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question.

[10:50 a.m.]

It's a concerning amount of money and it's only getting more expensive. However, CFIA has recently announced that the SRM is going to possibly change in the near future and maybe align more with the USA. That will definitely make more efficiencies for our processors and profitability for our processors and our farmers. I look forward to that in the next few months. I hope that there's some good news coming on that.

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

R. Henderson: Well, that is indeed good news for the cattle industry should it become a reality, but we do know the situation we are dealing with the United States – these times are very tumultuous at best. I drive by PEI Energy Systems Waste Plant every day on my way home from the Legislature. I know it costs between actually \$30 and \$50 per animal disposed of, or for the beef plants, about \$1.5 million annually. This is a very real issue for our cattle industry.

Question for the Minister of Agriculture: Will the energy from the waste facility, which is under construction, be capable of handling any SRM materials that might come from the beef plant?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you for the question.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at a model of a biodigester that will digest animal waste, seafood waste, and other food waste that possibly could power Borden-Carleton, we'll say. We're looking at a plant that's just started up in Winnipeg. So, we're looking to see how this biodigester is working and if it will work in Prince Edward Island. We already did the numbers; it will pay for itself. I think that's a real positive look at the industry and our ecosystem here on the Island, and our energy files.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: Well, once again, it's good to know that the department is working on some of these situations. As the Minister of Agriculture is well aware – he's involved in the dairy industry, and he knows what the competitions are and what issues are faced there – U.S. beef plants do not have to comply with these same disposal costs, while our beef plant is having to deal with this exorbitant burden.

If this facility cannot handle SRM disposal, why not, and what is your department doing to assist the beef plant with these exorbitant costs? You did mention a little bit about a biodigester, but where and when will that facility be operational?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Member, thank you for the question.

I prefer a biodigester over a golf course, that's for sure, in that area. If we can get that started right away, it's over the next few years. We've had a great working relationship with the beef plant. It's great to see their success over the last number of years, and with these changes that CFIA is hopefully going to be announcing in the next few months. They did a risk assessment between the U.S. and Canada, and it came out positive towards Canada. So, they are looking at changing the amount of SRM that is required to be disposed of. It's good news. Wait for that good news to happen in the next few months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

R. Henderson: So, with that answer, you sort of gave us a little bit of a teaser, that possibly the fixed link assembly site is going to be the location where you may be putting this rendering/digesting/compost facility. Just wondering: Has the Member from Borden-Kinkora been actually informed of that?

But anyway, minister: Is that the potential location or do you have other sites that might be possibilities to locate this biodigester for these specified risk materials.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you.

This possible digester in a possible area of Borden-Carleton would best be located next to the beef plant because of the cost of transporting material. You don't want to be moving it to a.... So, closer to the beef plant as well. It also deals with our deadstock here in Prince Edward Island that we also pay over \$1 million to deal with every year. Unfortunately, when you have livestock you have deadstock, and we can't bury it because of our water source here on the Island, so we have to deal with that.

This would be a good news story for many, many options here on the Island, and I look forward to maybe powering Borden-Carleton someday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

M. MacFarlane: Yeah, interesting discussion; a 100-acre biodigester in the fabrication yard.

[10:55 a.m.]

Mr. Speaker, Islanders understand that government has to make investments in health care, housing, and education, but they also expect those investments to come with a plan, with accountability, and to deliver results. Right now, we're seeing growing deficits, delayed projects, and review after review with very little to show for it and no indication of how government plans to get its spending under control in the future.

Fiscal management (further)

Question to the Premier: In order to restore confidence in our public finances, will you present Islanders with a stable, long-term plan of how you plan to address the growing deficit while continuing to support Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance and Affordability has outlined a number of times our fiscal management plan that's been very carefully put together and our comprehensive expenditure review, but this government is making the hard choices now so Islanders don't have to make more difficult choices in the future, and that's what we'll continue to do.

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

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The executive leadership at Health PEI is a perfect example of wasteful spending. Two years ago, when the previous CEO was first hired, government immediately directed her to overhaul Health PEI leadership. That cost Islanders millions. Now, shortly after that CEO has been let go, Health PEI is undergoing yet another executive overhaul which will also cost Islanders all this money and time lost, and not one dollar from all of this restructuring has gone towards improving health care for Islanders.

Question to the Premier. It's situations like this, Mr. Premier, that have put PEI in the absolute worst financial situation compared to every other province in Canada. At what point do you say "no" to spending that does not improve the lives of Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not quite sure where this question in particular is coming from. I think the Green Party has been asking for a little less heavy at the top, which is exactly what I've delivered. We're reducing the number of chiefs; we're reducing the number of executive directors so we can invest that money into the front lines.

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

M. MacFarlane: It comes down to proper use of our tax dollars. When it comes to how our tax dollars are spent, Islanders are sick and tired of this government's jiggery-pokery with respect to the tax dollars, and they want a plan. They want a plan. We're a province with potential. We have hardworking people, growing communities, and opportunities ahead of us, but Islanders are increasingly worried that this government's mismanagement is putting our financial future at risk.

Question to the Premier: Mr. Premier, instead of uncertainty year after year and reviews and reorganizations that get redone every other year, will you commit to a long-term fiscal and human resource strategy focused on stability, transparency, and measurable outcomes for Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

Hon. J. Burridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we've been very clear. We have our fiscal anchors. We have our guardrails in place. We have a debt management strategy that we're looking at. We have reserves right now that are going against debts. We're building new reserves right now, and money is going into them to go against our debt as we work through. Our comprehensive review is actually going to look at that. It's going to look at exactly that. It's going to look at human and fiscal resources. That's part of that exercise. We know we have to find \$200 million over the next two years in each year, and that work has already begun.

We're on top of it. We realize where we are. It's a challenging time. We are like every other province across this nation, our net debt to GDP is our key anchor; that's what we're measured on. We're under 40 percent, which is our guardrail, and we'll continue doing that work and managing the province's fiscal resources through very challenging times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

Maritime Electric is trying to buy two used diesel generators at a cost approaching half a billion dollars, and perhaps the most concerning thing about all of this is that they're seeking approval from IRAC for a downpayment of almost \$50 million of Islanders' money to secure that purchase, but if the deal isn't completed for whatever reason, some or all of that downpayment would be forfeited. It's kind of like Maritime Electric is asking for a credit card for their spending spree, but it's Islanders who will be on the hook if they buy this and it has to be returned.

Maritime Electric (further)

To the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Do you think it's appropriate and fair for Maritime Electric to risk \$50 million of Islanders' money on a project that might not get approved and has been shown by an independent study to be considerably more expensive than a battery storage option?

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

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the hon. member for the question.

[11:00 a.m.]

The hon. member references battery storage. I think that there are a number of factors of initiatives as a government that we do have to look at. With regard to battery storage, for example, I have referenced here a couple of times with regard to the expression of interest that was sent out and the tremendous feedback that we received from that – over 40 replies to that EOI.

Those are the types of things, as we review them and see the different aspects of things that are brought forward from that EOI and the responses that we've received to it, that we can start to build and look at the future as well. It does have to be about the reliability for Islanders.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, first supplementary.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

These two used turbines are being bought through a noncompetitive process from an American supplier at a time when we're trying to support Canadian. The U.S. company, indeed, only started making these turbines a couple of years ago in 2023. As far as I'm aware, there are only two of them in operation anywhere with no long-term data on their reliability. The warranty that comes with this half-billion-dollar purchase is only one year. As somebody in this House mentioned, I bought a toaster with a longer warranty than that.

To this same minister: Does this sound like a reasonable risk to you?

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

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

As the hon. member is aware, these applications are being reviewed. They are before IRAC at this point in time. I certainly do anxiously await the decisions/recommendations that may come down from IRAC with regard to the various applications that Maritime Electric does have before them.

I would say, too, that if you look right across North America, really – certainly here in the Atlantic region, all of our provinces are facing challenges with regard to ensuring that we do have a reliable supply of energy for Islanders, for Maritimers, for Atlantic Canadians. Discussions have taken place, will continue to take place as far as how our region can work together to make sure all of our residents have that reliable supply of energy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point, second supplementary.

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

An independent study by Synapse Energy Economics, which was commissioned by IRAC, was recently released and I'll be tabling it later today. It clearly states that Maritime Electric's application is deficient and does not properly compare the upfront or the lifetime costs of all the viable options, including batteries, compared to the diesel turbines.

To the same minister: Batteries are cheaper, batteries can be delivered sooner, and unlike the diesel generators, they will help us meet our climate targets. Will you, minister, step in like two previous Energy ministers did before and stop the jiggery-pokery with these diesel turbines?

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

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

I really do appreciate that both the Leader of the Third Party and the hon. member have been able to insert that phrase into their questions today. I think it's the first time that I have heard that phrase used in the Legislature. I would assume it's not unparliamentary or else you would have stepped in, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I am not going to circumvent a process that is in the works right now. Having said that, as I said in the answer to my previous question, I do await what the recommendations/rulings are that come out and then, I assure the member, I assure Islanders, appropriate action will be taken at that time.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A major issue and to that point a problem with our youth right across this country is the consumption of caffeine energy drinks. These flavoured energy drinks are easily accessible by young people and too often we see young kids running around with them. Our neighbours in the Quebec Legislature unanimously adopted a motion urging the government to strictly regulate energy drinks to those under 16 years of age; work is underway.

Energy drink regulations

Let's go to the Minister of Health and Wellness for some questions: Minister, we all know that this can be a major issue for our young developing youth and one that seems to be getting out of control. Have you had a chance to review or have you been following the actions of the Quebec Legislature?

[11:05 a.m.]

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I haven't been following what Quebec has been doing, but I did see it in the news, I think yesterday or a few days ago. I have met with the chief public health officer on this exact topic probably about a month ago, and I've heard from principals that have issues with students drinking them in schools.

I guess the question would be: If there was to be a ban or a certain age, would it be 16? Should it be 18? Then, also the issue of – well, there's coffee, which has caffeine in it, which anyone can go through a drive-thru or anywhere and purchase as well. But I think one of the main issues is that the energy drinks in particular – when you mix them with medication for ADHD, it can have severe consequences. I think there has to be an education component as well.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, first supplementary.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back to that same minister for some questions around that education.

Minister, it is not just the caffeine but a lot of other additives – such as niacin, taurine, and ginseng, to name a few – that are very unhealthy for our youth or anyone. The flavoured drinks are geared towards our younger generation who may not realize the severe cardiovascular risk of drinking them.

Minister: With the severe side effects that even saw a fatality in a Quebec youth from fatal cardiac arrhythmia, is your department educating parents and school communities on the risk?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Education just said to me there quickly that he's seen cases himself as a paramedic where folks have cardiac arrests, and

they haven't passed away but they've had to treat those individuals.

I guess what I could say is that right now we're exploring the option of a ban on a certain age. Whether it's 16 or 18, I don't know. I think there would have to be some consultation done – it's not something I think we can do overnight – to see what the best option is as we move forward, but we are taking this very seriously. I know a number of principals have also said to me, in passing, the issues that they have seen with these in schools.

It is something we're looking at.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, second supplementary.

T. DesRoches: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's some great wording in that answer, but exploring and doing studies is not what we really want to hear.

Back to that same minister. Minister, in the past you successfully banned tobacco and flavoured vapes to protect Island youth from systemic health habits. High-caffeine energy drinks, which pose immediate, acute cardiac risk to children, should be treated with the exact same urgency.

With your role as Health and Wellness minister, can you commit to this House today to doing the right thing and keeping these caffeinated energy drinks out of the hands of our youth?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I took quite a bit of abuse when I banned flavoured vapes, and I don't know if I want to....

[Interjections]

Hon. C. Deagle: Geez. I don't know if I want to go through that again, to be honest. But no, we'll do the right thing. I think we'll take the time, review, consult, but I do think that there is a path forward in looking to restrict the sale of energy drinks to youth. I just would want to take a bit of time to see how that would look and how that would work because they're sold in convenience

stores. You can get them in vending machines. They're quite widely available.

We're going to take the time to look at it, but yes; I do agree with the member that a ban on a certain age would be beneficial.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Home education continues to be an important and growing choice for many families across Prince Edward Island who are seeking diverse learning environments for their children. As we continue to prioritize the educational outcomes of every student on the Island, it is vital that we maintain a clear and accurate understanding of the total number of students engaged in this model of learning.

Homeschooling oversight

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Approximately how many students are currently registered as being homeschooled in Prince Edward Island for the 2025-2026 school year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Hon. R. Croucher: I was a little surprised that I didn't get questions from the Leader of the Third Party on this, as he had some questions yesterday during the budget – I think it was you, member – about homeschooling, but I'm not completely surprised at Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke. We have had conversations on this in the past.

[11:10 a.m.]

I wasn't prepared with the answers yesterday, so I did get a little information yesterday evening from my deputy. Currently, we've got about 300 students that are homeschooled. That number has dropped, they tell me, from approximately 400 just after COVID. Public education in our system is always our preferred route, obviously, but I do appreciate parents that do homeschool their children.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, first supplementary.

H. MacLennan: Mr. Speaker, I spent a lot of time talking to parents in my district who have chosen to homeschool their children. These are fantastic, dedicated people who are doing a great job, but I've also heard from some that are worried about kids falling through the cracks. We need to make sure that even though these children are learning at home, they aren't becoming invisible. We have a responsibility to know how these students are doing.

So, question to the same minister: What measures is your department currently using to track the wellbeing and academic progress of these students?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Hon. R. Croucher: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do disagree with the member in his suggestion that the education system has a responsibility to track academic progress of children. These parents decided to keep their children out of the public system for a reason, so I don't know that that responsibility should lie on the education system to track that.

Currently, we don't have any mechanism to intervene in homeschooling. We do help in the way of materials and that sort of thing. But certainly, I think if there are concerns – if someone comes to any member with a concern about a child that's being homeschooled, it probably should go to the appropriate family service like Child Protection or what have you depending on the reason of their concern.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

H. MacLennan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know a lot of the homeschooling is great. I'm just worried about the kids who happen to, like I say, fall through the cracks. Many other provinces have developed various frameworks for oversight, ranging from mandatory progress reporting to structured curricular reviews. These models help ensure consistent educational outcomes and provide a safety net for students, and we should be open to examining those successes.

Question to the same minister: What lessons can we learn from the systems in other provinces, and how can we apply those best practices to improve our current approach to our home education in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

Hon. R. Croucher: I honestly can't speak for what other provinces are doing. Certainly willing to take a look at and do a jurisdictional scan, potentially, on what other provinces are doing that maybe we could adopt. But I can't stress this enough: these parents have decided for any number of reasons that the public school system is – they don't want to go that route, and homeschooling is preferred. Once they've decided that, they've taken on that full responsibility for their child's education.

If any parents are concerned with their children's academic progress, we would certainly welcome them back into our school system with open arms. As for what other provinces are doing, I will certainly sit down with the member after the session and have a more fulsome conversation on this, maybe look at what we're doing in other jurisdictions in the country, and go from there.

Thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over this session, we realized that primary care is of deep concern to Islanders. I'm not sure we're seeing exactly where we're going with primary care. The plan is changing, it seems like, almost every day in here.

Access to primary care (further)

Minister: Will you commit over the summer to making sure that you invest every resource possible to get our primary care clinics up and operational across Prince Edward Island? There are too many not working. Will you do what you can to get those up and operational, and recruit better? Because this government has failed at recruitment of doctors in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Hon. C. Deagle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Everyone was so happy and positive up here today. The hon. member shows up, and it's taken a turn, but I'll try and explain what we're doing here in primary care very quickly.

[11:15 a.m.]

No, the plan hasn't changed. We have our patient medical homes across the province. I explained this in my interviews yesterday, and in the Legislature as well: we have our patient medical homes. We've invested significantly in the resources in our patient medical homes. I think the resources are there; we just have to work better on how we manage those facilities and utilizing all the resources we have and working more efficiently and assigning Islanders to the patient medical homes, which is exactly our plan this summer.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, final question.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This is probably the fourth time I'm going to ask or raise this question/concern in the House. I know the Minister of Health is looking at me; he knows what it is.

It's a situation that's facing the Tignish seniors home residents who are being basically forced now into the emergency room to get their prescriptions refilled. The minister told this House he would look into the matter and get back to us on it. Also, with that, there was the capacity for residents of the community care facility who require 24/7 nursing care and require additional staffing to care for them.

Prescription renewals for seniors (further)

Would the minister be able to provide the answers to the community care facility today? We don't want another promise; what we need is prescriptions refilled.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. R. Lantz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know this is an issue that the Minister of Health has been working to resolve. I think that he and the Leader of the Opposition can get together and talk about this and find a way through it.

But Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to answer what may be the final question of this period and I've been reflecting on the session. Last night I was very proud to be the winning bidder at the first auction at the Lady Ball. I was thinking – let's talk about the jiggery-pokery. I was reflecting on the Leader of the Third Party's comments about bidding up items last night, and it occurred to me that members on the other side do a great job of bidding up the items here in the House, but it's government that has to close the deal. The opposition can say what they like, but we have to do the hard work of making the final bid, making the hard choices, and supporting the cause of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a report which is an examination of the MECL application for on-Island capacity supply that was prepared for IRAC by Synapse Energy Economics, Inc., and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Hon. E. Hudson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table takebacks from debate on the Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy operating budget, and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability, that the said

document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supply to His Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to call upon the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole, debating the grant of supply to His Majesty.

[11:20 a.m.]

[S. Dillon in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of supply to His Majesty.

Minister, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. Z. Bell: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

If you could state your name and your title for Hansard, please.

Jed MacEwen: Jed MacEwen, director of finance.

Chair: Okay, for those of you following along, we are on page 164.

General Administration

Corporate Management

“Appropriations provided for operation of the office of the Minister and Deputy Minister, policy, records management, and staff development.” Administration: 16,900. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 10,100. Professional Services: 27,500. Salaries: 647,400. Travel and Training: 20,500.

Total Corporate Management: 726,900

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair, and welcome to the floor.

Under professional services, what is the MNP LLP funding?

Jed MacEwen: It was professional services work related to an organizational review.

K. Bernard: And is that like organizational review of the whole department?

Jed MacEwen: It was actually for Collège de l'Île.

Chair: Total General Administration: 726,900

Shall it carry? Carried.

Population and Settlement

Population and Settlement

“Appropriations provided for research, recruitment, settlement, and retention.” Administration: 17,500. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 11,500. Professional Services: 232,500. Salaries: 657,500. Travel and Training: 8,200. Grants: 2,807,200.

Total Population and Settlement: 3,738,900

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Hello, and welcome back. Just a few questions here. This is a pretty important section.

I noticed last year you spent on the Grants going out, \$356,000, and it's forecasted for \$450,000; so that's an increase. First question is, what was the forecast for last year, did we underspend on that?

Jed MacEwen: No, this is a point in time, so this is as of February 28th. A lot of these grants go out late February or early March, so we did spend the full amount for (Indistinct).

G. McNeilly: So, you were somewhere around \$450,000? I see that's the line for next year.

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, it's actually \$600,000, but about \$150,000 of it is through SDS.

G. McNeilly: I appreciate the funding going out to these and being there.

There's just one line going to the University of Prince Edward Island for \$27,600. What was that? Was that for events there for is that a partnership with...?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, it's a partnership with Work Integrated Learning.

[11:25 a.m.]

G. McNeilly: Okay. I could ask more, but I'm not going to. Thanks a lot for keeping those grants going.

The operational component – I noticed it's in two different spots here. Is that in this section too?

Jed MacEwen: It's below the GEDI grants there.

G. McNeilly: So, I do have a couple of questions in there because it's operational funding.

I always usually ask about the Black Cultural Society. To a certain point, they were at \$151,000. They're going up to \$241,000 next year. What's the difference in that, and is the rent excluded on the building in that number?

Jed MacEwen: The rent is excluding, so it's not included in this grant amount. But you'll be

happy to know that we have signed a three-year agreement with them.

G. McNeilly: What are the years for that?

Jed MacEwen: We lined it up with the other operational grants. It'd be '25-26, and then two more years after that. So, '27-28 is when all those agreements expire.

G. McNeilly: I could ask about the other lines, but....

I like to see this. There's a slight increase in this, especially during the times. This is important funding for our communities. I'll just leave it at that.

Thanks a lot. I always watch this section, so thanks a lot, minister and Jed.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Population and Settlement: 3,738,900

Shall it carry? Carried.

Labour and Industrial Relations

Labour and Industrial Relations

“Appropriations provided for industrial relations services to employers, unions, and individuals: the Labour Relations Board, the Employment Standards Board, the Office of the Worker Advisor, the Office of the Employer Advisor, and the Workers Compensation Appeals Tribunal.” Administration: 34,400. Equipment: 8,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 13,700. Professional Services: 212,000. Salaries: 1,261,900. Travel and Training: 21,600. Grants: 2,500.

Total Labour and Industrial Relations: 1,554,100

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thanks a lot.

I noticed Stewart McKelvey got \$134,478 for.... What was the breakdown of that? It seems a little bit high.

Jed MacEwen: It's various fees that we had them do. So, it's just professional services for different items. I don't know if we can get in too deep on exactly what they're hired to do there.

G. McNeilly: Okay, and I guess the same thing would be for the other – in there.... I guess, are we proportionally spending as little as we can on lawyers' fees throughout this section, or is the cost going up year over year?

Jed MacEwen: No, last year was a little higher, as you can see, the forecast compared to the budget. There were some legislative reviews being done that needed some outside work. There were also some strikes in there that needed some outside help. So, it all depends on an annual basis on where we've got to – we don't really know, but the budget is there for it.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

Is the *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act* under this section?

Jed MacEwen: It is, yeah.

K. Bernard: Are you able to speak a little bit about how the new legislation's going, and how many staff are dedicated to that?

Hon. Z. Bell: I'll try. I'll start and then maybe Jed can give you a little bit more of the details on the staff.

The *Temporary Foreign Worker Protection Act* is being implemented in two phases. The first phase was implemented in April of last year I believe it was. Phase 2 is working through right now. I don't have a date on when that one's going to be complete, and then maybe Jed can tell you about the numbers of staff.

Jed MacEwen: It's a federal program, so April 1 was when the phase 1, as the minister mentioned there.... Phase 2 of the act will come into force this year and reintroduce employee registry administration penalties.

K. Bernard: And is there any funding in this budget for education around that by any chance?

[11:30 a.m.]

Jed MacEwen: That's the plan, is to, yeah, do education and train, yeah, for sure.

K. Bernard: And I don't know if – I can't remember when we had this discussion, if you and I had it before, but one of the things that.... I

had gone to an event to support temporary foreign workers with... Not the Sierra Club, but the.... Anyway, it doesn't matter. I'll think of the name after.

But one of the things that they had asked for in terms of.... Because whenever temporary foreign workers come here, many experience abuse of various forms, and one of the things that they said in order to protect or to empower them coming to a strange place, a strange country, maybe not speaking the language, is – and this may be federal too – their point of entry to have information about where they're going, different programs that are available for them, different groups that are there to support them.

Do you know if that's something that's being worked on? Again, I don't know if that would be provincial or federal, that part of it.

Hon. Z. Bell: Thanks for the question, member. My assumption, and it's just based on an assumption, I'm sure my staff are watching right now and they'll probably provide me with a better answer, but I think that is federal, too, I'm assuming IRSA might help a little bit in that situation, but again, don't quote me on that, I'm sure I'll get an answer here in a second.

K. Bernard: I appreciate that. So, with respect to the Workers Compensation Appeals Tribunal, do you know how many files were opened and closed last year?

Jed MacEwen: I do have that, yeah.

K. Bernard: I'm wondering if these are staying consistent or trending in any way.

Jed MacEwen: They had 13 hearings and issued 15 decisions.

K. Bernard: Oh, that's interesting. How do you have more...? There must have been a couple of (Indistinct) –

Jed MacEwen: Probably some carryover, yeah.

K. Bernard: Are the employment standards officers or inspectors funded under this section?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

K. Bernard: Is there a wait time for these inspectors to complete work when there's a complaint made?

Jed MacEwen: That would be more the workers comp I think you're talking about.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

Again, going back to the professional services on page 7. I know there were questions asked and there's obviously legal services provided to the department in this section, but not all of the itemized vendors or providers are lawyers or law firms.

Can you give a bit of an overview or a description of what some of the other services that would be provided under this section that came up to \$194,000?

Jed MacEwen: You're looking at the individual names, I would assume. They'd be for stipends, honorariums for the WCAT hearings.

M. MacFarlane: Would that encompass all of the other providers there?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, then there's also like translation services as well in there.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, has the office fully moved out of Sherwood to the new location at the Atlantic Technology Centre?

Jed MacEwen: We have as of April 21st I think it was. They're in there now, yeah.

M. MacFarlane: So, it's fully set up and there's no funding for the operation for that move? It's going...

Jed MacEwen: That would be capital, but we did have the capital was approved in '25-26.

M. MacFarlane: My last one would be: Is it fully staffed now? Do we have all of the positions filled? I know the director, I think, has left the position. Shawn has left the position of labour relations. Are all the positions full now?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, so the director actually was Patricia. She left and that has been filled in-house. Somebody applied to that and they're currently the director there now.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair. I think I just have one more question.

I don't know if this is the right section for this or not, but if government funds a program – I'm looking at the practical nursing program, would that fall anywhere in this budget?

Jed MacEwen: You're likely into the post-secondary side of things, or it could be in Skills, I'm not sure of your question, but it would likely be Skills or post-secondary.

K. Bernard: Okay, I'll wait until then.

[11:35 a.m.]

Hon. Z. Bell: Before we carry the section, Chair, we do have one temporary foreign workers protection officer here in the province.

To your question on the educational piece, we do work with IRCC and partners to make sure that that education is available.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Labour and Industrial Relations: 1,554,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Workforce Development

SkillsPEI

“Appropriations provided for administration and delivery of programs targeted at improving the Prince Edward Island labour market.”

Administration: 170,900. Equipment: 25,500.

Materials, Supplies, and Services: 165,500.

Professional Services: 102,300. Salaries:

4,922,500. Travel and Training: 45,500. Grants:

Workforce Development Agreement: 2,831,100;

Labour Market Development Agreement:

20,002,100; Essential Skills Training: nil;

Provincial Programs: 8,672,600.

Total SkillsPEI: 36,938,000

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

R. Henderson: Minister, I'm just trying to get a better sense of the workforce development agreement and the labour market development agreement. It sort of looks like – I see that the federal government contributed the \$30 million under the labour market development agreement, and then there's this workforce

agreement section. It looks like it's federal, but can you maybe explain the difference between the two?

Jed MacEwen: The workforce development agreement focuses on those with greater barriers for employment, where the LMDA more targets EI.

R. Henderson: But they're both funded by the federal government as part of that \$30 million?

Jed MacEwen: They are, yeah.

R. Henderson: Okay. So, my next question is what kind of flexibility...? Obviously, I had a number of questions for you regarding the whole issue pertaining to the oyster fishery regarding the Self Employ program, Training PEI, and some of these different – and they are all federal.

As far as criteria, do you have any leeway in that, of eligibility?

Hon. Z. Bell: I'm going to let Jed talk about that a little bit, but I do want to tell you, hon. member, that after our question set, I would love to welcome you up to the SkillsPEI location. I'm going to be going up there myself, and I would love for you to come in and to tour and meet all the staff and have a conversation, and we can talk about those things. I think that would be maybe beneficial for the both of us.

Specifically to your question, I don't know if Jed has any detail on that.

Jed MacEwen: The only detail – I think I'll talk about the oyster stuff – is we do have a \$1.4 million that has been announced for the contingency fund which is not in here; it's with general government.

R. Henderson: Yeah, because I think, as I talked before about the issue around – as I used the Self Employ PEI program, and about the ability where if.... In my particular case, I had a constituent that if he was a public fisher, he would have been eligible. In this particular case, he was on EI and he was a shellfish labourer, and he held a public license, but he was ruled ineligible.

I go back to saying on the eligibility criteria, minister, that if you have some flexibility on that, if you could open that up to allow more people to qualify, you'd do a great benefit to the industry. You're really not changing much on

your budget situation. Yes, you have more applications, but you may have priorities you can pick on the business opportunities that exist out there, or training; the list goes on.

I'm just wondering if you have that flexibility, and if you don't have the flexibility, is there a possibility you can renegotiate or get some approval from the federal government? I don't see why they would not want to allow that to happen too.

Anyway, have you had any negotiations with your federal counterparts on eligibility of the LMDA agreement and workforce agreement?

Hon. Z. Bell: I don't know specifically right on the spot if there is that flexibility, hon. member. I know that I have a number of FPTs that are coming up, and of course, I always lobby for what is best for Prince Edward Island.

I think the biggest thing to tell people is that PEI is very unique. I know you've been in this role before, so you're quite familiar with this, hon. member, but the big thing that I want to argue for is for that flexibility because we're delivering the programs.

[11:40 a.m.]

I assure you that I will argue and debate the federal government for everything that is more beneficial for Islanders and Island workers.

R. Henderson: When it comes to that sense of flexibility, I'm assuming you have flexibility because you are able to make public fishers eligible as an example, and with the contingency money that's been allocated, you have some sense of flexibility.

I guess I just sort of look at it – I felt a little bit.... Previously, when I'd be criticizing the government as far as the Province would be standing up and saying that they provided this much money and the federal government provided nothing – well, the LMDA is, like I say, \$30 million of federal money.

How much, as far as the administration side of this – my understanding is that the Province still has a \$36 million total for Skills and the feds only contribute \$30 million, so there's \$6 million of provincial money. So, it's really a case where they're providing the programming and the Province is providing the administration and decision making on who gets approved in

the process of that. Is that correct, minister or Jed?

Jed MacEwen: Keep in mind, hon. member, that federal base funding has stayed – probably decreased since the last ten years. So, we have to work and everything else is increasing – the minimum wage is increasing; the cost of living is increasing. We're doing the best that we can with that federal money that we're receiving.

R. Henderson: But still, the reality is there's \$30 million that's federal money of the \$36 million. At the end of the day....

Jed MacEwen: And part of that goes towards wages as well.

R. Henderson: Well, obviously, yeah. But anyway, I stand on that.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

Can you just speak to the essential skills training? It seems like an important topic. There was some money in it – just \$30,000; I'd think it would be a little bit higher – but there's no money allocated for next year. Why?

Jed MacEwen: It's just a federal program that expired. We were still working on a new agreement last year, so we didn't expect anything at that time, but there were carry-forward moneys that were spent.

G. McNeilly: Is it expired? Are you renegotiating that for the –

Jed MacEwen: No, the program was discontinued. Sorry.

G. McNeilly: So, for the labour market development agreement, which we just talked about a little bit, which is the EI program, I noticed there's an increase in it next year. Would that be all federal support?

Jed MacEwen: That actually relates to – sorry to interrupt here. That actually relates to the tariff response and the global market shift. Mainly, that's the steel and softwood lumber that we increased. We amended the agreement for an extra \$1.8 million.

G. McNeilly: So, that would have been just an extra \$1.8 million from the federal government to the Province of PEI? That's all that increase was?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

G. McNeilly: Just talk to the salary line – \$4.6 million. We were a little bit under on that, and I noticed there's an increase of about \$300,000. Are we getting more employees or is that collective agreement?

Jed MacEwen: There were some vacancies in the year last year which kind of offset the collective agreement. This year, we filled two of the vacancies, and again, with the collective agreement, that's the increase there.

G. McNeilly: I just wanted to say how important this section is, minister and Jed. This is a very important section for labour in Prince Edward Island. I wanted to say a big shout-out to all the staff that are working there. They really make some things happen and make careers blossom, so I look forward to just saying thank you to them.

Hon. Z. Bell: Thank you.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

The provincial programs were underspent by \$1 million. Was there one that didn't happen, or was this spread across...?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, that was the upskilling and reskilling; it was delayed. We were waiting on negotiations with the federal response for the steel and aluminum.

K. Bernard: What was the last...?

Jed MacEwen: The steel and aluminum and that softwood lumber that we talked about earlier, but we do have that in there this year for \$1 million.

K. Bernard: Okay. Under professional services there was some work done by Volume 18. What was that project?

Jed MacEwen: That's social media management.

K. Bernard: And one with Grant Thornton – what was that one?

Jed MacEwen: That's the audit services for the LMDA and WDA.

[11:45 a.m.]

K. Bernard: I'm going to ask that practical nursing question here. From what I understand – I was speaking to someone who works in that program – government funded an extra class to increase the number of practical nursing seats in the Holland College program, and that funding is set to end in 2027.

Is there any talk about renewing that, about funding that program further, or does government feel like it's met its...?

Jed MacEwen: It sounds like it's a Holland College decision. I can't remember. It's probably funded through our operations in post-secondary, actually. I can't speak to if they're ending that or not.

K. Bernard: Okay. So, am I misunderstanding that, then? From what I understood from the conversation, she said that government funded an extra 32 seats and that there's still quite a long waitlist. I assumed maybe there was a government program to get more practical nurses through, but judging by the looks on your faces, I'm guessing not.

Jed MacEwen: There is funding in post-secondary for – but it's not directly relating to the nursing at Holland College. That's new funding for the LPN to RN.

K. Bernard: The bridging.

Jed MacEwen: More than the bridging; it's to get their bachelor of science. There are 14 new nursing going once they graduate from Holland College, which we can get into later on in post-secondary as well.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

What section, please, would we find the student summer employment programs Jobs for Youth/Post-Secondary?

Jed MacEwen: That would be in post-secondary or EDA.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So, it's coming up.

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

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

H. MacLennan: Thanks, Chair.

The re-training that we did for oyster fishers – does that fall in this section?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

H. MacLennan: How much? Do you have a figure on how much we spent on that, the re-training?

Jed MacEwen: It wasn't very much in '25-26, but we do have \$1.4 million available in the contingency fund this year, yeah.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair. Hi.

Not sure if this question belongs here or not, but I'm wondering about – yesterday I asked, when the education budget was up, about training for EAs who do not meet the qualifications and thought that there might be some funding available here for people to skill up. Would that be under this section or another?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, I mean, there are all kinds of programs and skills. Steps to Success is one, which directly relates to the early childhood (Indistinct)

But if they want to upskill like Training PEI – if you have a particular person you're looking for, I'd recommend to contact SkillsPEI or one of the CDS organizations across the province.

C. Simpson: Minister, I'm wondering if there's a target that could be looked at similar to Steps to Success, which is for early childhood educators. If we have 20 to 30 percent of our educational assistants that do not meet the educational requirements, is there a gap that can be filled through your department in here or any other budget line?

Hon. Z. Bell: I'm sure that's something that we can look at, hon. member. It would be something I'd have to bring back though. I don't know right off the top of my head.

C. Simpson: I encourage you and the Minister of Education and Early Years to work on that one. Thank you.

I wonder, then, in absence of that, if somebody wanted to take the initiative on their own to go back to school to get whatever they need – there are programs in here; they can reach out to one of the organizations is what I hear you saying.

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, absolutely.

C. Simpson: Okay. Thank you for that.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Apprenticeship

“Appropriations provided for administration of apprenticeship training and certification of tradespersons.” Administration: 13,100. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 20,000. Professional Services: 75,000. Salaries: 677,500. Travel and Training: 23,400. Grants: 245,000.

Total Apprenticeship: 1,058,500

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

[11:50 a.m.]

I'm seeing that there is professional services for the Council of Atlantic Premiers – roughly \$24,000 – but then I'm flipping around and I see a grant for \$215,000. Can you explain why there's both professional services and why there's also a grant?

Jed MacEwen: The professional services is for the maintenance funding for the AHP to ensure the common curriculum process and training methods across the Atlantic Provinces. The grant relates to the AMS hosting. So, that's more of the online service that's coming into play.

M. MacFarlane: So, the grant is for an online service? That's the higher of the two. That's a lot of money for – I'm not sure what that would....

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, we're into the implementation cost there now for the program.

M. MacFarlane: Could you just explain a little bit more about what that program is? I'm not trying to obtuse; I just don't really understand what it's all about.

Jed MacEwen: It's part of a major initiative to maximize similarities among apprenticeship authorities and modernize apprenticeship management services. We're trying to use the national best practices, and other provinces may join in the future. Right now, it's PEI, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

M. MacFarlane: This fits under the Council of Atlantic Premiers – you didn't mention Newfoundland, so it's like the Maritime Premiers?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

M. MacFarlane: There was a \$30,000 underspend. I assume – and what's the budget for next year? I'm not seeing.... Is it \$245,000 for next year?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, \$245,000. In '26-27 there's expected to be some extra costs related to the data security and getting the front end live.

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

K. Bernard: I'm wondering about the apprenticeship in general. I know when the Member from Kensington-Malpeque was in that role, we met a couple of times with people who had specific issues with the apprentice program. It was kind of identified that it wasn't working as effectively as maybe it could be.

Is that something that the department has looked at or plans to look at?

Hon. Z. Bell: I think that's a hard one for me, maybe, or Jed to answer that because I'm not sure what specifically those issues were. It's been a little while since the Member from Kensington-Malpeque has been in the role, but if there are specific things, please send them my way, and I'll make sure that they're looked into, for sure.

K. Bernard: And of course, the deputy minister, Mary Hunter, was very much involved in those conversations as well, so she would have that knowledge.

I know the Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park asked this – and I'm not sure if it was under the last section, so tell me if I'm in the wrong section – about EA training...

Jed MacEwen: That was in the last section.

K. Bernard: Okay. I missed my chance.

Thank you, I'm good.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Workforce Development: 37,996,500

Shall it carry? Carried.

Post-Secondary and Continuing Education

General

"Appropriations provided for post-secondary coordination, the regulation of private training businesses, and the administration of the division." Administration: 23,600. Equipment: 900. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 24,800. Professional Services: 30,000. Salaries: 946,600. Travel and Training: 7,500.

Total General: 1,033,400

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Thank you very much.

So, just maybe going to the end line for the University of Prince Edward Island. The estimate was \$80,717,300, and it seems like they underspent. I don't get how you underspent – the university underspent last year.

Just maybe, Jed, (Indistinct) know what I'm talking about. I don't know how there's...

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, you are getting a little ahead of yourself. We're just carrying the general right now.

Chair: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, no I was just adjusting my microphone.

Chair: Okay, well, good thing we're not in the auction tonight, because I tell you, there'd be bids everywhere.

[Laughter]

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, is that a wave or a hand, or what's going on?

M. MacFarlane: Both. All of the above, Chair.

[11:55 a.m.]

So, this is where I could ask questions on the Jobs for Youth, did I hear?

Jed MacEwen: The Jobs for Youth is in Employment Development Agency.

M. MacFarlane: Oh, okay. Sorry, I thought I heard you say post-secondary and continuing education.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Post-Secondary Grants

“Appropriations provided for post-secondary educational institutions, student assistance, adult basic education, and literacy training.”

Collège de l'Île: Core Operating Grant: 402,400. Student Tuition Subsidy: 69,200. Restricted Funding: 661,100.

Total: 1,132,700

Holland College: Core Operating Grant: 27,469,200. Student Tuition Subsidy: 6,155,800. Restricted Funding: 6,977,500.

Total: 40,602,500

University of Prince Edward Island: Core Operating Grant: 49,566,700. Restricted Funding: 33,971,100.

Total: 83,635,800

Atlantic Veterinary College: 11,351,200.

Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission: 1,435,700.

Lifelong Learning Grants: 191,800.

Total Post-Secondary Grants: 138,349,700

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

I have one question on the apprenticeship section, out of curiosity, and it slipped past me. Could I ask that?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, sure.

K. Bernard: Thank you.

I'm just very curious what the \$15,750 to the Minister of Finance in Alberta would be for.

Jed MacEwen: Oh, that's for the –

Hon. Z. Bell: The GED, isn't it?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, the CAEC exams now. Canadian –

Hon. Z. Bell: The GED. That used to be called the GED.

K. Bernard: Okay, thank you for that.

With the immigration changes federally, I know that UPEI and Holland College of course have seen a significant decrease in students, which inevitably means they're going to get less tuition. So, was there an increase based on that to Holland College and UPEI?

Jed MacEwen: Based on what, sorry?

K. Bernard: On the loss of tuition, to kind of help....

Jed MacEwen: It's factored in. When we're dealing with the college and UPEI, it's definitely a conversation. You can see Holland College has a 4.5 increase of their core, and UPEI is 3 percent.

K. Bernard: Under Collège de l'Île, the mental health funding is decreasing from \$4,500 to \$1,100. What would that cover, and why the cut there?

Jed MacEwen: I don't think it's a cut. It's just based on the number of students. You can see we do budget for that. So, maybe \$4,500 was – we probably should have adjusted a little higher this year, but it will be there for – it's on a per student basis.

K. Bernard: No real increase to Collège de l'Île. Did they request an increase?

Jed MacEwen: They have a 2 percent in their core.

K. Bernard: So, last year at Holland College, again, with kind of the decrease in students, we've lost a lot of different courses at Holland College, which has a real impact on our domestic students of course, because then they don't have access. Do you have a sense from the college, from that, if we're losing any more courses this year?

Jed MacEwen: I don't have that in front of me here.

K. Bernard: I recognize you may not have had that.

At UPEI: \$1 million in an operating grant. Can you share what was requested from UPEI this year?

[12:00 p.m.]

Jed MacEwen: Sorry, where are you at – under core?

K. Bernard: Yeah, the core operating grant.

Jed MacEwen: That's 4.5 percent, so \$1.4 million.

K. Bernard: Do you know what they requested?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, they requested higher. We were trying to work with them and what they needed and stuff like that. The settlement was 4.5 percent with UPEI.

K. Bernard: An increase to the faculty of medicine's operation funding – why do we see this increase, but no increase in other departments?

Jed MacEwen: This is going to be year two of intake. There's a second cohort of students coming in, so more faculty will need to be hired. It's going to be a full year of operations, so the general – the lights and everything to heat up the building – would increase.

K. Bernard: The AVC capital projects – actually, no. Sorry. Let me start again. The increase to the LPA to that bridging – it's not called the bridging program, but that program that we were just talking about, the licensed practical nursing seats to....

Can you give us an update on what this funding will provide? Does that include more seats? I think you mentioned that already.

Jed MacEwen: It does, yeah. Every second year, there's going to be 14 intakes of LPNs. So, it's a bridge program to enter directly into the third year of the bachelor of science program at UPEI.

Following completion at Holland College, they'll need some prerequisite course. So, the first bridging semester will happen in July, followed by a full intake in the third year, which will happen in the fall of 2026. Every two years, there'll be 14 new LPNs.

K. Bernard: That's such a great program. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

There are a couple of lines there for the faculty of medicine. There's the operations line, which we've talked about – sometimes the columns are reversed, so I want to make sure I'm looking at the right one – and the construction debt.

Is this where we find the extent of the funding to the faculty of medicine? Are there any other sources where there'd be money to the faculty?

Jed MacEwen: No, it's all in here.

M. MacFarlane: What's the trajectory – two, three, five years – for what's anticipated for funding to the faculty as it gets up and running?

Jed MacEwen: I don't have that in front of me, but I know they have supplied some expected costs.

I can't remember where exactly it flattens out a little bit where you're just getting your cost of living, but we're pretty close to there now.

M. MacFarlane: So, you say we're pretty close to there. Just looking at the number that's in the big book now, it's anticipated for the faculty to continue its operations as it gets its second and third cohorts in and processing. Do you think that's going to hold steady around that number?

Jed MacEwen: I'd like it to hold fairly steady. I can't say.

There's also the MUN partnership that UPEI has in there, so that can fluctuate as well. I know it did increase by about \$700,000 this year.

M. MacFarlane: I guess I always wonder, when we get to UPEI and the colleges, just how we determine what amount to give. I'm sure it's quite a process to make sure that it's enough but not too much.

Any comment on how that discussion works to land on the numbers? It's a big enough number – \$77 million for UPEI alone.

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, I think we have a great relationship with both. As I mentioned before, we start these negotiations probably in October on what they're expecting to need for the upcoming fiscal.

[12:05 p.m.]

There is a little bit of a back and forth on what their total asks are and what we can provide to them. I think for both of us, we try to meet in the middle as best as we can.

M. MacFarlane: The Rubin Thomlinson report – do we fund UPEI anything specific to advance the recommendations in that report?

Jed MacEwen: You'll see there is \$261,000 for the UPEI action plan under restricted funding.

M. MacFarlane: And I see that's consistent with last year. Again, is there a three- or five-year – two, three, five, whatever – trajectory for that?

Jed MacEwen: It is, I'm pretty sure it's a four- or five-year plan. I can't remember exactly.

M. MacFarlane: I know there must be some sort of monitoring and oversight of how the plan is getting implemented. Are there strings attached?

Jed MacEwen: UPEI does publish what they have on their website as a result of this action plan. It's an annual thing right now. I believe there is something on their website.

Hon. Z. Bell: Yeah, it's a five-year plan, and they are posting everything on their website.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, and I know there are others on the list; I'll wrap it up with this one, Chair.

Yeah, there might be some disclosure on the website, and I will definitely check that out, but I'm wondering if our commitment with the

funding is tied to success and implementation so that there's some accountability on their part to make sure that the recommendations are actually getting implemented.

Jed MacEwen: There is accountability. They would have to provide some performance measurements back to us. This mainly – \$261,000 – is for that audit and the salary of the manager.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

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

G. McNeilly: Thank you, Chair.

Just start off with the question too – I was asking before about – it was budgeted \$80 million, and they only spent \$77 million. Was that because it was done in February? The report back was done in February? I don't understand why there was an underspend so large when....

Jed MacEwen: That's good news. Nothing in relation to the action plan; it's actually related to – like I said, we have a tight working relationship with UPEI. They have mentioned they have delayed their hirings in the med school, so there was savings there of about \$1 million, and the timing of the construction debt – when they rolled that over, they ended up having a more favourable rate than we were expecting, so there was about a \$2 million savings there.

G. McNeilly: Okay, so that just all had to do with the med school and the hiring there.

I'll bring it back to the faculty of medicine, which was talked about, and I listened to all the answers, but \$21.8 million next year, and you say that's going to flatten out. How much of that goes to Memorial? I know there's an MOA with Memorial. How much of that goes to Memorial?

Jed MacEwen: \$2.7 million.

G. McNeilly: So, \$2.7 million. I'm thinking back to the MOA that was signed. Wasn't that a three-year MOA with Memorial? Do you know, minister?

Hon. Z. Bell: I don't know. I can bring that back though.

G. McNeilly: Why did it go up \$700,000? Is that what it's going to go up with each cohort of 20 students that come in?

Hon. Z. Bell: I don't know if that specific number is what you're talking about, but of course there are going to be increases as the number comes in because every year, we're adding 20 new students to the program.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, but we have 20 students or 40 students and we're looking at paying \$21 million. That math is getting up there; that's a lot of money. Have you minister, looked at a return-in-service contribution that is – is that built into this number? Why is that number rising so rapidly?

Hon. Z. Bell: The other part of this too, hon. member, is that UPEI is wanting accreditation; they want to have the med school being an accredited school. So, that number will decrease once that does take place.

[12:10 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: So, are we putting money aside? And when is that going to happen? Will the minister go on record and say when that will happen, the accreditation?

Chair: That doesn't have anything to do with the budget.

Hon. Z. Bell: I'm not personally going to be accrediting them if that's what you're asking. If I have that power, I'm sure I would use it.

Chair: Can you tie that to the budget?

G. McNeilly: It's going to be expensive to accredit a med school. Those things usually happen over a long period of time, and I'm hearing 2029. That seems awful ambitious, and it's going to be very expensive to do that.

Minister, what are some of the costs associated with that, and are there any in this budget?

Jed MacEwen: There's nothing in this '26-27 budget. That \$21 million is operational costs for the med school.

G. McNeilly: When we're talking about the construction debt, it's in here, so that opens up a couple questions on that. So, that's servicing the construction that was done in the med school. I remember there was a sign; I think it was \$48

million. Is that where it landed in the end? How much did it cost to build that building? Why did it go from \$1.8 million last year to \$4 million this year? I put a bunch of questions in there.

Jed MacEwen: I think I half mentioned that earlier, about just the timing on when it would roll forward and the favourable rate. That's why \$1.8 million. So, \$4 million will be the going-forward annual payment.

In regard to the cost of it, we actually are benefitting from it. The original budget was about \$81 million on our part. UPEI was able to get some federal funding towards that, so the actual cost to our department is only about \$53 million.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

We've been hearing a lot lately about shortages of veterinarians. Do we see money in this budget to increase seats there, or is there any talk of that?

Jed MacEwen: That's in the AVC, yeah. We did sign a new five-year agreement with them in '24-25, which did increase one seat each year.

K. Bernard: Looking in the big book under UPEI, the international student backfill – it looks like this year we spent \$2 million, but that funding is discontinued. What is that for?

Jed MacEwen: That was just a one-time thing for the international student reduction that UPEI had requested for. They indicated they didn't need that this year.

K. Bernard: Okay. Did we give similar funding to Holland College? Was that something that they requested?

Jed MacEwen: Nothing they requested.

K. Bernard: The UPEI open education resource is \$50,000. That's not being renewed this year. If my memory serves me correctly, that number has been in there for a little while. Maybe I'm wrong there. I'm wondering why that's been discontinued.

Jed MacEwen: It was kind of in two places. We did actually fund that above, in the restricted funding.

K. Bernard: Under lifelong grants, there's miscellaneous for \$117,500 but it's not being renewed. What's that for?

Jed MacEwen: The big thing was CAMET dissolved, so there's a huge savings there, and then the partial refund in '25-26.

K. Bernard: And under the lifelong learning grants, what sorts of things do those grants fund? I see the list of places that get those, but I'm wondering what – is there certain programs, or is it...?

Jed MacEwen: I think it's all listed. SHAD Canada, community schools, workplace....

K. Bernard: Okay. I misunderstood that, but yes.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Total Post-Secondary and Continuing Education: 139,383,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Acadian and Francophone Affairs

Acadian and Francophone Affairs Secretariat

[12:15 p.m.]

“Appropriations provided for the coordination of measures relating primarily to the implementation of the *French Language Services Act* within the Provincial Government, including support to departmental French Services coordinators, coordination of several bilateral agreements, provision of translation services, administrative support to the Acadian and Francophone Community Advisory Committee, and several other initiatives which support French language services.”
Administration: 11,700. Equipment: 7,400. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 8,600. Professional Services: 144,700. Salaries: 1,118,500. Travel and Training: 22,500. Grants: 63,300.

Total Acadian and Francophone Affairs Secretariat: 1,376,700

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair.

The Red Fox Consulting – what was that for?

Jed MacEwen: Capacity optimization for translation services.

K. Bernard: And the freelance translation – what was that for?

Jed MacEwen: That's just various translations that our staff can't handle, so we have to go to outside sources.

K. Bernard: Are there no grants under this section?

Jed MacEwen: There is, yeah – \$63,300 in '26-27.

K. Bernard: In the big book, do you know what page that would be on?

Jed MacEwen: It should be under WAL page 23 of 23, WAL-22.

Chair: Do you want me to come back to you? Give you a chance to have a look at that?

K. Bernard: Yeah, sure, that would be good. Thank you.

Chair: Okay. The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Chair. Hi, minister.

This is a question that's probably not specific, but we talked a lot about the cut that was made to Cap Enfants and the joint effort between yourself and the Minister of Education and Early Years in coming up with some solution. I'm aware that a meeting has been scheduled with officials and Cap Enfants, but \$52,000 to \$57,000 – would that be able to be found or cost-shared to reintroduce that program back?

Hon. Z. Bell: Again, it's one of those things that – you mentioned, hon. member, that there is going to be a meeting set up with Cap Enfants. I think the biggest part that I want from that meeting is to have a better understanding to make sure that that money is being used properly and being used in the most effective and efficient way. So, I can't commit to it right now, but the meeting is going to take place, and I hope to find out a little bit more after that meeting.

C. Simpson: I respect that you can't commit to it without having the background. It was in the Minister of Education and Early Years's file, so I appreciate you taking that deeper dive. I will say: to the families, it's essential, minister, and it does work for them to work to maintain language and culture.

So, the question then becomes – assuming the answer is yes because I can't imagine it would be anything less than that – are there funds in here to at least cost-share, if not fund the \$52,000 to \$57,000 it would cost?

Hon. Z. Bell: Specific to the budget, I don't think there is funding, but like I said, that's something that I can work and I can talk to the Minister of Education and Early Years on.

C. Simpson: One more. Would you commit, minister, to getting back to us following that meeting on the results and the next steps?

Hon. Z. Bell: Yeah, I don't see an issue with that.

C. Simpson: Thank you, minister.

Thank you.

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

K. Bernard: I'm good, thank you.

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

G. McNeilly: In here, you don't have much in the grant lines. It seems like that would be a – you do have an increase to \$63,000. Obviously, we don't know what those are going to be. Minister, that seems like a nice place for a little bit of funding towards the situation that we were just talking about.

What's the \$63,000 budgeted for under the grant line?

Jed MacEwen: As we mentioned, some of it relates to that Acadian Heritage Month now, and then there also is the Quebec-PEI agreement in there.

G. McNeilly: So, the Quebec-PEI agreement was Musée Ambulant?

Jed MacEwen: It's a co-fund project with Francophone organizations promoting French language across PEI.

[12:20 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Okay, so that would be paid for from another organization. Minister, this seems like a nice... When you are at your FTP meetings, will you – you're the representative for the Acadian community at the national table. There is funding out there federally.

Will you go and, in your first action...? Because I mean, I've been listening to what you just said those are – Cap Enfants is an important program, and it seems like you can do that job to get that money for that organization. Will you lobby the federal government to come in a joint partnership for this little bit of money to help the community out?

Hon. Z. Bell: I will and if you have a letter written *en français* – in French – I'll take that with me as well, hon. member. Again, I don't know enough. Self admittedly, I don't know enough about how that agreement works and how those agreements are signed with the federal government on how the funding works. Self admittedly, I don't know enough about that, but 100 percent, and I appreciate your advocacy.

G. McNeilly: *Merci beaucoup*. Thank you.

Hon. Z. Bell: *De rien*. You're welcome.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Acadian and Francophone Affairs:
1,376,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning: 184,776,200

Shall it carry? Carried.

Heading to page 170, which is the Employment Development Agency.

Employment Development Agency

General

“Appropriations provided for administration of program delivery, budget management, and payment processing.” Administration: 7,100.

Equipment: 2,700. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 700. Professional Services: 11,000. Salaries: 318,700. Travel and Training: 6,000.

Total General: 346,200

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: I just had one question on this section; I appreciate the indulgence as I found it.

There was a grant to BDO Canada. What was that for?

Maybe I'm in the wrong section.

Jed MacEwen: I think it's in professional services. That's for the audit for the Crown corp.

M. MacFarlane: It was what, sorry?

Jed MacEwen: I think it's in professional services, not a grant. It's for the audit of the Crown.

M. MacFarlane: That's just for the audit?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

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

R. Henderson: Just on salaries there, there's a bit of an increase in salaries, but there was also an underspend last year – maybe explain that.

But I also wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge Elliot Deighan. He's one of your workers through the Employment Development Agency, and I do find Elliot very accessible and very upfront on making decisions regarding EDA funded positions. So, I'll give a thank you to Elliot for what he does in my district anyway.

But if you could explain the difference; is he getting a raise or are you hiring somebody else there?

Jed MacEwen: The decrease in the forecast related to a vacancy. So, there was a retirement in the year. Then the rest, the increase in '26-27 just relates to the collective bargaining.

R. Henderson: When that position's filled.

Jed MacEwen: Yeah.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Community and Business Projects

“Appropriations provided for wages of individuals hired by businesses and non-profit organizations to work on approved projects, the majority of which are rural based.” Special Projects Program: 3,580,500. Job Creation Program: 629,500. Jobs for Youth Program: 1,780,500. Rural Enhancement Employment Program: 922,900.

Total Community and Business Projects: 6,913,400

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

[12:25 p.m.]

R. Henderson: Obviously, minister, I've had some disappointment with the fact that special projects has cut close to half a million dollars. This is a program that I think saves your government money, as well as job creation, although there's only a slight increase in job creation. But these are all mostly people that would probably be on financial assistance if they weren't involved with a non-profit organization. I think it has a big impact on the non-profit organizations as well.

Can you explain what that rationale would be and why you'd be cutting that to that degree of money to, I'll say, a very vulnerable employer group with multiple barriers?

Jed MacEwen: I wouldn't call it a cut. I know it does look like we spent \$4 million last year; \$3.5 was the budget last year, so it's very similar this year.

We did have some savings in REEP, so we were able to re-purpose them to '25-26 to increase the special projects here.

R. Henderson: What would give you the rationale in thinking that you wouldn't spend as much as you did last year? Why would you have spent more? Because I just look at it in my district – and minister, you're well aware of the oyster situation. Obviously, it's more complex and problematic in my area. But I just don't see any employable opportunities that are coming up that are going to employ those people.

I've got a lot of shellfish labourers, so this might be an opportunity for them, and you do have the decision-making process to make eligibility criteria. This is all provincial, so I just don't

understand why you'd think there'd be less need, especially in the western end of the province, than there was last year.

Jed MacEwen: I don't think there's any less need.

We are reviewing the organizations on a case-by-case basis here. There are some tough times ahead here, so we're looking at that. With the synergies with SkillsPEI, maybe there are some opportunities to tap into their programs as well.

R. Henderson: There will be need; I'm quite confident in that. As far as eligibility, you do determine that as an organization. So, when it comes to issues like those that wind up being over the age of 65, that's a new decision that your department has made to make EDA special projects for older workers. Now, I'm seeing there's some of them – they never leave. But you've got a huge demand coming from a younger demographic, especially those impacted by the shellfish industry.

That's why I sort of look at it – if you're not going to make changes on that side of the ledger and there are no new positions, we're kind of in this log jam of not really being able to help the people that are probably most in need. So, do you have any...?

I don't have a problem, personally, if you're changing the eligibility to target a certain industry, target a certain worker, or things of that nature, but at the end of the day, I just see that there's need and I just can't see where there's less need than last year. If you spent \$4 million last year and you're \$3.5 million this year, that's significant.

Hon. Z. Bell: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll let Jed talk about the specifics to the parameters that you're indicating. But I do want to mention, too, it's not in our department, but in the contingency for the oyster industry, there is \$1.4 million. That should help some of the people that are being affected. I know you and I have had discussions and maybe some disagreements on how that's going to be implemented, but I do feel that that will be beneficial.

I just wanted to mention that before Jed talks about the specifically around the question you had.

R. Henderson: This is my point: You go back to the issue with some of these workers from the Skills money that there's more money involved with, which you said there will be, but their EI has expired. So, they're not – this is my argument: they're not eligible for a lot of these programs.

Under the PEI program, as an example, you have to have an active EI claim. Under the self-employed business program, you have to have an active EI claim. So, when we get into issues like special projects, your EI is usually expired. In fact, I think Elliot will tell you that until their EI expires, they're not eligible for the program and job creation partnership is for people who are on social assistance or at risk of being on social assistance, or a high risk of being on social assistance. So, they might not have applied for social services, but they have no other opportunity of eligibility, so they can put them under that.

I go back to saying, you can say there's \$1.4 million put into Skills, but this isn't Skills. I'm just trying to verify and clarify this, and I just wanted you to put some sense of understanding of what's going on because of this oyster sector, which I know you know because you're a former minister of that.

I do think we need some sense of flexibility, and when I see less money than last year, I just don't see where there's any new positions. In fact, when I talked to Elliot Deighan, he said to me: until all the positions are filled who's going back from last year, there's no new money.

[12:30 p.m.]

So, this is where I'm left as an MLA trying to help and assist these people, and I've got no tools to use it or even to lobby your department. I guess that's what I'm doing here under this format of having you on the floor of the Legislature where I've got you cornered a bit here and I can ask you.

Can you respond to that to say why there's less money? Is there any flexibility to put more money into that? Like I say, the contingency fund – if you had it directly to EDA funding, I would totally agree that that's your solution, but you're not. You're saying it's going to SkillsPEI.

Jed MacEwen: There is contingency funding in EDA with this as well. I think there's \$300,000.

R. Henderson: That's helpful. At least if there's \$300,000 more coming in, it's not showing on the budget, but at least that's an answer that gives me some promise anyway. I'll do my best to try to see if we can find employers to take as much of that as we can, I guess, between me and Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

This section has about eight pages of grants. They're broken down by county, but there's no dollar amount for any of these. Why is that?

Jed MacEwen: It's a good question. I think you asked this last year, and I asked the same question. I didn't really get a straight answer.

It's been like that for a while. We haven't put a dollar amount to each organization, I think, probably to protect the individual a little bit better.

M. MacFarlane: Well, obviously, my question – if you don't protect any other individuals when they get grants, and they're not individuals. They're all non-profits or corporations of some sort, municipalities...

Jed MacEwen: They're hiring these individuals. So, one position – if I'm in there, then you could probably work out Jed MacEwen makes this amount for that amount of weeks.

M. MacFarlane: I guess I'll always advocate for transparency when it comes to the disclosure of how our tax dollars are spent.

So, Jobs for Youth – I think we've got the...

Hon. Z. Bell: Do you have a question on that?

M. MacFarlane: No. [Laughter] I do – a couple.

How much money in this section is allocated for that program?

Jed MacEwen: \$1.78 million.

M. MacFarlane: Yes, I see it there now. It's actually down \$200,000 or so from previous years. Is that because of...? Why are we looking at...?

Jed MacEwen: Actually, internally, we're re-allocating – the Seaman Star is funded partially through Skills and partially through here. So, we're re-allocating \$300,000 to the Skills funding portion of that just so it's all housed in one division.

M. MacFarlane: Again, all these grants that don't have dollar amounts to them, would they all be receiving grant money under this particular program, or would...? I mean, there's rural enhancement as well, so these four grants are what comprised these eight pages, and we're not disclosing any dollar amount to any of the organizations for all of these four grants – special projects, job creation, Jobs for Youth, rural enhancement.

So, the next question I would have is: Has there been a change in how the department is allocating out the money for grants? Because I'm hearing a couple of things, and I'll start with this: I'm hearing that the timing is late to the point where the potential recipients don't have any notice to either proceed with hiring the student or to not. They just don't know. Has there been any change in the timing?

Jed MacEwen: I don't believe so, but I can take that back and ask internal.

M. MacFarlane: I think the timing is somewhat in mid-April, is it, minister – or even later than that, where the deadline is mid-April, I think, and then the potential recipients, the applicants under the program, aren't notified until this month that we're sitting in. What I'm hearing is that it's late to be able to secure a student, to let a student know if there's funding available.

[12:35 p.m.]

Is that tied to this process, this budget process? Why is it so late in the season?

Jed MacEwen: We can look into that. I can take that back for you.

M. MacFarlane: The other situation I'm hearing about is that recipients who may have received money for a certain number of students in the past are now being informed this year that they may have got three or four students, but now they're only getting sufficient funding for one. Has there been a change to how the department decides who's eligible and who's not?

Jed MacEwen: There's no change, but as I mentioned to the other hon. member, we are looking at each application on a case-by-case basis.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. I think what I'll do, Chair, is I'll send a follow-up to the minister with some specific concerns that I've heard about – off the budget.

Chair: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Employment Development Agency:
7,259,600

Shall it carry? Carried.

PEI Student Financial Assistance Corporation
General

“Appropriations provided for student assistance and the community service bursary program.”
Administration: 729,600. Debt: 817,400.
Equipment: 115,000. Professional Services:
20,000. Grants: 13,999,200. Provision for Loan
Losses: 355,000.

Total General: 16,036,200

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West
Royalty.

G. McNeilly: Yeah, just obviously on the grant line, you'd think that this – tuition is going up. I'm just worried. Is there less students? Why are we budgeting for less than we spent last year in grants and financial assistance? It's either students going down or – because costs are going up.

Jed MacEwen: It mainly relates to one program, and that's students with disabilities. There was a big influx two years ago. We're expecting that to decline back to kind of normal levels, where we were before that. It is a federal program, but PEI just administers it. So, that's the big savings there.

G. McNeilly: So, that's a savings there. So, the students with disabilities will not be – it's just the numbers are going down?

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, we're finding the average cost per student has been decreasing. So, I mean, we're kind of estimating here – it is a budget; it

is a guess – but we feel it will be declined in '26-27.

G. McNeilly: Okay. Are there any other trends we can pick up from these lines? Is that the only major difference?

The federal government supports us, what, 100 percent? No. And are there any other trends that we can talk about? Just to merge a few questions in here: Are more students going to school and looking for financial assistance? Do you have any statistics on that? I'm just trying to get a scope of what's going on because costs are going up, and that's what we're hearing from students.

Jed MacEwen: Yeah, it has been fairly consistent. George Coles, for instance – there were 2,200 disbursements last year. Marion Reid had 148. So, they have been in line with prior years.

G. McNeilly: Okay. That's good. Thank you, Chair.

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

K. Bernard: Thank you, Chair. I just have one question in this section.

The Island Advantage bursary has gone down. Why is that?

Jed MacEwen: It's a needs-based bursary, so you never really know. There were more students that applied to it in 2026. We're not going to turn down any students, so we will be keeping an eye on that. Hopefully it will stay within the budget that we had in '25-26.

K. Bernard: Okay, great. Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

[12:40 p.m.]

Total PEI Student Financial Assistance
Corporation: 16,036,200

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. Z. Bell: Just want to say thanks to Jed and all of his great work. Thank you very much for that.

[Hear, hear!]

Chair: I'm just going to call a quick, two-minute recess.

[The Committee recessed from 12:40 p.m. to 12:43 p.m.]

Chair: Welcome back. For those of you following along, we are on page 176, the Legislative Assembly.

Legislative Services

Legislative Services

“Appropriations provided for costs associated with the general functioning of the Clerk's Office, the Speaker's Office, and the operation of the Sessions of the Legislature.”
Administration: 194,500. Equipment: 97,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 380,100. Professional Services: 30,000. Salaries: 2,842,000. Travel and Training: 75,000.

Total Legislative Services: 3,619,100

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

R. Henderson: Just one question. I guess I kind of know the answer to this, but I just wanted to kind of get it on the record. We've been a member of the Council of State Governments for – I don't know how long; maybe you might know that answer. Certainly, it's all of my time I've been in the Legislature here. The Council of State Governments represents provinces east of Ontario down to, I don't know, the Carolinas somewhere.

Are we going to continue being a member of that organization? And if we are not, have we informed that organization we're not a member?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Yeah, the Standing Committee on Legislative Assembly Management decided last week to withdraw from that organization, and they have been informed.

R. Henderson: Okay. Do you think it's the right time to do that? I could see arguments both ways because I do know another couple of provinces have backed out in the last couple years, just with what's going on in the United States, but is it a good time to use that as a... Because there was some good collaboration, and at a state level and at a provincial level there was a whole different dynamic than what would have been at,

say, the federal level, between Canada and the United States.

[12:45 p.m.]

Was there rationale/thought into why you decided not to continue the membership on that?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Well, I guess, in the time of “where do you put tax dollars,” I think it was felt that with this organization, the return on that investment was not great.

For example, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association dues are about the same, but we get a lot of money back – we get money for travel, we get money for airfare, there are lots of grants and things like that that we can apply for – whereas with this organization, we pay the dues and we observe American conferences. I think that was kind of the feeling.

R. Henderson: Yeah, it is predominated by the United States as there are more states than provinces in there, but there is an opportunity to host the conference – and it's a massive conference, by the way. I don't know when PEI's turn would have been coming up anyway, and I guess there's probably no issue about rejoining at a future date anyhow, too, but maybe that could be....

Is there a chance to rejoin in future years if fiscal times are a little better?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: I think, yeah, if the committee wants to rejoin, I think we would always be able to do that.

R. Henderson: Okay. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

Just on the materials line, there's a full \$100,000 less budgeted. Can you explain that, Clerk?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Part of that money was budgeted for some of the costs related to moving back into Province House, and we spent that money in the last fiscal, so we don't need to expend that money this year.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. So that line, then – not all of it, obviously, is moving back into Province House, but you're saying that we've budgeted

enough to get back over into there, which hopefully will be in this coming fiscal year?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Yes.

M. MacFarlane: Okay.

Thanks for that, Chair. I'd just like to acknowledge and thank the clerks and all the legislative staff for all the incredible work that they do to keep things running around here.

Thank you.

Chair: Appreciate that.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Government Members' Office

"Appropriations provided for costs associated with the Government Members' Office. Paid from this section are general office expenses, telecommunications, salaries for caucus staff, and MLA expenses not covered by Legislative Services." Operations: 697,700.

Total Government Members' Office: 697,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Opposition Members' Office

"Appropriations provided for costs associated with the Opposition Members' Office. Paid from this section are general office expenses, telecommunications, salaries for caucus staff, and MLA expenses not covered by Legislative Services." Operations: 462,300.

Total Opposition Members' Office: 462,300

Shall it carry? Carried.

Third Party Office

"Appropriations provided for costs associated with the Third Party Office. Paid from this section are general office expenses, telecommunications, salaries for caucus staff, and MLA expenses not covered by Legislative Services." Operations: 352,600.

Total Third Party Office: 352,600

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Legislative Services: 5,131,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Members

Members

"Appropriations provided for payment of remuneration to Members of the Legislative Assembly, including basic indemnity, expense allowance, and additional honoraria, as determined by the Indemnities and Allowances Commission." Administration: 15,000. Salaries: 2,947,500. Travel and Training: 150,000.

Total Members: 3,112,500

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Members: 3,112,500

Shall it carry? Carried.

Office of the Auditor General

Office of the Auditor General

"Appropriations provided for operational costs in conducting audits and other examinations." Administration: 49,700. Equipment: 18,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 64,000. Professional Services: 30,000. Salaries: 4,028,200. Travel and Training: 65,700. Grants: 10,000.

Total Office of the Auditor General: 4,265,600

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

Just on the salaries line, is that reflective of an increase in positions or an increase in wages year over year?

[12:50 p.m.]

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: That was just increases in wages year over year.

M. MacFarlane: Okay. Has there been a request for increased staff or resources in that office?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: I think going back to the budget meetings with the standing committee back before Christmas – I'm trying to recall. I think he did make a request for extra staff, which was not granted.

M. MacFarlane: Who keeps track of the work that's getting done? If there's time issues in getting it processed and maybe that question could be asked of all the different offices, and I'll just ask it now and the answer is probably consistent across all of the legislative offices as far as if there's backlogs or delays in processing the work.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: So, in general, the standing committee on Legislative Assembly Management, when budgets are considered, in general, those are in depth conversations and members have a chance at those meetings to ask about performance issues or maybe, thinking specifically of the information privacy commissioners office, like of how fast orders are going through, but it would be a chance to ask the Auditor General maybe how audits are proceeding, things like that.

M. MacFarlane: I am on the committee, I recognize that, but I'm still learning my way through it and I appreciate the ability to ask questions on this section.

That's all I have, thank you.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Just to bounce off that question set from the Leader of the Third Party, who would audit the Auditor General's office if there were...? Does it ever happen?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: It can happen, absolutely. I'd have to look back at the act, but I think the Auditor General's office can be audited by an external entity.

Hon. B. Thompson: Has leg management ever requested...? Because \$4 million in salaries seems substantial.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Not in my time.

Hon. B. Thompson: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

"Appropriations provided in support of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate in accordance with the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*." Administration: 15,700. Equipment: 7,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 34,200. Professional Services: 100,000. Salaries: 1,038,000. Travel and Training: 35,700.

Total Office of the Child and Youth Advocate: 1,231,100

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Just similar question to the last one that I'd have is – there's not much of an increase; I assume it's all just cost of living. Was there a request for additional staffing for any other resources in this section?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: There was a request, and it was not granted. So, yes, the increase here in salaries is only for cost of living and negotiated raises.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you for that. That's all I have.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner

"Appropriations provided in support of the provisions contained in the *Conflict of Interest Act*." Salaries: 65,200. Travel and Training: 3,500.

Total Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner: 68,700

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: That's a pretty small budget for that office to run on. Has there been any request from that office to increase the allotment to help with processing?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: No.

M. MacFarlane: Okay, thank you, Chair.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Following off the questions from the.... It is a small budget. Does

that commissioner ever ask for – does she have an expense for outside legal opinions?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: So, in her case, if there was a request for something like that for professional services, it would come out of the office of the Legislative Assembly's budget.

Hon. B. Thompson: Okay. And if she does have a request, does this office look at conflict laws ever? I've asked this every year since I've been here.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: I think you'd have to ask the commissioner. Does the commissioner look at conflict law?

[12:55 p.m.]

Hon. B. Thompson: Yeah, does she request a budget to look at acts or is that outside her scope?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: I'm not sure I understand the question. But I guess if she requires professional service money to do her job, it would go through our budget, I guess, if she needed it. She made the request and we would facilitate that if it fit her job.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

"Appropriations provided for costs of carrying out the duties of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*." Administration: 8,700. Equipment: 3,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 15,800. Professional Services: 75,800. Salaries: 790,900. Travel and Training: 11,800.

Total Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner: 906,500

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thank you, Chair.

So, this is an office, Clerk – as you mentioned, it's a busy office. Sometimes there are delays in processing.

There is an increase in salaries; there must be one or two new positions there.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: There's one new one, one new position.

M. MacFarlane: Is that consistent with what was asked? I can't recall. Again, it's a very busy section, and sometimes we hear, as MLAs, concerns with the processing on this side.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Yes, that is what the commissioner asked for, and the committee granted it.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Office of the Ombudsperson and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner

"Appropriations provided for the operations in support of responsibilities laid out in the *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act* and the *Ombudsperson Act*." Administration: 11,700. Equipment: 12,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 18,500. Professional Services: 35,500. Salaries: 736,800. Travel and Training: 26,500.

Total Office of the Ombudsperson and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner: 841,500

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Chair.

This is a reasonably new office, I believe. I saw a job advertisement for a deputy. Was that part of the.... When the office was established, was there always a plan to be a deputy ombudsperson?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Actually, the previous deputy ombudsperson who was just hired won the competition to be the new ombudsperson, and so now he's hiring to replace that position.

Hon. B. Thompson: So, a new office and we already have turnover. Was the ombudsman overworked? Is that one of the reasons for...?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: I mean, I can't speak for Sandy, but I think she would agree she had an opportunity come up to be the ombudsperson in British Columbia, and those appointments only come up every five years, so it was – she had to decide if she wanted to take that.

I think she was doing a good job and really did a great job getting the office set up, but this was an opportunity she wanted to pursue.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

So, this is – as the minister said, it's a new office. It's also a very important office. It looks like it's only got an adjustment for CPI, or cost of living. Is that consistent with what was asked for by way of the budgeting process for this office?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: It was, yes.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Elections PEI

“Appropriations provided for all operational costs associated with the Elections Office.”
Administration: 18,200. Equipment: 2,800.
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 12,000.
Professional Services: 30,000. Salaries: 608,800.
Travel and Training: 20,000.

[1:00 p.m.]

Total Elections PEI: 691,800

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

M. MacFarlane: Thanks, Chair.

With the vacancy, there will be a by-election presumably in the coming months. Is that contemplated in the budgeted amount for the year ahead?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: It isn't.

M. MacFarlane: Can you explain how that gets adjusted then in the numbers? Where does the money come from – re-allocation? What happens there?

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: So, in general, we usually are able to find efficiencies within the office to cover the cost of a by-election.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Legislative Assembly: 16,249,400

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. B. Trivers: Chair, with your indulgence just before we leave the floor, I just want to remind members that it's the 175th anniversary of responsible government on Prince Edward Island. The Office of the Speaker, working with the Office of the Clerk, is going to celebrate that this summer (Indistinct) Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. Lots of cake. I shouldn't say – we haven't applied for the cake yet, but with that request in, I'm sure we can make that happen.

So, responsible government – and maybe you're aware of what happened. Before, there was a Legislative Assembly, but there was no Cabinet or premier; there was just the Lieutenant Governor. Responsible government, in 1851, brought in the ministers and the premier and the Executive Council that reported to the Lieutenant Governor and managed the affairs of the Province. So, it's a pretty big thing and I look forward to that.

Thank you, members.

Chair: Minister, would you like to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Hon. J. Burrridge: Yes, please.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

If you want to just say your name and title for Hansard, please.

Lane Pineau: Sure, it's Lane Pineau, director of finance.

Chair: Alright. We're on page 64 for anyone that's following along.

Department Management

Corporate Services

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Minister's and the Deputy Minister's offices.”
Administration: 21,300. Equipment: 5,000.
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 13,500.
Professional Services: 2,500. Salaries: 973,400.
Travel and Training: 69,500.

Total Corporate Services: 1,085,200

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

Hi, nice to see you again.

I'm just looking at the salaries line here, which went down substantially this year from estimate to forecast but has gone back up again. Could you just explain what's going on there, please?

Lane Pineau: Sure, so we had some vacancies in this division this fiscal year, including a policy manager and lead, as well as an industrial relations development officer that had been vacant for most of the year.

P. Bevan-Baker: The new committee on red tape and – I can't remember its full description. Would the funding for that be found within this particular section?

Lane Pineau: No.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. That's all the questions I have for this section, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: That was my question.

Chair: Okay. Shall this section carry? Carried.

Pensions and Capital Management

Debt and Investment Management

“Appropriations provided to manage the provincial debt, sinking fund, cash management operations, and pension fund assets.”
Administration: 7,700. Equipment: 6,900.
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 6,000.
Professional Services: 156,000. Salaries: 601,900. Travel and Training: 16,700.

Total Debt and Investment Management:
795,200

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair, for noticing.

[1:05 p.m.]

Is this where we'd find the positions for the red tape reduction and debt management...? No, maybe I'll ask where we should find that rather than keep asking. Is that across the department?

Hon. J. Burrridge: I don't know if there would be – are you asking about the fiscal

responsibility and red tape reduction committee? Is that the one you mean?

P. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Hon. J. Burrridge: That committee is made up of deputy ministers – it's an internal committee, so there would be no cost, truly, to that committee. It's more of an oversight committee that will push departments – push workplans out.

For instance, right now we've asked departments to go and do scans of their whole, full department. We're trying to find out where there might be synergies in what one department is doing against another. So, basically, this group is really looking at that and tasking departments throughout government to bring back more information.

P. Bevan-Baker: Presumably, there's some sort of administrative costs involved in managing that committee, or is that being found in existing positions?

Hon. J. Burrridge: It's basically just existing positions being tasked to look at these... On that committee, we would have the Deputy Minister of Finance who would be on that committee. The deputy clerk is on that committee, myself, and four other ministers. The chief of staff will sit in there as well.

Basically, through that committee, we're just trying to take a really granular look through government to see where we can find savings in all different ways and a reduction of costs.

P. Bevan-Baker: This is just for my own understanding because I've always struggled to get this. It's regarding sinking funds – exactly what they are and how they're structured. I know you've mentioned it – a few times referenced it as a fairly large credit sitting there on government's behalf, hundreds of millions of dollars, but if I remember right, we're only contributing a very small amount this year to that.

Can you just explain in third-party layman's terms how a sinking fund works and how it is seen as an asset when we have such a large deficit?

Hon. J. Burrridge: We can do that. It just wouldn't be under this section. There is a debt section where we can talk about that.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right, even though the sinking fund is mentioned in the section headline here. That's why I'm asking about it here.

Hon. J. Burridge: Relative to this particular section and how the reserve fund links to this is there is interest that's garnered off some of these investments. So, now that interest, through the new strategy, is being directed into the new general reserve...

Lane Pineau: Which is in interest and charges.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right, and that's at the very end, I think, isn't it?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yeah.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I'll wait.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Pensions and Benefits

"Appropriations provided for administration of pension benefit programs, which includes advising employees on a variety of programs, informing Government of the financial direction of these programs, and overseeing the cost and delivery of employee benefit packages."
Administration: 13,000. Equipment: 30,800.
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 59,100.
Professional Services: none. Salaries: 1,993,200.
Travel and Training: 48,100.

Total Pensions and Benefits: 2,144,200

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thanks, Chair.

Under professional services, not one dollar was spent in 2024-25, yet half a million was budgeted for '25-26. Again, there was no money spent, and it's been scrapped for the '26-27 year.

Why was half a million dollars budgeted for '25-26 if not a single dollar was spent, basically?

[1:10 p.m.]

Lane Pineau: Sure. These are implementation costs that were previously approved in the '25-26 budget for the pension administration CRM tool. Once we got further into the project, the implementation costs were determined to be capital; they're implementation costs associated with implementing a new system here.

This cost and the other costs associated with that project are included in the capital budget that was tabled in the fall.

Hon. H. Perry: That's fine. That explains it. Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

Again, I don't know whether you want me to hold this question until the last section that we were just talking about, but I'm interested in whether we are divesting from U.S. assets as much as is reasonable and sensible

Lane Pineau: I do recall, in reviewing the *Hansard*, this was brought up last year. Within the pension plan, there's the joint investment advisory committee that basically advises on the master trust. Within their mandate, they have a fiduciary duty to ensure that the investments that are brought forward are in the best interest, with maximum return, of government. As part of their policies, they don't get into specifically the U.S. versus Canadian versus international mix in terms of their assets.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think the big thing here is – and I think that it's hard to avoid this – the U.S. asset base is the majority of where you would invest. So, there are definitely investments there but it's because it's the large majority of their options, to be honest with you. But I think – and I could be wrong – based off last year's question on this, I think that we did look into that and I want to say that the split was like 60-40 or something. But I don't want to say.... Was it around that?

Lane Pineau: Yeah, last year was about in the 42 percent range. This year – I just checked with our investment folks before coming on the floor – it's about 35 to 36 percent. So, it is down a little bit in the mix.

P. Bevan-Baker: The steering committee that you mentioned – I forget what its name is – does it take direction...? I'm just thinking if the only parameters they have are to make as much money as possible and that's it, and there are no guardrails or anything attached to that other than make as much money as you can, do they get their direction from government or is that something that they decide themselves?

I guess what I'm getting at is – I realize that we're verging on policy questions here, Chair, but if we wanted to change that, would that lie within the purview or the jurisdiction of the government to change the authorities and how they invest?

Lane Pineau: I'll just refer to some of my notes here on that.

The joint investment advisory committee was created to give the beneficiaries of the master trust – civil servants, teachers, and MLAs who pay into it – a voice in deciding how their pension funds are to be invested. The JIAC provides advice to the Minister of Finance on protection of principal assets of the master trust, monitoring of costs, recommendations on investment fund asset mix, and review of investment fund and fund management performance as well as compliance with both federal and provincial requirements relating to ownership of foreign equities.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I'm not sure – I appreciate you, Blaine, for reading that out. I'm still not sure exactly where the authority lies to change the parameters of the committee's work. But I'm fine. I appreciate the conversation and I'm particularly glad that the percentage has gone down – pretty significantly; 42 to 35, I think you said? That's a large – whether by accident or design, I don't know, but that makes me happy.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Pensions and Capital Management:
2,939,400

Shall it carry? Carried.

Economics, Statistics, and Federal Fiscal Relations

Economics, Statistics, and Federal Fiscal Relations

[1:15 p.m.]

“Appropriations provided for policy advice on federal fiscal matters, including major transfers and tax issues, economic analysis, and statistics. This division includes grants for income and sales tax credits and rebates.” Administration: 163,600. Equipment: 2,000. Materials, Supplies,

and Services: 2,500. Professional Services: 58,500. Salaries: 693,000. Travel and Training: 26,900. Grants: 27,650,500.

Total Economics, Statistics, and Federal Fiscal Relations: 28,597,000

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thank you very much. Under professional services, why is professional services in this division being cut from \$129,500 to \$58,500, which is a 55 percent cut?

Lane Pineau: There are a few agreements that fall under this, a few contracts that fall under this budget line – various consulting contracts advising on fiscal performance, planning, supporting this area in planning – and it was deemed that there were one of those agreements in place that was not required by the staff of the division at this point in time.

Hon. H. Perry: Will that weaken PEI's ability to produce sound economic analysis and fiscal information?

Lane Pineau: There are three arrangements in there, basically, with companies that this division consults with, so there are two other agreements that are still in place that are ongoing. The unit has determined that they can work with those other consultants in terms of their requirements to fulfill their duties.

Hon. H. Perry: So, basically, you're saying they are confident that with these other contracts no longer funded or available, I guess, they're confident that they can still fulfill those duties as required?

Lane Pineau: Yes.

Hon. H. Perry: Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I'm going to start out with a small but not insignificant thing here; it's the volunteer firefighters tax credit – also goes to Search and Rescue folks. I know federally they doubled their tax credit, from \$3,000 to \$6,000 last year, I think. Ours has been stuck at \$1,000. We talk frequently – in fact it was brought up this morning by the Leader of the Third Party – of

how valuable our community firefighters and first responders are, and I would just love to see that love that we describe here in the Legislature so frequently reflected in an increase in that tax credit. It did go from \$500 to \$1,000 five years ago or something.

Is there any debate within your department to increase...? It really wouldn't cost the treasury a lot, but would be a real, tangible nod to all of the folks that do such incredible work that we do value in a real, tangible, financial sense.

Hon. J. Burridge: Yeah, I agree with you. These people do incredible work across the province. In conversations with a lot of the folks and fire departments that I've been in touch with over the past couple of years, the needs that they were putting forward were – one, a new training fire centre, which we have put I think \$2 million or \$2.5 million into. And in the rural growth initiative – I know we've been investing quite a bit of money into those departments as well. More on – when you talk to them, they would say they need some better tools, and they need access in order to do their job well.

The training centre was one that they put forward that they figured was a high priority for them so that they could have more modern training done, so we decided that that was an investment we could make. We've got two very informed volunteer firefighters within caucus.

Those are the kinds of spends that we are doing to help our firefighters across Prince Edward Island.

[Interjection]

[Laughter]

[1:20 p.m.]

P. Bevan-Baker: I doubt that was picked up by Hansard, so I will say it – this was from one of the volunteer firefighters: “But we would not say no to an increase in the tax credit either.” So, I don't think, in this case, it's necessarily an either/or – although I understand the fiscal responsibilities you have to carry on. But anyway, I wanted to bring that up.

I have some other questions in this section, Chair, regarding the big number here, which is the Island essentials benefit. Last year, I see that we spent \$10.2 million. I'm assuming that money was the sales tax credit, was it? Yeah,

right. So, I'm just trying to understand – and I did ask these questions when the bill was on the floor.

We've gone up \$16-plus million; that difference lies in the extra money that is now being put in as a result of the Island essentials benefit. Is that correct?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yeah.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. So, we went up \$16 million –

Hon. J. Burridge: I think, actually, just to be – I think this year, in the partial year, if you're asking about the new money into.... So, I think this year, annually – Lane, correct me if I'm wrong – the new money into the Island essentials benefit would be at like \$7.7. Annually, it would be \$9.2 million. I think I said \$10 million before, but it's \$9.2 million that would be new money annually into that benefit.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I just wanted to check that that was the case.

Thanks, Chair. I'm good.

Chair: Okay. Shall –

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I have one more question.

Chair: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: I don't know if I'm in the right section or not, but that lovely announcement you made about the ride share program – where in the Finance department budget would that be found?

Hon. J. Burridge: That would be out of the Liquor Commission social responsibility spending. That 3 percent that we dedicate to social responsibility out of the net profits of the Liquor Commission – it's coming out of that.

P. Bevan-Baker: May I ask a question on that?

Hon. J. Burridge: Sure.

P. Bevan-Baker: Just since we've started. It won't be a long conversation.

Any sense of what this program is likely to cost the treasury?

Hon. J. Burridge: \$30,000.

P. Bevan-Baker: Is that all? Okay.

Hon. J. Burridge: For six months.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. Okay, that's good. Again, I'm glad it's there. I hope we can expand it. If that's how much it's going to cost, we should definitely expand it.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Hon. H. Perry: No (Indistinct)

Chair: Oh, sorry. That's right. I forgot about you. This time I actually did forget about you. It's not always the case, but I did today.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: Thanks, Chair.

Going back to the Island essentials benefit. This is meant to approve affordability, right? Can you tell me how this funding level is determined?

Hon. J. Burridge: I don't know; that's a pretty open question. How this funding level was determined – as to how did we get to this number of \$26 million?

Hon. H. Perry: Yeah. How do you determine that number? How do you determine the funding each year? You're going to have to have some kind of determination. How do you get there?

Lane Pineau: I don't have a whole lot of notes in terms of – but I do know, in discussion with this unit, that there was a jurisdictional scan done. Within this unit, they typically try to take the economic information that they have and jurisdictional scans and use that, basically, to come up with the funding level for this program.

Hon. J. Burridge: What they did was – you have the sales tax credit in there, and then there were the energy rebates that got shifted over into this benefit, and then the top-up. Where the top-up came is basically – and I'll have to give credit to Nigel Burns and his team in here that did a lot of analysis on how we.... Where does the line stop?

What we decided in there was that the average energy rebate that a household across the

province in those energy rebates they were getting – the average was \$175, so \$175 is the floor that was put in the benefit. Every household will get \$175. In the zero-to-\$60,000 household income, they are getting a sales tax credit already, so we did the top-up to get those folks to the maximum of \$310 per individual, \$365 per family.

[1:25 p.m.]

Where the real sliding scale was here was where you kind of had to balance what we can afford to do and what is meaningful and impactful is between that \$60K and that that \$95K household income, which are a lot of those families and folks that don't qualify for a lot of the programming. They don't hit the income threshold. They're above the income threshold to be able to draw on a lot of programs we have.

This is the modest middle-income household where they're working day to day trying to pay the bills and just need a little extra help, so we tried to stretch that extra investment in to try to get it as far as we could. That went to \$95,000 household income with a bit of a – you have to taper it down. From \$95,000, I think it went to \$114,000 per household where you taper it down to that 175.

It was a lot of analysis that went into it to try to see that the benefit was going to go to those households that really needed it.

Hon. H. Perry: What assurance is there that this will keep up with the pace of the cost of living as we move forward?

Hon. J. Burridge: I think that's a huge question. We all know the costs of living are rising in a lot of cases, and we get that. We see that in government. I see that in my own house, and we see that in government.

What we're trying to do here is try to, in all these little pieces, whether it be the Island essentials benefit or the PEI child benefit we brought in last year or free school food, free school supplies, free pre-K, \$10-a-day child care – all of these pieces add up and hopefully bring more affordability to Islanders.

Even the CPP announcement which I know was a joint thing between the feds and the provinces, and I know it's only \$133, but once you start piling all these things on top of each other, we really hope that Islanders are seeing the impacts

of that and the extra dollars in their pockets for those rising costs of living.

Hon. H. Perry: That's why I was asking you about the formula moving forward to see if there was any flexibility as we do move forward with this benefit. If things change – I'm not going to say dramatically, but if things change, is there flexibility there to assure Islanders that they're keeping pace with the cost of living?

Hon. J. Burrridge: Yeah. This is a model that was built this year by this team that I think had a lot of data to back it up, and they looked at a lot of different models. There were iterations of this model until we figured we got it right – multiple iterations.

So, yeah. That's something that can be looked at on an annual basis, I would say.

Hon. H. Perry: Okay. I'll look next year. Thank you.

Chair: Okay. Shall the section carry?

Total Economics, Statistics, and Federal Fiscal Relationships: 28,597,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Office of the Controller

Accounting, Procurement, and Internal Audit

“Appropriations provided for the Comptrollership services to Government, which include maintenance of the Province's accounts, preparation of the Public Accounts, processing and monitoring of related revenues and expenditures, as well as operating policy over the Province's financial information system. Appropriations are also provided for an internal audit program and procurement of goods on behalf of departments and agencies.”
Administration: 40,700. Debt: 2,000.
Equipment: 16,300. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 53,500. Professional Services: 94,400.
Salaries: 2,987,400. Travel and Training: 30,000.

Total Accounting, Procurement, and Internal Audit: 3,224,300

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I'm looking at the professional services here. In the big book, it's noted as a tax recovery review for \$1.8 million, which presumably is the entire difference. Can you explain what that was about, please?

Lane Pineau: Sure. So, this is a similar variant that was discussed last year as well, I believe.

[1:30 p.m.]

This is HST contractor fees. We have an outside firm do an audit of our HST claims that are paid by the province. They assist and support the controller's office in government in general with recoveries of any HST that was considered not to be applicable, so this is the fees associated with that, and there's also a corresponding revenue item where we book those recoveries.

P. Bevan-Baker: I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last bit of that, Blaine. This is ringing a vague bell from last year as well. So, it's a sort of revenue-neutral...?

Lane Pineau: Basically, this firm will go in and do an audit, whether it be a program or within a department, to identify if there's any HST cost that was incurred by the Province that is actually not applicable, where they can recover funds from the federal government with respect to that. So, this is their fee, basically, to do that work, and then there's a revenue item that – we recognize that revenue on the revenue side of things, but this is their fee, basically, which is a percentage of the HST that they recover on the Province's behalf.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, okay, and presumably it's not 100 percent.

Lane Pineau: No.

P. Bevan-Baker: No. Okay. The second question – and the minister is probably anticipating this – is on the internal audit program. I'm wondering if you can give us an update on that, minister.

Hon. J. Burrridge: Yeah, I just leaned over, and I said there will be an internal (Indistinct)....

P. Bevan-Baker: [Laughter] Okay.

Hon. J. Burrridge: Yeah, so the budget is in there. Are the jobs posted at this point in time, Lane? I think they might....

Lane Pineau: There's one that I believe is going to be posted soon. The positions have been created. There are three positions that have been created for this year. I have a couple of other notes if....

Hon. J. Burridge: Yeah, go for it.

Lane Pineau: So, within '26-27, the plan is to approve and staff for those three positions. There's funding in here to set up with IT, to set up the governance, educate senior stakeholders, develop and approve an audit plan, and hopefully within the year, launch some initial audits to get the program going.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. And just again for my own information, those three positions, will they all be held – I know that the review of this was financed by Finance, but will all of those positions be held within the Finance department?

Hon. J. Burridge: Yes.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I think that's all I have for this section.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. H. Perry: No, all my questions were asked.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Office of the Comptroller: 3,224,300

Shall it carry? Carried.

Taxation and Property Records

Administration

“Appropriations provided for administration, tax audit, collection and inspection activities, tax processing, tax information and interpretation, registry of deeds and mapping services, property assessment, and geomatic services.”

Administration: 104,900. Debt: nil. Equipment: 25,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 82,000. Professional Services: 122,500. Salaries: 5,538,700. Travel and Training: 94,500.

Total Administration: 5,968,100

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

The taxation system modernization consultation that was done, I presume that accounts for the big discrepancy in the professional services. Can you tell us exactly what aspect of the taxation system modernization we were looking at?

[1:35 p.m.]

Lane Pineau: The expense that was forecasted for fiscal '25-26 was for phase 1 of the implementation, which was basically a review of the current systems to do a requirements analysis. There was an RFP awarded for a consultant to review the division's system, so that was phase 1. Phase 2 of the project begins in March and includes the development of an RFI and RFP for the replacement of Govern, which is our property tax admin system; CHRIS, which is the registry system; and LIN systems – I don't have the spell-out for that one.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think that's the assessment. I think maybe that might be the – you go ahead.

Lane Pineau: I was just going to say this phase is expected to occur within this fiscal year and includes development of business use cases, technical requirements, and target state architecture. The actual implementation is on the capital budget side.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. So, last year, the \$330,000 ended up being an overspend, and things were shifted around, presumably. This year, we're back down to actually even less than we estimated, but you're saying that we have a second phase of this project coming through. Is the \$122,000 going to cover that?

Lane Pineau: The review phase has been accounted for – was accounted for in '25-26 – so it was included as part of the capital budget originally. But given that it's basically a review of our current systems, it doesn't qualify as capital, so we had to record it on the operating side. That's a one-time cost. Phase 2 – the ongoing costs of the project now are reflected on the capital side.

P. Bevan-Baker: All in capital, okay. You mentioned, Blaine, in that description there, a property tax admin system. Again, I realize this is probably a capital expense, but is this review

looking at modernizing, as it says here, the manner in which we calculate and administer property taxes, or is this just the computer system that accounts for the money as it comes in or goes out?

Hon. J. Burridge: Our existing system is very old. It's hard to do analysis and garner really good insights out of the current system that we have right now, so this replacement and modernization is going to allow us to do a lot more on that side. This really is going to be transformational on this end of government business. Replacing these systems is going to help us, certainly, be able to get the right data, do the proper analysis, and gather the insights that we need to really look at property taxation on PEI.

P. Bevan-Baker: I don't think I have another question, but I think we both responded to the same email in the last few days specifically around the property tax system that we have here on Prince Edward Island, expressing some deep concerns about what this person referred to as unfairness. Anyway, it's not infrequently that I get emails like that – people, particularly folks who move into my district and are surprised at the discrepancy between their property tax rate and those of their neighbours.

So, you say this system is going to make it easier to look at the.... I can't remember the word you just described it – old fashioned or ancient, I think maybe you said. Will that be perhaps the harbinger of a more comprehensive overhaul of our property tax system here?

Hon. J. Burridge: I think with this new system, we'll be able to work with the data a lot better. We'll be able to do much more robust analysis on property taxation in PEI, and I think we'll be able to make.... Yeah, I think it is going to be able to lead to – better analysis will lead to probably better policy and....

The big thing with property taxation is the market value versus the assessed value, and I mean, that's not going to change. That's a legislative component. But through this new system, I think we'll be able to pull out the data a little bit more and be able to look at it in a way more robust way.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I appreciate you answering what was really a policy question. Thank you, Chair, for allowing it. I have nothing else on this section.

Chair: Okay. Shall it carry?

R. Henderson: Chair.

Chair: Oh, sorry.

R. Henderson: I thought you acknowledged me there, but okay.

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

R. Henderson: An all-party committee on natural resources made a recommendation to the Legislature to include ownership – who owns a property and the property tax numbers – when you go on the GeoLinc. Can you give us an update on where that...? Maybe that's part of what your whole review is doing, but can you...?

[1:40 p.m.]

That's a couple of years ago now we made those recommendations, and still today, once you get the property tax number, you have to call and you can get the owner. It seems a redundancy at this day and age.

Hon. J. Burridge: Yeah, we actually did make a regulation change. I'm trying to remember if a piece of it was included in the bill that we were on the floor here with, but there has been absolute movement on being able to – while it's not the individual person and mailing address, we're making the tax assessment roll information....

The legislation as it was set up before, you had to come into the office between the hours of eight to four or whatever to be able to extract certain information. Now we have kind of brought that more into an electronic world – today's world – as to how municipalities and other entities that are always looking for that data can access the data.

On your question on the mapping and being able to gather more every time you click on a parcel, what kind of information comes up, I'd have to – I know you asked that question before and I feel like I brought the answer back, but I can't recall that specific answer right now. It might be something we take back and bring back to you.

R. Henderson: Well, the answer was that you were working on it, I guess. It just seems like if you can click on a parcel.... Like I say, you can

go on GeoLinc right on your phone here. You can pull up the property boundaries; you can pull up the tax number. It doesn't seem – why you can't pull up the property owner and contact information maybe.

I guess it comes back to our hunters and trappers. This was a big issue for them in trying to identify who the property owner is to get permission to hunt and trap on that particular land. I just sort of say, in this day and age, 2026, I find it hard to believe you couldn't be able to add that onto a GeoLinc information screen.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think some of that information is there.

R. Henderson: Well, no, it's not.

Hon. J. Burridge: It's not?

M. MacKay: The property owner's name is, and the address where the tax bill goes. Their address is there.

R. Henderson: On GeoLinc?

M. MacKay: Yeah.

R. Henderson: I'll have to look it up here.

Anyway, I'll go with that. So, that's just recent then.

[Interjection]

R. Henderson: PID I know is....

Chair: Are you okay if we keep moving on?

R. Henderson: Yeah, go ahead.

Chair: We can come back. I'll allow you the indulgence if you want to have one more question on that.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Total Taxation and Property Records: 5,968,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Treasury Board Secretariat

Administration

“Appropriations provided for Treasury Board Operations, Fiscal Management, and the office

of the Secretary to Treasury Board, including appropriations provided for the preparation of the Budget Estimates and Forecast documents, and providing analytical support and advice to Treasury Board and Government on financial matters.” Administration: 14,900. Equipment: 4,400. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 5,300. Professional Services: 5,000. Salaries: 1,182,700. Travel and Training: 4,900.

Total Administration: 1,217,200

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Just a very short, quick one here, I'm sure.

A year or two ago there were some concerns about improper process for special warrants, which would come through Treasury Board of course. Just making sure that you're comfortable and confident that all of the applications you get now are following the proper process.

Hon. J. Burridge: Yes, I would say – if I knew there was something going on outside process, we'd be cleaning that up. As it stands right now, I have no concerns on that end.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay, that's fine.

That's all I had, Chair. Thanks.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness. We'll indulge you to ask your question.

R. Henderson: Just want to go back a bit, yeah, to the issue of the mapping. We just checked it out here. It is on GeoLinc, but that's a subscriber service. Hunters and trappers aren't going to subscribe to get one property owner. Why can't you make that free, then, to everybody? The site I was on was the PEI Department of Agriculture site, which does the same thing but it just doesn't give the property owners. That's where I'm coming from.

Hon. J. Burridge: I don't know for sure. I wonder if having a bit of that paywall – I think by not having.... I just wonder, and I'll check into it for you, whether putting information of a name and an address on a site without some sort of a paywall might lead to some unintended consequences in this day and age, but I can look into that.

[1:45 p.m.]

Chair: Corporate Finance

“Appropriations provided for administration and management of financial and budgeting matters for departments and Crown agencies.” Administration: 21,500. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 3,000. Salaries: 7,343,100. Travel and Training: 13,100.

Total Corporate Finance: 7,380,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Information Technology Shared Services

“Appropriations provided for the administration and management of IT Shared Services. This includes corporate, enterprise architecture, business infrastructure, business application services, digital services delivery, security services, and Document Publishing Centre (King’s Printer).” Administration: 1,466,400. Equipment: 222,100. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 23,785,100. Professional Services: 8,474,100. Salaries: 31,677,700. Travel and Training: 776,800.

Total Information Technology Shared Services: 66,402,200

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Chair, I just wanted to start out by saying that all of my interactions have been nothing short of super helpful. I seem to run into more than perhaps my fair share of issues with my phone and computer and whatever, and their help is always very timely and excellent – absolutely excellent – so I wanted to start off by saying that. It’s just a very large number at the end of this, so I think that merits a couple of questions.

Have we had any concerning – I know there was the school issue; I think that happened in this fiscal year. Were there any other breaches or anything else that we should worry about in ITSS?

Hon. J. Burrridge: I mean, no, nothing that we would highlight today. I think over generally, the IT team in building a defence against cyberattacks on the day-to-day is something that they’re on. They have to be on their game all the time. That’s not just the Government of PEI;

that’s every private and public entity in the world right now.

They’ve been doing a really good job on boosting our defence and ensuring our systems are more robust against these types of attacks. There’s been a lot of time, resources, and money going into that to protect the data of Islanders.

P. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I agree, and I also want to give a shout-out to whoever is responsible for the Beauceron Security thing that we get on a frequent basis. I’ve learned so much through doing those little tests that you get every now and again, and I pass that on to members of my family who would not otherwise have – and I can think of one instance where because I as a government employee did a test and passed on a particular thing to a family member, a problem was averted. So, this goes beyond government, but I just wanted to give a shout-out to Beauceron or whoever’s looking after that. I have nothing else.

Hon. J. Burrridge: Yeah, we have a very strong team there and I absolutely agree with you; they have a very tough job in this day and age, and they’re rising to the occasion.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Treasury Board Secretariat: 75,000,100

Total Department of Finance and Affordability: 116,814,100

Shall it carry? Carried.

Employee Benefits

“Appropriations provided for Government’s portion of costs associated with providing employee benefits programs.” Medical/Life Benefits: 502,500. Employee Future Benefits: 16,912,000. Government Pension Expense: 16,593,800. Pension Management: 486,600. Grants: 686,000.

Total Employee Benefits: 35,180,900

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Again, I don’t have a lot on this, but it is a big number at the bottom of the section.

[1:50 p.m.]

I see that it's almost like a wash between if we look at the budget forecast for this year of the employee future benefits and government pension expenses, they were quite far apart. One was overspent; one was underspent. But this year, they sort of come together. Is that just a coincidence that they've become a wash, or is there an explanation for that?

Lane Pineau: It's a coincidence for the most part. These are based on actuarial information and determining future.... Basically, establishing a present value of what the future liability is going to be. So, there are variables that change year to year as the actuaries do their work, and if the projected discount rate is higher, it results in a smaller expense that has to be recognized within the current fiscal year. So, it's those variables that get taken into account every year when we look at this.

P. Bevan-Baker: No further questions, but I think I owe Lane an apology. I think I've been calling you Blaine all afternoon. My sincere – I should know better; it's not the first time we've met. So, apologies, Lane.

Lane Pineau: That's okay. Apology accepted. Thank you.

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

General Government

Miscellaneous General

“Appropriations provided for the Premier and Ministers' out-of-province travel, Cabinet, protocol gifts, and other meeting expenses.” Administration: 30,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 35,000. Travel and Training: 165,000.

Total Miscellaneous General: 230,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Grants

“Appropriations provided for Grants-in-lieu of Property Tax.” Grants: 2,350,000.

Total Grants: 2,350,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Government Insurance Program

“Appropriations provided for insurance premiums to the self-insurance fund and outside insurers, self-retained losses assumed by Government, and for a risk management consultant. The Program provides insurance to all Government departments, various Crown corporations, and reporting entities.” Administration: 6,125,700

Total Government Insurance Program: 6,125,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Contingency Fund and Salary Negotiations

“Appropriations provided for Provincial Government funding of unforeseen program requirements and projected salary negotiations within the public service.” Grants and Salaries: 34,815,300

Total Contingency Fund and Salary Negotiations: 34,815,300

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

R. Henderson: The oyster contingency, is that under this section or the next one? I've been kind of –

Lane Pineau: It's the next one.

R. Henderson: It's the next one, okay. Pass.

Chair: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I see that this has wildly fluctuated over the last year; it tripled, almost, between the budget estimate and the forecast, and now we're more than doubling. Can you explain what's going on there, please, Lane? Thanks.

Lane Pineau: To your point, this varies year to year, and a large part is contingent on what collective agreements are outstanding as of when the budget is compiled. Right now, I believe there are six agreements that are currently expired or are in the process of being negotiated. So, we do put in a base provision within general government and basically go from there.

Obviously, the budget next year – once the union agreements are settled, the increases are

placed in the appropriate department budget and taken out of this budget.

P. Bevan-Baker: Got it. I really appreciate the explanation.

That's all I have, Chair. Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Oh, wait.

R. Henderson: No, it's the next section.

Chair: Okay. Shall it carry? Carried.

Response and Recovery Contingencies

"Appropriations provided for expenditures related to Government's ongoing response to extraordinary, non-reoccurring events." Program Contingencies: 5,950,000.

Total Response and Recovery Contingencies: 5,950,000

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

R. Henderson: Thanks.

I guess just based on some of the announcements that were sort of made on the floor of the Legislature regarding contingency funds for the oysters, could you give me a breakdown on each section which has already been distributed, that contingency money? Because I was surprised: \$300,000 for EDA, and then \$1.4 million to LMDA. These are all new things that I haven't been aware of that were announced.

[1:55 p.m.]

So, if you could break that down and give me a list of where that contingency money went and if there's any still remaining to go to the oysters that haven't been determined, it would be appreciated.

Lane Pineau: So, you're talking about the current budget, current fiscal year, '26-27?

R. Henderson: That's right. That's correct, yeah.

Lane Pineau: Okay. I do have a list here.

The UPEI AVC disease control and diagnostic testing capacity – there's \$497,500 there. So, that was committed last year for into this year.

Training and employment support program for oyster fishers: \$800,000 committed this year.

The oyster adaptation strategy: \$90,800 for this year.

The oyster relief wage assistance program: \$1.46 million.

The oyster growers income stabilization program of \$3 million.

There's a service agreement to establish a coordinated shellfish disease network: \$50,000.

R. Henderson: Okay, there was no EDA? Because I mean it was just announced by the minister shortly ago there was \$300,000 for EDA.

Lane Pineau: So, within the departments that are supporting this initiative, if there is ongoing budget money that is required, this is kind of considered like a one-time contingency which would be evaluated every year, but if there's other funding that's considered to fixed within an operating budget, we would transfer that or reflect it in the department that's providing the support.

R. Henderson: So, they had said there was \$300,000 that came out of "contingency" to EDA. I'm assuming the wage support \$1.4 million he mentioned that for LMDA funding through contingency. You see where I'm confused.

I appreciate \$300,000; I don't think that's enough for EDA, but can you give me some clarification to say – you're saying it's out of a budget that hasn't been allocated over yet, or it's out of their existing budget through Workforce and Advanced Learning?

Lane Pineau: I can't speak to Workforce and Advanced Learning, I adhere some of their reference there, but for general government purposes, basically for departments that would support those industries, they would work with finance with general government to identify if there needs to be a contingency set up within general government as a one-time.

So, there's a process through Treasury Board, there's a triage committee that evaluates that, and the program, however, is run by the department, whether that be fisheries or EDA or whoever, and they provide the recommendation

to Treasury in terms of how to disburse these funds. Then if it's identified that the program is going to be an ongoing program or a requirement, then the ongoing funding would be reflected in the department that's administering that program.

R. Henderson: You're basically saying – because I'm just doing the quick math here, you've probably got close to your \$5 million already over into contingency. Is there any remaining money in contingency for the oyster industry that hasn't been allocated yet? That might be a simple way to answer it.

Hon. J. Burridge: I think the only one other piece maybe that's come to mind, is like the interest relief program, maybe, and I think that's being run through Finance PEI. So, there'd be another – I think the other component tied to one of the announcements was interest relief, and I think you would have found that in the Finance PEI budget, I suspect.

R. Henderson: Right, yeah. Maybe the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning can give me a little more clarity, because it was their department that said there was \$300,000 extra out of contingency. Maybe I misinterpreted that or they mis-explained it somehow. So, is there any way I can get a bit more clarity on that \$300,000 extra for EDA from contingency?

Hon. J. Burridge: Why don't we all – we'll figure this out for you and get back to you. Does that sound alright?

R. Henderson: Fair enough. Thanks. Thanks, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks. I think, just again, a couple of quick questions here.

[2:00 p.m.]

I noticed last year, again, the difference between the estimate and the forecast is quite substantial, Lane, and just a couple of things on that. What were we expecting to have to have a contingency fund for that we didn't use it? And the second part of that is: how that actually gets booked in the Province's accounts.

Lane Pineau: I'm sorry, could you repeat the question again?

P. Bevan-Baker: Sure. It was the discrepancy of \$20 million between the contingency fund that was estimated last year and ultimately – well, maybe there's still the year left and that's where it's all going, but that's a big discrepancy.

So, the first question is what were we putting that money aside for that we ended up not needing it, and secondly, how does that actually get booked in the Province's finances?

Lane Pineau: In terms of the forecast variance from '25-26 budget to forecast, within that there was the tariff and trade contingency that wasn't, basically, utilized during the year, the aquaculture contingency – there was \$11,000,700 used for that, the potato wart contingency of \$140,000, and Fiona contingency of \$247,000.

P. Bevan-Baker: So, the vast majority of that, then, was the first item that you described?

Lane Pineau: Correct, yes.

P. Bevan-Baker: And the second part of my question was how does that get booked in the Province's finances? How does that appear now that we – last year we approved a budget for \$35 million; only \$13.4 million was spent. Where does that extra go?

Lane Pineau: That goes back into basically the bottom line of government. Unless – if there's an expenditure that was deemed incurred or approved subsequent to March 31st, we can book that back as far as the public accounts are concerned. But right now, we're saying that we're forecasting to spend \$14.1 million out of that contingency for '25-26.

P. Bevan-Baker: I think my last point here – it hasn't come up, and West Royalty and myself just had a chat about the tobacco settlement fund, the \$50-whatever million it is. Again, not the appropriate section, but we're right at the very end. I'm just wondering how that gets booked and where we would see that on the revenue side.

Lane Pineau: Basically, we booked that contingency in '24-25, I believe, based on what the anticipated result was going to be, and any payments that come in subsequent to the fiscal year will go against that provision that we made in the public accounts last year.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay, great. Thank you.

That's all I have for this section, Chair.

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

G. McNeilly: Just to follow up on that – that money came in and we were just chatting about it. I know that they're – you just kind of mentioned it a little bit about how they're scheduled to get some more money, but I'm just wondering: How do we find out where government redistributed that money? Did it go towards the debt or did it go towards health promotion-type activities?

Lane Pineau: If we accrued it back into '24-25 fiscal year, it would go against the debt. It would go against the bottom line.

G. McNeilly: But wasn't that money supposed to be paid out to further compensate the health care system? Why is it going towards a debt when it should be going towards future health care issues?

Lane Pineau: Well, I guess just a point of clarity: for accounting purposes, we would recognize the expense back last year. We have to. We still have to receive the money through a payment plan that's coordinated. So, yeah, that's all I can say – kind of where we are with that.

[2:05 p.m.]

G. McNeilly: Maybe I'll just ask the minister. Can you help clarify what's happening with this money? What's the vision for this money for Islanders? I just don't fully agree with it going toward servicing the debt. So, I might pass the floor over to you to figure out what we're doing with this.

Hon. J. Burridge: I guess the only thing I would add to it is although it was – yeah, it was recognized in the '24-25 year, and I think that was upon instruction nationally by, I think, Auditors General to say it should be recognized in the 2024-25 year.

The spends on the other side of, like, the Live Well program through Health – which, you know, the smoke-free generation work that they're doing.... I could probably go through the book and find – \$34 million is what the tobacco settlement was. I know I can go through our Health book and find north of \$35 million on spends towards the smoke-free generation and Live Well plan, and all these things that come

together. The work is being done on that end to certainly work towards a smoke-free generation and help with health care for those that are in our health care system right now relative to tobacco use. Those spends are there.

When you get into government, while you recognize money on one side – it's not like you take that cheque and put it over into this account to go.... The whole general government fiscal system kind of works together and you allocate resources. It's not taking a cheque from the tobacco settlement and going over to Health and saying: "Here you are." They're already doing the work. The spends are there.

G. McNeilly: I appreciate that. I mean, we can get into a debate on it, but when I see cuts actually in health promotion and in the Health budget, I wonder, one year out – we're not getting ahead. Health promotion is taking a back seat, and I think that there's definitely a missed opportunity by looking at your own budget, but that's maybe a debate for another day. I appreciate your response.

That's all I have for this. Thanks for the answer.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Response and Recovery Contingencies:
5,950,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total General Government: 49,471,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Interest Charges on Debt

Interest

"Appropriations provided for the funding of interest costs associated with monies borrowed by way of the issuance of provincial debentures, treasury notes, as well as borrowings through the use of bank lines of credit and loans from the Canada Pension Plan." Debentures:
175,933,100. Loans and Treasury Notes:
18,805,000.

Total Interest: 194,738,100

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

P. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I mean, it goes without saying that's an eye-popping number, and it's getting bigger all the time. I can't remember the stats; is it like the fourth-largest expense of government, bigger than most departments? I can't remember.

Anyhow, my questions are related to – we know that the forecast from a couple of the bond rating agencies has changed to stable to negative, but that's only a step towards a potential change in our bond rating, which would ultimately impact the percentage rate that we pay on our interest.

The forecast or the estimate that I see for this year – is that predicated on our bond rating interest rate remaining the same as it was last year?

Hon. J. Burrridge: I believe so.

Lane Pineau: Yes.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I'll use an example. If our bond ratings do change from what they are now – and I can't remember exactly, AA+ or something; I can't remember what it is. But if that gets reduced, which is a real possibility – some would say almost an inevitability – what sort of increase in the percentage rate of our interest would that create?

Let's say we go down one basis point. That's not the right terminology, but what sort of interest rate increase could we expect on our accumulated debt?

Hon. J. Burrridge: I don't think I'd be able to speak to that. I wouldn't be able to give you a number right now on that. I don't think we would actually even have that number, even if we looked for it right now.

[2:10 p.m.]

Lane Pineau: Yeah, and I guess for purposes of the budget for interest charges on debt, it's based on the interest rates that we're seeing at the time, so, obviously market rates play into that. We'd all love to know what the future holds in terms of interest rates. For budget purposes, we base it on – if we had a debenture that was issued in the latter part of the fiscal year at a certain interest rate, we would basically reflect that rate in our projections at that time.

P. Bevan-Baker: Right. How much of our accumulated debt is coming up for refinancing within this fiscal year?

Hon. J. Burrridge: I think that was put out under.... That's online. I think that chart is online under the debt management strategy. I think that we actually give you a chart online that shows all the upcoming debts. You can see it right there. I don't know if it shows the sinking funds or reserve funds that go up against those debts. There's somewhere between \$350 million and \$400 million in our kitties right now, and I think, in that chart, it will actually show where those come into play as well.

Lane Pineau: Sorry, and that schedule that the minister is referring to is in the public accounts. It has the list of all the debentures coming due, and there's nothing coming due this fiscal year; I just confirmed.

P. Bevan-Baker: Nothing at all?

Lane Pineau: Yeah.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I did ask a question earlier just looking for a layman's explanation of sinking funds, and this would be the time – if you'd just take a minute. I'm not looking for a university lecture here, just a sense of how it works.

Lane Pineau: I have a good note on that.

P. Bevan-Baker: Oh, I love that.

Lane Pineau: Basically, the sinking fund is money set aside by the issuer of a debenture to repay all or part of the debt upon maturity. The fund reduces the possibility of having to refinance debt at a time when interest rates are high. Basically, it's an offset.

Again, if you look in the public accounts, there's the schedule of the debentures and then there's basically a schedule of the sinking fund. If it's a debenture-specific sinking fund, which is what it has been previously, we have the new sinking fund as part of our debt management strategy. But basically, in terms of looking into the future, we can identify when the debenture comes due and when the sinking fund comes due to go against that.

Hon. J. Burrridge: And I would say, just to quickly do a.... I would say the team has done a really good job at looking – you don't want everything coming due in this year, so they've been doing a really good job of trying to spread that out so that in one year, you don't have this huge maturing of debt.

P. Bevan-Baker: Final question. Lane, you've mentioned that there are no debts coming due in this year. Let's imagine that our interest rate, as a result of bond ratings changing, goes up. Would that have any immediate impact on the accumulated debt of the Province, if the interest rate related to our bond rating were to go up?

Hon. J. Burridge: No, it wouldn't affect anything that's been locked in; that's locked. Potentially, it could affect forward-looking, but what we know right now is that there's no change. We have a challenge before us, but we're very clear in what we have to do to ensure that we don't have a downgrade.

P. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I appreciate that.

I'm good. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Promissory Notes for Pension Funds

"Interest costs associated with the promissory notes provided to the Pension Funds." Interest: 6,638,700.

Total Promissory Notes for Pension Funds:
6,638,700

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Interest Charges on Debt: 201,376,800

Shall it carry? Carried.

Shall the budget carry? Carried.

[2:15 p.m.]

Hon. J. Burridge: I'll take a quick note to thank Lane for his help on all this, and I'll add – I did, in my greetings, mention the budget team. I missed all the CFOs across all the departments that have done quite a piece of work that is fed into the main department, but the CFOs and fiscal analysts across government, to go through this process – they have been incredible, and you've seen it on the floor. They know their stuff. Thanks.

Thanks, Lane.

Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair make report to Mr. Speaker.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, I wish to report that the committee has gone into supply to be granted to His Majesty and has come to certain resolutions therein, which said resolutions I am directed to report to the House whenever it should be pleased to receive same.

Hon. J. Burridge: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Land and Environment, that the report of the committee be now received.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

P. Bevan-Baker: Standing vote, please, Mr. Speaker.

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the committee be now adopted.

Speaker: A recorded division has been requested.

We're voting on whether we adopt the report of the committee, Deputy Speaker. So, this is going to be a recorded division. If you could ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

T. DesRoches: Mr. Speaker, government is ready for the vote.

R. Henderson: The opposition is ready for the vote, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, member.

All those voting against adopting the report of the committee, please rise.

[The Clerk calls the roll]

NAYS

Bernard
Bevan-Baker
Henderson
MacFarlane
McNeilly
Perry
Simpson

[2:20 p.m.]

Speaker: All those voting in favour of adopting the report of the committee and passing the budget, please rise.

[The Clerk calls the roll]

YEAS

Bell
Burridge
Compton
Croucher
Curran
DesRoches
Dillon
Dollar
Hudson
Lantz
MacEwen
MacKay
MacLennan
Redmond
Thompson

Speaker: Members, the report of the committee has been adopted and the supply to His Majesty has been granted.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 19th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No. 19, *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*, Bill No. 17, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*, Bill No. 17, read a second time.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the

Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair Committee of the Whole.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*.

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. J. Burridge: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Thank you. If you could say your name and title for Hansard.

Lane Pineau: Lane Pineau, director of finance.

Chair: Promoter, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. J. Burridge: No.

Chair: Okay. I'm not going to go through that the pleasure be read clause by clause, I'll just open it for general questions.

K. Bernard: Clause by clause.

I'm just kidding.

[Laughter]

Chair: It's getting late in the day.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall the schedule carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the title.

Chair: *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the enacting clause.

[2:25 p.m.]

Chair: May it please your honour:

We, His Majesty's dutiful and loyal servants, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island, towards appropriating the several supplies raised for the exigencies of His Majesty's Government and for the other purposes hereinafter mentioned, do humbly beseech that it be enacted:

Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Hon. J. Burridge: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 21st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No. 21, *Loan Act 2026*, Bill No. 18, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: Minister.

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *Loan Act 2026*, Bill No. 18, read a second time.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you, hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, for chairing Committee of the Whole.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Loan Act 2026*.

Promoter, do you have a stranger you'd like to bring onto the floor?

Hon. J. Burridge: I do.

Chair: Shall it be granted? Granted.

Can you just state your name and your title for Hansard, please?

Ryan Bradley: Ryan Bradley, director of pensions and capital management.

Chair: Thank you.

Now, is it the pleasure of the committee to have general questions? Okay.

Open for general questions.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the title.

Chair: *Loan Act 2026*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. J. Burridge: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

S. Dillon: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Loan Act 2026*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Justice, Public Safety and Attorney General.

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[2:30 p.m.]

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 25th orders of the day be now read, with unanimous consent where required.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Yes.

Shall it carry? Carried.

[The following bills were ordered for third reading]

Deputy Clerk: Order No. 2, *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act*, Bill No. 2;

Order No. 3, *An Act to Amend the Private Schools Act*, Bill No. 3;

Order No. 4, *An Act to Amend the Education Act*, Bill No. 4;

Order No. 5, *Wills Act*, Bill No. 5;

Order No. 6, *An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act*, Bill No. 6;

Order No. 7, *Intestate Succession Act*, Bill No. 7;

Order No. 8, *Presumption of Death Act*, Bill No. 8;

Order No. 9, *An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act*, Bill No. 9;

Order No. 10, *Veterinary Profession Act*, Bill No. 10;

Order No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act*, Bill No. 13;

Order No. 12, *An Act to Amend the Registry Act*, Bill No. 11;

Order No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act*, Bill No. 14;

Order No. 14, *An Act to Repeal the Chiropractic Act*, Bill No. 16;

Order No. 15, *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act*, Bill No. 15;

Order No. 16, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Act*, Bill No. 12;

Order No. 17, *Charitable Lotteries Act*, Bill No. 19;

Order No. 18, *An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act*, Bill No. 20;

Order No. 19, *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*, Bill No. 17;

Order No. 20, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, Bill No. 24;

Order No. 21, *Loan Act 2026*, Bill No. 18;

Order No. 22, *Government Reorganization Act*, Bill No. 25;

Order No. 23, *Public Sector Pay Disclosure Act*, Bill No. 22;

Order No. 24, *An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 26;

Order No. 25, *Supplementary Appropriation Act 2026*, Bill No. 27.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the said bills be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

[The following bills were read a third time]

Deputy Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act*, Bill No. 2;

An Act to Amend the Private Schools Act, Bill No. 3;

An Act to Amend the Education Act, Bill No. 4;
Wills Act, Bill No. 5;

An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act, Bill No. 6;

Intestate Succession Act, Bill No. 7;

Presumption of Death Act, Bill No. 8;

An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act, Bill No. 9;

Veterinary Profession Act, Bill No. 10;

An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act, Bill No. 13;

An Act to Amend the Registry Act, Bill No. 11;

An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act, Bill No. 14;

An Act to Repeal the Chiropractic Act, Bill No. 16;

An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, Bill No. 15;

An Act to Amend the Real Property Act, Bill No. 12;

Charitable Lotteries Act, Bill No. 19;

An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act, Bill No. 20;

Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026, Bill No. 17;

An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act, Bill No. 24;

Loan Act 2026, Bill No. 18;

Government Reorganization Act, Bill No. 25;

Public Sector Pay Disclosure Act, Bill No. 22;

An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (No. 2), Bill No. 26;

[2:35 p.m.]

Supplementary Appropriation Act 2026, Bill No. 27.

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the said bills do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

These bills are introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to with or without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bills do pass.

All those in favour, say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, nay.

They have carried. You guys are unanimous.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am seeking unanimous consent to revert to Orders Other Than Government.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Orders Other Than Government

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the 26th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Deputy Clerk: Order No. 26: *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act*, Bill No. 104, ordered for third reading.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Deputy Clerk: *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act*, Bill No. 104, read third time.

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

C. Simpson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Members, this is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, nay.

The bill has passed. It is unanimous.

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Hon. B. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that government has concluded the business it wishes to conduct during the spring sitting.

Speaker: Hon. members, I am now advised that the Honourable Lieutenant Governor will be arriving at the Honourable George Coles Building here shortly. I will now leave the Chair

and invite His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to join us in the Chamber to receive the House and its address and reply to the Speech from the Throne, and to grant royal assent to the various bills passed by this House.

[The Legislature recessed from 2:38 p.m. to 2:48 p.m.]

Hon. Dr. Wassim Salamoun (Lieutenant Governor): Please be seated.

Speaker: May it please Your Honour: We, His Majesty’s dutiful and loyal subjects of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island at this time in session assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to His Honour for the gracious speech which His Honour had been pleased to open the present session.

Hon. Dr. Wassim Salamoun (Lieutenant Governor): Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, it’s a pleasure for me to be with you to receive your address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, with which I opened the present session of the Legislative Assembly.

I thank you for the careful consideration which you have given to the matters contained in the speech, as well as for the address which you have just presented to me.

[2:50 p.m.]

Clerk: Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has passed certain bills during this, the 3rd session of the 67th General Assembly, and now begs Your Honour’s consideration of the grant of royal assent for the following bills:

An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act, Bill No. 2;

An Act to Amend the Private Schools Act, Bill No. 3;

An Act to Amend the Education Act, Bill No. 4;

Wills Act, Bill No. 5;

An Act to Amend the Children’s Law Act, Bill No. 6;

Intestate Succession Act, Bill No. 7;

Presumption of Death Act, Bill No. 8;

An Act to Repeal the Crown Building Corporation Act, Bill No. 9;

Veterinary Profession Act, Bill No. 10;

An Act to Amend the Registry Act, Bill No. 11;

Act to Amend the Real Property Act, Bill No. 12;

An Act to Amend the Powers of Attorney and Personal Directives Act, Bill No. 13;

An Act to Amend the Ambulance Services Act, Bill No. 14;

An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, Bill No. 15;

An Act to Repeal the Chiropractic Act, Bill No. 16;

Appropriate Act (Current Expenditures) 2026, Bill No. 17;

Loan Act 2026, Bill No. 18;

Charitable Lotteries Act, Bill No. 19;

An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act, Bill No. 20;

Combative Sport Commissioner Act, Bill No. 21;

Public Sector Pay Disclosure Act, Bill No. 22;

An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, Bill No. 23;

An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act, Bill No. 24;

Government Reorganization Act, Bill No. 25;

An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (No. 2), Bill No. 26;

Supplementary Appropriation Act 2026, Bill No. 27;

An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act, Bill No. 100;

An Act to Amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, Bill No. 103;

Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act, Bill No. 104;

Financial Literacy Week Act, Bill No. 105;

An Act to Amend the St. Dunstan's University Act, Bill No. 200.

Hon. Dr. Wassim Salamoun (Lieutenant Governor): In His Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

We, His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island in session assembled, approach Your Honour at the close of our labours with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to His Majesty's person and government. We do humbly beg for Your Honour's acceptance of a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2026*, thus placing at the disposal of the Crown the means by which government can be made efficient for the service and welfare of the province.

Clerk: His Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor doth thank His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, accepts their benevolence, and assents to this bill in His Majesty's name.

Hon. Dr. Wassim Salamoun (Lieutenant Governor): I wish to commend all the hon. members for the conscientious manner in which you have conducted your deliberations to this point of the 3rd Session of the 67th General Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

At this time, I pray that until the Legislative Assembly again meets, each of you enjoy good health and prosperity and that peace and freedom for all people shall be more nearly achieved.

Please, along with all the work that you will be doing this summer, try to take time with your families to recharge before the next session.

Have a good summer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

M. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that this House adjourn and stand to the call of the Speaker.

[2:55 p.m.]

Speaker: Hon. members, before putting the question, I would just like to say a few remarks before we depart. It really has been a very good sitting, and it wouldn't be complete, I didn't think, without a short poem that I put together for this occasion.

The sitting has come to close
with debates and fine speeches of prose.
The budget has passed and today is the last;
my stopwatch has safely been stowed.
Thirty-seven days of Assembly galore:
bills, motions, and statements, and more.
But we all can agree, they work with such glee,
the Pages have bright futures in store.
Sitting spring '26 left its mark:
some days full of light; some quite dark.
Through the joys and the tragic,
still the laughter was magic
when we all raised cheer for Green Park.

Thank you, members.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a great summer.

[The Legislature adjourned until the call of the Speaker.]