



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of Prince Edward Island**

**Official Report of  
Debates and Proceedings**

**(Hansard)**

**Third Session of the 67th General Assembly**

**Friday, 8 May 2026**

**No. 25**

**The Honourable Brad Trivers, Speaker**

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**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

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**Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms** – June Ramsay

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

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

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

Welcome back to all my colleagues in the Legislature today. Welcome to all of these bright youths we've got in the gallery from grade 12, I think at Bluefield – advanced political science. I'm sure you'll be interested in the proceedings today, and I hope we live up to your expectations.

[10:05 a.m.]

I just want to comment on the fact that spring is here, and something that gives me great joy is driving to the PAB and passing that magnolia tree kitty-corner to the PAB, and it's starting to bloom. Anyone who hasn't seen it needs to go; it's not quite in full bloom yet. Also, the forsythias are blooming. If you don't know what that is, google it and then watch for it in your neighbour's yard. It'll make you smile. Or maybe your yard, if you know what it is.

I rise today to recognize the Eastern Prince Edward Island Chamber of Commerce. They hosted their 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Business and Community Excellence Awards gala last night at Brudenell River Resort. I was pleased to attend. Wonderful nominees for the awards. I have to say that the Minister of Education and I were keeping score as to whose community was winning the most awards, and I think he might have won.

I want to recognize Beck's Home and Heating because Alisa and Ryan are from my district. They were the winners of the Business Excellence Award. There were six different awards. Congratulations to all of the nominees and all of the award winners. There was a milestone of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the awards, so that's really a testament to businesses in eastern PEI and the work that they do. It was great to visit with a number of constituents who were there as nominees. I would just want to shout out to the Eastern Chamber and the great work that they do.

There's some truly historic news in our province. This past week in Ottawa, at the 31<sup>st</sup> Associated Country Women of the World Triennial World Conference, one of our own was elected world president – Marie Kenny, who continues to make us proud.

[Hear, hear!]

**Hon. D. Compton:** A dedicated leader and former president of both the PEI and Federated Women's Institutes was elected to the world's largest international organization for rural women. With over 51 countries in attendance at the declaration, it's a massive honour for Marie and it's a proud moment for every one of us.

As world president, Marie will lead the ACWW in advancing vital initiatives focused on education, food security, climate action, and women's rights, ensuring that rural women remain at the heart of sustainable development worldwide. Having an Islander at the helm at such an influential, global position is a testament to the leadership and vision that exists right here in our rural communities.

I'd also like to mention that David Attenborough is celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday today. As Minister of Land and Environment, I really recognize him for all the work he's done for the environment, for different species at risk, and really, all things that pertain to my department. Happy birthday to David.

Last but not least, this weekend is Mother's Day. I hope each and every one of us who has a mother still with us, or the mothers in this room, the members in the room here who have daughters or daughters-in-law who are mothers, anyone who is a mother figure to you – I just hope that you have a wonderful weekend. Enjoy the celebration, and I hope everyone has a great day.

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome all those who are watching online, in particular those watching from District 27 Tignish-Palmer Road. Also, welcome to those joining us in the gallery today: a grade 12 advanced political studies class from Bluefield High School, along with Randy Nicholson. Welcome to today's proceedings.

I'd also like to welcome the leader of the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island, Robert Mitchell, and Chase MacLeod from Montague. Chase actually was up for an award as an up-and-coming entrepreneur at the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce Awards which, as mentioned, was held last night, for his company, Three Rivers Geoscape. So, congratulations to all the nominations and to all the recipients. And I'd like to extend a very happy birthday to Chase who's having his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday today. Happy birthday, Chase.

I also would like to extend congratulations to Marie Kenny for her newest leadership role on the world stage. I know she'll do a great job, and it's great to do PEI proud. Congratulations to her.

[10:10 a.m.]

The Minister of Land and Environment mentioned about the flowers. I can't tell a flower from a flower, but you put a horse in a field, I could tell you all about it. [Laughter]

I, too, want to wish all the mothers out there and all mother figures a very happy Mother's Day this Sunday. I'm sure there's going to be lots of lobster sold tomorrow and a lot of lobster eaten on Sunday, which is great for our fishing industry here on Prince Edward Island.

I do want to put a shout out to all of the staff at the Tignish Seniors Home and offer sincere gratitude for the support that they've given to the patients in the recent GI outbreak at the centre. I want to thank them for ensuring that all of the residents, all of the centre, continue to receive the care and the attention that they deserve. This staff – and I know them – go above and beyond no matter what. They go – how do I say it? They're tired, they're exhausted, but they still get up in the morning and go in and give 100 percent effort to ensure that all the residents of that seniors home are taken care of no matter what is thrown at them. So, shout-out to the staff at the Tignish Seniors Home.

And with that, I wish everyone in here a very productive day.

Thank you.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and everyone in the Chamber here this morning on the Friday before our weekend – Mother's Day weekend.

Welcome and good morning to all of the grade 12 students from Bluefield here in the gallery this morning. As a graduate of Bluefield, class of 1993, it's great to have you all here today. I understand you're with the advanced political science class, so I hope you're impressed with the debate here today, although I'm not sure if it'll be advanced or not. That'll be determined. So, welcome, and I hope you enjoy the proceedings.

Tomorrow, as we probably already know from the many yellow bags on the side of the roads, is the Women's Institute Roadside Cleanup annual event where the Women's Institute coordinates the cleanup of the roads, issues the yellow bags. If you don't have one of the official yellow bags, any clear bag will do. I know that a lot of the roads out my way have already been tackled and bags are waiting for pickup.

On that point, I would like to thank the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy who assist by having their trucks pick up the bags in the week following the cleanup. So, hopefully we'll all get a chance to get out and get the ditches cleaned up and make the Island presentable for us, but for the many tourists who come and enjoy our Island.

Finally, it is Mother's Day weekend, and I would like to wish a wonderful Mother's Day to my mother, Ruth MacFarlane, who continues to do so much for the family, day in, day out. I know she's not watching – she no doubt is busy baking and has better things to do – but I will be spending a lot of my weekend with Mom this weekend. Happy Mother's Day to Mom. Happy Mother's Day to every mom and everyone who serves in a mother role in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

I, too, want to welcome all those in the gallery here. I always appreciate seeing our youth here, but especially when they're here from District 15. Bluefield School sits in the boundary lines of District 15. Welcome to you all.

I also want to recognize Marie Kenny. Not only is she an Islander, but she's also a resident of District 15; her and her husband, Cecil, are from Brackley. She has just recently, as mentioned before, been elected world president of the Associated Country Women of the World. It represents 82 countries, and she's only the fourth Canadian to reach the status of the executive of this great organization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would, too, like to welcome the students from Bluefield. I hope you do enjoy the proceedings. And to the leader, and to – happy birthday to you – everyone in the gallery and those watching from home, and to those of my district who are in hospital and still looking to get home soon, I wish you all the best.

I, too, would like to wish all the moms and the mother figures in our province a very happy Mother's Day, and remember, too, those that will find it a bittersweet weekend, as not all of our moms are with us.

[10:15 a.m.]

I, too, would like to recognize Marie Kenny. This is such an incredible honour for her and for all women and for PEI, so congratulations, Marie.

Finally, I wanted to recognize Dr. Olive Bryanton who is one of seven Atlantic Canadians being honoured at the inaugural Top 7 Over 70 Atlantic Awards Gala on May 14<sup>th</sup> in Halifax. Dr. Bryanton created Seniors College of PEI in 1998 and served as its first president.

With that, congratulations, and have a great day.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to welcome back my colleagues, staff, our Pages – Connor, Jorja, and Zachary today; thank you for being with us – everybody tuning in from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and all around the Island, and a very special welcome to the students from Bluefield joining us in the

gallery, and everybody joining us in the gallery today. I recognize some faces from Westwood and Gulf Shore. Very nice to see you all.

I want to thank the PEI Heart and Stroke Foundation for putting on a phenomenal women's health event last night at Vicinato restaurant – educational, amazing stories shared by women, very young women, who have had heart attacks and strokes. I'm going to do a member's statement on that later because I recognize the time.

I'm going to just say happy Mother's Day to every mom out there, to anyone who plays the role of mom in someone's life, for all the moms who may have lost children, or to people whose moms have been lost. Happy Mother's Day. And Irene Bernard, my mom – happy Mother's Day.

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome all the students from Bluefield High School, where all of my children went and did the civics course. It was Mr. Headley back then. I know he's still in the school, or still teaching, but it's lovely to see a new generation of young budding politicians here with us today in the gallery.

This weekend – tomorrow, actually – in Bonshaw, there is the opening of the new playground at the Bonshaw Community Centre. That's an event put on by the Rural Municipality of West River, in association with the Bonshaw Women's Institute. There will also be a free meal and the first farmers market in Bonshaw, something that's going to happen every month during the summer. Thank you to Morgan Palmer and the Bonshaw W.I., who, of course, are part of the roadside cleanup as well, and to all the women's institutes across the Island who do such amazing work to keep our communities strong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**S. Dillon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm excited to stand on my feet today and wish my mom a happy Mother's Day, and all those mothers and mother figures in District 11.

I, too, want to turn and welcome the class from Bluefield High School. I recognize lots of faces that have come through Eliot River. It's so exciting to see how they have grown. Just to let them know: if you see the Speaker doing his – we only get 45 seconds, and that's why everybody is rushing through. For some of us that really like rules, we try to follow them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

As Minister of Education and Early Years, I'd like to welcome Mr. Nicholson's advanced political studies class here as well from Bluefield.

Mother's Day wishes going out to all moms. As someone that's lost their mom at an early age, I can say with conviction: hug your mom, give her a call, make her feel special. To all the mom figures out there – my aunt Jean would be my mother figure – and of course, my wife, Mary. Happy Mother's Day.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Hon. Z. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise to welcome everyone watching from District 10 Charlottetown-Winsloe. I do want to welcome all the youth. It was funny; probably about two weeks ago, my daughter was in a panic to get goggles. I'm like, for what reason? She said, "Well, we need it for Senior Assassin." I see some of the youth in here are wearing goggles. If any of the members are curious as to why they're wearing goggles, best of luck in Senior Assassin.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**R. Henderson:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to acknowledge the wonderful moms of O'Leary-Inverness. They play a key role in raising families and bringing in incomes and all the things that they do. I have, obviously, a

couple of special moms in my world. My wife, Sandra – she's a pretty good mom.

[Laughter]

**R. Henderson:** She did a lot more than I did on the raising thing. And my two daughters, Chantel and Sara, are both pretty impressive moms in their own right, too.

While I'm on my feet, the West Prince Arts Council is having its annual meeting this Saturday in Woodstock. Hopefully, you'll see a few people there.

Thank you.

[10:20 a.m.]

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to stand today. As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I would like to wish all mothers a happy Mother's Day. Especially, I have two daughters who are mothers and I'm very proud to be their mom, and I wish them a happy Mother's Day as well.

Thank you. Everybody enjoy their day.

**Speaker:** I just wanted to rise very quickly and welcome you all here from Bluefield as well. As the Leader of the Third Party said, you are in advanced political studies, so we will try and live up to your expectations here today.

I, too, recognize some of the faces: my neighbour, Annabelle, in Cornwall here, a member of the Rotary Youth Parliament. There may be some others here, so my apologies. And say hello to my son, Alex Trivers, at Bluefield; I'm sure he'd be very happy I said that.

[Laughter]

#### Statements from Members

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

#### **Dr. Olive Bryanton – Top 7 Over 70 Atlantic Awards**

**M. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a true powerhouse of Prince Edward

Island, someone who proves every single day that age is nothing but a number when it comes to leadership and learning. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Olive Bryanton will be honoured at the Halifax Convention Centre as one of the first ever recipients of the Top 7 Over 70 Atlantic Awards.

Now, most people think about slowing down when they hit in their seventies. Not Olive. At 76, she decided to go back to school for her PhD. She walked across the stage at UPEI to receive her doctorate at the age of 82. Her research didn't just sit on a shelf either; it gave a voice to rural women and our seniors, ensuring they can age with dignity in the communities they helped build.

Olive has been a force for decades, from helping start the Seniors Active Living Centre to her work with the National Seniors Council. She is always looking for ways to make life better for Islanders. Whether it's her postdoctoral work, helping our veterans, or her efforts to confront agism, she never stops. She's a recipient of the Order of PEI and multiple Jubilee Medals, but what I think what Olive loves the most is the work itself and maybe a bit of travel and time with her family in between.

On behalf of this Assembly, I want to congratulate Dr. Olive Bryanton on this well-deserved Atlantic Award. Olive, thank you for showing us all that it's never too late to start a new chapter and make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Youth Mental Health

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we want to understand the state of mental health among our youth, we need to start listening to what they are telling us. This week is Mental Health Week in Canada, and this year's theme is "Come Together," a reminder that connection matters, especially at a time when so many youth and young people are struggling in silence.

The latest Compass survey paints an alarming picture of what many Island youth are experiencing: 26 percent reported feeling lonely; 20 percent reported feeling depressed; 31 percent said they feel nervous or constantly on

edge over a two-week period; nearly one in four reported being bullied, including cyberbullying, sexual harassment, exclusion, and physical violence; and perhaps the most concerning, over half our students surveyed said they feel unwelcomed or uncomfortable at school.

These aren't just stats; these are Island kids trying to navigate pressures, anxiety, isolation, and uncertainty, often without the supports they need. We are also seeing significant increases in calls to Kids Help Phone. While it's encouraging that young people are reaching out, it is also a clear sign that many are struggling.

Island children and youth are telling us something important. The question is whether this government and all of us are listening, and whether this government is prepared to act before more young people fall through the cracks.

Let's come together and do as much as we can for mental health in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Prioritizing Budget Debate

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

In February, this government shut down the Legislature for a full month and told Islanders that they needed extra time and that it would be worth the wait. This House returned on March 24<sup>th</sup>, but the operating budget was not tabled until April 14<sup>th</sup>. Now here we are, well into May, and this government still shows no urgency to debate its own budget.

And what exactly did Islanders get for all that delay? Not a more disciplined plan. Not a budget that makes life more affordable. Instead, Islanders got another massive deficit: \$450 million this year, followed by another projected \$410 million next year.

This is the number that this government is telling us, but as we have learned, this government has no idea how to manage this province's finances. Just ask the Minister of Education. He can't even get a handle on the cuts in his own budget.

So, it begs the question: Is the deficit 25 percent higher or 50 percent higher? Only time will tell. That is not careful financial management; that is a government with a spending problem and priorities that are completely out of touch with what Islanders are dealing with right now, and Islanders are going to be paying for it for years.

We have now spent day after day in this House debating just about everything except the budget – the central responsibility of government. Municipalities, businesses, community organizations, and Islanders are waiting on it for certainty. For a government facing deficits of this size, the lack of urgency around debating its own budget leaves a very understandable impression that this government is disorganized.

**Speaker:** Member.

Alright, moving on to questions by members.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Hon. H. Perry:** Mr. Speaker, this government's health care mismanagement is now forcing community care facilities to pick up the pieces of a system that is falling behind. Hospitals are overcrowded, long-term care beds are unavailable, and now level 4 residents – seniors who require full nursing care – are being pushed into community care facilities that were never meant to handle those needs. That is not a solution, and it's unacceptable that this government is asking community care facilities to clean up a crisis of its own making.

**Nursing care for level 4 residents**

Question to the Minister of Health: Why is Health PEI asking community care facilities to provide nursing-level care when those facilities were never designed, staffed, or supported to handle it?

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

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

It is a good question. I did have a discussion with the department and Health PEI on this

exact situation, not just in Tignish but across PEI. This does happen a number of times, where we have patients in community care facilities who do become level 4 and do need long-term care. It does pose an issue, as the staff in those facilities aren't necessarily capable of looking after those more advanced patients and the needs that they require.

What I would say is that right now, with our hospitals running over capacity and the shortage of long-term care beds – ideally, we would like to take those patients out of the community care facilities and put them into long-term care, but with the overcapacity issue right now, that's just not possible.

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

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

Earlier this week, the same minister was patting himself on the back for decreasing the capacity from a level 4 to a level 3 in hospitals across Prince Edward Island.

Staff in these facilities are already stretched thin trying to hold the system together, and instead of giving them relief, this government is asking them to care for residents with higher medical and nursing needs, without the staffing levels or clinical supports that long-term care facilities are supposed to have.

To the Minister of Health: What safeguards are in place right now to protect residents and staff in facilities being asked to care for level 4 patients without proper nursing capacity?

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

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

I certainly wouldn't say I was patting myself on the back with overcapacity now being at a level 3 and not level 4. It's just a reality of the system and what it's at; that will happen when it happens. There's nothing that I can do to help solve that.

What I would say in relation to this exact issue is that I think we do have to look at how we can best support these community care facilities that have residents in them that now require long-term care. Do we need to provide support with staffing? The reality is, perhaps in some cases,

this might have to be agency staffing. We simply don't have enough staff on PEI. They're stretched thin right now as it is. But it's definitely something we have to look into.

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

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

But this is not a new issue. I've been hearing this for years. There are level 4 patients in a community care facility, and they are not staffed to take care of a level 4 patient. This government keeps talking about increasing capacity in the health care system, but moving higher-needs residents into facilities that are not equipped to care for them is not solving the problem; it is shifting the pressure and strain to somewhere else in the system, and the people paying the price are frontline workers, seniors, and families.

[10:30 a.m.]

Question to the Minister of Health: Does the minister acknowledge that placing level 4 residents in community care facilities creates serious risks for quality of care, staff burnout, and resident safety?

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Yes, I would agree with that statement, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Community care operators and staff are stepping up because they care deeply about keeping seniors in their own community, but goodwill alone cannot replace proper staffing, nursing support, and financing. At some point, this government needs to stop expecting facilities to simply absorb the consequences of its health care failures.

Question to the Minister of Health: Will the minister commit today to providing emergency staffing and funding supports to facilities now caring for level 4 residents right across Prince Edward Island?

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

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

I would say that when they're – as the member has mentioned, the patients that require level 4 care, these patients might have already been living in community care, but over time, because of certain circumstances, they now require level 4 care. That does pose an issue because obviously, we need the staff in those centres that are able to support them.

What I will commit to is to go back to the department and work with Health PEI to see if there is a way to support community care and the staffing that they do need to look after these patients that do need that care.

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

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

Staff in the community care facilities are well trained in assessing levels 3 to 4. They know what to watch for. When they're assessed at a level 4, that requires 24/7 nursing care, which is not required in a community care facility.

We are now hearing that residents are being placed in rooms in manors without call bells. They're unable to immediately access care when they need it the most. Rooms are not intended or set up for residents. This is a huge safety concern. Frontline staff, who have dedicated years to long-term care, say that the system is crumbling around them, and this government continues to make matters worse.

Question to the Minister of Tourism: It took your colleague in Souris to complain before this government walked back its failed plan to put residents in the activity room at Colville Manor. Why are you failing to stand up for the residents and staff in your own district as this government continues to add undue pressure on the long-term care sector?

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Mr. Speaker, I would assume the member is referring to the adult day programs. I don't believe –

**Hon. H. Perry:** No, I said manor. Maplewood, Alberton.

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Maplewood, Alberton. Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is making lots of

allegations here. I can go back to the department and take back what I can. I'm not aware of any of these situations, but I'll certainly look into it.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Continuing on with that theme – we talked about community care to long-term care – I'm going to talk about long-term care and what's happening in those areas.

Minister, what's happening in long-term care places like Beach Grove and PE Home in my area is that people are coming into those facilities that shouldn't be there. Long-term care needs to be a place where people call it home.

#### **Long-term care (further)**

Minister, are you familiar with anybody being put into long-term care that necessarily should not be in long-term care?

**Speaker:** Member, be sure to come through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Mr. Speaker, I necessarily wouldn't keep track of every person that's admitted to long-term care. That's more of an operational question. It's not something that comes across the minister's desk. I would assume that the hon. member is probably going to bring up one individual, a certain situation, but we'll see what he has to say.

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

**G. McNeilly:** No, actually, I'm not. I'm going to be talking about how this is a general theme in Beach Grove and PE Home at this time.

What's happening is when you have a facility like Beach Grove that does a lot of dementia care, that's their home; that's where they belong. When you put somebody in that is not necessarily going to fit there – and this is coming directly from the staff, this is coming directly from people on the unit – they can't do their job and they're burning out because people are coming into these facilities that take extra care.

Minister, are you familiar with that on a general theme? What are you going to do with

somebody who faces mental health needs and should not be put in a long-term care facility beside somebody that's struggling with dementia?

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

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

Health PEI does have criteria, an assessment that they complete to see if someone is in need of long-term care.

I think I know what the hon. member is referring to in that specific situation. I do know that Health PEI is working to see if we can find a different location for one of the residents and working with the union because I know it's placing a lot of stress on the staff. We're certainly aware of it and trying to work through it.

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

[10:35 a.m.]

**G. McNeilly:** It's bigger than that. I'm trying not to talk about any individuals in particular, but the minister is right. Are you looking at putting commissionaires in at PE Home to solve that problem, Mr. Chair? Question to the Minister of Health.

**Speaker:** Thank you, member.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Not that I'm aware of, Mr. Speaker.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Back to Beach Grove Home, we are losing staff. We're losing staff in these facilities that care so deeply about the residents in these facilities, and we're losing them to home care, and we can't keep going with this. You can order in \$52 million of travel nurses; it's not going to replace the hardworking staff that work every day, because this is what we're telling us. This is a problem.

Minister, something needs to be done because you're putting people in a facility where it's their home, and it's disrupting not only the staff;

it's creating violent situations in and amongst these sacred facilities, and something needs to be done.

Will the minister look at capacity issues for other people in different areas like Hillsborough and around the province? Because this isn't working for the staff, and it's not working for the residents.

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

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

I completely understand what the member is saying. I've talked to the head of the union. We've heard their concerns on this particular situation, which I think the hon. member is discussing.

But what I would also say is that I can't just take an individual and put them out on the street. There has to be somewhere for them to go. Could you imagine if we did that and the criticism we would face from the opposition, and rightfully so? We want to try and work through it, but we need some time. It's not a simple fix. Please just give us the time; we're trying to deal with it.

Thank you.

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

**G. McNeilly:** The minister needs to come and tour these facilities because he's talking about one person and I'm talking about a much larger issue than that. It's happening across the province. This is coming from staff that we're losing. They are working hard, and I want to thank all the hardworking staff in there. It takes somebody special to work in long-term care, and I realize, and I will do whatever I can for you. But violence is a real issue amongst the staff and it's causing them to burn out at an extraordinary rate.

Will you commit to touring our long-term care facilities from tip to tip to figure out what's going on? Because it's not working for people, and it's not working for the staff, minister.

**Speaker:** I would assume that's a question for the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness?

**G. McNeilly:** It's a question to you for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Thank you very much.

[Interjections]

**Speaker:** Thank you, member. Well done.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Yes, I'll certainly commit to touring all of the facilities, probably once we wrap up in here and spend less time in here and more time on the road meeting with the frontline staff and getting out and hearing their concerns.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, there was a report: last year, Health PEI spent more than almost \$40,000 on an outside review after concerns were raised by staff at Kings County Memorial Hospital. Staff spoke up. Taxpayers paid the bill. Islanders did not get a chance to see what was in that report. This government still keeps finding ways to hide this information from Islanders.

### **Kings County Memorial Hospital**

Question to the Minister of Health: Will you release the report with any necessary protections for personal information so Islanders can understand the concerns raised by frontline staff at KCMH?

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

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

I am certainly aware of the report. I think what I would say is that in that report that the consultant completed, they interviewed staff at the hospital. There would obviously be sensitive information in that report that probably wouldn't want to be shared publicly, to protect the staff.

From my understanding, the consultant will meet with the staff from the Kings County Memorial Hospital. I think this month, there are two times set for that. I actually think I'm going

to try and attend one of those meetings to hear those concerns firsthand.

But no, I'm not going to commit to releasing that report unredacted. I would think that there's sensitive information in there.

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

**G. McNeilly:** That's why I asked for you to release it redacted. Take out whatever necessary – I asked the Minister of Health to take out whatever (Indistinct) because this is happening across the board. Whether it's hospitals, long-term care, staff need to be heard, and their voices need to be heard, and that's what they're telling me. Their concerns might help solve the issues, but this government continues not to listen and hold information that's not beneficial for Islanders.

Minister, will you commit to releasing – taking whatever redactions out and releasing that report? Thank you.

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** I think, if I'm not wrong, Mr. Speaker, the report was released but very heavily redacted. I'm not sure what I could go back and change with that.

[10:40 a.m.]

What I would say is that the consultant is going to meet with all the staff at the KCMH to go through that report to hear their concerns firsthand. I've committed to attending those meetings to hear those concerns. We take it seriously. I think we've made great strides in trying to rebuild trust with the frontline staff within Health PEI. We value what their opinions are, and that's what I'm committed to.

Thank you.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Social Development and Seniors has acknowledged that requiring seniors to provide three months of bank statements was a violation to their privacy and stated that this practice would stop. But an elderly constituent

of mine reached out to me to say that she was asked just a few days ago to provide three months of bank statements in order to access support for hearing aids.

I have a question for the Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

### **Social programs (further)**

When you said that this would no longer be a requirement, were you meaning only for the seniors independence program? I assumed it was for all the programs.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, it was just for the seniors independence program.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, if it's a violation of privacy in one area, I would just follow the bouncy ball; it's a privacy issue in other areas.

Question to the Minister of Social Development and Seniors: Minister, will you commit to removing this invasion of privacy for people placing application, immediately, from all programs?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, income-tested programs require information that can feel very uncomfortable, but we fund at least \$131 million a year to Islanders. Tested requirements are necessary because we're dealing with public funds, and we have to have some requirements.

Our SI program, the program that the member is talking about, is a program based from \$500 a year to \$1,800 a year, so we put a regulation in there where seniors will sign a declaration. They certainly could be chosen to have a bank statement given at the end. If they're chosen to be investigated, they will still have to give their

bank statements. We just took it out from the top.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'll be back to that.

I've asked about a review of the thresholds used by government. Islanders continue saying that they don't qualify, yet Islanders are living on fixed incomes, and the cost of living is continuing to rise. We were told that some programs were actually underutilized in Social Development and Seniors last year, so the critical thinker in me would stop and ask: wait, why were they underutilized? I would want to know the barriers to this access.

So, question to the Minister of Social Development and Seniors: Minister, will you commit to a thorough review of the eligibility requirements for all programs to ensure they are delivering on the support many Islanders need but can't access?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we found out last week when I was on the floor during my budget debates with the accountant from our department, we do reviews on a regular basis – if not monthly, annually.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Minister of Education and Early Years said that I was acting like a politician, like that was a bad thing. Truly, I felt it was an odd thing to say. Not sure what being a politician means to the minister, but for me, I say I'm proud to be a politician. For me, it means representing my constituents, standing up for what they need, and standing up for the citizens of this province.

I will never apologize for fighting for what I believe to be true, and that includes standing up for the Acadian and Francophone families on PEI who are having the program cut – the one program, at a cost of \$57,000, that will allow them to give them the strategies and tools they need to help maintain their very language and culture.

#### **French language supports (further)**

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years. You stated that there was something else coming. "Stay tuned." Not sure what you could possibly do for less than \$57,000. So, again: Will you do the right thing and reinstate this program?

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

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

Just to add a little context to her "being a politician" statement: yes, she's a proud politician, but in this case, I think she's trying to score political points to the detriment of the system.

[10:45 a.m.]

As for the programming that she speaks of, we're still talking this through. We're not committing today to reinstating it, that's for sure, but the Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs and I are still talking this one through.

Thank you.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll say it again: as the critic responsible for Education and Early Years, call me a politician, call me what you want, but I will hold this government to account.

Yesterday the Minister of Education and Early Years finally acknowledged that early childhood education was part of the education continuum. That's a good thing. The Premier said there were no cuts to education. Clearly, he was referring to schools. But that's a good thing.

The Minister of Finance and Affordability confirmed that each department was asked to cut, probably a percentage. It's becoming increasingly clear that the early childhood sector is carrying if not all the cuts in this department, the majority of cuts.

### **Education and Early Years funding**

Question to the Minister of Education and Early Years: Did any other division within your department receive comparable cuts, and if so, what were they?

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

**Hon. R. Croucher:** I don't know how many times I have to get up and tell this member that the early years sector didn't get cut. In fact, it was increased by \$15.6 million this year – the largest increase in investment for a one-period in history. We're now sitting at \$101 million of investment, up from \$18 million when this government lost the House.

**Hon. R. Croucher:** Thank you.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Mr. Speaker, Islanders were told that the NHL deal would promote Island tourism, but government has yet to provide us with any direct evidence that this specific deal that has cost millions of dollars has accomplished any benefits for Islanders or our economy. The current arrangement is nearing its end.

### **Tourism contract with NHL**

My question to the Minister of Finance is simple: Minister, are you renewing the NHL deal?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the hon. member for the question.

I think we look at tourism, how it has grown, how it's rebounded over the last two years – \$1.8 million coming to PEI. The initial figures for this year – increasing once again.

I will be taking the budget on for the Department of Tourism here once we finish the other portion

of my department and look forward to having a discussion just on that matter that the hon. member has brought up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Mr. Speaker, I really don't understand the secrecy around this arrangement. After spending millions of dollars on this NHL arrangement while Islanders struggle with health care, housing, and affordability, people deserve transparency before government commits another cent.

It's a simple question. I'm going to go back to it again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: Are you renewing the NHL contract, and if so, will you table any renewal agreement and financial commitment related to that arrangement today, or are you going to keep Islanders in the dark continually?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

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

I think you look at the tourism strategy that we have in place, which includes marketing – we have to get the message out there of what a great place PEI is to come to. It's the best place on the face of the Earth.

You talk about education and health care, you look at the record investments that this government has put in right across the board, but we need revenues. We need tax generated to be able to pay for those programs as much as possible. I give full credit to the tremendous workers in the tourism industry, both in my department but more so in the public, for the great job they do.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** It's getting comical, Mr. Speaker. The government is embarrassed to answer the question of whether or not it's going to renew a simple contract.

Spend frivolously is what this government does so that ministers get perks like NHL games to meet their idols. Meanwhile, Islanders are left in

secrecy – non-disclosure agreements, unanswered questions.

Will the minister tell Islanders: Are you or are you not going to renew this agreement, and if so, how much taxpayers' money is going to continue to be put into this for another year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

[10:50 a.m.]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Mr. Speaker, all I can say to the hon. member is “shame” when he refers to the tourism industry as comical. To use that comment with regard to the hard workers in my department and in the tourism industry, to use that word, “comical” – to me, shame. Shame.

You look again at the strategy. As I had referenced before, that strategy – which the hon. member a few days ago knew nothing about although it's been posted on the website for some time – it is working. It is working for Islanders.

Just to finish up, yes, my budget will be on the floor, and I do look forward to a wholesome discussion on this.

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

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

In this House, we recently debated a piece of legislation called the *Government Reorganization Act*. It was needed because the names of several departments got changed. For example, Finance became Finance and Affordability. When I asked why the change was made, I was told that it's to signal just how important the issue of affordability is to this government.

The removal of a name, it would follow, suggests how little importance this government places on whatever that was; for example, climate change, which until a few weeks ago was part of a department title.

### Climate action

A question – on behalf of the youth who are in our gallery and David Attenborough, whose 100<sup>th</sup> birthday is today – to the Minister of Environment and Land: Is climate change still a

concern for this government, despite being chopped from your department's name?

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

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

Hon. member, we have a very strong team in the department who still is very focused on climate change. It's not in the name anymore, but I can guarantee you that it's definitely a focus within the department.

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

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks.

We constantly miss our mission targets, and this year's climate change report shows really clearly that we're not even going to get close to the 2030 and 2040 goals that we have. At the same time, this government is cutting a whopping \$40 million from the programs designed to reduce our carbon emissions like solar grants, electric vehicle rebates, and the heat pump program.

A question to the same minister: How can you stand up and claim that climate action is something that you and your government take seriously when you're axing the very programs that actually make a difference?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and Affordability.

**Hon. J. Burrridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Within there are strong insulation programs. We've made significant investments and lowered the GHG in Prince Edward Island significantly. This government's done more on that front than any other before – significant strides. We have very strong teams still working in there on climate action, working with the academic community, as well, and community organizations. Everyone's going to continue this work.

The incentives for solar panels and the incentives for heat pumps, sure, were rolled back, but we have made – we're going to continue to.... Anyone that's in those pipelines – there's still \$15 million in heat pumps that are still there to satisfy all the people in those pipelines. That was very clear that we're going to continue and honour those commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well, I don't think history will look kindly on those that fight climate action rather than fighting climate change.

Our children and our grandchildren are the ones who will suffer because of governments like this one who look to balance the books by making shortsighted cuts when what we need are long-term commitments.

To the same minister, the Minister of Land and Environment: How can you reassure our farmers, who are already facing massive costs as a result of climate change, and our fishers, who are being devastated by new invasive diseases, and indeed all Islanders that in abandoning our climate commitments, this government is actually acting responsibly?

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

**Hon. D. Compton:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, not in my department but in the Minister of Energy's department, there still is a sustainability focus there. In that focus, there is work and initiatives to lower GHGs. So, not in my department, per se, but in the minister's. We are sharing that load. We'll continue to share that load.

And yes, there are very tough decisions made for this budget, but we still have a focus on climate adaptation and what we can do to work through Energy and through me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

**T. DesRoches:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for energy.

[10:55 a.m.]

Minister, I constantly advocate for Summerside Electric, and today is no different with their

electricity rates tied to Maritime Electric's. Islanders are continuing to face affordability pressures, including rising electricity costs, while two major matters before IRAC remain unresolved.

One is Maritime Electric's request to recover a \$35.5 million shortfall in the ECAM balance. The other is a request to recover \$41.2 million spent repairing Hurricane Fiona damages. In both cases, the company is seeking approval on how these costs will be charged back to Islanders.

### Electricity rates (further)

Does the minister have an update, or have you been able to sit down with Summerside Electric to hear their concerns?

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

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

Actually, yes. Just earlier this week on Tuesday, the Premier and I had the opportunity to sit down with the mayor of Summerside, with the CAO, JP Desrosiers. We had a great discussion on issues of concern. They are great advocates, as the hon. member is, for residents in the city of Summerside. We had a very wholesome discussion. We are going to be working with the City of Summerside, addressing/moving forward on the concerns that they have brought forward.

Thank you.

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

**T. DesRoches:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Summerside residents will watch very tentatively on that because they've already paid for their own repairs with Hurricane Fiona.

Given that continued delays may increase the financial burden on ratepayers, particularly families already struggling with the cost of living, what steps is the government taking to ensure timely decisions by IRAC? All Islanders are facing higher electricity costs as a result of prolonged inaction.

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

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank the hon. member for the question. It's a great question.

My predecessor in this position – actually, back about a month ago, April 14<sup>th</sup> – sent a letter to IRAC basically addressing the very question/concerns that the hon. member has put forward. I'm certainly not going to go through all of the things that were.... But asking for a written report addressing the following matters: electricity rate-setting practices, statutory decision-making criteria, as well as regulatory considerations relevant to the potential future approaches.

As the current minister, I look forward to receiving that information back from IRAC in a timely manner.

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

**T. DesRoches:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This ongoing uncertainty makes it difficult for households and businesses to plan and raises concerns about sudden rate increases in the future. Can the minister indicate when Islanders can expect decisions on these matters and what impact they may have on electricity rates?

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

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

As I've said before, with regard to energy file and with regard to electricity, the two priorities that I have as minister are to make sure as much as possible that we have a reliable and affordable supply of energy. I think as I referenced in my answer to the previous question, I do look forward to the information being supplied back from IRAC, to be able to look at that and see how we best can move forward in conjunction with other stakeholders, and certainly one of those stakeholders being the City of Summerside.

Thank you.

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

**S. Dillon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my former role in the school system, I had the opportunity to learn about the Bog neighbourhood in Charlottetown. Understanding history and the contributions and the significant role that Black Islanders played in our province matters. It's important that all Island history is captured and told.

### **The Bog neighbourhood**

My question is to the Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism: Can you explain what initiatives related to the Bog neighbourhood in Charlottetown are helping Islanders and visitors to our province learn about the important chapter of our Island history?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank the hon. member for her advocacy on this matter.

[11:00 a.m.]

I do want to recognize Matthew McRae and his team for the work that they have done and the work that they continue to do. Back in February of 2025, the Black Cultural Society was provided an anti-racism grant focused exclusively on the Bog and on the tour, and we're continuing to move forward with initiatives with regard to the Bog.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, first supplementary.

**S. Dillon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recent years, there have been walking tours provided to schools, tourists, and all interested people on PEI to learn about the history of the Bog neighbourhood.

Question to the same minister: Will these tours continue to be offered to the interested groups, and is there a charge?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

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

Yes, the tours will be continuing this year. They'll be continuing next year. There's no fee/cost associated with those tours.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere, second supplementary.

**S. Dillon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding that there has been talk to establish a monument in the Bog neighbourhood to inform people of the contributions of Black Islanders in our province.

Question to the same minister: Do you have an update on this?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Rural Development and Tourism.

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

Actually, in April of this year, the concept with regard to the monument was put forward to the anti-racism table. As I understand it, there certainly was support there and that stakeholders had been involved in being consulted with, as is the City of Charlottetown. I also understand that a draft of what that monument will look like, if it hasn't been put in place, is being prepared for those consultations.

I am very optimistic that a monument will be in place within the next few months, I would hope.

Thank you.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Housing First strategy (further)**

Question to the Minister of Housing.

The Minister of Housing said in the Legislature that you're "all in on housing."

Can the minister explain what you meant by that when, last fall, the Housing First budget line was zero?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

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

This government has taken an all-in approach to housing. We are seeing lots of progress – historic housing starts, an increase in vacancy rates.... We have been all in.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Well, the first thing the minister did is he stood up and said – about his own housing project in his own district, about cancelling it – that "it happens." Then, last week, he just said we're taking a little bit of a pause on partnerships and we're hitting the reset button. Now we know that there's no money in the budget for Housing First.

Minister: How are you all in on Housing First or housing when you don't have any money in your budget?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

**Hon. K. Dollar:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the member is going. It's kind of a scattered question. We just opened up our Housing First units here in March. It's in the budget. We're not closing it down.

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

**G. McNeilly:** This government is more interested in masking a problem that's growing in Prince Edward Island.

I'm going to ask a question to the minister. Instead of building housing – and Housing First means that people have an option to get into housing first, minister – we see that this government puts a new budget line in the budget: \$700,000 for transportation.

Minister: Can you confirm that the \$700,000 is taxis from Charlottetown to Summerside?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Communities.

**Hon. K. Dollar:** I will have to come back with that, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty, final question.

**G. McNeilly:** Okay. Question to the Minister of Health.

[Interjections]

**G. McNeilly:** I can't take it anymore. I can't take any more of that.

The Minister of Health, last year, was running for the leadership. He once said to me he has 700-plus names on his registry for that. But we realize now that – we look at him, and since he's been in that chair, he's got 700-plus names that he added on the patient registry under his watch – 751.

### Patient registry

Minister: Can you confirm that you've added 751 names to the patient registry since you've been in that chair?

[11:05 a.m.]

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

**Hon. C. Deagle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I asked for that one.

Yes, I guess the hon. member is right. My record so far on the patient registry isn't good, but we're doing everything we can to reduce it. Our government has made, I think, record investments in health care. We have the new medical school at UPEI that will pump 20 doctors per year. We're building a new hospital in Kings County. We're building a new health centre to open in Summerside, probably next month. We're building schools everywhere.

The investments our government is making are record. The new physician services agreement – over \$100 million for physicians. Mental health campus beside the QEH – we've invested over \$500 million in mental health and addictions.

I remember the days when Wade MacLauchlan balanced the budget by not hiring doctors. I will not take any lessons from the Liberal Party.

### Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors.

### Family Violence Prevention Week

**Hon. B. Ramsay:** Well, I can't follow that, Mr. Speaker.

Next week, from May 11<sup>th</sup> to May 17<sup>th</sup>, is Family Violence Prevention Week. This important week is led by the Premier's action committee on family violence prevention, and this year's theme is "Supporting intergenerational resilience in our communities." This theme reminds us that strong, healthy communities begin with each one of us. Whether it's checking in on a neighbour, supporting the social and emotional learning of our children, or modelling healthy relationships, even small actions can make a big difference.

Throughout the week, communities and organizations across the province will be hosting events to promote family violence prevention, raise awareness, and share tools and resources for victims and bystanders alike.

Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, is Wear Purple Day. I encourage everyone in this Legislative Assembly and people across the province to wear purple as a show of solidarity with survivors and as a commitment to ending family violence. I also encourage Islanders to visit [stopfamilyviolence.pe.ca](http://stopfamilyviolence.pe.ca) to find resources and learn about events happening in their communities next week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for her statement and for all the work that is done on behalf of family violence prevention on PEI.

I, too, would like to recognize Family Violence Prevention Week. This week is an important time for us to reflect on the harm violence causes and to stand with those who've experienced violence in their homes and in their relationships.

I'd like to remind us that family violence is not rare, and it is not distant. Stats Can reported in 2024 that 289 victims reported to police, partner violence, out of 100,000 people. Behind every number is a person, is a family, is an impact.

Family violence can take many forms, and it is often hidden. This is why awareness matters, but awareness alone is not the answer; it needs to be matched by support, safety, and clear pathways to help. Protecting our children is critical.

I want to acknowledge community organizations, frontline workers, advocates, and volunteers who support survivors and families across PEI. Their work is both difficult and critical.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for everything.

**Speaker:** Member, you have about 45 seconds.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**K. Bernard:** Thank you.

Thank you, minister, for the announcement. We do have high rates of family violence in this province, and while I don't have much time, I would just like to remind – it does; our healthy communities do start with us checking in with people, being there, ensuring that organizations have the funds they need to do this work.

So, I would like to thank the Premier's action committee on family violence, Anderson House, Blooming House, and Chief Mary Bernard Shelter. I would also like to thank a new organization I've learned about called Shelter Movers, in which volunteers help women and people fleeing violence move and store their stuff.

[11:10 a.m.]

We all have a responsibility here. I look forward to attending events next week.

Thank you.

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

### **PreVenture Pilot Program**

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

I am pleased to rise today during National Mental Health Week to speak about how we are supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Island children and youth. We know that many young Islanders are dealing with stress, anxiety, and pressure at a young age.

We've also learned through the recent Compass student survey report that too often, alcohol, cannabis, or vaping become ways to cope. This affects not only students, but families, classrooms, and communities across the Island.

That is why our government is taking steps towards early action.

Today, I am proud to share that we are launching the PreVenture pilot program in several Island schools for grade 8 students, a key developmental stage when early support can make a big difference. The PreVenture program is an evidence-based prevention program that aims to promote mental health and prevent substance use among youth. Delivered through short, small-group sessions, it gives young people tools they can use to make safer choices and feel more confident before problems begin.

We know that this approach is working. Research shows us that students who take part are less likely to use alcohol, drugs, or vape, experience lower levels of anxiety and depression, and carry these benefits with them for years, into adulthood.

This pilot program will reach approximately 300 grade 8 students across English and French school boards, supporting existing staff who work in mental health and support student wellbeing and who will be trained as facilitators.

This is about helping young Islanders build resilience, confidence, and skills for life, and it is about reducing future harm by strengthening mental health early. I want to thank our partners across health, education, the school boards, Health PEI, and student well-being teams for working together to make this possible. When we support young people early, we help set them up for a healthier future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for that announcement. Again, Mental Health Week is an important week in Prince Edward Island. It's called "Come Together," and I hope this announcement – obviously, we don't much about this program. We do have some incredible young people here today. I would like more than anything else to ask them about what they think, and what they would think about what it was like in grade 8 and what a program would do for them – and our Pages, too, as well.

We have to consult with our young people too, and figure out – they have the answers; they’ve been through it. I would like the minister to consult with young people on how we can make this as efficient as possible, to make sure that – we can’t just look at what’s going to happen but what they’re going through at the time. Grade 8 is a tough year. It’s a good year to get this in place. But there are other things we need to do, as we come together in this facility, about moving forward.

I think the first one – and this government has struggled with that before – is listen to young people and listen to people that it affects and see what they have to say.

That’s all I have to say, but hopefully this program works. If it’s a small step or a big step, it is a step forward. I support the minister with this. A lot of work needs to be done, and hopefully they’ll have good success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Thank you to the minister for the statement. It’s no question that young people today are under considerable stressors with online social media issues and influences, access to drugs, and substance abuse. Anything that we can do to help with that is heading in the right direction.

Government needs to put money where its mouth is on this. It’s more than just to say and announce this. We need to follow through. We need to put the money into it. We need to get the measurables out of it and make sure it’s working. We haven’t seen that consistently applied by this government.

We see cuts to pedagogy supports, which feeds into helping getting young people off on the right foot. We see the mental health alliance – the programs and the projects and the non-profits funded through that alliance are being cut. What’s the influence going to be on young people and mental health for that?

I also want to give an acknowledgement to the Atlantic Summer Institute, who has been promoting for years now a Health in All Policies approach in mental health and wellbeing supports, including young people going forward.

I know that the government and all parties have met with the representatives for the Atlantic Summer Institute. We’ve heard what they have to say. It’s important. We need to move in that direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15 a.m.]

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a social media post that is not anonymous addressing ped support reductions in early childhood education, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter from the UPSE president asking government to restore support to staff in early years centres, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter confirming a 50 percent cut – that was sent to the centre, dated April 28<sup>th</sup> – of their ped support. I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Hillsborough Park.

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a second letter confirming a 50 percent cut to pedagogical support staff dated April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Minister of Education and Early Years.

**Hon. R. Croucher:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document that also is not anonymous, by a Liberal staffer and centre owner, with a link to a petition that is sent from [www.liberalpei.ca](http://www.liberalpei.ca). I spoke a little bit yesterday about political interference and manipulation. I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Development and Seniors, 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

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Hon. D. Compton:** Thank you.

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

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

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

Minister, do you have a stranger you’d like to bring on to the floor?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Yes please.

**Chair:** Shall it be granted? Granted.

Welcome back. Can you just please state your name and title for Hansard?

**Stephen Mutch:** Stephen Mutch, director of finance.

[11:20 a.m.]

**Chair:** For those following along, we are on page 82. We didn’t carry the section Seafood Services. Would you like me to re-read that or are we good just to have questions?

Good with questions? Okay.

The hon. Member from O’Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** Just on seafood services, I see the grants have been cut pretty significantly, but Versatile Management Group – seafood development initiatives, for last year – what exactly were they doing? That was the big chunk of that budget, \$106,000. I was not familiar with that one.

**Stephen Mutch:** Versatile Management Group are contracted to run all the PEI seafood social media channels and all of the content – so that could be the PEI seafood holiday campaign – development and delivery of PEI seafood industry profiles.

**Chair:** Excuse me for just a second. Members, can we just be mindful. It's one thing when one side gets going, but when both sides get going, I don't know where we're going. We're going nowhere good.

The floor is to the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** Who is Versatile Management Group. I just haven't heard of them; that's all. Are they an Island company or are they...?

**Stephen Mutch:** I'm not sure on that.

**R. Henderson:** The minister knows?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I don't. We can certainly bring that information back, though.

**R. Henderson:** Okay. Thanks.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

Welcome back to the floor on this.

Just carrying on with the grants, looking at the grants section here under this section in the big book, can you give us an overview of – was there a theme of the initiatives that were supported here, or how did the grants get determined that were issued? Page 2 of the big book.

**Stephen Mutch:** I believe a lot of these would be sort of ongoing, year by year. There's Versatile. There's the Food Island partnership, which is an ongoing support there. There is obviously support for PEI International Shellfish Festival. There are probably some contracts, and there's probably some application-based in there.

**M. MacFarlane:** Sure. Just further on that, do you anticipate any changes to the distribution of grants based on the challenges with the oyster industry right now? I mean, we've been supporting the Shellfish Festival for a long time. I hope that continues to support the industry, but do you foresee changes with that?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think I agree 100 percent with the hon. member when he states that we need to continue to support the industry. We will be continuing to support. The grants are

increased by about \$7,000 over what the budget estimate was last year.

I know the budget forecast is increased a fair bit, and as I understand, a fair portion of that was with regard to additional initiatives for mussel promotions over the year. If I recall correctly, information that I had seen was that our mussel markets were decreasing to some extent. We always want to be promoting Island product, whether it's mussels, oysters....

**M. MacFarlane:** Just further on that, minister, I don't know whether you addressed it in your response there, but last year there was funding for the PEI mussel and oyster market development promotion initiative. Is that moved to another section?

**Stephen Mutch:** I think that additional funding last year – there was a request from the Mussel Industry Council that came in, and because we did have some savings in other areas, we did agree to that ask. There was additional money over budget last year.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay, but not this year?

**Stephen Mutch:** It was a proposal that came in and we were able to fund it. Again, if it came forward this year, we'd have to determine the merit of that, I guess.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay. That's all I have on this section. Thanks.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

[11:25 a.m.]

I'm just looking at the position title of the climate action policy coordinator I'm wondering, is that position charged with just looking at policy or do they roll out projects, like project ideas and rollout?

**Stephen Mutch:** That position actually was within the policy section, but I could answer to say that it would support different initiatives across the department, you know what I mean? In all the sections.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. I'm sorry; I didn't realize that was in the former section, but could I ask

one more question about that? It's not a long question. Is that okay? Thank you.

Is there any funding that goes along for that position or is it just the position itself?

**Stephen Mutch:** There is just the position but there is a Cleaning Our Shoreline program, which is sort of a bigger program that that position specifically looks after.

**K. Bernard:** Maybe this is the wrong section, but I'm just looking at consultant services; there was nil. Would this be the section where the department might hire consulting services to look at the oyster industry or would that be under a different section?

**Stephen Mutch:** It would be under aquaculture if it's oysters specifically.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. I'm good, Chair. Thank you.

**Chair:** Total Seafood Services: 987,400

Shall it carry? Carried.

Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services

"Appropriations provided to support the commercial fishing industry through strategic research, science, and advocacy."

Administration: 7,100. Equipment: 3,300. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 64,200. Professional Services: 4,800. Salaries: 465,700. Travel and Training: 54,400. Grants: 150,400.

Total Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services: 749,900

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** Thanks, Madam Chair.

Just to look at the grants, once again, a cut to the grants to the marine fisheries regulation. The biggest grant in that is the future fisher program. As the minister is probably quite well aware, that program supports some of the interest payments that new fishers have in buying gears, and I think it provides some training and things of that nature.

Are you getting the sense that there's less demand for that particular program?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** No, certainly not. But I think when we look at that, the budget – and I'll ask

my stranger to jump in here if he so likes – historically, the amount was 133, 133, 139 for that. It's based on the historic amount that was paid out for that program.

**R. Henderson:** Okay. I guess the only point I'm going to make is that it seems like the lobster gears are only going up. I don't know if there's a greater interest and more fishers that are looking at entering the fishery, but I do think it's an important component of a successful long-term fishery, incorporating new fishers into the industry.

I just wonder if you're getting the sense that there are no new people wanting to get into the industry, or is it a case where you just have so much money and you're just allocating – last year was \$119,000, but...?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I agree 100 percent with the hon. member with regard to the importance of the future of the fishery. It was one of the groups shortly after I came into the department that I had the opportunity to meet with – just the enthusiasm there, the numbers there.

The other thing, member, that really jumped out to me are the number of new fishers who are women as well, which is very positive right across the board, I would say.

**R. Henderson:** Just a final question on the future fisher program. I believe we added the oyster industry. Is that under this section or is that under Aquaculture? I don't know if – I'm assuming there wouldn't be a whole lot of uptake on that now, but is that freeing up some money? Were there many oyster fishers under the future fisher program?

**Stephen Mutch:** That's under Aquaculture...

**R. Henderson:** Okay, sorry.

**Stephen Mutch:** ...when you get there, but there was no uptake last year.

**R. Henderson:** Thanks. That's it for me.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thanks, Chair.

[11:30 a.m.]

Just a general question given the section is responsible for strategic research, science, and

advocacy. I'd like to ask: What was accomplished by way of research and advocacy last year? The second follow-up would be: What's planned for the upcoming year?

**Stephen Mutch:** In this section, there is the lobster monitoring program. It's been running for 28 years, where staff go out on boats and collect data, work with the fishermen. On the advocacy piece, there are a lot of meetings that staff participate in across the Maritimes, advisory committees. Both of those, obviously, are going to continue into next year.

**M. MacFarlane:** Anything new or just a continuation of the previous years, which seems consistent, year over year?

**Stephen Mutch:** I think it's pretty consistent with what they do every year. It's been a really good relationship from what I understand with the lobster association.

**M. MacFarlane:** Any contribution from the feds on the lobster monitoring?

**Stephen Mutch:** None that I'm aware of, no.

**M. MacFarlane:** Does that research result in a publicly available report? Are there annual reports showing the results of that program? I guess the reason I'm asking is with the changing climate and the warming of the waters, the migration movement of lobster – it's pretty fundamental to our industry.

**Stephen Mutch:** I just see a note here. DFO does house all of the data collected, so there must be some type of partnership with the Fishermen's Association which I'm not aware of right now. But there is a presentation every year that's completed at the Fishermen's Association AGM. Everyone is very interested to see what happens every year because they do track male/female.... Just the regular data you would collect: where the lobsters are, growth, reproduction, all of that stuff.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay. I find this pretty critical, given the importance of the industry. I see the section as a whole is getting a bit of a reduction. I guess my question would be twofold: Can the section continue to deliver the same services with a bit of a deduction in the allocation, and how do we keep our mind and eyes open for other areas of research and advocacy and science that could be critical? I

don't know if you have a comment, minister or stranger.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I appreciate where you're going on this, member. It would be certainly under federal regulations under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but just a comment on your concerns, on your questions there.

With regard to, for example, the increase in the lobster carapace size, one thing that struck home with me in a presentation was when the lobster carapace size was increased, the number of eggs that are put out by female lobsters, it's just like on a curve like that. As the result of increasing the carapace size – and I know it did take time, but I think that we certainly saw it in LFA 25 a number of years ago that the catches had dropped substantially. Carapace size increased, and now there's a rebound.

**M. MacFarlane:** I guess you may have answered it in the – but the question I had asked previously is if there's a publicly available report. I'm sorry if you answered it and I missed that, further to the research done under the section.

**Stephen Mutch:** I'm not sure if it's public, but it definitely is presented to the members of the Fishermen's Association every year at their AGM.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** We can check into that, member, and if it is, bring the information back.

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

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

**R. Henderson:** Just to follow up a little more on your discussions on the carapace size, because I do somewhat agree with what you're saying. But you do know that there's a difference in carapace size between LFA 24 and LFA 25. Are you advocating with the industry as well as the minister, Joanne Thompson, about uniformity in carapace size in Prince Edward Island?

[11:35 a.m.]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** What I have stated there were the results of an increase in carapace size. If there was a request came from any of the LFAs, from the PEI Fishermen's Association, similar to the advocacy that I've put forward with regard

to, for example, small craft harbours, I would certainly be there for the industry as an advocate and will continue to be.

**R. Henderson:** I appreciate that. As a former minister, I understand the challenges that that sort of faces, but with your comments that it does really show a significant increase in the amount of lobster availability, you as Minister of Fisheries for PEI could see that there's a big economic advantage of more lobsters landed. I guess it's a matter of whether you, as minister, want to take a leadership role in trying to advocate and persuade the industry to be on the same page and have that uniformity of carapace size.

So, you're telling me that it's only going to be driven by the PEIFA; it's not going to be driven by the minister.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think that I previously answered that, but just as a follow-up, I want to hear from the boots on the ground, we'll call it; the fishers that are in the boats and what they are requesting, whether it's through an individual LFA or whether it is from the PEIFA. I want to work with them and will continue to.

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

Total Marine Fisheries and Seafood Services:  
1,737,300

Shall it carry? Carried.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture

"Appropriations provided to manage and support the sustainable development of both the aquaculture industry and the estuarial shellfish fisheries." Administration: 37,900. Equipment: 15,300. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 139,100. Professional Services: 244,700. Salaries: 882,800. Travel and Training: 58,700. Grants: 872,300.

Total Aquaculture: 2,250,800

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** I guess my first obvious note, noting on the grant side of it, is that you underspent your grants to an industry that's been really kind of somewhat having a lot of challenges here. How did that happen? What's

the explanation of why you didn't meet your budget targets? Not that I'm always advocating that you spend your money or overspend...

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Oh, yes, you are.

**R. Henderson:** ...but in this particular case, we do have quite an issue there. I would also say you, as minister, should be really trying to get all the money out to the industry that's possible. Can you give me an explanation as to why you underspent? By a significant amount, I might add.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think that it needs to be clear with regard to the funding that went out the door for mitigation programs – things along that line would be completely separate from this section, first of all.

Looking at the reduction, I can certainly understand the member's perspective, and I'll be honest, when I reviewed it, it was my first a question, too: How come?

But you look at it, one of the major savings – and I'll ask my stranger to jump in here at some point if he so likes. There was a substantial number of dollars that had been allocated for dredging. Now, I'm not sure of just the reason for that. As you know, dredging of harbours, of areas, is a federal responsibility.

There was also under – you had mentioned the future shellfisher program. That had dollars that had been in there in the budget in '25-26 that there was no uptake on.

**R. Henderson:** Fair point. I appreciate the explanation on that, but once again, the fact that you had money to spend, you could have maybe developed a – when I say "you," you understand what I'm saying, the minister. The minister could have developed new programs.

[11:40 a.m.]

Now, if I look at the grants section, you have "Oyster Processor – access dredging." We spent \$100,000 on dredging. Where was that located, and what was the oyster processor that we had to dredge for?

**Stephen Mutch:** I believe that was done – and I do have a note here someplace.

Bayview Channel. I'm not exactly sure where that is, but it was a contribution. The money we

had allocated really isn't hardly enough to even get a dredger in because it is very expensive, so we did contribute a little bit to a – Raspberry Point had contracted some dredging, and I think we did contribute to that project over a couple of years.

**R. Henderson:** Usually oyster leases, though, don't require a lot of dredging to get access to them, so I'm a little baffled to.... Was this some sort of a bullpen area where...? If I use the example of Malpeque Harbour, I mean, a lot of those Malpeque oyster boats come to Bideford, so there's a bullpen there that has to be dredged every now and then, and things of that nature.

So, that's something that we would be doing as a province – leading dredging for anything that would be aquaculture-related?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think with that, as the stranger has indicated and as I'm sure both the Leader of the Opposition and, member, yourself, as well, the cost of getting a dredge in like that would barely cover it. The long and the short, though: what I will do is bring back the information as to the reason that that was included and what the circumstances were around it.

**R. Henderson:** Yeah, because obviously you know the situation in Malpeque Harbour. There's been pretty well perpetual dredging there, but a lot of that dredging is based on the aquaculture industry, to get their boats, and that's why they're winding up going to Bideford. And then, of course, it takes some significant trucking to take the mussels around to where they're processing them at. Anyway, that's kind of an interesting point.

On the Shellfish Association, they get – there's a shellfish enhancement program. What are your thoughts moving forward on that? You spent \$126,000 last year, and there were a number of other contributions for organizational funding support.

Is that going to continue and is that going to increase? Because – here's what I'm getting at: although you haven't stated yet whether you're supportive of the importation of American seed, I'm told it is coming. Is the Shellfish Association going to get access to that seed? Is it going to be able to have the resources to multiply that seed out? Is that anywhere near enough money to develop that?

I know there are a lot of questions there, but maybe we could have a discussion regarding that whole issue and the funding that the Shellfish Association gets to do oyster enhancement.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Maybe we should go one question at a time.

**R. Henderson:** Okay.

If you want to go to the first one – if we said \$126,000, is that going to be enough money for the Shellfish Association moving forward, knowing that the biggest challenges that they've got in front of them with oyster mortality up mostly all over Prince Edward Island?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** It's one of the things – and I'm sure that the member knows probably better than myself about the importance of the beds themselves, for example. It's one of the things that the two departments that I have under me presently are working with, with regard to the identification of an area to store shells that ultimately can be moved back out onto the beds to enhance them, because as the member knows, you have to have that shell base there. You can't put seed just on sand as I understand it, or rock; it needs that shell base in order to have it placed and actually grow.

**R. Henderson:** So then the next question comes back to: Is the Shellfish Association going to get access to any of the seed that's imported here? Have you, as a minister, worked out any kind of an arrangement to make sure that they get access to some of that?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** With regard to the seed, I'm sure that what the member is referring to is seed coming in from the U.S. As I've said before, that is the CFIA; that's under their jurisdiction federally. They are the ones that do the risk assessment. I fully support it if the risk is shown.

[11:45 a.m.]

As I understand, it was Atlantic Aqua who had actually put the application in to CFIA to bring the seed in, and the seed most likely will be approved to come in. Again, as I understand, the Aquaculture Alliance will be involved in that as well.

**R. Henderson:** Well, you probably have seen the press release that was out today; the seed is coming in.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I have not.

**R. Henderson:** Okay. That somewhat surprises me, as the Minister of Fisheries for PEI, that you would not have been informed that this seed permission has been granted. I was also of the understanding that there would be no seed imported in Prince Edward Island until the Minister of Fisheries or the government of Prince Edward Island gave its blessing to allow it come in. I'm assuming that has already been done, has it not?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** That's an interesting comment/observation. I'd be extremely interested to know who has provided the hon. member with some of the things that he brings forward and has brought forward. As I've said, sometimes we have to question some of the accuracy of the information that the hon. member may have been given.

**R. Henderson:** I will argue that it's somewhat irrelevant whether or how I know some of this information, but it should be a very clear answer to the Minister of Fisheries that you're in support of or you have already provided an indication to the CFIA that you're willing to provide support to allow the importation of seed. You can throw it back on me, but it's either you did or you didn't.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** What it comes down to – and I think I've already answered that question, to be honest, Chair, with regard to the member knows that the application was made by Atlantic Aqua, that it goes to CFIA, that CFIA gives the permission one way or denies permission the other way for the company to bring it in.

**R. Henderson:** I would probably argue that there would be no province in Canada that would allow the federal government to do this without its jurisdictional support to do that.

Like I've said before, there's a reason why you're the Minister of Fisheries or somebody is the Minister of Fisheries. It's one of the biggest industries in Prince Edward Island. Yes, it's a very shared jurisdictional industry, but you have a role to play in whether you support it or you don't. If you have on record that you were against that, that's fine; I'm all for seeing that.

So, ultimately, did you provide that support to the federal government and CFIA to allow the importation of seed from the United States?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Chair, I believe that I've answered that two or three times now.

**Chair:** Okay.

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** Thanks, Chair.

To get back to the Shellfish Association, there was a number of indications of \$30,000 for organizational funding support. Is that going to continue? Once again, I would assume that industry is under significant duress right now, and uncertainty, and although they may not have the volume of oysters that's going to be marketed in Prince Edward Island and all those factors, I think there's probably more than ever a need for the organizational support to keep that industry – through these difficult times, to try to figure out where it's going to go.

Like I say, there was an announcement today by the federal government through ACOA and DFO to provide some oyster licence buyback and things of that nature. Are you going to continue those supports? Once again, there is a slight increase in the grant support. I want you to give some consideration to trying to give whatever access to resources that we can for that organization. And I'll also add in the Aquaculture Alliance, too – to try to help them get through this.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Absolutely, yes. You talk about the Aquaculture Alliance. You talk about the PEI Shellfish Association. We also have another player in the industry, the oyster processors. We have provided funding last year, and have provided funding again this year, for assistance. When I say assistance – in different ways, but certainly with regard to staffing there.

[11:50 a.m.]

I am very pleased, although I did not get the chance to take a look at what came through.

I guess there's a fair number of questions coming forward there and then right onto the floor, so I look forward to seeing the details with regard to federal programs and the assistance that has been put out. I'd like to think, in some small way, that our collective advocacy in public – and behind the scenes, I'm sure; I know that's happened – has resulted and contributed to that.

**R. Henderson:** Yeah, okay. Well, I do appreciate it. I know everybody's trying here, minister. Even in opposition, we're doing what we can to try to raise the awareness of the impacts that this oyster industry is going through, but when we look at the organizations – both the Shellfish Association and the Aquaculture Alliance – and the processors, it's been announced that there was a \$5.9 million contingency fund. You had mentioned that that's going to be allocated towards the oyster industry in general.

Are there any supports that you're going to do out of that \$5.9 million? When are you going to get access to that? And I'll go with the assumption that it'll be your department that determines where the resources get allocated, so where are you at with this \$5.9 million? Do you have any indication of where that's going to go?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** On that, I would have to answer: stay tuned in the near future.

**R. Henderson:** Thanks.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

Just on the subject of grants, continuing on. I didn't hear an answer in the previous line of questioning. Sorry if I missed it. It's quite a remarkable decrease from \$1.3 million last year, down to \$872,000. Can you explain why and what's going, what we're losing by way of grants?

**Chair:** I think we did ask that question.

**M. MacFarlane:** Did we?

**R. Henderson:** You're sharp, Chair.

**Chair:** I'm trying.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** I'll watch that back, but was there any consultation done with the industry on that decrease? A follow-up to that would be: Is there consultation with the industry on what is needed?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think that the answer that the stranger gave, with regard to your first question that had been answered previously, answers your first question here. With regard to consultation

with the industry going forward, there is continuous consultation, whether it's with the oyster processors, the Aquaculture Alliance, PEI Shellfish Association, PEI Fishermen's Association.... That consultation – there are always discussions going on, and feedback.

**M. MacFarlane:** The high-level overall look at the section – there's a decrease of a quarter million dollars for aquaculture. Maybe I missed that one, too, but why would we decrease this particular section at such a critical time for it?

**Stephen Mutch:** Part of that – he talked about the dredging, which was really an unused grant line that we've had for a few years. There was also some unused prior funding that was allocated for waste reduction initiatives which really hasn't been used, so if you see the underspend in last year, a lot of that was related to those dollars.

There wasn't really a reduction of direct aquaculture grants; it was unused funding from prior years. I will say, with that waste reduction funding, from that initial funding, we did develop the Cleaning Our Shoreline program. So, that is the main program that we developed from that, and the rest, we just haven't used it in the past few years.

**M. MacFarlane:** One section that is jumping up quite a bit is the administration side. What's the explanation for that bump?

**Stephen Mutch:** This division was – we did purchase a new aquaculture lab last year. Part of that budget increase is to cover some of the additional costs with that property.

[11:55 a.m.]

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay. I was going to ask about that. On the lab services, there's \$21,000 spent. Is that what you're referring to there, that line?

**Stephen Mutch:** No, the lab services in the big book, I guess, would be just regular testing, not MSX-related testing. This could be water testing if there was heavy rain or something, but the lab was an actual building that was purchased.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay, so that's where the administration is going to go, to the newly purchased lab which will do non-MSX/non-Dermo water testing?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah, it's just the regular things that the section has been doing for the past number of years. They have boats that they use, so they'll store boats there. All the staff will be in the one section. They can do their regular testing. I believe the MSX testing would be done elsewhere, not in that specific lab.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** With that, Chair, certainly if the member so likes, I'm sure that there's – it's varied. What we will do is bring back the information of the services, what is actually monitored/tested at the lab.

You had asked about the administration. The stranger is absolutely right; the administration dollar increase is associated with the lab, and as I understand, a certain portion of that increase is the property taxes.

**M. MacFarlane:** When we talk about the lab and the staffing of it, I don't see any material increase on the salaries lines. There are some people who have already been allocated into the lab, so there's no new hires for the lab?

**Stephen Mutch:** Correct. The staff has been a little bit spread out in various locations. This brings them all under one roof, so to speak, but there are no net new positions there.

**M. MacFarlane:** And on that note, no net new positions. Obviously, the department feels the section can operate with the staffing that it currently has. The positions are outlined in the book. Was there consideration given to how there could be benefits to the industry by increasing staff in certain positions?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think one of the things – and the stranger has alluded to – is that staff have been previously spread out. By bringing them together, there should be efficiencies that result from that.

**M. MacFarlane:** Bringing them together – they were spread out, but now they're under the same roof?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** That's correct.

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

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

Total Aquaculture: 2,250,800

Shall it carry? Carried.

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Rural and Regional Development

Rural and Regional Development

“Appropriations provided to support community organizations with the opportunity to develop initiatives that strengthen rural community life in PEI.” Administration: 26,900. Equipment: 3,200. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 64,400. Professional Services: 15,000. Salaries: 933,900. Travel and Training: 33,900. Grants: 7,510,000.

Total Rural and Regional Development:  
8,587,300

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** Obviously, you're cutting programs in rural communities. I thought you were the big advocate and champion for rural development.

[Interruption]

**R. Henderson:** Oh, there's somebody's – an emergency call coming in.

Can you give me some explanation as to why you're cutting a little more than \$1 million out of rural development grants?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Am I a champion for rural development? Absolutely. I think that the hon. member does know that, as I know he is as well, yes.

[12:00 p.m.]

With regard to the reduction in grants, there was a heat pump program for places of worship that was \$200,000. Then there was the reception resiliency program, which was \$1.25 million. Those were put in place over the last two- to three-year period, maybe even a bit longer than that, but there has been tremendous uptake on them.

Having said that, the majority of those – you look at reception centres, you look at places of worship where heat pumps were installed – it has for the most part fulfilled what the intent or what the requirement was there. With that, what I'll say is when you take those two out, it would have meant that if there had been no adjustment to the budget, instead of \$7.5 million, we would

have been a fair bit below the \$7.5 million that's showing here.

One thing too though, with those two programs – the heat pump program and the reception centre resiliency program, and again, the heat pump program for specific places of worship – that does not mean that under the regular rural growth initiative stream that they could not make application.

**R. Henderson:** So, I'm certainly not a big theologian, nor do I go to a ton of church services, but any that I do see, I don't see a lot of heat pumps in them, so my guess is that there probably is still a demand and need for that. But as I also understand, that was the only program that a church could apply for because it was specifically known for places of worship. So, when you go to the other rural growth initiative funds, churches are not eligible; it's only the halls if they're separate. You can correct me if I'm wrong in that.

So, I just kind of wonder if you've met all the demand that the churches or places of worship would have across Prince Edward Island, and if I'm wrong in saying that – churches will now be eligible for rural growth initiatives? Is that what you're saying?

**Stephen Mutch:** No, you're correct. The churches were just eligible under that specific program. That being said, the demand did really drop off last year, and I think the estimate was that they thought they covered 75 percent of the churches. With that demand dropping off, it has ended, so they wouldn't be eligible under the mainstream.

**R. Henderson:** Okay. I just wanted to clarify that.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

In professional services, there's just the one line. It's consultant services related to rural economic development. What was that for?

**Stephen Mutch:** That was work associated with the community space directory. So, that is where you can go online and you can search for – if you need a meeting space in a certain community with a kitchen and with X number of space, you can go online and find that. So, that was just work that we paid somebody to do to

update that: contact people and get updated contact information, if there have been any upgrades, that type of thing.

**M. MacFarlane:** So, that's an online tool that's active?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah, and there's a link from the government's main site, actually.

**M. MacFarlane:** A question I always ask – because there's quite a few grants in the section, and that's great. I guess the question I always ask and I always like to get the transparency around is how it gets communicated to potentially eligible applicants and how they get determined. I know it's a big question, but my goal here in the question is to make sure that the variety of organizations that could be eligible actually know and get their applications in within the timelines and meet the criteria.

**Stephen Mutch:** It's all application based. There are the community development officers; I believe there are five of them, at least, spread out across PEI, and it sounds like they have their ear to the ground and sort of know about the organizations. Certainly, if there are organizations that aren't aware, they could contact those development officers and I'm sure they'd be willing to sort of guide them through that process, but it is all application based.

[11:55 a.m.]

**M. MacFarlane:** One I had a specific question on is the northside windmill enhancement program. How many applicants applied under that program?

**Stephen Mutch:** I'm not sure if I have the exact number of applicants. I'd have to bring back the number of applicants, but it is for folks in that unincorporated area. Supporting business development is sort of the purpose of that fund. It would be private businesses or citizens that would apply for that program, that live in that area. Rural Development runs the program, but it is funded by funding through the Energy Corp.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay, because I note there's a Northside Windmill Enhancement Committee Inc. that received a small amount of \$2,400. But if you're bringing information back, my interest would be with respect to how many applicants and which ones were successful.

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah, we can do that.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

I was going through the grants and can't believe the diversity in the groups that are represented there. I'm wondering if you even have this: the total funding amount that's available for organizations.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Just for clarity, are you talking about the maximum amount that can be funded per application, member? I'm not completely clear, I'll be honest, on the question.

**K. Bernard:** You made me think of it on a new level. Two-part question: What is the top amount that an organization can get, and what's the total amount of funding available for you, through the department, to be able to give out to grants? What's your max? Where do you max out?

**Stephen Mutch:** Under the rural growth initiative specifically, it's \$7 million this year. It was around \$7.8 million last year. A few years ago, it was \$2.6 million, so it is quite a bit higher than it was.

Specific projects: Under the large-scale project line, it would be amounts of 50 percent up to \$2 million, and then smaller projects are 75 percent up to \$250,000. The vast majority of the projects are the small stream.

**K. Bernard:** The North Star Minor Hockey Association – I know that you said that this is application based. Could any minor hockey team apply for funding through this to get funding for – this one was for an awards night volunteer appreciation.

**Stephen Mutch:** I wouldn't know the specifics on that, but it would certainly have to be applied for and fit whatever criteria relates to the purposes of the program. I'd have to bring that back specifically – it's okay?

**K. Bernard:** I appreciate that, but that's okay. I was just curious because I thought that was a potentially dangerous door to open when we think of how many minor sports associations we have. Not that they're not important and I would love to see them be funded; just recognizing the times that we're in.

Transportation West – before I started looking through it, I was wondering.... Like I said, a diverse group, so, confused of why some of them were in there, but it makes more sense now. Transportation West – this is a project; it's not the only funding. Did this have to do with the announcement of the accessible transportation? Would you have that level of information?

**Stephen Mutch:** Is that the \$20,000 payment?

**K. Bernard:** Yeah.

**Stephen Mutch:** I do know that one was related to a specific project, which was strategic planning. We would have contributed. That was I think around trying to improve their revenues because, again, it does serve rural areas, in western PEI specifically.

[12:10 p.m.]

**K. Bernard:** I love that that's kind of getting some love because it's such an important service.

There's a whack of grants that are under Youth on Board. I'm wondering: Is that a specific program that's offered, or what does that mean? There's a lot of them.

**Stephen Mutch:** Youth on Board fits in with – a lot of those bigger projects are through rural growth, which is that \$7 million. There is a line for a not-for-profit community initiative, which is \$150,000 per year. Youth on Board is something that has been running for a while. It matches youth to volunteer boards to give them that board experience, and then there's some funding that the student actually gets as an honorarium for participating.

**K. Bernard:** Okay, thank you.

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

**S. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you both for being here.

I just want to scream from the rooftops how important the Rural and Regional Development division is, especially the rural growth initiative. Minister, I don't have to tell you how important it is to the areas, but for our district, for many, many years, it is a key, key, key fund – I think individually the most key fund for rural PEI

going. I want to thank you, and I want to thank this government and previous governments, for just continually increasing that. It's harder and harder to get matching dollars these days, but these funds are so important.

Your director, Amie MacDonald, and our community development officer, Chris Blaisdell – but I know right across the province – they do tremendous work, and they aid these volunteer organizations that have the people and the capacity but just don't always have that funding. Thank you for all your lobbying to get all the funding that you can for this department. I think it's incredibly important. I've been involved in these groups for many, many, many years. It's a godsend honestly. So, take that feedback back, please, to your department, to Cabinet. I can't speak enough about this fund, quite frankly, in our area, and I just want to thank you and end encourage you to do it.

The Youth on Board I also wanted to speak to as well. What a fantastic program in the Morell and Area Development Corporation, that I was president of until very recently. We had participated this year for the first time. What fantastic youth that we had, and the skills that they get and the training – and then the honorarium is wonderful too. I just wanted to point those two things out and thank you and that whole division for all the work they do.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I certainly thank the hon. member for the questions. As he is from a rural area of the province, I certainly do appreciate the tremendous importance of this program. I have to say that I am proud of our government for the increases that we've seen over the years. You look back to 2017-2018; the budget was about half a million dollars.

So, what we have been able to do with the increase in the budget, working with community partners – the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park referenced Transportation West, and that is just one example of such a fantastic service that we need in rural areas – Transportation East as well – all of these entities that benefit from a program like this. And as the member has said – I will certainly always fight for it.

Thank you.

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

**K. Bernard:** It's very interesting, and when I say diverse – for people who may be watching at home, there's everything from hockey tournaments to Pride PEI to ringette associations, to ATV clubs, to chamber of commerce.... It is very diverse.

A lot of the projects here are also – it says, "community capacity building," and then there are different things that come after it. Is the community capacity building a specific program that people apply for, or what is that?

[12:15 p.m.]

**Stephen Mutch:** There's the community revitalization, which is your bigger infrastructure projects, where community capacity would be increasing your organizational capacity. It could be more of a strategic plan piece or something along those lines.

**K. Bernard:** The Community Foundation of PEI – there is \$9,337, not a large amount, but that's for Vital Signs. Is that the only funding that Vital Signs gets from government, or would they potentially be under a different section? Do you know that?

**Stephen Mutch:** No, I would not know that.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. I'm noticing there are quite a few ATV clubs that are funded through these grants. Are they all having to do with the revitalization – the trails and clubhouse upgrades? Is that the bulk of what those funds are for?

**Stephen Mutch:** My understanding is that, yeah, that is the case. You can see there are quite a few on there. I believe they max out at \$75,000, anything ATV club-related.

**K. Bernard:** That was one of the things that surprised me was how many ATV clubs that I did see. Also, PEI lawn tractor racing was another one I hadn't heard of.

Another thing that really stood out to me was the Town of Three Rivers got \$100,000 for a playground. I know schools have to fundraise for their playgrounds, so is this specifically something that only municipalities can apply for, or would this be a potential stream for schools to apply to help get funding for playgrounds?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I guess, on that, what I would strongly suggest is – as the stranger has indicated, and the Member from Morell-Donagh as well: the tremendous staff – for any organization or group, certainly reach out, to work with the community development officers. I do give a shout-out to Amie Swallow MacDonald, the great work that she does, and all of the work that is done by staff – Ellen Rennie in the western part of the province.

I would encourage any organization or group or municipality that has a project that they feel could meet the criteria of rural growth initiatives to reach out; have that discussion.

**K. Bernard:** That's something that's very interesting – just apply and see what happens – especially the rural schools, given this is kind of a rural.... It's so much harder, given the socioeconomics. I know this isn't really relevant right now, but given the socioeconomics in different areas, it's hard for schools with high socioeconomics to raise that money. That's an interesting path.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Just on that, too, I think some of the initiatives through Education and Early Years with regard to playground equipment, things along that line as well.... it's always important for departments to work across lines, I guess I would have to say.

**K. Bernard:** I see here the Charlottetown Farmer's Market got some funding for heat pumps – unfortunately, can't use it right now. But I'm wondering if – farmer's markets in general, I was surprised; I kind of started to look for Summerside but recognized that we wouldn't be there yet. Is this the only funding from your department for farmer's markets, or is there another section where I might find that?

**Stephen Mutch:** Rural Growth would have given them some funding for those last year. I think they are currently in discussions for this year where they're going to support with some planning and costing scenarios on whatever route they're going to go.

[12:20 p.m.]

**K. Bernard:** I appreciate that. I've been kind of keeping up to date on the project, and I know it's pretty discouraging.

I think that's all that I have.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, and welcome back.

This might not actually be in this section, but because it's Rural Development and Tourism, I'll ask; if it's somewhere else, that's fine.

Are festivals provided any grants through any of these initiatives?

**Stephen Mutch:** What were you thinking?

**C. Simpson:** For example, there's a folk festival that's held every year in the Georgetown area: Cloggeroo. I'm wondering if this is an area where – is this someplace else?

**Stephen Mutch:** That grant would probably be under tourism; I believe you'll see that.

**C. Simpson:** Okay, thank you.

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

Total Rural and Regional Development:  
8,587,300

Shall it carry? Carried.

Sport, Recreation, and Physical Activity

Sport, Recreation, and Physical Activity

“Appropriations provided for development, implementation, delivery, and monitoring of programs and services in the areas of sport, recreation, and physical activity.”  
Administration: 8,800. Equipment: 4,100.  
Materials, Supplies, and Services: 6,000.  
Professional Services: 59,300. Salaries: 719,500.  
Travel and Training: 18,500. Grants: 3,640,800.

Total Sport, Recreation, and Physical Activity:  
4,457,000

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

There's a consulting fee of \$6,495. Can you tell us what that was spent on?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yes, I can. There were two payments there. One was for – we paid for website design for the Canada Games for Team

PEI. That was \$4,500, and then we also paid \$2,000 for equity, diversity and inclusion work that was completed by Chrysalis Human Rights Agency.

**M. MacFarlane:** When I look at the line for professional services, I see \$6,500 is forecasted to be spent. Is that directly connected, then, to that consulting...?

**Stephen Mutch:** Those were those two amounts, yeah, exactly.

**M. MacFarlane:** So, why was there a budgeted amount of \$59,300, and then that was the only spend, then we're budgeting back up to the exact same amount of \$59,300?

**Stephen Mutch:** In the past, that line has been used for contract positions; that could be for Canada Games preparation – that type of thing. We didn't spend very much last year on that obviously, as I noted. Going forward, we did keep that budget in place because of the combative sport act which just sort of passed. We may need to use some of that funding for a part-time commissioner depending on what that looks like going forward.

**M. MacFarlane:** So, this would be where a commissioner would be compensated? It would be through this section and through the professional services line?

**Stephen Mutch:** It could be; it just sort of depends how that's structured, whether or not it's a contract or if it's maybe a part-time staff member. It could show up in salaries, but that money – if it is a salaried position of some kind, we would move it to where it should be. But the money, for now, is just sitting in that one spot.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** It was referenced with regard to Canada Games; there is an upcoming Canada Winter Games next year. So, over this fiscal year, there will be potential work that will have to be done on that as well.

**M. MacFarlane:** It seems sort of speculative budgeting when there's not a really predetermined area for that spend to go. I mean, it's carrying the exact same number forward.

[12:25 p.m.]

I get the contemplation of the commissioner for the combative sports commission, but it seems like that could have been carried forward

without the concrete direction for that area to go in. Anyway, not a huge amount.

On the grants line, there is a bit of a decrease in the grants. Is there anything material that's being discontinued/reduced?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Under the grants, actually, Recreation PEI is going to see an increase of \$10,100; Sport PEI, increase of \$6,400. And then there's \$90,000, as I understand, miscellaneous grants reductions for the cost of the initial setup of Safe Sport. That is where you see the vast majority of that dropping off. Sport PEI will administer the universal Safe Sport program.

**Stephen Mutch:** The decrease is really just related to – we had \$290,000 in budget for that. As it was being developed, we weren't 100 percent sure of those costs. Now, as we get closer to that being put in place, we think \$200,000 is a better estimate of what it's going to cost going forward, so that drop is just reflecting a more accurate estimate of that contract.

**M. MacFarlane:** Sure. I think I caught the gist of the response that it's Safe Sport. Is there a line in the book that you can point me to from what it received last year?

**Stephen Mutch:** We did provide funding to Sport PEI, but it wasn't until March, so that's why you don't see it in the grants paid out.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay. Just picking one out that jumped out was the Special Olympics. There's only \$28,000 that I see going for Special Olympics, unless I'm missing another entry somewhere. But that's a pretty huge organization that does a lot of work year-round for families and in Island schools.

Am I missing funding or is that all that government provides to Special Olympics, is what I see – the \$28,000?

**Stephen Mutch:** Through the bilateral agreement, that is the portion that they're allocated. That's sort of based on the size of the organization. They would apply for that every year. There could be other funding for Special Olympics PEI; I'm just not exactly sure. I wouldn't be able to say 100 percent if it's in here or another department.

**M. MacFarlane:** Maybe, then – you mentioned the bilateral agreement on sport funding. It seems to me it's only forecast for \$488,300, but last year it was over \$1.1 million. There's less than half. Is that true and if so, why the decrease?

**Stephen Mutch:** Are you just looking at the Recreation PEI amount?

**M. MacFarlane:** I think that's the total amount.

**Stephen Mutch:** The bilateral agreement would be –

**M. MacFarlane:** Sorry, it is the Recreation PEI amount, but there's various within that that adds up to \$488,000.

**Stephen Mutch:** The bilateral agreement actually did – it is increased by \$10,000 this year. The total budget for bilateral is actually almost \$1.2 million. Recreation PEI was just one part of that, but it goes to a lot of other organizations.

[M. MacKay in the chair]

**M. MacFarlane:** Including, as you just mentioned, what the Special Olympics receives. That wouldn't be in that total. Baseball PEI Inc.... All of that gets added up to that \$1.2 million?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yes.

**M. MacFarlane:** One of this government's campaign promises going back a few years now, 2019 – it seems like a long time ago – was to commit to free swimming lessons for Island children. Was that funded? Because I see that the PEI Royal Lifesaving Society under a bilateral water safety program is getting \$77,700. Is that this government's contribution to what I assume is swimming lessons?

**Stephen Mutch:** I wouldn't have the details on that, but I could bring that back.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** We'll bring that back.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay, I guess just to be clear, what I'm interested in is if that's the government's contribution towards the swimming lessons. I don't believe we've ever gotten to the point where that commitment was fulfilled to offer the free swimming lessons across the province.

[12:30 p.m.]

I guess the next question would be the amounts for the amateur sport organizations determined. They vary from as low as under \$5,000 to more than \$30,000. Is that tied also to the bilateral agreement?

**Stephen Mutch:** Are those the lines where amateur sport bilateral is mentioned?

**M. MacFarlane:** It seems like that is consistent.

**Stephen Mutch:** It's really determined by the size of the organization, so you'll see – I believe Hockey PEI would have...

**M. MacFarlane:** \$32,000.

**Stephen Mutch:** ...the biggest one, I guess, or one of the bigger ones, and then baseball is a bit smaller. Soccer is a bit smaller than that. So, my understanding is that it's based on the overall size.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Thank you very much, Chair. Thanks a lot. I don't think I've asked any questions in this section yet, so I'm excited to do that.

When we're looking at this, my first question is when we were talking about the consultation, you mentioned that it was for equity. Was that for sports equity? Was there something that – what that was, and can we share the results of that?

**Stephen Mutch:** That was.... John Morrison – he's the director there – was working with Omar Broderick, who's the director with the Province. The purpose of that spend was to get some work completed on putting an EDI lens on sport governance, and then the sport division is going to work with provincial sport organizations to implement that in the different organizations.

**G. McNeilly:** I applaud that very, very good initiative by Omar and EDI. This is exactly why – well, he's the anti-racism coordinator. This is the type of thing that's important because sports – if we can educate people before a situation happens, whether it be on the baseball field or anywhere, we're taking good steps.

I know you probably don't have much information, minister, and I understand that, but I would like to see the findings of that, or whatever could be public. Is that something that you can maybe talk to your department about?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Absolutely. Yes, I agree 100 percent.

**G. McNeilly:** Thanks a lot. Best of luck as you continue with that. I would like to see some more money for evaluating it and seeing what the training component is. Excellent.

I'll just go to Safe Sport, too. I was listening along. That's going to be done in Sport PEI. I see Sport PEI had a – well, it says \$321,000, but that's only for 11 months. What will their allocation be for next year in here? I think plus-64 is what we said was Safe Sport, but what do you have for a number for allocation for Sport PEI's budget for next year?

**Stephen Mutch:** They would get funding through a few different lines. That would be the core funding that they get and there's a few other projects listed there. They also administer the KidSport program, so they would receive money for that. They also oversee funding – when we have a contract going forward – for the Safe Sport initiative. I believe \$200,000 is the rough figure right now we're going with.

**G. McNeilly:** Yeah, because in here, all we have is \$321,000. We talked about Safe Sport being plus-64. KidSport – the number in here is \$50,000. Is that the number that the Province is going to support Sport PEI to deliver KidSport next year or is that going up at all?

**Stephen Mutch:** Sorry, did you say \$50,000?

**G. McNeilly:** Yeah, in the budget book it says \$50,000. That was for, I would assume, last year. It was 11 months last year. The problem here is that I don't know what some of these staple organizations are going to get next year. So, \$50,000 for KidSport – is that number staying static or...?

**Stephen Mutch:** KidSport – we do provide them \$450,000 a year, actually. That may have just been a payment. We may have issued the rest. I'm not sure – I don't see the \$50,000.

**G. McNeilly:** Okay, under grants; it's on page FRDT-12.

**Stephen Mutch:** Oh, okay.

[12:35 p.m.]

**G. McNeilly:** And under Sport PEI, Sport PEI organizational sport core funding is \$126,300; sport capacity, \$50,000; coaching advisories, \$50,000; special projects, \$45,000; and management – I guess that's the management of KidSport.

**Stephen Mutch:** Yes, sorry.

**G. McNeilly:** So, are those numbers going to stay the same for next year?

**Stephen Mutch:** There might be a small increase there.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Sport PEI does increase; not a large amount, but \$6,400.

**G. McNeilly:** \$64,000?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** \$6,400.

**G. McNeilly:** That's not a whole lot. They're doing a lot, as the minister knows. They're doing a lot and it's getting more expensive to provide sports. Just to put a bunch of questions into one – I don't want to see parents who are struggling – whether it be Basketball PEI, Soccer PEI. They all work so hard, but their budgets are very tight.

So, is \$6,400 enough of an increase?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I guess I would say time will tell on that, but I think also you have to look – and I agree 100 percent, KidSport is a fantastic organization, fantastic programs. If you look at the initiatives or the changes that have been made with regard to KidSport, with regard to changes in the level of programming or assistance that's provided on a per child basis, and then the changes that were also made with regard to family income thresholds in order to qualify for assistance – I think that was about two or three years ago that those changes were made.

**G. McNeilly:** Yeah, and I appreciate that, I know things are tight. I just wanted to spend a little bit more time on recreational activity sports in particular, because in other parts – not in your budget, minister, but in other parts – we see some cutting in the health promotion field, so I appreciate that.

I'm going to talk about the line right above it, Recreation PEI Inc. Recreation is very important, and I like to see the number \$488,300 last year for 11 months. What's that number look like in this budget line for next year?

**Stephen Mutch:** So, Recreation PEI – and I should note, the Sport PEI contract is a three-year contract with those, so that's a contracted increase. Similar to Recreation PEI, there's a three-year contract which is ongoing this year. They both expire March 2027 and they have a built-in increase, so they're going to receive an extra \$10,000, which I think is a 2 percent increase every year is what they receive.

**G. McNeilly:** Okay, so we're in the middle year of that, so they'll be renegotiating. So, they get 2 percent more every year. That's good information and I appreciate that.

In a bilateral agreement on sport for Recreation PEI the core funding is only \$89,000. That's probably not even one FTE. Go!PEI is \$66,400, and they do a great job there. But I don't understand – the exercise programs for \$112,000. Can you give me a little bit more information on the exercise programs they provide?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yes, I can. I might just have to read this out.

It's the \$112,000, right?

**G. McNeilly:** Correct.

**Stephen Mutch:** So that is a free virtual educational program targeted towards Islanders with one of six chronic diseases: cancer, diabetes, COPD, cardiovascular disease, neuromuscular disease, and osteoarthritis. They receive prescreening assessments, goal setting, exercise tracking, education, evidence-based exercise prescriptions, evaluations, and a few other things; and Katie Beck is the program leader for that.

**G. McNeilly:** We've talked about that program before in the past. It's a good program. They've done a great job with that because that's where it's going. So, if people have those issues they can go and get into a sport group, and I think that's the way of the future.

[12:40 p.m.]

I want to thank the minister; your government has supported that program quite extensively over the years, so I'll be keeping an eye on that, and I think that's the way to go with health promotion. I just wanted to compliment Katie and everybody on that program. I'd like to see it continue and expand if we can and use what we've learned from that program to get more people active, especially after they face something chronic.

Thanks, minister.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

Just a quick jump off of what the Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty was saying in that program – that is a phenomenal program. When we consider the number of people living with those chronic health issues, what a great opportunity for them if they choose to engage. I think of my dad who lives with COPD and every time I see him, I'm asking him to – let's do chair yoga, dad, let's do something, but you know, that's one way that people can try to help themselves a little bit if that works for them. I think that's phenomenal.

I'm just wondering if you have any update – I know the Eliyahu Wellness Centre, the Rustico Arena, they had been facing something financial challenges. Would this be the section if there was any funding given to them or if you have an update on that?

**Stephen Mutch:** There's no funding that I'm aware of through here, no.

**K. Bernard:** Do you know, is that something – I don't know where that stands right now, but as of right now, government isn't involved in that? I'm assuming it would be through your department, maybe not? I don't know.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Certainly not in this section.

**K. Bernard:** This is another very important section. I mean, very focused, obviously, on sports teams or sports organizations. I'm wondering if you could give me kind of the same question I asked about the last one, that maximum number that you have to play with in order to support organizations. What's the max bucket number?

**Stephen Mutch:** I'm not sure if it's quite the same as far as if there's a max or not. Again, everything is application-based here every year. I think a lot of it is every year you sort of know what's coming in and John Morrison has been there for a long time. He knows all the organizations quite well. He knows what he has to work with. I think he forges the path for the year based on that.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. It sounds like that's not completely fluid, but maybe a little bit fluid based on the need.

Would this be something that – because I was just kind of looking through all the different ones – and I don't think I saw any school association sports teams. Again, is this something that a school, like let's say rugby school – I'm trying to think of what it would be called – not just specific schools, but kind of the umbrella of that – is it something that people would be able to access from the schools or is it community?

**Stephen Mutch:** I would think that would be through Department of Education. I don't it runs through sport here.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. I'm looking at the Lacrosse PEI funding. Lacrosse is a fairly new sport to me and my –

**R. Henderson:** It's Canada's national sport.

**K. Bernard:** I know, but I wasn't really involved in it until my nephew got heavily involved in it. I'm wondering if there's any specific funding if you know that youth support it. There's a new lacrosse team, the Island Oaks, a Junior B team. Would there have been any funding through your department for the startup of that?

**Stephen Mutch:** I don't know the answer to that.

**An Hon. Member:** Under 15 boys.

**K. Bernard:** No, I think it's U18. Okay, I'm good.

**Stephen Mutch:** I will say there could be specific event funding that they could apply for. I'm not exactly sure. There could be some – yeah, yeah, I'd only be speculating, but....

**K. Bernard:** Yeah, okay.

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

**C. Simpson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is great work. Thank you for all that we do here to support the young people and adults in terms of sport and wellness.

[12:45 p.m.]

I'm particularly drawn to the event – sport hosting Alysha Corrigan event – that happened. I want to highlight that the female sports that's highlighted within is fewer than you would see perhaps more male-dominated. Not that other sports and other grants that were provided don't include women as well, but I'm wondering if there's anything specific to promote girls and women in sport or sporting events and athletes – and particularly elite athletes. I couldn't see that if there was something just in that awareness and recognition.

**Stephen Mutch:** Sorry, did you mention elite athletes?

**C. Simpson:** Yes.

**Stephen Mutch:** There is funding for elite athletes.

**C. Simpson:** Just to clarify, what I'm wondering about: Is there something that promotes awareness for women and girls sports and promotes and supports our elite athletes – female elite athletes?

**Stephen Mutch:** I don't know. I'm not aware of anything specific towards that other than just in general elite athletes, male or female.

**C. Simpson:** Okay, I'm good.

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

**G. McNeilly:** Just a couple of things. The positions – I'm not sure if this was asked – but positions about the MMA, the position that we talked about, it's going to be in the department. Was it going to be showing up in this section, minister?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** (Indistinct)

**G. McNeilly:** So, it would be salaries, permanent positions, staff lists – is that where we anticipate it's going to...?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** For clarification, you're talking about the commissioner?

**G. McNeilly:** Yeah, the commissioner, but I thought there was going to be one position added to your department. Is that correct? No.

Is the commissioner going to be a staff member and will they show up here or is it going to be granted?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** We had I believe answered that previously in this section, but certainly you looked at professional services and I believe, stranger, that you had alluded to that.

**G. McNeilly:** Okay. We'll see when that comes up.

I just want to send a big shout-out to – the grants in here, I know the one-off grants in here are weighted. The PEI Amateur Basketball Association, they did a great job setting up the Buckets and Borders basketball facility in Charlottetown. That's incredible. We need more partnerships with that.

Where I kind of – talking with Josh Whitty, who does a great job there at Basketball PE – that was such a big project and it was so important that they could have used more support from the province is what I understand. Can we look at that or is there an annual maintenance for that or is the province – it that a one-time, the \$1,500 contribution to that – is that a one-time or is there any maintenance we're going to come up with for that project?

**Stephen Mutch:** Again, it would be looked at year to year. I would suggest if you required more maybe talk to one of the support officers or talk to John and see – put an application in. I'm not sure on the parameters of each specific grant program.

**G. McNeilly:** Yeah, and it's hard. I'm glad that the Province is there and receptive to the – you must get a ton of requests, unbelievable. But we have a ton of needs in our province for developments like that and we're going to see that pay off in spades – Buckets to Boards, thanks for choosing PEI to come in. I appreciate that. I'd love to see the Province come in with

more money because that's a big project that will get a lot of people active.

Thank you, member.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Just a couple of quick. I know I stepped out for a bit, but the Sport Law Inc., was that discussed because I have a question as the \$4,060 for Sport Law Inc., if there was a description of what that was.

**Stephen Mutch:** What page is that on?

**M. MacFarlane:** It's on 16 at the very, very top of the big book.

**Stephen Mutch:** That was actually to do – it says professional fees – it was to do with the Safe Sport program. That was just an invoice that the department paid on behalf of Sport PEI. That's why it shows up there, but it would have, in a regular year, we would give them the grant, like Sport PEI, and they would pay that invoice. For whatever reason, we've paid that invoice, but it is to do with the development of the Safe Sport universal code of conduct mechanism.

**M. MacFarlane:** Is that a non-profit legal organization here on Prince Edward Island? I've just never heard of it.

**Stephen Mutch:** They're not PEI. I think they're – I'm not sure exactly where they are, but I think it's more of a national piece that they deal with that type of specific sport law piece. They're helping out with the development of the Safe Sport.

[12:50 p.m.]

**M. MacFarlane:** The only other one that jumped out at me – I had presumed that the eligibility requirements, you'd have to be an organization of some sort, either incorporated or unincorporated. But I see there is an individual's name on here who received money for development and growth of a wrestling project. These grants are available to individuals and not just to – again, looking at page 16. –

**Stephen Mutch:** It would appear – it's possible. It could be that he received the payment, but it could be on behalf of an organization, which is possible as well. I'd have to look at that specific one and bring it back.

**M. MacFarlane:** Would that be normal for an individual to get a payment on behalf of an organization? It just jumped out as the only one here where there's an individual receiving funding, whereas they're all organizations otherwise.

**Stephen Mutch:** It's a good question. I'd have to look into that though and bring it back, which I could.

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

Total Sport, Recreation, and Physical Activity:  
4,457,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Cultural History and Heritage

"Appropriations provided for the assurance that sites on Prince Edward Island are identified and valued for their cultural, historic, archaeological, paleontological, prehistoric, or natural importance." Administration: 6,500. Equipment: 4,400. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 8,300. Professional Services: 22,000. Salaries: 202,700. Travel and Training: 12,900. Grants: 100,000.

Total Cultural History and Heritage: 356,800

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

It's not a huge section, but there is a decrease on the grants side. I'm wondering what's being reduced.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** When you say a decrease on the grants side as compared to the budget estimate, when you look at the budget forecast, there's actually a \$4,000 increase there.

So, heritage grant budget – yes, \$100,000 –

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah. I can just add in – that does show up as a reduction, but what happened was this section was transferred from Innovation PEI or another department last year. When that transfer happened, all of it – because it was late in the process, it got all lumped into the grant line, when reality was \$100,000 should have been the grant line.

All we've done is readjusted. You'll see some of the other lines have gone up. We've just moved the budget to where it should have been when it

came over initially. The budget has always been \$100,000 for heritage grants.

**M. MacFarlane:** There's that word again. I think the chair stumbled on it – paleontological services, the \$10,000. This year, we have \$22,000 budgeted for the professional services. Is that going to bump up the paleontology services, or what's contemplated in professional services?

**Stephen Mutch:** I believe the contract is the same for paleontology. There's a person on contract. There's also budget – we talked about the budget that all got lumped into the grant line. Part of that budget was for a heritage consultant, which we don't always use but have a line on if we have to use them, and then there's some additional consulting.

Again, because this section is so – there are some specialists required depending on what's found at certain points.

**M. MacFarlane:** Are those locally sourced professionals?

**Stephen Mutch:** I'm not exactly sure where the paleontologists are from. I believe it's the Maritimes. The heritage consultant, I believe, is from PEI – when she's used.

**M. MacFarlane:** Looking at the Travel and Training lines – almost doubled. What's it contemplated there for – is it travel, or training, or both?

[12:55 p.m.]

**Stephen Mutch:** Again, we talked about the money that should have been in certain spots. That was part of it. There's Canadian archaeology meetings, and there's also FPT meetings, and there's also some training in that section. So, really, that's just adjusting the budget to what it should have been originally, so we did increase that to reflect expected costs.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Just an addition: As I understand, under the Grants portion of that, should have been moved to that section.

**M. MacFarlane:** Just a general question, we always seem to have travel and training on the same line; to me they're two distinct things. Has that ever been contemplated – to move them to separate lines to better identify how much is being spent on departmental travel, and how

much is being spent on training and upgrading to staff?

**Stephen Mutch:** I believe that would just be the public accounting standards. So, we have them separated by travel and training and there's more specifics, but for the purposes – the way it gets rolled out, for what you folks see, is it is all in one section and that is dictated by the accounting standards.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you for that, just came into my mind as I was looking at it. Always good to have more information.

How many sites fall under this division when we talk about cultural, historical, archaeological, paleontological, prehistoric, natural importance...? There's a lot of areas covered there.

**Stephen Mutch:** So, the archeologist here, he does have a database of sites. It's not public for – main reason is so people don't go and try and dig up stuff, I guess. I wouldn't have the number of sites, but it would be significant.

**M. MacFarlane:** So, I think in your answer there, you were kind of referring to prehistoric or archeological or paleontological, but then we also have cultural, and historic, and natural importance. So, I certainly take your point of going and digging up stuff, but is there a database publicly perhaps of sites that wouldn't be perhaps subject to damage by traffic?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** The Province does have an online site of all heritage sites, and as I understand, artifacts, too, for example, would be stored at the collection facility.

As I understand too, the federal site though is being discontinued; the provincial one definitely will not be. And just as a follow up to that, I did write the federal minister responsible which is voicing concern that the federal site is coming down.

**M. MacFarlane:** Sorry, I just may not have heard you correctly, you've made your concerns known to the federal...did I hear you say that minister? You've communicated concerns to the federal minister?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Yes.

**M. MacFarlane:** Alright, thank you for that.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

It's funny, I wrote down "Paleontologist?" before I saw that line, because I was wondering if there's anymore – there's not a huge bump in funding here – but wondering if the fact that people are finding so many fossils in PEI right now, which is crazy, but wondering if that has given –

[Interjections]

**K. Bernard:** And I didn't say that to make fun of you.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Why is everyone in here chuckling?

**K. Bernard:** [Laughter]. I'm just wondering if there's any new projects or any new position, or any new funding that's been added into the budget given that kind of new-ish – it's new to me anyway; maybe it's not so new – but given that information?

**Stephen Mutch:** The budget actually did increase slightly for that contract, I think it was last year. I would say it was probably in relation to the increased number of fossils. I believe this year it's just going to stay the same, but it's something that he's on contract. So, if demand for that service goes up, then the contract may have to follow. But as of right now, it's going to stay the same.

**K. Bernard:** Would this be the section to ask about funding for the structure that we were discussing this morning on the Bog? Or would that be a later section?

**Stephen Mutch:** It's either this one or the next; probably the next one.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I would say, it's more likely under the next one; Museum Heritage Foundation.

**K. Bernard:** And I also wanted to talk a little bit about, I forget what's it's called, but the announcement that you had made the other night, minister, at that event that we were at. I forget what it was.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Okay, that was the Museum and Heritage Foundation AGM. That's right, and that's under capital.

**K. Bernard:** That's right. Okay, thank you. I think that's it.

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

**R. Henderson:** Thanks.

I just wanted to bring up, I guess, the PEI Shellfish Museum. I'm not trying to indicate anything where the oyster industry is going by any means, but I do know that they could probably use some upgrades there. I'm just wondering if there's something that maybe your department could reach out to the Shellfish Museum and sort of see what can be done and if there could possibly be an expansion to the museum from – I think they have some temporary plans, I guess, to try to expand the facility and things of that nature.

Would you be willing to have your department reach out to the PEI Shellfish Museum in Bideford and see what could be done? Because I think there may be a job creation opportunity there and it might be very timely and appreciated by that organization.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Certainly, I wonder though, to be honest, member, if it wouldn't be more appropriate under rural growth initiative. But having said that, absolutely, to have that reach-out made.

**R. Henderson:** Okay, thanks, Chair. Thanks, minister.

[S. Dillon in the chair]

**Chair:** Look at that.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Cultural History and Heritage: 356,800

Shall it carry? Carried.

PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation

PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation

“Appropriations provided for the study, collection, preservation, interpretation, and protection of the human and natural heritage of

the Province; operation of six historic heritage sites and a National Exhibition Centre; and production of the Island Magazine.” Materials, Supplies, and Services: 3,800. Salaries: 1,826,500. Travel and Training: 600. Grants: 435,300.

Total PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation: 2,266,200

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**R. Henderson:** It flows off the tongue quite nicely, doesn't it, Chair?

[Laughter]

**R. Henderson:** Anyhow, I guess, being a former minister of heritage and the former chair that sitting there was Kensington-Malpeque, there's been long litany of ministers that have identified support for a provincial museum.

I'm just curious to where this minister would stand on the creation and development of a provincial museum because I really am impressed with our Museum and Heritage Foundation and our sites across the Island, but I do feel that it needs something to kind of bring it all together and also something that can talk a little more about our natural history as a province and an island. There would be an opportunity, but I'd just like to get your points of view, whether this is something that you're advocating for within your government or not.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Well, first of all, I would want to say a real shout-out to Matthew McRae and all of the staff there for the tremendous work that they do. One of the things – one of the first places that I toured after coming into the ministry here was the holding, I guess – I can't remember or recall the exact – the collections facility....

**R. Henderson:** I went through that place myself.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** ...which is what the member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park referred there, that is under capital. There's no doubt that we need a new collections facility. The capital budget for that was increased.

Would I support it? Absolutely, I would. Are we in economic times right now that we don't have challenges right across the board? Unfortunately, we are.

[1:05 p.m.]

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

**K. Bernard:** Just a couple of questions.

Looking at the list of positions and seeing site managers for the various locations, where would we find the funding for the summer? I'm assuming they hire more staff in the summer – the tour guides and stuff like that. Would that be within your department? Is that a special program, or what is that?

**Stephen Mutch:** Those are through the foundation itself. These would be the permanent staff that are employed by the Province, and they do work at those sites, but the foundation is a separate Crown corporation and they obviously have admission revenue. They receive other grant funding. There could be wage subsidies from federal departments. They would hire those students themselves; that's why it's not really included here.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. And there aren't a whole lot of grants under this section, but what would people apply for under this section, for grants?

**Stephen Mutch:** Actually, a majority of that is the break-even grant that we give to the foundation. They have their own sources of revenue, we pay for staff members listed, and then we would just give them the amount they needed to get to a net zero bottom line is what, mostly, that is.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. I'm good.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Just again on the grants. It's interesting; it looks like the budgeted amount for this year on the grants line is exactly what was taken up or forecasted to be taken up, and you've carried that number over for go-forward. But why was the full grant estimate from last year not taken up?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I do believe – it was under grants, but it's related to a reduction in a digitization grant, and that amount was reallocated to salaries as a coordinator and a photographer position, which are now permanent positions, I believe.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay, so the recipients who benefitted from the grants last year – if they were to reapply, you're saying, minister, there would be no diminished funding available for what they might be looking for to continue their operations?

**Stephen Mutch:** Actually, it was a grant paid to the foundation. So, we would have given them money and they would have hired a photographer and a digitization coordinator. But now, if you look in the position listing, they're actually positions that we actually pay for. We don't have to give them funding anymore, if that makes sense.

**M. MacFarlane:** I think we're getting to the answer to my next question, which is on the increase in the salaries line. That's where that money has gone? Okay.

That's all I had. Thank you, Chair.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

I forgot. I asked about it in the last section and forgot to ask about this one – a little bit more detail on the Bog structure that will be the memorial structure. Is there funding attached to that yet, or what does that look like?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** That's a great question. I guess, like in response to the questions earlier today, certainly, the consultation is going on and the tours are going to continue this year. This would be, though, under, as I understand it, the Museum and Heritage Foundation. It would be under more of a capital expenditure for any type of a monument such as that, rather than under operational.

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah, that would be accurate.

**K. Bernard:** Okay. And just a comment: this is something that I think we've been talking about for seven years. Since I've been elected, we started talking about this. Every time I ask about it, we seem to be on consultation, so, my goodness.

**Chair:** A minister of action.

[Laughter]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** What I'm taking about, Charlottetown-Victoria Park, is: let's get it done.

**K. Bernard:** Yes.

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

**H. MacLennan:** Thank you, Chair.

I notice the Site Manager – Green Park/Yeo House. Under this section – is the upkeep and maintenance to the building and the structures under this one?

[1:10 p.m.]

**Stephen Mutch:** The funding for that type of thing would be through the actual foundation itself. We don't have budget here for the maintenance supplies and repairs.

**H. MacLennan:** So, it goes under...?

**Stephen Mutch:** PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation is an actual separate Crown corporation which would – generates its own revenue from fundraising or admissions to its sites, that kind of thing. They sort of pay for their repairs. It's through the separate Crown.

**H. MacLennan:** Okay. I'm good.

**Chair:** I just wanted to have one comment, if that's okay.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Sure.

**Chair:** I've spent many years attending Orwell Corner and I believe that that's in this section as well. They do such an incredible job with the youth, the students in our communities. Every time I go to meet with the blacksmith, he teaches me something more.

I just want to give a huge shout-out to Jason MacNeil, who also introduced us to The Bog and does the walking tours down there. He is incredible. He is such a wealth of information. We are so lucky to have him as a person who educates all of us on the history of PEI. I just want to say thank you. I am excited to see that this budget keep going. I am excited to hear about the walks, and I certainly am appreciative of Jason MacNeil's efforts at Orwell Corner.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I'll pass that along.

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

Total PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation:  
2,266,200

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Department of Fisheries Rural  
Development and Tourism: 20,630,500

Shall it carry? Carried.

Moving right along, we're heading on to page 87 for those of you that are following along in the book.

Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Could we take a break for three or four minutes, please?

**Chair:** We certainly can.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Seventh inning stretch.

**Chair:** We'll call for about a five-minute break.

[The Legislature recessed from 1:12 p.m. to 1:17 p.m.]

**Chair:** We're now onto Tourism PEI, page 87.

Corporate Services

General Administration

"Appropriations provided for the administration of the corporation." Administration: 13,400. Debt: 2,000. Equipment: 19,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 26,500. Professional Services: 21,000. Salaries: 333,100. Travel and Training: 25,000.

Total Generation Administration: 440,000

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** Since we're at the start of this section, minister, just so you could point me to where I can ask these questions, where would we find appropriations for Confederation Trail? It may be not even in this department.

**Stephen Mutch:** I think transportation looks after the maintenance for Confederation Trail.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** You're right. It would be under TIE – Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**M. MacFarlane:** Just further to that, though, it is a bit of a tourist attraction. Again, general questions here, Chair, if you'll indulge me as I get my feet under me. Would there be anything within this department to support tourism related activities with respect to the Confederation Trail? I see Island Trails, so I was wondering about the Confederation Trail.

**Stephen Mutch:** The only thing I know of is that through the capital budget, there was some investments made through tourism on some interactive signage where you could scan a QR code and, depending on where you were at, you could get nearby restaurants or places to stay.

As far as operations, I don't remember seeing anything about that within the budget.

**M. MacFarlane:** Further to the questions I had this morning on a particular sponsorship package, what section would we find that in?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Advertising and Public Relations.

[1:20 p.m.]

**M. MacFarlane:** So, there would be nothing in the Corporate Services: General Administration section that would touch on that particular sponsorship arrangement?

**Stephen Mutch:** I don't believe so, no.

**M. MacFarlane:** So then, specific to this section on travel and training, it is contemplated that there will be less travel by a small margin. When we look at where travel was spent in the last fiscal year, it is contemplated that there will be a little bit less for this section on the travel side.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** That's correct.

**M. MacFarlane:** That's all I had for this section, Chair.

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

Total Corporate Services: 440,000

Shall it carry? Carried.

Operations and Industry Investment

Administration

"Appropriations provided for the development and administration of industry funding and product development programs."  
Administration: 2,200. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 1,600. Professional Services: 5,000. Salaries: 318,500. Travel and Training: 15,000. Grants: 4,137,700.

Total Administration: 4,480,000

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** Just on the grants line, looks like \$500,000 to \$600,000 less available for grants this coming year. Could you speak a little bit to that?

**Stephen Mutch:** Within that line, there is the innovation fund grants. They were reduced down by \$350,000. Then there are some seasonal extension grants that are given to six different regional RTAs, or regional tourism associations, I believe they are. That's \$150,000 decrease overall for that as well.

**M. MacFarlane:** You mentioned seasonal extension grants were decreased.

**Stephen Mutch:** Yes. There are six different associations that would have gotten grants. I think it was up to \$75,000. They're now reduced to \$50,000.

**M. MacFarlane:** I'm curious about that, minister, if you might comments on why we would look at that when we've talked in here a lot about how our shoulder seasons are expanding. With climate change, we're having warmer falls. We see various private business enterprises like the Sommo Festival trying to get into a shoulder season. Why would we be looking at reducing seasonal extension grants?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** That's an excellent question, absolutely. You look, tourism has been successful in broadening the shoulder seasons, I do believe. But there are in other sections, though, where you will see increased funding that addresses that as well.

**M. MacFarlane:** Okay. What was this funding expected to return? You mentioned there were six organizations. They must obviously feel an impact if those funds aren't there. They must

have been doing something with that money to further and promote extension and **results** of our tourism seasons.

**Stephen Mutch:** I understand those six group were – it's sort of been communicated with them the reduction in the grants. They are aware. They still feel like they can administer – we give them the funding and then they would administer the grants to groups in their areas to do extension projects. They feel like they've received a lot of money over the past few years and can do some significant work with the \$50,000.

[1:25 p.m.]

**M. MacFarlane:** Just to finish that off, you had mentioned the innovation fund was the other one that was cut. Can you explain a little bit what that could mean in practical terms?

**Stephen Mutch:** The innovation fund, that's sort of the major grant line within this section. It's still a \$2 million pot for that. The feeling there is that we can still really almost better target projects that fit the tourism strategy more specifically, and it's still obviously a significant amount of funding to go towards that.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm just learning from going through the budget that the Scotties are coming in 2027. That's very exciting. Good news for the province.

As I'm going through the grants, I'm seeing a lot of repeats in terms of organizations who have received grants in other areas. I'm not suggesting that's a bad thing necessarily; I'm just wondering if that's something that departments follow and kind of keep track of in terms of who's getting what funding. Is that something that you do for administrative purposes?

**Stephen Mutch:** That would be folks applying in tourism, and then, say, in sport for the same project?

There would be some work done across departments to make sure that we're not double funding something. There are some of these grants here that you may see in the sport grants section for example. There could be some

projects where they both contribute money because it could be a sporting event that's coming here that's going to attract a lot of people. There are some joint projects like that, so that may be some of the ones that you see in both.

**K. Bernard:** Are these grants that...? Because I'm noticing things like, you know, the Shellfish Festival and the Busker Festival, the Jack Frost, the Cloggeroo – those are things that happen every year. So, are some of these grants repeated or is this application based as well?

**Stephen Mutch:** It's applications every year.

**K. Bernard:** I'm looking down at the 2025-2026 seasonal extension tourism product development fund I'm assuming that is to extend the tourism season just beyond the summer months, or am I wrong on that?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah, and that was the amount I was speaking about earlier where we give each of those associations or the groups the \$75,000, and then they would accept project proposals from people or entities or groups within their region to specifically extend the tourism season – you know, fall, winter, whatever – that fits within the tourism strategy.

**K. Bernard:** So, would these be projects or would this be more salary, or both?

**Stephen Mutch:** We wouldn't quite know the specifics because we just provide them the funding and then they administer it. So, whatever projects they would get in – it could be a mix of both, I suppose.

**K. Bernard:** I'm just making sure I didn't think these went to the next page, but it looks like they do. Out of curiosity, there's something called the beach program, and it says various recipients for \$29,804. What is that?

**Stephen Mutch:** That would be non-provincially owned beaches that organizations could apply, and it would be a nonrepayable grant for upgrading infrastructure of public beaches to enhance the user's experience and safety. The maximum grant there is \$5,000. So, I think it's different organizations or maybe individuals could even apply to that and have a project to clean up a beach.

**K. Bernard:** Do you know if this would include something like making the beach accessible, like

having those wheelchair ramp mats? Would that be included in that funding or would there be funding for such projects?

**Stephen Mutch:** I would say, in general, yes because it is specifically used for upgrading infrastructure, which that would be. Is there specific funding? I'm not aware of any.

[1:30 p.m.]

**K. Bernard:** Underneath, at the bottom of the grants, it says: "Committed and unpaid – \$1,772,354," and then, "Uncommitted – \$508,353." What does that mean?

**Stephen Mutch:** What was tabled was amounts actually paid out as of February 28<sup>th</sup>. A lot of the projects, a lot of groups would only submit their final claim or final report – whatever is required – in March.

A lot of it is the innovation fund grants, and I think out of all of that there was only \$10,000 left at year-end that was unpaid. So, a lot of it does come in right at the end of the year. We're just missing the March payments here, so that's what that would entail.

**K. Bernard:** Thank you.

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

**R. Henderson:** Thank you, Chair.

Just to add a little bit more to the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park on this beach program.

We have a problem at West Point and Cedar Dunes Park for the public beach section. Now, the Department of Tourism has put a porta potty for washroom services for that particular beach. It's been looked after by the Department of Tourism, but it's not enough. In other words, it's either not enough washroom capacity or it's not clean enough or it's not.... And I know I've been dealing with your parks people regarding it, minister.

I'm just wondering, is this something that maybe the West Point Development Corporation could apply for funding to put a proper washroom facility there that's on a more permanent basis, like a septic system and things of that nature?

**Stephen Mutch:** The beach program again is only for – it's up to \$5,000, so I don't think that would probably go very far. And if it's a provincially owned beach that's run through parks, that would have to be a project through parks.

**R. Henderson:** So, as an example, the parks have the lifeguards at the beach – and I'm sure the minister is quite familiar with it – and they do have the wheelchair ramps for people who want to access the beach. The issue has always become, in the past, the public were going to the Cedar Dunes Park washrooms or the West Point Lighthouse washrooms and both entities – that's not acceptable anymore just because it's work for either group and most of those people aren't patrons of the park or the lighthouse. So, how much services do they provide?

Graciously, the Department of Tourism put the porta potties there, but they're getting such use at times when it's quite busy there that they're not cleaned out enough and the septic pumping doesn't come and take it out. So, there's a problem there.

I guess I'm openly asking the minister and his department's who's probably watching if they could maybe have a real hard look at that and see what options that might exist because, at the end of the day, we have a lot of tourists that go to one on the more popular beaches in Prince Edward Island. You want people to leave with a good impression, especially when you're dealing with small children. Getting into a washroom that's only pumped out once a week is just not near enough. It's one porta potty and it's in a parking lot at the end of a government road, I mean it's all those things that are there.

But if you could make some effort to see if we could resolve that issue. I know your staff are working on it, but we need to get it corrected for this coming year.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Absolutely.

**R. Henderson:** Thanks, minister.

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

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

I also have a porta potty related question.

[Laughter]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I won't make any comments.

**M. MacFarlane:** It relates back to when I mentioned responsibility for the Confederation Trail. I know some of us in this chamber have perhaps heard some representation about the need for enhanced washroom services on the Confederation Trail because it is a tourism attraction for our province.

But there have been studies done – at least one that I know of – that called for enhanced washroom amenities on the trail. We talked about the app under the capital side for directing walkers, cyclists, and tourists to amenities at different points along the trail. But I continue to hear from people who want to make better use for our tourism of the Confederation Trail, but there are insufficient washroom facilities.

Is that not something that might fall within this section when we're talking about operations and industry investment into our tourism industry?

[1:35 p.m.]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** No.

**M. MacFarlane:** Why not?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** You look at the Confederation Trail – and I think one of your previous questions, hon. member, was with regard to the responsibility, if you like, as far as the maintenance, upkeep, and things. It would be under Transportation, Infrastructure, and Energy.

**M. MacFarlane:** No, that's fine. I'll save further questions until we get to that department.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** In other words, I'll see you then.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Okay, moving right along.

#### Parks Administration

“Appropriations provided for the management and regional administration of provincial parks.”  
Administration: 15,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 23,500. Professional Services: 500.  
Salaries: 577,000. Travel and Training: 15,600.

Total Parks Administration: 631,600

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thanks, Chair.

There is not a lot of change here, so a couple of quick questions. There's a new hire on the salaries side.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Under Salaries, the forecast increased due to collective agreement increases and an intern position added to the section.

**M. MacFarlane:** An interim position added?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Intern, unless it's a typo. So, it'd be training.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you.

Then, I see – sorry. Are these day parks that we're talking about?

**Stephen Mutch:** It would be both. It would be day parks and campgrounds.

**M. MacFarlane:** What campgrounds or day parks do we provide security for? I see a small entry for a security fee.

**Stephen Mutch:** There'd be no security for the parks. That is actually just the security system at the Bloomfield park's west office. So, just the little – whatever security system is in there.

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

#### Parks Operation

“Appropriations provided for the operation and maintenance of provincial parks.”  
Administration: 190,000. Debt: 40,000.  
Equipment: 120,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 1,300,000. Professional Services: 5,000. Salaries: 3,937,300. Travel and Training: 130,700.

Total Parks Operation: 5,723,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** There's a big jump on the salaries line – about \$600,000. So, there's new people coming into the section.

**Stephen Mutch:** I don't necessarily think it's new people. There's the regular agreement increases, which took a big jump last year with the new agreement. There are also the hours for the parks. There's more 24/7 staffing there because of... They're really busy. They've been

super busy. The season has been extended over the past few years as well on some of those, so it's a combination of all those.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** ...which, if I could add, I think it goes back to a previous section where there was a question on – I forget just what budget item line it was, but you look at salaries and, as my stranger has indicated, the extension of the season, basically. Obviously, when you do that, you have to have it staffed.

**M. MacFarlane:** On that, when we look at the position titles section in the big book, there's.... Those are year-round full-time positions, but minister, you're saying that hours are extended for some seasonal workers on top of what these positions would contribute.

**Stephen Mutch:** Those are all part-year positions as well. There, you can see it's 66 percent FTE, so that would be eight months of the year. It's sort of blended in with the next column.

**M. MacFarlane:** Oh, I see. I missed that. Thank you.

[1:40 p.m.]

**Stephen Mutch:** Those would be the permanent positions, and then there's obviously the hires that are hired every year. It would be a lot of those staff that would be extended or working 24/7.

**M. MacFarlane:** Keeping on that same page under the – there's a line for parks strategy, \$30,851. What is the parks strategy that resulted from that spend?

**Stephen Mutch:** There was a park strategy and that was the final payment, so it is finished. I don't believe it's online, but they said they could table it if they need to – or if you want it.

**M. MacFarlane:** I'd love to see it.

**Stephen Mutch:** Yeah, okay.

**M. MacFarlane:** I would think that the public would be interested to see the strategy for our provincial parks, too, whether they're overnight parks or day parks. Can you tell us how long that strategy took to put together? You say that's the final instalment?

**Stephen Mutch:** I wouldn't know exactly. It would be – I wouldn't have that information, but I know it is done now.

**M. MacFarlane:** I think it would be very helpful to have that tabled and have it available, if you would.

I know I've asked before about what used to be a park in my district. It's still there, at least some of it's there. The building was taken away, minister, as you know. I'm talking about the Victoria park that used to be a provincial day park. The building was in disrepair and was correctly hauled away. I guess I'm wondering if this parks strategy has any intent to create new parks, refurbish that park, which was a park, into a continued day park, if there's any money available for that.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I'm familiar, certainly, with the park that the hon. member, the Leader of the Third Party is referring to. If I do recall correctly, it was transferred from the Province over to the municipality, was it not, a number of years ago? And then that's where the negotiations really need to take place at this point in time, I would say.

With regard to knowing the area, is that a possibility? I'm going to give an absolute yes, but I'm certainly not going to say absolutely not either. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and the municipality to follow up on that discussion again.

**M. MacFarlane:** I don't know if all of this is contained within that parks strategy or not, but the question is outside of that strategy, are there any intentions of upgrading other parks because I think last year, maybe in the capital budget, there was funding available for maybe a park up west, Green Park, if I'm not mistaken?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** It would be under capital budget, certainly. There have been upgrades. There's been improvements, certainly, to day parks being – I'll be honest – much more familiar with the parks up in the western part of the province – but improvements at Bloomfield day park, at Jacques Cartier provincial park with regard to the addition of sites improvements there.

**M. MacFarlane:** Just so I'm clear, we have \$1.3 million set aside for materials, supplies, and services. Is that really just for maintenance of the park or is there potential for that line to be

put towards – well, improvements. I mean, it's hard to draw a line between maintenance, repairs, and improvements. I guess my question falls around the upgrades of the existing parks.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I guess with that – and I'll ask Stephen to join in here – but when you look at the increased usage of the parks, the expansion of some of the parks, the extension of the season, obviously that involves increased materials, increased supplies to keep them operational over that time period, which would certainly be a contributing factor, just for example even the cleaning supplies, things along that line, toiletries, what have you.

[1:45 p.m.]

There has been some mitigation, as I understand, through some other savings, but that would be primarily the reason for the increase that you would see there.

**M. MacFarlane:** It's great to hear that the parks are so well utilized. To me, that's a really nostalgic part to me of what our province offers to visitors: you take advantage of our coastline, our beautiful beaches, and ecotourism all in one. It's wonderful to see the uptake in our tourism industry on the parks side.

Without seeing the strategy, are there thoughts and planning for expanding new parks in Prince Edward Island?

**Chair:** That's capital budget, is it not?

No, that's not operational budget. If we're going to develop a new park, I think that would come under our capital.

Do you want to try again?

**M. MacFarlane:** Sure, just tying it to the park – we've paid for a park strategy and we're talking about how well utilized and popular our parks are. So, I'm wondering if the strategy for the department would be to promote new parks.

**Chair:** That would be a great question set.

**M. MacFarlane:** It's a great question, isn't it? Thank you, Chair.

I don't think I'm going to get an answer to it.

**Chair:** I'm not sure we're going to get an answer here either. I feel like it's up to the table,

but I feel like that's more of a capital budget than it is operational.

**Stephen Mutch:** I would say there's no new operating money here for any new parks, if that helps.

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

**H. MacLennan:** I'm just wondering, when you were talking about repairing and that, I know in Green Park itself, the shoreline – she's really starting to get back to the pavement there. What does that fall under? I know it's inside the park.

**Chair:** That might be capital, too. That's capital.

**Stephen Mutch:** That would be capital, yeah.

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

Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park at Brookvale

“Appropriations provided for the operation and maintenance of the Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park at Brookvale.” Administration: 18,200. Debt: 15,000. Equipment: 22,000. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 625,000. Professional Services: 9,000. Salaries: 1,558,000. Travel and Training: 25,000.

Total Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park at Brookvale: 2,272,200

The hon. Member from New Haven-Rocky Point.

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

Of course, this ski park is my district. It's been exciting to watch all of the investments that have been made in there, and the incredible uptick in use of that park. I know this was a great winter because of the snow, but I think you bike there, do you not, Steve. Have I seen you there?

**Stephen Mutch:** Not me.

[Laughter]

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Not you. So, it must be somebody else.

Anyway. Apart from Steve, it gets a lot of good use. I'm wondering whether there are any particular new investments or projects planned

for the ski park, either the alpine or the cross country.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** With regard to new investments and expansions, again, that would be under capital.

Having said that, I think you look at the budget items here, the increase of 203,300 – it certainly speaks to what you have alluded to, hon. member. It's just the increase in the usage of it, the attempts that we, I would have to say have been successful on as far as extending the season. What's been a partial factor in that? Snow making equipment, for example, but that comes with the cost of operation, of salaries, and so on.

With regard to specifically your question, that would be capital.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks. I do appreciate the answer, minister.

I know we call it a ski park, but of course, it's used year-round because when the snow goes, it's opened up for bikers. That's becoming an increasingly popular sport as well.

I want to give a particular shoutout here to the guys who make the trails, both at Brookvale – well, across the Island actually, but in Strathgartney and Bonshaw as well, and in other parts of the province – literally world class trails.

[1:50 p.m.]

I know that, particularly for families with very young children, the trails that we have here are really well suited to that, so it's a big tourism magnet. I'm glad that the Province has made the investments both in things like snow making – as you described, minister – but also all of the other infrastructure investments that we've made to really make this a year-round tourism magnet.

One thing, and I realize this is also a capital question. I think I asked it last year and I don't believe anything has been done. It's the chairlift at the alpine centre. I get the sense that it's nearing the end of its life. I don't know if you have any information on that – again, recognizing it's capital.

**Chair:** It is capital. I'll leave it to the table to determine whether they want to answer it.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I appreciate the question. It is a good question. It would be capital, but you brought it forward, though, member; it's something to make a note for me to look into here. Absolutely.

**Stephen Mutch:** I know that we do pay for the – obviously, there's a company that comes and tests it every fall and would obviously aid in determining end of life, but yeah, I'll leave it to the minister to look into that.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** That's totally fair.

**Chair:** Another question?

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Yes – thank you, Chair – and it's regarding accommodations in the area. I realize I missed the section on park operations here, and I'm mad with myself because I was going to ask a question regarding the Strathgartney Park and the status of the chalets there. It's very adjacent to the Brookvale ski park. I'm wondering whether you would allow me to ask a question about the status of the accommodations in Strathgartney Park. I'll be fine if you say no, Chair.

**Chair:** I think the table is quite willing to entertain it.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** I appreciate that.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** The specific question again, please, Chair?

**P. Bevan-Baker:** There are some accommodations which were purchased by – the company is Meridian63°. Several years ago, a grant was given to the company to build – or install, I should say – some geodesic domes and also some tiny homes within Strathgartney Park which were to be sort of high-end glamping sorts of facilities. As I understand it, that company is no longer in operation.

I don't know the status of the loan that they owe, and that's not something within your department anyway, minister. But I do wonder what, if any, plans the government has for those facilities – assuming that, with the loan sitting in our name, we would have first dibs on that.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Thank you for bringing that forward. I'll be honest, I do not have an answer. I'll have it looked into and we'll bring that back.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Minister, I really appreciate that. It's something that – I walk through there often and it's such a beautiful place that's sitting empty. I really appreciate you looking into that for me. Thank you.

Final question, regarding not that particular set of accommodations but accommodations generally in the area. Are there any investments being made to encourage people to build more accommodations in that sort of area to support both the ski hill and the biking facilities I talked about?

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I guess that would probably fall within other departments, to be frank with you, with regard to whether it's Finance PEI initiatives that may be taken there – rather than within this particular section of the tourism budget. I do appreciate where you're coming from; that's right. We see it right across the board, though, the tremendous increase in tourism – the factors that have been contributed to that, the strategy that has been in place.... But with that, in order to continue to grow it, to your point, the accommodations in the area, support those accommodations....

I appreciate the question, but personally, I don't feel that it's completely – I shouldn't say completely. I don't feel that it's relevant right to this section here.

Thank you.

**P. Bevan-Baker:** Chair, I think that's absolutely fair. I have no more questions on this.

Thank you, minister.

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

**K. Bernard:** Thank you, Chair.

[1:55 p.m.]

I just have one question around this and it's around snow making. Is that something that the department pays for, is that something that Mark Arendz pays for, or is it a combo?

**Stephen Mutch:** The ski park, through the operational budget here that we're debating, it would all be paid through that – the supplies and the staffing wages....

**K. Bernard:** Would that fall under the materials, supplies, and services line?

**Stephen Mutch:** Yes, other than the staff required to operate it.

**K. Bernard:** Yeah. Honestly, I'm surprised not to see – I mean, there is a bit of a difference here – but I'm surprised not to see a bit more of a difference. This winter wasn't too bad but last year, for example, how long those machines would have been running. It doesn't seem like that's a significant cost, is that fair to say? I mean, other than the staffing part but the actual... because looking at these lines here between last year, there's not a huge difference.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** It's a fair observation and comment. To be honest, I have no idea how much it costs to run the snowmaking machine but it's an interesting observation.

**K. Bernard:** Just to comment, I never really thought about it either but when I was looking at these lines that's – and now I'm curious.

Anyway, I'm good. Thank you.

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

Golf Courses

“Appropriations provided for the operation and maintenance of provincially-owned golf courses.” Administration: 215,800. Debt: 130,000. Equipment: 86,600. Materials, Supplies, and Services: 2,793,900. Professional Services: 3,100. Salaries: 3,691,600. Travel and Training: 37,900.

Total Golf Courses: 6,958,900

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**M. MacFarlane:** Thank you, Chair.

There's a big line here. This is a big number, \$20 million to keep our provincially owned golf courses going. What's the revenue side look like on our golf courses?

**Chair:** I think that's for all of it. That's all of – parks, Mark, the park, golf courses, (Indistinct) –

**M. MacFarlane:** Yeah, okay. Total golf, \$7 million. Thank you, Chair, for that clarification – still a big number, not as big.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** It has been record years in.... Revenue projected, \$9,272,900. We are making – let's not go that far. It's showing, absolutely, profits. The golf course, with great management that we have at them, they have turned a corner and they're going forward, full steam ahead.

**M. MacFarlane:** That is one of the concerns I hear from Islanders is that they are so busy that it's hard to get a tee time to get on the golf course. Maybe we need more golf courses, minister.

**Chair:** When we get this section passed.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Yeah.

**M. MacFarlane:** Is there any planning or contemplation for further provincially owned and operated golf course, given the abundant success that we're having with our existing golf courses, as you've just described.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** I think that the golf courses that are provincially owned, obviously, are doing extremely well. They have turned a corner. But I would have to say, you look at the golf industry across the Province of PEI, as far as PEI being a tourist destination, the private sector also will respond when there's an opportunity for need and for profit.

**M. MacFarlane:** The section is getting about \$700,000 more than previous year. Are there specific areas where that's going? What's the strain, I guess, on the golf course.

[2:00 p.m.]

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Just for example, \$310,300 goes to materials, supplies, and services. We have a significant increase related to the cost of goods sold due to expected retail revenue. You've got an increase in the volume of golf business results and additional maintenance fees, green fees, things along that line. Overall costs are increasing due to inflation.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**M. MacFarlane:** I'm done, no further questions.

**Chair:** Can we just extend it for one minute just to pass this section so we don't have to read it all over again? Nobody has any more questions on it.

**Hon. E. Hudson:** Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

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

[Hon. B. Trivers in the chair]

**Chair:** Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration the grant of supply to His Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

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

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**M. MacKay:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 p.m.

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

[The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, 12 May 2026 at 1:00 p.m.]