



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2023**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON SUPPLY**

**6:10 P.M.**

CHAIR  
Lisa Lachance

THE CHAIR: Order. The Committee of the Whole on Supply will come to order.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Chair, would you please call the Estimates for the Minister of Public Works, Resolution E36.

**Resolution E36 - Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$672,290,000 be granted to the Lieutenant Governor to defray expenses in respect of the Department of Public Works, pursuant to the Estimate.**

THE CHAIR: I will now invite the Minister of Public Works to make some opening comments and, if she wishes, to introduce her staff to the committee.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Thank you, Chair, and good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the work that we do at the Department of Public Works on behalf of Nova Scotians. It has been a privilege to serve in the Legislature as an MLA, a Minister of the Crown, and as Government House Leader.

I am proud to work with some of the most committed public servants in government to ensure that we provide a safe and efficient transportation system for this province. The department is responsible for building and maintaining provincial highways, roads, and bridges. We also build and maintain government buildings, and operate seven ferries in our province.

Today I have the following staff with me: Peter Hackett, Deputy Minister; Brent Pero, Executive Director of Financial Advisory Services; some very amazing staff, who are up in the gallery; and some incredible staff who are also supporting me back in our Public Works boardroom tonight. Thank you to all the staff who are supporting me through this Estimates process. I appreciate everything you do.

Budget 2023 helps move our province forward, investing in health care and many other things that are important to Nova Scotians. Our top priority is health care. Our government has a real plan to fix it. As the minister responsible for the work being done on several hospitals across our province, I can see the progress we are making every single day.

This budget builds on our work so far and moves us forward. We will do whatever it takes, and invest what it takes, to fix health care and deliver the care that Nova Scotia families need and deserve. We want real results for people and, while we are making progress, this important work does take time.

This budget considers the challenges and opportunities of our time, and is responding to the demands of a growing and diverse population. We are moving forward with solutions that work, and we are building a province that thrives from end to end.

I'll talk a little bit about health care infrastructure first. I am particularly proud of the progress I am seeing with my department's work on health care infrastructure. My colleague who shares this portfolio with me, the MLA for Argyle, is leading our work on More, Faster: The Action for Health Build.

Some of the highlights of his work include breaking ground this Summer on the Halifax Infirmary replacement; completing the Bayers Lake Community Outpatient Centre later this year; continued progress on all aspects of the CBRM Health Cre Redevelopment Project; and the creation of a new transition-to-community facility in West Bedford. The MLA for Argyle is present to provide you with more details on any of these important projects that will help deliver better health care to Nova Scotians.

Within my portfolio, I am pleased to be able to report that our health care infrastructure projects are moving forward. The North Cumberland Memorial Hospital has approved funding of more than \$25 million, and is scheduled to open in the Fall of this year. This new health centre will provide emergency services and clinical spaces, including a collaborative clinic, administration spaces, short-stay observations, rehab services, blood collection, and ancillary spaces.

[6:15 p.m.]

The helipad design is complete, and the construction tender was issued in February. Demolition of the existing hospital facility will be tendered and executed to align with the operation of the new facility in late Summer 2023.

The South Shore Regional Hospital has approved funding of almost \$128 million, and the first phase is scheduled to open in the Fall 2025. This phase includes an expanded emergency department, endoscopy, and a dialysis unit. The next phase is scheduled for a Summer 2027 opening, and will include a day surgery. The four remaining tenders for trade contracts are expected to be awarded in June 2023.

The IWK emergency department redevelopment has approved funding of more than \$101 million, and is scheduled to open in the Winter of 2026. The new emergency department will include three triage rooms, 24 examination rooms, two trauma and resuscitation rooms, four mental health and addiction care rooms, a mental health day room, a low-acuity treatment space, a CT scanner in close proximity, and a double ambulance bay. Demolition is complete and construction of the new building is expected to begin in the Spring of 2023.

The \$8 million Dartmouth General Hospital MRI is expected to open at the end of this year. Renovation of existing hospital space to construct the MRI suite for the new equipment is expected to begin this Spring.

Our work is also progressing on the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre. This project will include an emergency department and a renal dialysis unit. The early works package is complete, and we expect to award the collaborative design team contract in the next month. Also, the Yarmouth Regional Hospital emergency department project has completed the early works package, schematic design, and draft developmental design report. We'll be moving this project forward throughout the year.

While these projects speak directly to my government's commitment to fixing health care, it also speaks to the core of what we do here at the Department of Public Works. Quality roadways and buildings support the ability of Nova Scotians to thrive in their communities and across the province.

The mandate of the Department of Public Works is to collaborate with other government departments, the private sector, and stakeholders to address Nova Scotia's transportation and infrastructure needs.

We'll talk a little bit about gravel roads and RIM. Well-maintained, good quality roads are essential for rural communities. Thirty-five per cent of our provincial roads are gravel roads, and many Nova Scotians travel them every day. That's why I am proud that we not only doubled the funding for the Gravel Road Capital Program from \$20 million to \$40 million per year, this year we are adding another \$15 million, for a total of \$55 million invested in 2023-24. This program is a proactive approach that will rebuild roads to improve the structure and drainage. This will result in longer-lasting driving surfaces and make regular road maintenance easier.

The list of gravel road projects is contained in our Five-Year Highway Improvement Plan. The gravel road program is not an application-based program. Department staff evaluate and prioritize the gravel roads that need the most work. Along with traffic volume, the criteria include potholes, loss of gravel and soft areas, ditches, culverts, and overgrown brush and drainage pipes.

I am also proud of our work to improve the Rural Impact Mitigation fund - RIM. Last year we doubled it from \$11 million to \$22 million. This year, we are investing another \$14 million, for a total of \$36 million.

As members know, the RIM program supports road maintenance and improvements, including pavement patching, shoulder gravelling, gravel patching, and - the most favourite - brush clearing, ditching, guard rail replacement, and shoreline protection. These two new investments will help Nova Scotians to get where they are going, safely and efficiently, through improvements to our network of more than 8,400 kilometres of gravel roads.

The Cobequid Pass. During my time as the Minister of Public Works, we eliminated the tolls on the Cobequid Pass for Nova Scotia-registered vehicles. Staff in my department worked hard to make sure that roughly 60,000 Nova Scotians received refunds for their prepaid accounts. The department's work to construct two new rest areas with parking and basic facilities continues.

Road maintenance and storm resilience. One of the most serious parts of my job is the responsibility we have to ensure that we deliver safe, quality roads and highways for Nova Scotians. Anyone travelling the highways and roads - like I do, going back and forth from Liverpool - knows just how critical good roads are to the people and the businesses of Nova Scotia. Our department's more than 2,000 employees are committed to the delivery of safe roads to keep people connected to the economy and to keep the economy moving.

During my travels, I have had the opportunity to see the service provided by our Public Works employees. From plowing and salting in the Winter to filling potholes in the Spring, I can see the results of their hard work.

Over the past year and a half, we have faced some tough conditions. We've had extreme weather, ranging from heavy rainfall to sudden swings in temperature to hurricane-like winds that have challenged Nova Scotians and our department's road crews. The extreme weather washed out numerous roads and bridges, leaving some communities completely cut off. It washed away salt and sand from our roads, making it challenging to prevent icy conditions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our road crews for their hard work and their commitment, for working tirelessly around the clock to ensure that our roads are safe for all Nova Scotians. Given the severity of our storms, the Department of Public Works is certainly taking into consideration the impact of climate change. Our planning is done through a climate change lens. We have a strong capital plan, and we have been steadily upgrading and improving infrastructure right across our province. All new projects are designed and constructed with climate change readiness in mind. We are also working to ensure that we have spare culverts and pre-built temporary bridges on hand to react to severe storms and storm surges when they impact our existing infrastructure.

The Chignecto Isthmus. Concern about climate change and its impact is also behind our work to address the Chignecto Isthmus Climate Change Adaptation Comprehensive Engineering and Feasibility Study. The study identified potential options to protect the transportation infrastructure on the Chignecto Isthmus from the impacts of climate change.

This work is a collaboration between New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and the federal government to ensure this vital economic link and trade corridor between both provinces remains protected. This includes raising the existing dikes, building new dikes, raising the existing dikes and installing steel sheet pile walls at select locations. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick will decide on a course of action after discussing these options with the federal government.

We understand how important this is. This is what connects Nova Scotia to the rest of Canada. Fifty-million dollars worth of trade crosses the Chignecto Isthmus every day, and if we lose it to a natural disaster, the impact would be felt throughout North America. All parties involved are supportive, working together on a weekly basis and making progress towards finding a solution that will work - and the work will continue.

The important thing to understand about this issue is the magnitude and the scope of the solution. It is going to take hundreds of millions of dollars to do this. We need to be creative and we need to get it right.

I'll talk a little bit now about our operations budget and our five-year highway plan. As you can see from what I've talked about so far, we are a very busy department. For this work, we have an overall operating budget of \$672 million for 2023-24. The operating portion of our budget is used for the day-to-day operations of the department, for things such as snow and ice control, highway and bridge maintenance, field operations, fleet amortization, ferry operations, vehicle compliance, engineering and construction services, administration, professional services, employee benefits, road improvement maintenance work, and smaller highway and building projects.

In January, we released the province's Five Year Highway Improvement Plan for 2023-2024. It's the fourteenth year that our department has unveiled a five-year plan for building, repairing, and maintaining our roads, highways, and bridges. The plan includes the work our department plans to pursue annually over the next five years. Sharing this plan lets Nova Scotians know about the improvements being made in their communities, and when they can expect the work to be done. It also helps give Nova Scotia companies a better opportunity to prepare for the improvement projects planned in the coming year.

This new plan is one of the biggest investments we've ever made in highway improvement, and we aren't wasting any time. In 2023 and 2024 alone, we're going to invest \$450 million in annual road work, as well as continue our commitment to the major projects we already have under way.

On top of that, we have announced six more large-scale projects that carry a total value of about \$583 million. In total, we are going to have more than 150 projects this year, spanning 23,000 kilometres of roads, highways, and bridges. That means that families and communities spanning four regional districts from Yarmouth to Amherst, to the northern shores of Cape Breton, will have improved access to health care, schools, highways, and public infrastructure.

This level of investment is to the great benefit of not only public safety, but also to our economy. In Nova Scotia, the road building industry directly and indirectly employs almost 10,000 people. These are good jobs, good projects, and good work taking place right across our province.

Our bridges. We have 4,100 bridge structures - another critical part of our provincial transportation infrastructure. We know how integral bridges are for communities across the province. We know that Nova Scotians need these structures to be safe, dependable, and ready to face all kinds of conditions. Last year, we doubled the funding of the Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation Program from \$30 million to \$60 million. This year, we will keep this increased funding to make it possible for us to repair and replace existing structures sooner.

Let's talk a little bit about our twinning projects. The 100-series highways are the backbone of our transportation system, carrying people and goods from one end of the

province to the other. That is why our department continues to be committed to ongoing highway twinning projects, including Highway No. 101, Highway No. 103, Highway No. 104, and Highway No. 107 - the Sackville-Bedford-Burnside connector.

[6:30 p.m.]

Here's a quick update on these projects. The Highway No. 101 twinning project through the Windsor area from Three Mile Plains at Exit 5 to west of Falmouth at Exit 7 is well under way. The 9.5-kilometre twinning project includes the Windsor causeway. At this time, traffic is now divided and travelling on the new lanes from Exit 7 westerly, and work is under way with the reconstruction of the interchanges at Exit 6 and Exit 7.

Due to the complexity of the aboiteau project on the Windsor causeway, the environmental approval process has been longer than anticipated, and is still ongoing. We are currently working with our consultants to provide Fisheries and Oceans Canada with additional information on how the proposed structure can best accommodate fish passage. Pending regulatory approvals and no major changes to the detailed design, the Department of Public Works will be tender-ready in 2023. Construction is expected to take two to three years with overall completion in 2026.

Construction began last Spring on the Highway 102 Aerotech Connector project. The project includes a new connector road between Trunk 2 and Highway No. 102 at Exit 5A roundabouts, and two other structures. This project is anticipated to vastly improve traffic flow and reduce congestion in the growing Fall River-Waverley area. Subgrade work is expected to be completed in late Fall 2023, and then we will issue our paving tender. At this time, the Aerotech Connector project is expected to be completed by the Summer of 2024.

The Highway No. 103 twinning project will make it safer and easier for local residents, tourists, and commercial drivers travelling on this key transportation route along the South Shore. Work is ongoing for the subgrade, while the bridge structures have been completed. The project is scheduled to have the paving completed and the twinning section open in June 2023.

The Highway 103 Bridgewater Interchange project will provide improved access to the highway, support future growth of the Bridgewater Business Park, and enhance safety. This project was originally announced in 2019, and construction began in 2020. It is anticipated that the project will be completed in the Summer of 2024.

Recently, Public Works completed a land exchange with Michelin Canada Incorporated to support the completion of the construction of the new interchange. Through the exchange, Public Works acquires the land at 200, 233, and 250 Logan Road from Michelin, while Michelin receives the land and commercial buildings at 270 and 280 Logan Road from the province.

Highway 104. Twinning the Sutherlands River to Antigonish continues to be a priority, as it will improve safety and efficiency along that stretch of highway. In the Summer of 2020, we officially broke ground on the Highway No. 104 twinning project. I am thrilled to report that the project is on track, and is expected to be completed before the end of 2023. Working with our P3 partner, Dexter Nova Alliance, we will deliver a safer and more efficient highway years earlier than a traditional build. The project includes 28 kilometres of new, two-lane twinned highway and 10 kilometres of new, four-lane twinned highway. There are two new interchanges and about 24 new bridges.

Dexter Nova Alliance will also operate and maintain the highway for 20 years, following the substantial completion of the project, and to set standards by the province.

Highway No. 107 Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector. This new, four-lane highway will more directly connect Burnside Industrial Park and surrounding communities with our major provincial highway network, including Highway Nos. 102, 107 and 118. This connector will result in improved safety, reduced travel times, and the more efficient movement of people and goods through our provincial highway system.

Currently, construction is ongoing for the subgrade, bridge structures, and paving work. Rock blasting and bridge construction is proceeding at Highway No. 102. A final paving tender will be issued this Spring. This project is currently on track to be completed in the late Fall of 2023.

Future twinning projects. Earlier, I mentioned that we introduced new major projects as part of our updated five-year highway plan. Of the six projects announced, five support twinning efforts.

Highway No. 103 Argyle Interchange. There are safety concerns with Highway No. 103 Exit 32 and Exit 32A at Argyle. Two exits are at grade intersections of a non-twinning highway. Also, a major driveway off of Highway No. 103 services a home for special care.

This project will result in the construction of a new diamond interchange at Trunk 3. The reconnection of Trunk 3 through the project area will also be completed, reinstating the section of secondary road that was lost when Highway No. 103 was originally constructed.

Highway No. 103 twinning from Exit 6 Hubbards to Exit 7 East River, and Exit 7 to Exit 8, Chester. Traffic volumes on this section of Highway No. 103 exceed 10,000 vehicles per day - a metric used to support the need for a twinned highway. This project is a continuation of the Highway No. 103 twinning, extending westerly from Halifax region and previously twinned portions of highway. Slower moving vehicles mixed with faster vehicles moving through traffic impede the efficient movement of goods and people, which causes a lower level of service. Separating traffic with a wide, grassy median also improves safety for motorists.

The work for Exit 6 to Exit 7 will result in the construction of approximately 9.5 kilometres of new twinning. Reconfiguration of the Exit 7 interchange to a traditional and more standardized diamond layout will also serve as a connection point for a gravel service road to provide access to lands adjacent to the highway corridor.

The work for Exit 7 to Exit 8 will result in the construction of approximately 7 kilometres of new twinning. Replacement of the Exit 8 interchange structure is also required to accommodate the twinning.

Highway No. 107 twinning, Burnside to Lake Loon. Traffic volumes on this section of Highway No. 107 exceed 15,000 vehicles per day. The highway suffers from poor levels of service performance and traffic congestion queuing during morning and afternoon peak commuter periods. This project is a continuation of the Highway No. 107 twinning, extending easterly from Highway No. 118 interchange, and expanding upon the Highway No. 107 project currently under construction.

Modification to the Highway No. 107/Highway No. 118 interchange is also required to accommodate the twinning. Twinning this portion of Highway No. 107 is also required to support the Port Wallace residential rapid growth area.

Highway No. 104 twinning from Taylors Road to Paqtnkek. Traffic volumes on this section of the Trans-Canada Highway can reach up to 14,000 vehicles per day during the busy summers. The highway also carries a significant amount of commercial traffic servicing Cape Breton and Newfoundland and Labrador. Multiple at-grade intersections are also present along the highway, and pose safety concerns to motorists.

This project is a continuation of the Highway No. 104 twinning, extending easterly from the new, four-lane highway that was completed in 2016. This twinning will result in the construction of a wide, grassy median separating opposing traffic flows. All at-grade intersections will be eliminated and replaced with an interchange and other grade-separated crossings that will support local traffic movement along Trunk 4 and within the adjacent communities. The project will result in the construction of approximately 11 kilometres of new Highway No. 104 twinning, and over 12 kilometres of new and upgraded Trunk 4 and other local roads along the project corridor. These project components will replace and reinstate portions of the secondary road network that were lost when Highway No. 104 was originally constructed in the 1960s.

The department will continue to invest in safety improvements for highways not being twinned. That work involves improving at-grade intersections and adding passing lanes, climbing lanes, and turning lanes, as well as roundabouts.

I'll talk a little bit about our provincial ferries. Throughout Nova Scotia, ferries function as important links in our highway system. Currently, the Department of Public Works operates seven provincial ferries. This past June, we officially launched the *Grand*

*Chief Ben Sylliboy* ferry with a crossing at Little Narrows between Inverness County and Victoria County. The late Grand Chief Sylliboy was a residential school survivor, promoted the Mi'kmaw language, culture and spirituality, and played an important role in advancing reconciliation.

Another exciting development for our provincially run ferries is our ongoing work with the Tancook ferry. As part of the launch of the new five-year highway plan, we announced planned funding to support infrastructure development for the service and Lunenburg County. Currently, the Department of Public Works is in the final design stages for the Tancook ferry infrastructure, and we are still in the regulatory approval process in preparation for tendering construction later this year. We also recently purchased the federal wharf at Little Tancook Island for \$1.00. This old wharf will be torn down and used as a breakwater.

Construction of the ferry itself continues to progress. The contract was awarded to A.F. Theriault & Son Limited last year. Currently, the vessel's hull has been welded, and work is moving forward on the superstructure. Completion of the ferry is expected in the Summer of 2024.

Public infrastructure. Our department continues to be responsible for the more than 2,400 government structures and their associated properties. Buildings include provincial museums, justice centres, and government offices. Our department is responsible for the daily operation and maintenance to ensure a safe, secure, effective, and efficient work environment for the building tenants.

Our School Capital Plan. We have worked very closely with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on the new five-year School Capital Plan, providing much-needed school infrastructure improvements and new construction to enhance and modernize learning environments for approximately 7,500 students across our province. To date, we have committed \$674 million for 13 major school capital construction projects, currently in either the design phase or in construction.

We have also committed \$263 million toward the design and construction of new school projects. While the province's active construction market and growing population have created some challenges for some projects, we have worked very hard to modify any designs or plans as needed to ensure that we deliver infrastructure that enhances the school experience for students, teachers, and families, and to make our communities stronger overall.

Traffic Safety Act. A new, modern Traffic Safety Act - TSA as I like to refer to it - was introduced and passed in the Legislature in October 2018. It will make the province's roads and highways safer for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. The Motor Vehicle Act had not been rewritten since the early 1920s. It has been amended several times since then, resulting in a patchwork piece of legislation that is unclear, inconsistent, and outdated.

[6:45 p.m.]

The TSA is a framework act that sets broad policy and regulatory authority to address the more technical and day-to-day issues that arise in the administration of road safety in the province. By moving technical details to regulation, the TSA will give us more flexibility than the current MVA, helping us to be more responsive to emerging issues and to trends.

Incorporating feedback from partners and interested parties was hugely important in this process. The Department of Public Works conducted online engagement for all sections of the TSA regulations, and we directly engaged multiple partner and community groups, including Bicycle Nova Scotia, Insurance Bureau of Canada, Road Safety Advisory Committee, Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association, and Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

The Act will come into effect when regulations are finalized to support it, and when the necessary IT system is ready to implement.

Active Transit. As part of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, the Department of Public Works has a goal to establish a provincial active transportation strategy to increase active transportation options by 2023.

To support us in meeting this commitment, we have hired WSP Canada in partnership with Stuckless Consulting to assist in finalizing the active transportation strategy with our partners. We have also been engaged in consultation with internal and external partners to help inform the active transportation strategy implementation and evaluation plans, and governance structure for active transportation.

Because collaboration on this work is key, we have created the provincial active transportation team. Led by the Department of Public Works staff, the team includes members from the Departments of Health and Wellness; Municipal Affairs and Housing; Natural Resources and Renewables; Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage; Environment and Climate Change; and Education and Early Childhood Development.

Community transportation - one of my most favourite things. Before becoming an MLA, I spent two years as Queens County senior safety coordinator. This experience really opened my eyes to the impact that loneliness and seclusion can have on a person. It helped me to recognize the barriers that prevent people from engaging in their communities. One of those barriers is the lack of access to safe, dependable, and affordable transportation. I am extremely proud of the work that the Department of Public Works has done, and will continue to do, to support community transportation operators right across our beautiful province.

We work with our partners in the sector, along with our First Nation communities, municipalities, and not-for-profit groups to identify areas of investment to help build a sustainable, integrated, and connected network throughout the province. From funding studies to help operators improve their services or establish new routes to capital investments that facilitate fleet upgrades, we are working to enhance community transportation services and options to improve the quality of life for those living in Nova Scotia communities.

Last May, we invested almost \$5 million through the Community Transportation Assistance Program and the Public Transit Assistance Program. That provided 27 municipalities and community organizations with funding.

In November, I announced nearly \$11 million in federal funding for 20 community transit operators and eight fixed-route operators across the province. In January, we announced nearly \$525,000 in funding to help the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network purchase and implement a new, centralized dispatch system to improve the booking process for operators and their clients. All of this work is about keeping people connected. It's about keeping communities in Nova Scotia strong.

Another topic I love to talk about is our JRTA - the Joint Regional Transportation Agency. In the Fall of 2021, the province passed an Act to establish the Joint Regional Transportation Agency. The purpose of this new agency is to help improve the flow of people and goods in and out of the Halifax Regional Municipality and the surrounding areas by developing a long-range transportation plan that considers all modes of transport and associated infrastructure. This work will help us to ensure that our transportation system meets the evolving needs of our growing population and economy.

To ensure we have strong leadership guiding this important work, I am very pleased to say that in January we appointed Mark Peck as CEO of the JRTA. (Applause) Mark's 34 years of public service experience - including his tenure as Associate Deputy Minister of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing - makes him ideally suited for this role, which will require the collaborative efforts of all levels of government, businesses, communities, and interest groups. It has been truly a pleasure working with Mark.

Supporting this collaborative approach is the creation of the JRTA's technical advisory board. The board includes key sectorial agencies and organizations, including senior leaders from the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works, Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax Port Authority, Halifax International Airport Authority, Halifax Harbour Bridges, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

In the Fall of 2022, the agency released three request-for-proposal documents that will enable the creation of the Regional Transportation Plan. These RFPs have been awarded and the successful proponents include: the Regional Transportation Plan; HTR

Corporation Limited; Communications and Engagement Services, WSP Canada; Regional Travel Demand Model, WSP Canada; and the University of Toronto. With these strategic partners in place, the JRTA is now poised to begin the process of developing the Regional Transportation Plan, which I expect to be complete in 2024.

**Build Nova Scotia.** Last Winter, a review of the 20 agencies, boards, and Crown corporations brought to light some areas that needed to be addressed. This includes overlapping mandates, duplicate operations, and in some cases, outdated legislation. To help tackle these issues and support the government's efforts to modernize our approach to economic growth in the province, we joined Nova Scotia Lands Inc. and Develop Nova Scotia to create Build Nova Scotia.

Focusing on the province's strategic infrastructure, Build Nova Scotia is responsible for the province's HRM and CBRM health care development projects, waterfront and industrial park development, land bank asset management, Nova Scotia's highspeed internet initiative, and environmental remediation. Build Nova Scotia brings together the incredible expertise and experience of the former Develop Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Lands teams, under the leadership of our appointed CEO, David Benoit. (Applause)

As this new Crown corporation continues to establish itself, I look forward to the projects and initiatives it will move forward to use and develop the province's lands and properties in ways that will benefit communities, and enable our province to thrive.

**Boat Harbour.** Our work on the Boat Harbour remediation project remains ongoing, but our commitment remains unchanged. We are focused on the future and are continuing our efforts to ensure that Boat Harbour is returned to its original state as a tidal estuary. Staff with Build Nova Scotia continue to work closely with Pictou Landing First Nation, residents, federal and provincial regulators, technical advisors, and scientists to address the needs of the site. Our goal is to begin the cleanup procurement in 2023, subject to federal environmental assessment process approval.

**The Nova Scotia-Maine ferry service.** During the 2022 sailing season, the Yarmouth ferry completed 113 round trips, carrying a total of 36,151 passengers and 14,972 vehicles. We will conduct a broad economic impact study of the ferry service to ensure that it is providing good value to Nova Scotia taxpayers. We have collected feedback from relevant organizations to help inform the study. I want to thank every one of them who participated in this.

We expect the ferry to sail in 2023, and anticipate that the results of the study will be ready by the end of the year.

**ICIP infrastructure funding.** Originally introduced in April 2018, the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, or ICIP, made \$839.2 million in federal funding available

to Nova Scotia. As of March 2023, I am very pleased to tell you that the funding has been fully assigned, with 40 per cent of the funding being committed since August 2021.

Nova Scotia invested \$730 million in provincial spending to access ICIP funding, while municipalities and other organizations in Nova Scotia brought forward investments of \$430 million. This incredible, nearly \$2 billion in funding will support 221 projects, and will impact over 500 infrastructure assets, province-wide.

I am proud to say that our government is finding solutions. We have introduced a new plan for health, plans for our highways, and capital projects.

In closing, I want to take the time to thank the 2,000 employees who work for the Department of Public Works. I want to thank them for their dedication and their commitment to ensure we have high quality transportation infrastructure. This is not only important for connecting Nova Scotians and keeping them safe, but it is vital to growing our economy, and to the movement of goods and services across the province and throughout North American markets. With those few remarks, I'm happy to take your questions.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Minister, thank you so much for those opening comments. I'd also like to recognize and congratulate the public servants in the room: Deputy Minister Hackett, congratulations on the promotion, very well-deserved; CEOs Dave Benoit and Mark Peck, congratulations as well - all folks whom I have had a chance to work with over the years, very capable people who I know will contribute greatly. Great to see Diane Saurette in the gallery as well, who has done a great job, and others who have really been incredible in terms of their service to the province.

My questions are going to be on one specific issue - an issue that I know is very important to our region of the province: the western region, the South Shore, the Tri-County, as well as the Valley, and very important for the rest of the province as well. That is the international ferry service that connects Nova Scotia to one of the largest tourism markets in the world, the United States.

There has been ferry service between Nova Scotia and New England through Yarmouth, I believe for over 150 years now. It's a very well-established route, very well-established tourism markets, very well-established family connections, as well as real estate connections. A lot of Americans have owned property in the Yarmouth area over the years. I know historically the impacts for Yarmouth and Acadian Shores are very obvious. We've got a tourism industry that's estimated at about \$70 million a year in value to the province. The service is also really critical to Queens County. I think of White Point. Historically, 50 per cent of their American visitors are coming off of that ferry. The same goes for the Quarterdeck and others.

[7:00 p.m.]

The minister has mentioned the number of ferries we have in the province. I believe we have 13. A couple of them are municipally owned, mostly provincial, one being federal, and another two also being subsidized by the federal government.

We are a province of ferries. We have a lot. We have ferries that connect us to islands. We have a ferry that connects Dartmouth and Halifax that is subsidized at about \$5 million a year. I am wondering why this one ferry is subject to an economic study and why the economic study is not broad-based on the entire ferry network in Nova Scotia. Certainly, for the people who depend on this service in the tourism sector from one end of the province to the other - and also the people from Yarmouth who for obvious reasons are very sensitive about this issue - it makes them feel like this service is being targeted when other services have not been looked at, or economic studies have not been provided for those.

If we could please get the rationale for why - out of the 13 ferries we have in Nova Scotia, all of which are either paid fully by the province, subsidized partially by the province or the federal government or both, or the municipal governments - why this would be the only one that we would require an economic study for.

KIM MASLAND: I'm not surprised the member is asking this - that it would be the first question I would get asked.

As I said before, there has never been a broad economic impact study done on the service in Yarmouth. The member has mentioned the other ferries we have. The seven interprovincial ferries that we do have are part of our highway network. Those are connecting our communities. They are actually connectors - extensions of our highways.

We spend about \$10 million a year on our interprovincial ferries - the ones that are extensions of our highways that are connecting our communities. We spend \$1 million on the Digby ferry. Last year, we budgeted \$17.1 million for a ferry service that is a very short season.

We need to make sure that the taxpayers are getting value for the money. I certainly understand. I have two resorts in my constituency in Queens. I understand. I worked at White Point at one point. I've met tourists who have come across on that ferry. It is a lot of money being spent on a ferry with a short service, if you are comparing the other services of ferries that we have in the province. We need to make sure that the money being spent is of value to Nova Scotia taxpayers.

ZACH CHURCHILL: There have been studies done previously on the international ferry link. There have been multiple studies by the Nova Scotia International Ferry Partnership. I believe there has been one done by the Chamber of Commerce as well.

Those are worth reviewing, as well, because they do look at the service in a positive manner from an economic standpoint.

I certainly agree with the minister that you want value on any investments you're making on behalf of Nova Scotians in the province. We certainly believe that the math works out on this one.

I would challenge the minister's notion that this ferry is not an extension of our highway system. Our connection to the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. - New England - is long-standing. The trade relationship is probably the most important trade relationship that we have in this province. The amount of goods that travel down there has provided billions of dollars in taxpayer revenue and economic growth in the province. The historic connection we have there is very important as well.

I would argue that this is also a continuation of our highway system. If you look at our map, that is one area where a ferry is also needed. It's an isolated area in our province, the Yarmouth region, and we are the closest port to the Eastern Seaboard of the United States.

The tourism market there is unreal. If you look at Bar Harbor and Grand Desert Island, which has Acadia National Park on it, there are about 10,000 people who live there year-round. During the COVID-19 years, there were over four million visitors to that island, to Acadia National Park and to Bar Harbor, so there is a massive tourism market that we have been benefitting from in that location. Having 36,000 visitors last year - year one out of the pandemic, the first year back in Bar Harbor - was actually a really strong recovery number, particularly with the digital work that had to happen with vaccine passports and these sorts of things that were prohibitive for travellers.

If you look at the market recovery from Bar Harbor to Nova Scotia in terms of visitors, the recovery actually outpaced driving traffic into the country. Driving traffic last year into the country was down close to 30 to 40 per cent, I believe. If you look at the ferry visitations from the U.S. into British Columbia - I don't have those numbers to table right now, but I can provide that information to the minister.

If you look at visitations from the U.S. into B.C. via ferry, that was down about 70 per cent from pre-pandemic levels. If you look at the international ferry service that comes into Nova Scotia, I believe we were down around 25 per cent - it might be 25 to 30 per cent. If you look at the market recovery, it's actually quite strong in comparison even to driving traffic into the country.

I do want to ask the minister, recognizing that the government does have the authority on this - they are going to pursue the economic study - obviously now the next question is: Is that going to be a fair study? Are we going to look at all the appropriate metrics?

When you look at the federal dollars that come into the ferry services that are going outside the province, the per-passenger subsidy for the international ferry link in Yarmouth compared to Digby and Pictou is actually very close to being the same - between \$8 and \$12 a head, based on the last numbers that I saw. Of course, there are federal subsidies into those, which we don't have into the international link.

If you look at the overall cost of, say, the Marine Atlantic link that goes to Newfoundland and Labrador, that cost is over \$135 million a year, compared to between \$13 million and \$15 million in the Yarmouth service. Also compared to a ferry that goes across the harbour here in Metro where there are two bridges - it's a \$5 million subsidy a year for that.

If you look at the full picture of money that goes into ferries, you'll see that the money that goes into this service isn't that much greater than what we spend on the other parts of our marine links. But when it comes to the study now, we want to make sure that it's done fairly and properly, and that we're looking at all the appropriate metrics.

Will the minister ensure that we're looking at the market recovery of this service compared to U.S. travel into other parts of the country? Will that be a metric that can be looked at in this study?

KIM MASLAND: Thank you again for the question. I certainly understand your passion for this service and your community. I don't take your comments lightly. I don't take the comments of the people who live in Southwest Nova Scotia lightly - people who live on the South Shore, where I live.

You mentioned other studies that have been done and yes, absolutely, they have been, but this is going to be a very broad, economic study. I am extremely pleased to see the input that we've already received from folks on what the statement of work should look like.

We need to make sure this economic impact study is going to be broad. It's not going to look at just the numbers of people, seats that are filled. This is going to look broadly, like the people who work on there, the taxes they pay, the payrolls they are receiving, the money that is being spent in businesses. It's going to be extensively broad.

I'm very happy with the input. It is taking some time to get this statement of work, and to get an RFP out, but we need to make sure it's right. We need to make sure it's right for government, and we need to make sure that Nova Scotians are confident in the money that is being spent into the service.

I'm really happy, and as a minister, I was very much in favour of doing this study that is very broad so that we can see what is happening with the service.

[7:15 p.m.]

One other thing I would mention is that a couple of the services you have mentioned do receive some federal subsidy. We are subsidizing the Yarmouth ferry 100 per cent - the Nova Scotia taxpayers are - so certainly any type of help the member would like to offer in getting some federal subsidy in that, I'll certainly take it.

Again, I understand your comments. I don't take them lightly. I do believe in and I'm very confident that this study will show to government the value of the service, and it will show to Nova Scotians they are getting the value they deserve for the money.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Certainly, there has been long-standing confidence in that service. There was never a public outcry to change it - until politics got involved. In 2009, when the NDP cut the service - a decision that later Premier Darrell Dexter said was the biggest mistake that his government made. Then subsequent to that, the Opposition politics around the ferry service, from things that the former leader, Jamie Baillie said, calling it a boondoggle, to the current Premier going after the validity of that service.

It has really been the politics around the service, not the economics, that I think have created uncertainty and public mistrust or public doubt in the value of the service.

I do think if the economic study is done correctly and takes into consideration the metrics that really do matter, I think that hopefully we can put this issue to bed once and for all. That is my hope.

I am putting a lot of trust in the minister in this because I know where she comes from. I know what kind of person she is. I know that this matters to her, as well as to other members of the Cabinet in the current government and MLAs. I will remind the Chamber that the majority of travellers coming in from the U.S. are high-value tourists. They tend to spend twice as much money as people driving into the province, and they spend twice as long here. Sixty per cent of those visitors are actually coming into Halifax. Forty per cent of those visitors are actually going all the way to Cape Breton.

The range of the impact geographically is pretty broad. Certainly, I think that needs to be taken into consideration in the study.

There are also a number of specific things I think we need to look at. If the study is looking at whether the service can break even or make money as a business, it will be a losing case. If the assumption is that this is a loss leader like other ferry services, like the recreational facilities that we invest in - something that you put money into because it generates economic activity and there's a return on investment - then I think we've got a winning case here.

Can the minister please confirm that this study is going to look at things like the spend that's happening in Nova Scotia; the room accommodation impacts; the economic benefit of having over 30 local producers provide food and services to that service; the fact that for the first time in my lifetime, the fuel is also being provided for on the Nova Scotia side of the border? These are the things that I think really matter.

Also, we can look at historical impacts when the ferry service was lost, where 50 per cent of the room accommodations in the Yarmouth area alone shut down overnight. Fifty per cent of hotels, motels, B&Bs were gone overnight - a major impact. Since the ferry has returned, we have actually seen growth in that sector again. A new hotel has actually been built in partnership with the Acadia First Nation and Glenn Squires, who also owns Digby Pines, and is looking at other investments to grow the hotel networks that we have in the province.

Can the minister confirm that the economic study is not going to be looking at the economics specifically of the vessel, and whether it is going to net profit because it won't - no ferry does in the country - but that the study is actually looking at the impact to the tourism sector, the small business and the service sectors, and the economy of the province? Can the minister please confirm that will be the scope?

KIM MASLAND: The answer is yes - again, a broad economic study that I truly have tremendous confidence in. We reached out to the stakeholders. We asked them to provide the input of what they felt should be included in the statement of work. What we have been provided from stakeholders will be included.

As I mentioned previously in my response, it's not going to just look at last year's numbers. It's going to look at the entire service. It's going to look at previous years. It's going to look at an analysis of what the employment does, what the value-added is to local and regional suppliers. We know in Yarmouth there are many suppliers that look after the ferry.

It will look at revenues from government, workforce planning, the travel and trade industry, impacts on small businesses. Again, when I say broad economic impact study, that's exactly what I mean. I know that some of these studies in the past have not been what this is. What gives me such confidence in this is that stakeholders have been part - and I know the member has also provided some comments of what should be in that statement of work - and that's what will be in it.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you for the answer, minister. That is encouraging. We have actually seen the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores region lead the province in increasing room bookings since the ferry ran last year. Out of the whole tourism regions of the province, you actually have Yarmouth and the Acadian Shores that are leading the charge in increased room bookings. That is a very important economic indicator that I know will be factored in if the study is as broad as the minister says it will be.

Another thing that I think the minister needs to consider is the importance of the high-speed service that we have. There are obviously different opinions about this. Some people would prefer there is trucking traffic and commercial traffic on the vessel. I think we have to remember that 90 per cent of that traffic is always going to go through Digby. The reason why the Digby and the Yarmouth services work is because one is more focused on tourism, one is more focused on commercial traffic, so they are complimentary.

Also, what the high-speed service does is it allows - particularly in the Yarmouth region - twice the amount of room bookings, because it leaves in the morning and comes back at night. Whereas the old monohull model would have been leaving at night and coming back the next morning, you get only one room booking out of that schedule. The schedule that the high-speed allows is a two-night booking for every single traveller coming into Nova Scotia and going back. That's really important for the accommodation sector in the host community and host region. You don't get that with a monohull vessel that moves more slowly. I think that's something the minister needs to be aware of as well.

I think what also needs to be included in the economic study is the domino effect that can happen if that service is gone. If that service leaves, Yarmouth is no longer an international port of entry into the country. That means that the Canada Border Services Agency closes down. That means we can't host other small cruise ships that do come in and visit our area, and of course the CBSA jobs which are really good, high-paying government jobs in the area as well. That's another factor that I hope is considered in this, the domino effect that this can have on a visitation standpoint - not just visitors who are coming in off that service, but also ones who come in from the smaller cruise ships that do visit the area. We'll lose our ability to do that, which does impact the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores areas mostly.

I also think it is important to gather the small business and restaurant data. I don't know you do that without a survey. Certainly, the big numbers that will show up are room accommodations. Those are there and they are calculated. What isn't necessarily calculated is the spend - which small businesses are benefitting and what the impacts are. That is something that should be considered.

One way to tackle that is to look at the exit survey information done by visitors where they've told us how much they spent. That's how we know that it's about twice as much as other visitors into the province. Certainly, I think that's absolutely critical information as well. Probably the easiest way to gather that is with the survey data that is done with passengers. That's probably easier than doing the survey with restaurants and small businesses.

I think I've made all my points on this. The minister knows how important it is. I still do have some skepticism on the scope of this, just because I have seen politics - partisanship in particular - impact a lot of the decisions coming out of the government.

At this point, I don't necessarily trust that it's going to be all economics and not politics that form what this study is and what the outcomes are. I will put my trust in the minister and hope that she can be a good steward of this file. Hopefully she'll put this issue to bed once and for all for Nova Scotians so we can benefit from this service, which has generated so much economic activity in the province. It has provided an incredible return on investment, estimated even last year 36,000 visitors - the economic spend in this province between \$35 million and \$40 million, an incredible return on investment.

Recognizing how important it is for her area, and how important it is for the constituencies of other ministers, I will certainly hope that everything can work out as it should on this, and that Nova Scotians will know what the return on investment is, and we can get back to having that service without disruption for another 150 years.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: While we are on the topic, let's talk about ferries some more - a different ferry. As the minister knows, I'm very interested - as other members are as well - in the proposed high-speed ferry between Bedford and downtown Halifax. I know that the municipality has indicated they want to move forward on this. They seem to be fully behind it. The cost estimate has increased substantially, as has happened with many infrastructure projects over the last couple of years.

I'm just wondering if the minister could update me on the status of that project, and if the province has submitted an application to the federal government for funding for that project in particular.

KIM MASLAND: You'll be very happy to hear this. We have approved the project provincially, which I think we've talked about before. Phase 2, detailed design and construction, has been submitted to the federal government, and we are awaiting their approval.

BRAEDON CLARK: I'm very happy to hear that. That is something that has been talked about in Bedford since I was quite young - as long as I can remember. I really think that's a huge transformation not just for Bedford, but for Sackville, for Hammonds Plains, for Clayton Park - really fast-growing areas. I think it will make a huge difference for people.

As I've said to the minister in the past, I think it's really important that the department - through Joint Regional Transportation Agency and other avenues - has expanded its focus beyond the core business of roads, bridges and interprovincial ferries, and is looking at a more holistic approach to transportation. This is a key part of that, so I'm very happy to hear about that.

[7:30 p.m.]

Somewhat related to this, I've asked about Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program public transit funding before. There was a significant amount - about 70 per cent - that was unallocated for quite some time. Then I went on the website yesterday actually, thinking about this, and it appears that it has all been submitted. I just wanted to confirm with the minister that that is the case - all the transit money has been at least submitted. Obviously, this ferry is one of the projects, but I just wanted to confirm that with her.

KIM MASLAND: Yes, that has been fully committed. You mentioned the JRTA. I want to talk a little bit about them because they played a huge role in this as well. The work they are doing with all the stakeholders - the Halifax port, the Halifax International Airport, Halifax Harbour Bridges, the stakeholders that are part of that JRTA - it is just absolutely amazing what they are doing for work. That's what they do - they look at how they move people and goods in and out of HRM, and around the area efficiently and effectively.

I'll say they're on it. They are doing amazing work. They certainly did play a huge role in working through all of this.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that. I agree, I think the JRTA, from what I've seen thus far, is a really worthwhile effort. I know that there's a master transportation plan in the works for next November, I think - November 2024 - so we're looking forward to that.

I'm just wondering if the minister has any estimated timeline for these ICIP projects in particular - of course the ferry in Bedford, but all of them - when we might hear from the federal government on final funding decisions for those.

KIM MASLAND: I don't have any idea of when we expect that back. My understanding is that it still has to go through the federal Treasury Board. As soon as I know something, I could certainly share that with you.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that. I know it's not the fastest process at times, and we certainly look forward to that.

Speaking of somewhat slow processes but very important processes - Traffic Safety Act regulations. I'm wondering if the minister can give us a sense of when we expect those to be completed and the Act to be officially proclaimed. As the minister mentioned in her opening comments, the MVA is a Frankenstein piece of legislation, I would say, that is made up of all kinds of different parts, going back a century. I would love to know when we expect the TSA to be all ready to go.

KIM MASLAND: Most of the regulatory work is done. Most of the regulations are complete. The big thing is the IT system. What we're trying to do is finalize the regs,

modernize the RMV system - which I know you would know the RMV system is absolutely massive. So the regs, the system, and then the new IT system all in place - and we're targeting 2025.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that. That was my next question actually, about the IT system, because I know it. I can't explain it, but I know it's ancient. I'll just leave it at that. I know it's an expensive piece of work and a lot of work to rebuild that from scratch in a lot of ways. I think it will be really helpful when it's done, so I'm looking forward to that as well.

Obviously, inflation has been a huge issue for everybody. We've talked about it a lot. I think of all departments, the Department of Public Works might perhaps be most sensitive to that. You're putting out dozens of tenders every year that have to be moved on a pretty quick time frame, and costs were very high.

I'm just wondering, in this fiscal year that just passed, what kind of inflationary impact was there on the department's tenders? Was it 5 per cent above forecast, 10 per cent? Was there some number that we might have on that?

KIM MASLAND: Approximately 30 per cent on some projects is what we are seeing for inflation. Overall though, we did stay within our spend - on our capital spend.

As the member would know from his time working in the Department of Public Works, it is one of the things they are dealing with all the time. They could be dealing with supply issues, labour issues. Public Works, one of the things is they are very creative. They can look at phasing projects, they can look at staggering, they could look at redesigning projects. By doing the phasing project, it also allows us to work with industry so they can finish one job and go to another job.

To answer the question specifically, it is about 30 per cent on some projects.

BRAEDON CLARK: That doesn't surprise me, but I think for the general public, that might be surprising because they think, oh, inflation was 7 or 8 per cent - but I know that some of these tenders are particularly sensitive to that issue, and labour as well. So I am not surprised by that.

I am curious as well about another project that the department has been responsible for in the past, and I believe still is - the Boat Harbour Remediation Project, which is critically important. I know it is very complicated and expensive in its own way, but necessary.

I am wondering if the minister could give us an update on the progress of that project, when we might see it completed - which would be a great day, of course - and what the costs might be looking like at this point.

KIM MASLAND: As I mentioned in my opening remarks, our goal is, of course, to begin the clean-up procurement in 2023 - but that is subject to federal environment assessment approval. So \$391 million has been set aside for the project. The federal government is contributing \$100 million. To date, about \$40 million has been spent on planning, design, and environmental assessment.

We continue to partner with Pictou Landing First Nation, consulting and communicating together, and of course, with other levels of government, such as the federal government and provincial government through the regulatory assessments.

Again, our goal is to try to start that work in 2023, and to return that back to a tidal estuary.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that. Some quick math: \$391 million in total - \$100 million from the feds, \$40 million has already been spent. That leaves about \$250 million or so left over. I assume that amount is booked in future years on the operating side of the budget. I just want to clarify that point.

KIM MASLAND: That amount is completely booked on the operating side.

BRAEDON CLARK: I am also curious about the \$50 million strategic land acquisition fund that was announced in this year's budget. I believe we've asked a couple of departments about this but I'm curious, will that fund be administered through Public Works? Was it a request of Public Works? Where did that come from if Public Works had any connection to the creation of that fund?

KIM MASLAND: This land acquisition budget - this is strategic for government to be able to buy land for strategic investment. We're seeing incredible population growth, and with population growth we need to have infrastructure growth. We're having that in our province right now.

This fund will support the ability for the Department of Public Works to go out there and strategically look for land and purchase land to support the infrastructure going forward for our needs. I think about our Five Year Highway Improvement Plan. I think about our five-year School Capital Plan. I think about More, Faster: The Action for Health plan. All of those plans show the need for land. Land is becoming very difficult to find, so building those plans will show us what we need to go out there. This is a way for us to go out there and purchase that land for departments that need it.

BRAEDON CLARK: Just for a quick point of clarification, that fund will be contained within the department's budget and will be administered by the Department of Public Works, correct? Great, thank you.

The minister mentioned school construction, which is obviously another piece here. The province is growing quickly, as we know. My riding is growing very quickly. A new high school will open this Fall - the second one in 10 years. They will both be jam-packed the day the new school opens, which is a good thing in some ways because it shows that we've got a lot of growth. There's still a huge need in the CPA family of schools. Every school was at 100 per cent or more.

[7:45 p.m.]

I know that the department works closely with The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on this file. I'm just wondering if the minister could give us a sense of if that process has changed in the last couple of years or if there are plans to change it to adapt to how quickly the province is growing.

I think in the past, the attitude as been that once an area starts to grow, we'll start looking at it and think about building a school. That philosophy worked for a long time when growth was pretty slow, but now that we are growing so fast, I think that we are playing catch-up in a lot of places, including my own.

I'm just wondering if the minister could give me a sense as to whether or not that process is changing or adjusting with the realities that we're now facing.

KIM MASLAND: I think that question is more for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. We do work very closely with the department. As Public Works, we are the builder, so they would come to us. They will determine what they need for a school in an area, based on population growth. That would come from Education.

We, as the builder, would then go out and try to find a location in the community that they are looking for. We look at sight lines, we look at the whether the ground is good to put a school on, all kinds of things. Really, Education would come to Public Works and say, this is where we are having pressures in our schools, this is where we need a new school. Then we would go and look at sites for them.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that, and I appreciate that. That is something we've raised with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and will continue to do so because it's critically important. I have three special planning areas in my riding. I've seen some of the plans - 10,000 more people are going to be in more schools, for sure. That is an issue, but I appreciate the minister's answer there.

I wanted to ask you quickly about the Cobequid Pass tolls. I know that the removal of the tolls for Nova Scotian motorists was a long time coming - I think a good decision. Obviously, there are still tolls for out of province and I believe for most commercial traffic as well. I'm just wondering if the revenue generated at the Pass now is sufficient to cover the ongoing maintenance of that highway. As we know, it has been in exquisite condition

since it was built, as a result of the tolls. I just wonder if the reduced revenue is still covering that ongoing cost.

KIM MASLAND: That is a pretty beautiful piece of highway there. I travel that a lot to go to P.E.I. I can't wait to get on it Thursday night as soon as the Speaker walks out those doors.

Yes, there is still enough money in the tolls that we generate from non-Nova Scotian vehicles to maintain the level of service that is on that road, and what Nova Scotians expect.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that one. I encourage the Speaker to move quickly tomorrow night.

I am curious about bridges - always interested in bridges. As the minister said, there are a couple thousand bridges that the department is responsible for. I know the department does routine inspections on those every year. I believe every bridge gets at least a visual inspection and then obviously, depending on circumstances, more detailed inspections.

I wonder if the minister could comment on the investment that is required. There was an AG's Report recently on bridges indicating that we could be looking at as much as \$2 billion over 10 years - which is obviously a huge amount of money - in order to bring the bridges that are in poor condition up to better condition. Many of them are many decades old. I'm just wondering if the minister can give us an update on what the department's plan is on a go-forward basis. I know she mentioned the doubling of a budget, which is great, but obviously there's a lot more required on that file. So could she give us a sense of what the department's plans are on bridges.

KIM MASLAND: Yes, we have doubled our bridge rehabilitation program from \$30 million to \$60 million. We have about 4,100 bridge structures in this province. We have a lot of bridges.

We do know that we have a deficiency in our bridge infrastructure - about 10 per cent. In previous years, we replaced about 15 to 20 bridges, but with this increase in funds, it looks like we'll be able to replace approximately 40 a year. Of course, we are looking at inflation in some of these places too.

Staff are on this. The member mentioned the staff are inspecting these bridges, looking at these bridges all the time. Just because a bridge has been listed as poor doesn't mean that it's unsafe. A poor rating could mean that a bumper pad is off the side of a bridge, or it has a loose deck board or something like that.

If a bridge has been deemed to be unsafe, then we will close that bridge and we would provide a detour. This extra fund is a huge help for the department. I feel confident

that the province is going in the right direction in getting this work done to the aging deficit of bridges in this province, but I think we are moving in the right direction to address this.

BRAEDON CLARK: I know it's a hugely important issue all across the province, for sure. In my last minute and a half here, I will just say that my riding has very few provincial roads, which I often see as a blessing - so I don't have to bother the minister as much and I can just bother my councillor instead. But of the provincial infrastructure that I have, I will say that the department has been fantastic to work with, as I knew they would be. Just the other night I was at the roundabout on Larry Uteck - the lines had disappeared, and I had raised it. Then I was out there the next night, and they were out there repainting the lines and making sure that people could get around safely in those roundabouts, which can be confusing at the best of times, and with no lines, very much so.

I think it's a wonderful department obviously. I have a lot of time and respect for the folks who are here today, the minister as well. I just think that a couple of other things I'll mention - I know there was no time to answer these and I've got a pack of wolves behind me who want to ask questions about local roads, so I'll let them do that in the next hour.

I'm looking forward to a traffic study on the Highway No. 102 corridor, and obviously the JRTA survey as well. I'll mention those things before I pass on to the NDP for an hour. When we come back, I'm sure we'll have different members. I just wanted to thank the minister and the staff for being here and for answering all my questions tonight.

THE CHAIR: I will ask, before we pass the time over - it's almost halfway through - would the minister like a break? (Interruption) Perfect.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Let's stay on the bridges. The AG Report recommendations in 2019 recommended a better management system on bridge projects, including replacement and maintenance. I'm just wondering, are these completed? How many are incomplete? Why are those that are incomplete incomplete

KIM MASLAND: Could I have some clarity on the question? Maybe you could ask it one more time. I'm sorry about that.

KENDRA COOMBES: That's no problem. In 2019, the AG recommended a better management system on bridge projects, including the replacement and maintenance. I was just wondering, have these been completed? Also, how many are incomplete?

KIM MASLAND: Okay, I think I understand the question. I have the AG recommendations here. I think there were seven of them.

[8:00 p.m.]

KENDRA COOMBES: Yes.

KIM MASLAND: Okay, I'll make sure I'm on the right track.

The top four - if you happen to have the AG Report in front of you - are all based on the new structures Asset Management Program being put in place. That tender has just gone out for that program. Then the bottom three - there's one that's talking about an updating of the manual, it's talking about warranty procedure, and it's talking about training. All three of those are in progress.

KENDRA COOMBES: I thank the minister and staff. In my riding of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, I have lots of provincial roads and I spend a lot of time talking to the staff at the Department of Public Works about those roads. I want to take this time to thank every one of them, including Mr. Boudreau, in my local area for all their hard work.

Talking about those local types of roads, I'm just wondering: What is the criteria to determine priority roads that need to be repaved and whatnot?

I've been learning that other provinces have a more robust system to track and manage the conditions of their assets. For example, New Brunswick publishes the number and type of roads that are in good or fair condition, attached to targets for each type. Is the minister looking at doing a similar system here in Nova Scotia?

KIM MASLAND: This is really neat. You'll have to go to Miller Lake and check it out sometime. The Department of Public Works uses what is called the automatic road analyzer, or ARAN vehicle. This vehicle actually travels our 100-Series roads every year. It travels our trunks and routes every two years, and then our local roads at the request of the department.

What this actually does is it travels the road, it is measuring the smoothness, measuring the ruts and the cracks in the asphalt surface. Then this information will all come back, and its data is used by what is called the peer review group. They use that to discuss the rehabilitation methods required for the roads, and the best approach to address the deficiencies that were noted by the ARAN vehicle. Of course, that would go back to help in informing the annual and multi-year plans.

All this data that is collected, we don't publish it, like you've mentioned, into a different province, but it is all part of the decision making. I'm sure that if you wanted that information - if there was a specific road you are looking at in your constituency - I certainly could provide that for you. That is part of how roads would come on the Five Year Highway Improvement Plan. Also, we would look at information coming in from the Operations Contact Centre. We're looking at information that managers are bringing in -

our area managers and district directors - and I know each MLA has an opportunity to meet with our chief engineer to talk about the concerns they are also hearing in their constituencies.

All kinds of things - traffic volume, traffic studies. There's a lot that actually goes into determining when a road will go on the five-year highway plan or reuse the local road for repaving or re-asphalting.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you for that. I do have a similar question about the bridges. We've seen tragic consequences in the States. We've seen it in Quebec where bridges have collapsed. So I'm wondering, will the province publish the condition and related targets for bridge conditions?

KIM MASLAND: This goes back to a question that I answered earlier this evening. We do not publish the condition of bridges in the province. The reason is because it wouldn't be easily read. The example I used earlier tonight is - I talked about the number of times that bridges are inspected. We have staff out there inspecting bridges all the time. Because a bridge would come back with a condition of poor, it may create a lot of uncertainty with folks because they see the word "poor," and they think it's bad and it's unsafe.

Just because a bridge is classified as poor doesn't mean that it's unsafe. An example I used earlier is the bumper pad may be off the side of the bridge, or it may have a loose board on the deck. That doesn't mean that the bridge is not passable and that it's not safe - we just have a poor condition.

The annual inspections are done. If there was a bridge that during inspection was revealed that it was not safe, we would close that bridge and put in a detour.

KENDRA COOMBES: The next question I have is a question that I know you heard from my office about in a lot of detail - about the announcement was made that the government would stop maintaining the private roads that they had for years. These were pretty much - and I hate even saying it - the old gentleman's agreement. People were getting these roads maintained for many years.

I'm wondering why the decision was made to stop now, while people are still living on these roads, and most of them were never expecting to have to take up that cost.

KIM MASLAND: Back in 1995 when the road exchange was done, we inherited many of these roads. These were roads that were unknown. They didn't belong to the province. They didn't belong to the municipality. What I will tell you is we have a new policy now. A policy has been approved, which will result in a consistent approach right across the province. If the condition of the road has deteriorated and has posed a hazard to

our staff or our equipment, or exposes our department to a liability, then those services would be discontinued, with reasonable notice, to the impacted property owners.

We have not abandoned anyone. Those roads - we have a list. The roads that are on that, we have been servicing with minimal plowing or Summer grading, which is what we've done since 1995 when we inherited those.

Going forward, if it is of risk to our DPW staff or our equipment, notice would be given, and we would not continue with the road.

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm going to stay on the roads for a little bit longer because I really do love these conversations. According to the mayor of the CBRM, there has been a deterioration of services to provincial roads, in both maintenance and snow removal in the area. Hurricane Fiona made the existing road issues for us.

If this is the case, and there have been issues - I know in my area I have had a few - is this a human resources problem or an equipment issue? I know how hard they work in our area. The Department of Public Works works extremely hard in the CBRM, so I'm just wondering if this could be a human resources or equipment issue.

KIM MASLAND: I have not heard a lot of concerns about the levels of service this Winter. I would certainly suggest that if the member is having issues about levels of service within her constituency to reach out to the department. Reach out to the district director. Reach out to the area manager so we can work through those.

I will say that there are labour supply issues out there right now. We know that many companies are struggling to find operators. We are not immune to that. We struggle to find plow operators ourselves. I think about my own constituency- there was an ad put out looking for three snow plow operators, and we got zero. There are also the levels of service, and we do our very best to maintain the levels of service published.

I know that sometimes there can maybe some misinterpretation. I'm not saying this has happened in our levels of service, but I hear it myself sometimes from my own constituents. Our 100-Series Highways - our standard is essentially bare pavement eight hours after the snow has stopped. That's the big thing. Many people think we're still in the middle of a snowstorm, and as soon as the snowstorm ends, why isn't my road completely bare?

We do have a level of service. We have 25,000 kilometres of roads in this province and that creates time, and conditions change when we can get out there and make sure that we're clearing the roads. Again, if there are specific issues, certainly feel free to reach out to the department.

[8:15 p.m.]

KENDRA COOMBES: That's what I assumed, minister. I assumed that it would be an issue of human resources or a lack thereof problem, because as I said, they work really hard in the area.

On to another road situation that I thoroughly enjoy - which gave me great pleasure as a municipal councillor, may I add - the J-Class roads. I'm wondering how much money has your department put into J-Class roads? You may not be able to get it for me tonight. Could we get something tabled with regard to municipal units - how much the municipal units will receive in funding for J-Class roads?

KIM MASLAND: I was going to go through a big explanation about TCA, pave and gravel, and all that, but I think I'll save that. (Interruption) I don't get as excited about J-Class roads as you do. It is \$2.6 million - that is the spend. Once all of those are in, the tenders are closed, we can certainly give you the list at that time.

KENDRA COOMBES: I really do appreciate it. My other favourite topic that the minister and I have discussed - and you are aware - is the claims across the province about ditch maintenance and proper draining maintenance.

As you know, ditches can cause a lot of flooding and cause freezing on the roads in the Winter. I am wondering: What is the budget for ditch maintenance this year? Is this an increase or a decrease? I know my residents in Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, and across Cape Breton, are excited to hear about this because it is a big issue in our area.

KIM MASLAND: We call it drainage maintenance. We expect to spend around \$10 million this year in drainage. That is all part of our RIM. That's one of the things I've talked about. One of the things I get really excited about is RIM. When we became government, we started at \$11 million. We doubled at \$22 million. This year we are adding another \$14 million to it, so we are up to \$36 million.

When we can invest into RIM where we're digging ditches, we're brush cutting, and if you can have proper drainage on a road, you can extend the life of a road another 15 years. These funding level increases are going to make sure the department can get to work on our local roads sooner, and it certainly will make sure they are more safe and reliable.

KENDRA COOMBES: Trust me, minister, you are not the only one who gets excited about RIM. I also get very excited, and I do love brush cutting. I contact the department a lot about it. My office is very close to our Department of Public Works.

As sad as I am to do this, I'm going to leave roads for a little while. I want to go back to the school capital. I know you mentioned to my colleague earlier that you wait for

the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to let you know where a school might be needed.

This school I am talking about has been on the list for a very long time. In 2017 we were promised a new school for Reserve Mines, Dominion, because Tompkins Memorial Elementary School has reached its capacity in its life, and the old MacDonald Elementary School was on a mine, and the school was sinking.

I am wondering: Can I finally give my residents of Reserve Mines the good news that their school is coming within the next few years? I know it's on the capital plan, but they're looking for a timetable.

KIM MASLAND: Site selection has begun for that school, and we expect to have things rolling in 2023-24. Site selection is in the process right now.

KENDRA COOMBES: I think you are making some residents a little happier, and cannot wait to hear back from the department about some consultation.

I'm just wondering, how much of the Department of Public Works budget is earmarked for school capital? How many new schools this year and where, if possible?

KIM MASLAND: That is the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development budget, so they would give the money to us for that. As you know, the February 2, 2021 - the School Capital Plan for 2020-2025 was released. It included 23 projects for a total value of \$475.5 million. Again, that is Education and Early Childhood Development's budget.

KENDRA COOMBES: I appreciate that answer. I'm just wondering, how much of the department's capital budget is federal money?

KIM MASLAND: This would vary year to year. It would vary based on the capital spend, if it fits into the federal program, and the types of programs that they have. The total amount for 2023-24 - TCA, so that's capital - is \$69 million. Then we would also have federal recoveries, which would be about \$5.5 million.

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm just wondering if the minister can confirm if there was a cut to community transportation in the budget of about \$100,000 - I think it's \$1 million, actually. Sorry about that, I'm tired. If so, why?

KIM MASLAND: I share your sentiments over there. I think what the member is talking about is the money that was removed for PPE for public transit. That money was not required in the budget so that was removed. It was COVID funding.

KENDRA COOMBES: I think I was right the first time when I said \$100,000, but I'm seeing multiple zeros now. So that was COVID PPE money. Thank you very much - that helps a lot.

[8:30 p.m.]

I'm wondering, is there any funding for both the HRM and the CBRM regarding transit to electrify or make other investments into?

KIM MASLAND: The answer is yes to both. There are no tenders yet, but we are certainly looking at all of that.

KENDRA COOMBES: That is great to hear - I thank the minister. I'm just skipping around here. I have a question on procurement. Because I do love Public Works, I was looking around and I saw that from time to time the department has to use emergency or alternate procurement processes. I was wondering, do we have a definition of emergency criteria for when alternate procurement practices can be used?

Second to that is, how many times did this happen within the last year, if at all?

KIM MASLAND: I don't have the numbers here tonight with me of how many. I will say that when we do these, we define the emergency as something that is imminent, something that needs to be done right away. I'll use an example: if we have a piece of equipment that is broken on a truck that we need to get back out on the road in a snowstorm. I think about the amount of storm damage we've had - if we need to get a culvert in there right away, or if we need to procure a bailey bridge to get in there right away. Those are things that we would do through the alternate procurement practice. Again, it is only used in an emergency situation, which we would define as an imminent situation. I can get you those numbers.

KENDRA COOMBES: That's pretty much how I would define an emergency as well - something that is immediate.

I was also looking at the Department of Public Works business plan. I was surprised. I know the minister heard me speak about this before - about targets and how much I like targets, deadlines and timetables.

With this business plan I noticed that there were no targets set year over year or detailed steps to explain how the department goes about accomplishing their initiatives. I was wondering, is the minister willing to commit to a more detailed plan next year - or the next time the plan is set out - to provide those targets and deadlines so we can measure these initiatives?

KIM MASLAND: At the Department of Public Works, we follow the business plan template that is provided to us. Although it does not show specific targets in the business plan, our cash flow would have those targets. For example, if we're building a school, it would have a schedule time. I think about our five-year highway plan. We have cash flow that a project needs to be done at a certain time, so that would be our target within that. Our targets are not there in the business plan, but they are built-in with our cash flow, if that makes sense to you.

KENDRA COOMBES: Again, I'm going to be skipping around. I want to talk about the Joint Regional Transportation Agency. First, I'm wondering if the minister can table the terms of reference to that. Can the minister also please give an update on - I actually think you did provide an update on that. When we were reading this, our caucus became concerned that the agency's mandate did not include accessibility, active transit or an acknowledgement of the climate crisis. I'm wondering how that is being addressed in the Joint Regional Transportation Agency.

KIM MASLAND: Bill No. 60 would outline the forms of reference for the JRTA. I think you folks have heard me talk about the JRTA before - how passionate I am. I am in awe every time I walk into a meeting with the stakeholders. The engagement, the excitement around that JRTA table is absolutely incredible.

The JRTA is looking at incorporating everything in the study for transportation. They're looking at buses, ferries, active transit - and of course, accessibility would be part of it.

I would like to break down the Regional Transportation Plan. The regional transportation plan will provide the province and municipalities with a clear path to investment and development. It will allow them to maintain and approve mobility options in the region in policy goals for growth, equity, climate change, and public health. That's the regional transportation plan.

Then we have the activity-based travel demand model, which is a significant tool in the creation of the regional transportation plan as a regional scale travel demand forecasting model. It can examine the interactions of population, employment, land use and mobility options to provide a platform on which to test different possible futures - so to quantify the need for travel, assess the utility and scale. So that is that.

There has been, and continues to be, tremendous communication engagement from many stakeholders out there. I am really confident in the work of the JRTA - all the stakeholders that are on that. There is always room for more stakeholders to become involved.

KENDRA COOMBES: I want to talk a little bit more about the AG Report. I believe the update was in 2021 - the last update we had on this - so if my information is out

of date, please let me know. The AG pointed out that by 2021 the contract management process for the Halifax Infirmary expansion was not completed. My assumption is that this does not bode well for the project that is already facing major cost increases.

[8:45 p.m.]

My understanding is that the Bayers Lake Community Outpatient Centre still remains on track and on schedule. How can we be sure that weaknesses in the project will be identified without this recommendation being complete? If it is complete, could you please let me know? Again, we're working from 2021 numbers.

KIM MASLAND: I would suggest that the member put a big, red star by that and can ask my colleague when he gets up because that would come under the health projects under build, which the MLA for Argyle is responsible for.

KENDRA COOMBES: I think you have just transitioned me into my next question. Can the minister please explain, of the health redevelopment project, what exactly are the minister's responsibilities? I think we are all having a problem trying to figure out - because most of the projects, as far as we all understood, were supposed to fall under Public Works, but now it is coming into different ministers' portfolios. I'm just wondering, can you please tell us, what is hers? If it's too long, she can just table it.

KIM MASLAND: I just want to correct - I gave you a wrong bill number on that JRTA. It is actually Bill No. 61, so I apologize for that.

To answer this - it is confusing - I get confused sometimes myself on this. The projects that the MLA for Argyle will be responsible for would be the Cape Breton Regional redevelopment projects, the HI Bayers Lake. Under me - I would have the South Shore Regional Hospital, the North Cumberland that I spoke about earlier. I know the minister who shares this will be up tomorrow, and I'm sure he's just waiting for all those questions.

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm sure he is. Can the minister tell me if they are responsible for renovating the transitional care facility in Bedford that was recently purchased by the Province? If so, what will be the cost of renovating the facility?

KIM MASLAND: My apologies, I should have added that to the MLA's list. That is another star for a question for the minister tomorrow.

KENDRA COOMBES: I think we really do need that tabled for all of us to know. Maybe send out an email.

A few years ago, the province identified around 100 public buildings that could have small-scale wood heat systems installed, being a more efficient and a green option. What is the progress of this project?

KIM MASLAND: We are working with DNRR on this. It was a pilot project. I don't have with me tonight the results of all that, but certainly we'll make a note and get you that information.

KENDRA COOMBES: With seven minutes, I have a lot here I want to go through here, and I'm just trying to cherry-pick. Hopefully this will be an easy one for the minister.

Over the past number of years, the department has gone through rebranding several times, to the point where I now talk to people with the words DOT, and all the other acronyms until you finally get to Public Works because so many are calling it various different names. I'm wondering, how much does the rebranding cost the department?

KIM MASLAND: We do not dedicate any specific funding to rebranding. The big thing for us would be legal documents or stationery, which we would have to do right away. For example, if we replace a truck, then we would change the sign on the door - but there is no money dedicated to that. That's why you probably still see some trucks out there with TIR - Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - on them, or DOT. I don't think there's any DOT left or Department of Highways. But no specific fund dedicated to rebranding.

KENDRA COOMBES: I don't think it got to the point where it was able to put "active transportation" into that.

I'm wondering if the minister could tell me if they are responsible for the new NSCC student housing builds?

KIM MASLAND: That would be with the Department of Advanced Education.

KENDRA COOMBES: So I thought. It doesn't hurt to ask. I'm just wondering: What is the budget for active transit projects for this year's budget?

KIM MASLAND: There actually was a budget transfer from Public Works to CCTH because active transit has come back to CCTH. So that Connect2 grant of \$400,000 would be the budget for that for active transit. That has gone back to CCTH.

Last year we did 37 kilometres of Blue Route. This year we're doing 34 kilometres of Blue Route. I don't have the total cost of the actual Blue Route that we're doing, but if you do need that number, we can get someone to get it to you.

KENDRA COOMBES: The Blue Route was actually going to be my next question. Is the Blue Route still within the Department of Public Works? If so, could I get an update on the progress?

[9:00 p.m.]

KIM MASLAND: Since the program for Blue Route has started, we have done a total of 515 kilometres since the program began - 330 kilometres was done on trails, and 185 kilometres on roads. As I mentioned, last year we did 37 kilometres of Blue Route. This year we're doing 34 years - 34 kilometres. I wish I was 34 again. I probably wouldn't be as tired as I am right now.

KENDRA COOMBES: With the seven seconds I have left, I want to thank everyone and the minister for answering all these questions. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Order, the time has elapsed for the New Democratic Party. I now recognize the Liberal Party.

The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Just a few quick short ones, and then I will make way for one of my colleagues. As I do each year, I am going to check in with the minister on the intersection of the Bedford Highway and Highway Nos. 101 and 102. I have spoken to the minister before about the difficult intersection that it is. It's an old intersection. It needs to be replaced. We've spoken about this before. The minister indicated that the Highway No. 102 corridor was being looked at in its entirety. I was wondering if the minister could update us on how that review is going, and when we can expect to see an improvement in that intersection.

KIM MASLAND: The Highway No. 102 study is under way, and it's close to being completed, which is good news. We would need to complete the Highway 107 Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector first, which I am sure you understand. Once that is done - we expect to have that done by the end of the year - we would then take a look at the study. The JRTA would also be involved in that process.

We know - and I know I've mentioned to the member before - that this is an old design. It is a very congested area, and it's certainly something we are looking at, and so is the JRTA.

KELLY REGAN: Thank you to the minister for that. It did actually touch on - surprise, surprise - another question that I had, which is of course the Highway 107 Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector, and when we expect to see that open. It's interesting to drive by some of the various points where you can actually see some of the

work happening, and see a lot of progress over the last year. You said end of the year. Do we expect it to be open at the end of the year?

KIM MASLAND: Yes, we expect to have that open in the Fall of 2023. As long as all the stars continue to align, it should be good. I actually had an opportunity to drive by there the other day, even though I have only one route to get from Liverpool to Halifax. I actually had someone drive me by the other day.

KELLY REGAN: I think that folks who live in the neighbourhood where I do, where we've had blasting going on for the last number of years, we've all felt the earth move, and not in a good way. So we are pleased to hear that will be wrapping up soon. That's excellent news to hear.

My final question here is, of course not surprisingly, on the Bedford ferry. You've probably updated my colleague, but I was in another room at the time. Could you let us know what the status is of the Bedford ferry at this time?

KIM MASLAND: Let's see if I get a smile out of the member, like I did the other member when I answered this. We're in Phase 2, detailed design and construction, and we're awaiting approval from the federal government. Provincial money has been approved.

KELLY REGAN: So Phase 2, if I remember correctly, that is literally design, seeing where the ferry would dock, what the right location is - is that correct? Has there been an ask from HRM to put a library in that building or is it just a ferry building at this point?

KIM MASLAND: Exactly what you have described is what has happened. It is a detailed design construction. I am not aware of any ask coming in from HRM for a library at that location.

KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the minister for her quick, forthright answers - much appreciated. I will now pass my time over to my colleague, the member for Kings South.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Minister. I think I am going to be fairly short here with three questions. Thank you for appearing this evening, and to all your staff. I know they work very hard and do a very competent and professional job.

First of all, I wanted to kind of understand the pressures on budgets within the department for building projects, et cetera, with the limitations of labour. I hear that we are getting projects with one bidder. Is that really affecting how you are budgeting? Are you

needing to increase your budgets with the current state of the construction industry with respect to limited or only one bidder?

KIM MASLAND: To the member, you are correct, there are projects where we see only one bidder. Just because there's one bidder doesn't always mean it's a high price. We always compare those bid - or that bid - with the price we would have or the cost estimate that we would have. But also, one bid can affect the price too.

We also see multiple bids sometimes, too, and those are very high prices. I've seen that on a bridge project - it was multiple bids, and it was high. Then there was one with one estimate and it was high.

What I will say, as I mentioned earlier this evening, we do the best we can to work within the budgets that we have. Sometimes that means changing the scope of the project. Sometimes that means phasing the project at different times. We could look at pushing out other projects that we have, so extending the timeline on them so we can try to finish this project with the cost overruns. We do the best we can to try to manage within the budget. We know we're seeing pressures. I think every department is seeing pressures, and you certainly understand the pressures in the construction industry right now.

We do the best we can within the budgets we have. If we do go over on some, then certainly we could go back to the Department of Finance and Treasury Board and ask for more, but we try to work within scopes in phasing the best we can.

KEITH IRVING: I won't go down into the weeds - I know I have colleagues who want a bit of time with you. I do believe you mentioned a 30 per cent increase year over year in terms of construction and inflation. I guess it's fair to say that some of those pressures within the industry is contributing to that 30 per cent.

I have a question for a constituent. This concerns Nova Scotia Lands - a farmer who I think had about 25 acres damaged by the failure of the aboiteau on Halfway River in Hantsport a few years ago. The area flooded because of the failure. It took months and months for the department to make those repairs. That resulted in that land being completely unsuitable for farming.

The farmer reached out to government, and the government agreed that they would purchase the land and offered the farmer \$2,000 an acre. The farmer came back, under your government, and said, "We don't think that's enough, can we talk?" The response that was received from Nova Scotia Lands was, "We are no longer interested."

I'm wondering if you could ask Nova Scotia Lands whether they would undertake some negotiations with this farmer who has lost 25 acres of land as a result of the failure of an aboiteau - which was the responsibility of government - and see if they can come to a

resolution, so the farmer can buy other land to replace what he has lost. Would you agree to take a good look at that for us?

KIM MASLAND: I'm assuming you are talking about the aboiteau at Hantsport? Yes, okay. I am not aware of your constituent's inquiry, but absolutely, I will speak to Build Nova Scotia. It would be really good if your constituent could write to me and ask for us to look into that, but certainly, I will look into that for them.

KEITH IRVING: Terrific, thank you very much, minister. I'm hoping a solution could be found for that.

[9:15 p.m.]

My last question is a very loud issue in my constituency. For 10 years, I've had complaints on a road, and I have been unable to get it onto the capital plan. It's a small section of road in a high commercial area in Coldbrook. Unfortunately, the department internally tried to make repairs last November, and frankly, made a mess of it.

I have constituents wanting accountability and who is going to be fired, et cetera. I am not prepared to go there. Something happened in the patching job that was attempted there. It is now like a rumble strip. I don't know how it can be repaired in the Spring when we have hot asphalt. I did speak briefly with some of your staff about this. The area manager is not happy with the results. We're trying to get it on the capital plan, but I have citizens outraged that this has happened - that the department actually made this road worse. Is there any way that we could find it on this year's capital plan?

To give you a sense of the interest in this issue, this is about 2.1 kilometres of three-lane highway in Coldbrook - Exit 14, McDonald's, coffee shops, lots of businesses. It is the main artery into Kings West, if you don't want to drive 15 kilometres down to Berwick. It's also the main route for Michelin. It's very high traffic - it takes a lot of abuse. Right now, the hubcaps are flying off vehicles.

To give you a sense of the concern in the community, the other day Dyson and Darwin - ages I am guessing at around nine and seven - came to my office and delivered a petition. The two of them and their mom went around their neighbourhood asking for government action on the road because their car was recently damaged.

I guess I'm going to make an appeal on behalf of Dyson and Darwin that their social conscience and their public service might make change in government. I would ask you and your staff, on behalf of all my constituents - but especially Dyson and Darwin - whether we could find some way to sneak it into the capital plan this year.

KIM MASLAND: Thank you for the question. Please pass along to your constituents, Dyson and Darwin, my gratitude for them coming to your office and playing

their role in public service in advocating for their community. That's very admirable. Maybe they will be sitting here some day.

I know that our chief engineer is aware of the situation, and we are looking at how we can remediate that as the season progresses.

KEITH IRVING: Thank you very much, Minister. I will now turn it over to my colleague for Bedford South.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Thank you, Chair. I am back for just one question on behalf of the member for Clayton Park West. This is a question she wanted me to ask, related to the new school that is going to be coming in her constituency. She just wanted to ask if there is any money budgeted for that school in this year's capital plan with the Department of Public Works.

KIM MASLAND: There's \$1 million allotted for this year, \$22 million for next year, \$35 million, and then another \$23 million. I mentioned to the member for Clayton Park West that we're waiting to get approval now to get on that site to do some geotechnical work, to do some survey work. Yes, there is money allotted for this year.

BRAEDON CLARK: Our game of musical chairs here on this side continues. I'll thank you on behalf of the member, and turn the microphone over to my colleague, the member for Northside-Westmount.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you for being here today to answer some questions. In my constituency, as in many other constituencies, there's a mixture of municipal roads and provincial roads. The largest number of issues I have during the Winter season is around the difference between provincial standards and municipal standards. Provincially the standards are 24 hours for subdivisions, where the municipal is 10 to 12 hours.

My question is: Are we looking at the transfer of these types of roads within subdivisions and in local areas over to municipalities? If not, is there any thought to looking at reducing standards in subdivision areas to match up with other taxpayers?

KIM MASLAND: Presently there's no plan to do a transfer of roads. As far as the standards - I hope I am understanding you correctly - yes, there are different standards. We, as a department, cannot tell a municipality what their standard should be on their road. I would assume that our standard is much higher than theirs because we are responsible for a lot more roads in that area.

Our standards would look at our 100-Series - we have a standard for that first - then our trunks and routes, and our local roads. I hope that answers your question. I don't know how we would be able to tell a municipal unit what their standard should be.

FRED TILLEY: I completely understand that side of it. The big contention with constituents is the fact that they are paying the same taxes, the same water, sewer, and all those types of things, yet other subdivisions are cleared in a period of time much quicker than the ones that came from the former county.

My hope is to lobby to have standards changed in those areas to match up with the municipalities, or advocate to have those roads transferred over to municipal units - with budget, of course - or bring them to the standard beforehand.

KIM MASLAND: Certainly, I want to assure you that we can work with our folks in the municipal department to have that conversation. If you would like to be part of that, we'd love to have you.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you, Minister. That would be wonderful. I would appreciate that.

Another quick question. Highway No. 125, which runs between the Northside and the Sydney area - specifically in and around Campbells Hill and Coxheath - every year there is a lot of traffic, big trucks and the ruts come every year. I'm wondering if there are any plans to do any repairs this Summer.

KIM MASLAND: We certainly do recognize that we have some of those issues on our 100-Series Highways. The deputy actually knows your road there quite well. He grew up not far from there, is what he whispered to me.

Yes, we do see rutting. It could be from studded tires, it could be from traffic, truck traffic on those roads. We want to make sure we are addressing those safety issues, so I would certainly take that up with our chief engineer or your area manager, so your area manager can make sure that our chief engineers are aware.

We do what we call a plane and patch on those areas. It's very important to make sure that our 100-Series Highways are safe.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you for that, we'll certainly do that.

Another quick question, on the Sydney Mines interchange. There is a project that began last Fall to repair that bridge. We're very grateful for that project because the bridge was in very bad shape. It looks like work is about to begin again on the second phase. I am just wondering if we can get a timeline. I see all the signs are up. I know we are just waiting

for some approvals and stuff. I'm wondering - so we can let everyone know - when that is probably going to start, as well as an end date for that project.

KIM MASLAND: I wish I knew all these roads across the province so I wouldn't have to look up everything and ask questions all the time. We expect to be starting in the late Spring and completion in the Fall. In the meantime, that same configuration that is there now would remain until work is completed.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you, Minister. One other question, it's around overpass. This one is a little more complicated, I think. It's just near the Marine Atlantic terminal. It kind of connects the industrial park in North Sydney toward Sydney Mines. The top of that deck is in pretty bad condition. I think there may be some sort of an agreement with the municipality on that one, but I'm not sure. I'm wondering if you have any update on whether any work will be done to the surface of that overpass this Summer?

[9:30 p.m.]

KIM MASLAND: This is a cost-shared bridge. I'd have to get back to you - probably have our chief engineer get back to you on what could possibly happen there.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you, Minister, that would be great. Last question for me. The project on Tobin Road to put in an additional turning lane - it's a great safety piece. Some concerns from the residents of the top of Tobin Road - you would turn off of the highway onto Tobin Road, and not being up to the standard it would need for the trucks going into the industrial park.

Also, it seems this year that the Spring weight restriction sign is further down, so some of the residents are concerned about the impact that is going to have on that small stretch between the highway and the opening of the industrial park. I am wondering if you could shed some light on that for us.

KIM MASLAND: I know the chief engineer is up in the gallery, so I am going to have him connect with you to follow up on Tobin Road. As far as the Spring weight sign, I don't know if maybe it was just an issue of where it was placed this time. Maybe it was placed differently before. Spring weights are going to be removed within the next two weeks anyway. Certainly, I'll make sure the chief engineer gets back to you on Tobin Road.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you, Minister. That's it for me. Thank you for answering those questions. I just want to let you know that the staff for the Department of Public Works in Cape Breton are doing a great job. They are very responsive when I call and very helpful. If you could pass that along that would be great.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Thank you to the minister for being here. Thank you to staff for being here. I also want to say that local staff have been great to me over the last year and a half. A very responsive area manager is on it - regular visits - so I certainly appreciate that.

With so little time, I'll jump into it. There's a letter sent to the minister from the County of Annapolis and the Town of Annapolis Royal, dated March 31<sup>st</sup>, so it's recent. It's concerning Trunk No. 1, the causeway in Annapolis Royal over the Annapolis River. A quick background: It's a section of Highway No. 1 that connects Granville Ferry to Annapolis. It's vital for EHS and fire service, tourists and residents - and everyone you can imagine.

The requested action from both the county and the town is - and I'll read it out loud: "We respectfully request that the province undertake a detailed engineering assessment of the structural integrity of the causeway as a first step." They then go on to ask for a regular update on maintenance and inspection history on that asset.

I guess my first question would be: Would the minister grant these requests?

KIM MASLAND: Certainly, we can look into this. We do know that Nova Scotia Power is finishing up their generation station there. The road is back to us, and this is certainly something we could look into for your constituent.

CARMAN KERR: Does that mean that when the minister suggests we'll look into it, that an assessment will be completed?

KIM MASLAND: I would like to take a look at the letter. I haven't seen the letter. You said it was just sent on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Even if you want to put a copy of that letter in my hand so I can take a look at it, then certainly we could look at what needs to happen there.

CARMAN KERR: The second issue would be what is called the Rice connector. The Rice connector is a concrete-built on-ramp outside of Bridgetown, connecting Rice Road to Highway No. 101. I have talked to senior staff in the gallery about this. Senior staff in the gallery have actually been on the Rice connector. They have agreed that - I'm don't want to put words in their mouths but - it's not in great shape. It's in bad shape.

The company, V.J. Rice Concrete, is one of our biggest employers. They are adjacent to this on-ramp. They certainly want the contract. They are ready and willing, as far as I know, to complete the contract. It certainly would create a lot of work in the area.

I guess my question to the minister would be: Is there any update or any commitment from the department to discuss this with Rice? If so, could we work on that contract for them?

KIM MASLAND: The staff are aware of this. It's under review, and we're looking at options of how we can fix this in the future.

CARMAN KERR: Does the minister mind providing some detail on what those options may be?

KIM MASLAND: I have been advised that staff are looking at several options, but I don't have the details to offer to you yet. If you want to keep this conversation going, once those options have been gone through - if we want to talk about them, we certainly can. Just keep the communication going with me.

CARMAN KERR: I'll certainly try to keep that conversation going.

Switching gears here - the Traffic Control Manual - and pardon me while I read - outlines the procedures that have to be followed to close down a highway. In the past, the department would close the highway, maybe by parking a plow or other methods that don't meet requirements in the case of a serious motor vehicle accident. I'm assuming that because of increased risk of litigation - I don't know - they are now following the manual to a T. That results in department staff not being able to close highways at all or with a significant delay. That has caused problems recently.

This past Summer, we had a fatal motor vehicle accident on Highway No. 101 in my constituency. I know that local fire departments, as they do, responded. I know it's a concern for them. They've met at least once or twice on this issue. Having volunteers, as we all know, leave work and family to be at a motor vehicle accident - often first-responders are first to the scene - and not being able to rely on that highway being shut down certainly creates problems, as the minister can imagine.

I guess my question to the minister would be: Will the minister consider, or is the minister currently considering, a policy that helps rectify this type of situation?

KIM MASLAND: When there is an accident on one of our highways, the RCMP takes control of the site. Yes, you may have seen in the past one of our trucks pulled across to try to provide - but it's really important for Department of Public Works staff to make sure that we are following the manual to make sure that everyone who is on that accident scene is safe. We will always try to follow the proper setup to make sure that everyone is safe on that scene.

CARMAN KERR: I certainly appreciate following the proper set-up. I would argue that the proper set-up might need a bit of a tweak. To my former comment, firefighters and the EHS arriving first, then often traffic control, RCMP, RCMP auxiliary services - whatever that may be - support that usually arrives later, after that setup. It is a concern. I'm glad that I've raised it with the minister. I hope there's maybe a policy change or some kind of addition we can make to that policy.

[9:45 p.m.]

I guess this is just off the top, but speaking of first responders, I have heard directly from first responders - EHS mostly - in wintry conditions on private roads. There's no mechanism, as far as I know, that allows an ambulance to travel down a private road that is now plowed. I know that paramedics in the past have called their buddy or friend on speed dial who just might be in the area, but I've heard more than a couple of times that they are not able to access a certain road.

Is there any mechanism that the department would look at where, in an emergency situation, they could reach out to the department to have a priority plow or a priority clearance so that first responders could respond to that emergency?

KIM MASLAND: If a call did come in from 911 EHS, we certainly would try to support them if we possibly could.

CARMAN KERR: I assumed the department would, and I just wondered if there was a policy that . . . (interruption). Okay. Thank you.

A question around recruitment. I don't know the numbers of how many FTEs or staff are vacant. I heard the minister speak before - she is not immune to it in her constituency. I thought I heard that the department had pursued a pilot of some sort with the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration on Class 3 licensing. The minister can correct me if I am completely off topic or not on the point. Is there a Class 3 pilot for Class 3 licences onboarding staff in Digby that may be expanded across the province? We certainly need those staff in Annapolis.

KIM MASLAND: Yes, the pilot project is in Digby. It started slow, but it picked up well in the end. This was a project that I was really excited to see the department do. We will look at expanding these right across the province.

As I mentioned earlier, the Department of Public Works is struggling, just like many other companies out there, to find operators. We need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to try to attract and retain those operators. Yes, you will see more of this.

CARMAN KERR: Thank you to the minister for addressing that. I'd like to ask a few local road or infrastructure questions. One is called Brown Road. There is some culvert work that I believe was to be planned - \$800,000 worth, maybe. Will this work continue? If not, why?

KIM MASLAND: Work on Brown Road is not listed on the plan this year, which I'm sure you would already know. Certainly, I would recommend that you continue to work with your area manager and your district director, to make sure your priorities are aligning with theirs coming forward to the department.

CARMAN KERR: Thank you, Minister. With respect, I have worked with my area manager quite often. Brown Road was a priority on the plan, as far as I know, from the department. My question was: Why was it removed?

I'll move on to the next one. There is a \$1 million capital gravel project planned for West Dalhousie Road. It was on to be done and it has been removed. I want to know why, if that's the case.

KIM MASLAND: I have West Dalhousie Road gravel on the list for 2024-25 - Trunk 10 West, 5.2 kilometres. Is that what you are talking about? I have that on the list for 2024-25.

CARMAN KERR: I had seen it as being for this year, but it has been bumped to the following year. I'll move on to the next question.

Under the AM Pave Program there was \$500,000 on Ridge Road that was planned. It appears now that it's removed. Is this true? Why?

I'd like to give the minister a bit more context. There were two sections: three kilometres for 2022-2023, three kilometres for 2023-2024. The department has already ditched, brush-cut and done all kinds of prep work for this. That's my concern - all the work has been done. Is it going forward?

KIM MASLAND: Local roads are only published year to year. We don't publish out-years. It shows that it's on the program for the future, so I'm assuming there were other roads that were of other priorities that came in from districts.

I don't know. I could look further into it. I think maybe this is one that we've talked about outside the Chamber. Is it? No, okay, all right.

Yes, priorities come in and the department makes the decision based on volumes of travel, and this is slated now for a future year. That's what I have on the sheet.

CARMAN KERR: I certainly appreciate the criteria used. My concern is that it looks like it was on the plan to be done and then removed. So my questions around those roads were why they were removed and put off for future consideration.

One more road: Stoney Beach Road. Stoney Beach Road is in Granville Ferry. It is a gravel road. It has a community cemetery on the end. It has a couple of houses. There's work to be done by one of the other departments - dike work, I believe. So there's going to be a lot of traffic there, I believe this year.

My understanding is that for many years it was plowed in the Winter - graded twice maybe, Spring and Fall. There were culvert repairs, brush cutting and ditching. According

to people who live on the road, this year maintenance all of a sudden scaled back and not plowed. There's an uncertainty in the community as to what's going on with that road, given that the cemetery is there, as I mentioned.

Could the minister please comment: Has there been a provincial policy change on the status of Stoney Beach Road?

KIM MASLAND: I'd just like to ask the member: Is this a private road that you are talking about?

CARMAN KERR: Not that I am aware of. There are dozens and dozens of letters sent to me and sent to the department. It has been considered a public road. It is considered a Z-Class, so limited maintenance. (Interruption) Okay.

Maybe what I'll do is follow up with the minister directly, because we have so many letters and emails coming in over this road. Then we can sort that out.

The other concern is, as I mentioned, the Department of Agriculture will use this road for a multi-million-dollar project to improve the provincial dike system below Stoney Beach Road, and that is this year. With all that heavy equipment, large trucks and multiple trips, is there anything beyond what is being done now that will be done to ensure the maintenance of that road?

KIM MASLAND: Because this is a Z-Class road - there is minimal maintenance done on a Z-Class road. What I would say is that if it is the Department of Agriculture that is looking to go down that road to upgrade their asset, then I'd have to speak to the department to see if they would be interested in doing upgrades on that, if they are going in there to protect their asset.

CARMAN KERR: I hope the department is interested. I want to thank the minister once again. Thank you to staff for being here. I'll hand it over to my colleague from the New Democratic Party.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you. Hi, everybody. I have just a couple of questions that I would be remiss if I didn't ask. The first is a question I've been asking I think since I took office - I know that some are waiting for this - which is about the Portland Street overpass or the Circumferential Highway.

I have one half of provincial road in my jurisdiction, but that half of that one road gets travelled by thousands and thousands of vehicles every day. The overpass is not only not accessible most of the time - the concrete is always buckled, the guardrails are so low that most parents won't let their children cross it because it's deemed to be unsafe. I have

discovered through conversations over the years with your department that, in fact, it was not built properly - so this is why. I know there is this conversation that the province moves the cars, the city moves the people, but in this case it's a construction flaw.

[10:00 p.m.]

I have heard over the years that maybe there's an active transit piece that's going to happen, maybe the HRM is going to do it. In the meantime, it is inaccessible. People cannot cross it on foot, in a wheelchair, or with a stroller. I'm wondering if the minister can comment on when that will be remediated.

KIM MASLAND: We are installing new guardrail on the bridge this Summer so it will meet code. We are waiting for HRM to complete their active transit study so we can blend it into the work on the bridge.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thanks, I appreciate the guardrail, but as has been clear with my conversation over the last six years with staff, the concrete is still going to buckle once a year. That means it is still impassable by strollers, by wheelchairs, by those folks.

I won't belabour the point. I just wanted to make sure that everyone knows I haven't forgotten about this. I would like to ask - I'll do it offline because I'm going to cede the rest of my time around the RFP that went out a couple of years ago for the service lot in downtown Dartmouth from what was then Develop Nova Scotia, which is now Build Nova Scotia. I know there were two qualified proponents. We're waiting for something to get built there.

I will just park that with the minister and come back to her later to see that. I will cede the rest of my time to the member for Cumberland North.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you, Chair - almost done. Minister, I was just listening to your opening remarks. The minister spoke about North Cumberland, there was an opening date that was after - I believe you said the Fall - that the demolition date for the current hospital was July. I was thinking that the finish date for North Cumberland was June. I'm wondering if you could just clarify those dates of opening and demolition.

KIM MASLAND: We are looking at late Summer 2023. There were some labour illnesses on that site, which put the project back a few months. Things are moving along well, but it will be late Summer.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that. The people in the Village of Pugwash are very excited for the new hospital - very grateful.

In your opening remarks, you also mentioned the emergency room expansion and the dialysis unit construction. I have two questions about that. One is if there is any timeline that you might be able to share for the community, for the public? I believe the RFP has been out, but we weren't sure - I believe the deadline was extended. I think the deadline was February 28<sup>th</sup> and it was extended. I believe that RFP was for the design, as well as construction. I am just wondering if we know when that tender will be in, and possible construction timelines. I'll ask the second part after that.

KIM MASLAND: The RFP for that work is on the street right now, and it will close April 14<sup>th</sup>.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: We've spoken with Nova Scotia Health Authority about this. I'm wondering if the minister could share who would be the best person for me or others in the community to speak to about it. There's some desire to look at the design - that when the design is done for the ER expansion and dialysis unit to also consider adding a daycare for staff, with hopes that that may help with retention for nurses and other health care staff. As well, an area for cancer care - virtual specialists' appointments, Well Woman and well man clinics, early screening, as well as a place where chemo could be administered - because we're the only regional hospital that doesn't administer chemotherapy.

Who would be the best person for people in the community who wanted to talk about that to meet with?

KIM MASLAND: I would suggest that those conversations should be held with Nova Scotia Health Authority.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: That's great. We have had those conversations with Nova Scotia Health Authority, so to make sure we're in the right place.

Obviously, in a place like Cumberland County there are all kinds of roads we could talk about, but there are two road issues that I'll bring up today. Certainly, we've had these discussions with our regional manager and area managers. They're well aware, and I know they are doing the best they can. One is Trunk 6, between Hastings and Shinimicas. It has deteriorated significantly in the last two years. It is definitely below what would be considered the quality that a trunk road would normally have. That is definitely the main road that I would get the most concerns about. Our area manager has been trying to get some priority funding for that.

The second issue would be - and this has been something I spoke with the previous minister about a few times - there is one area in Cumberland North that is under Colchester management, and it is the Wallace-Malagash area. It's probably about 15 per cent of the physical size of the total of Cumberland North but I get about 80 per cent of my road complaints from that particular area.

It would appear historically - certainly since I've been elected - that that area is not getting quite as much care and maintenance as the rest of Cumberland County. We have requested that to be put back under Cumberland management. It's probably that the Colchester manager just has a lot to deal with in Colchester, but that request would still be made if that could be considered.

KIM MASLAND: The issue with part of that being that your constituency is in the Colchester area. We have to work with CUPE on that because there are issues of moving people from one zone to another, so we'd have to work with CUPE. Staff is aware of it, and they are looking into it.

THE CHAIR: Order. The time allotted for the consideration of Supply today has elapsed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Chair, I move that the committee do now rise and report progress and beg leave to sit again on a future date.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The committee will now rise and report its business to the House. I will note that we will take a short recess, in order to prepare.

[The committee adjourned at 10:10 p.m.]