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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Speaker: Hon. Kathleen M. Casey

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I would like to rise on this beautiful day in Prince Edward Island and welcome the gentlemen in the gallery.

It is great to see you and I hope you enjoy the proceedings. Certainly Ontario has been challenged in the last few days by about four feet of snow in one area. Records are broke and we've got beautiful travelling, so that really makes it very nice here on Prince Edward Island.

I'd also like to welcome everyone watching out on EastLink and I hope you have a great day. As well, going on this weekend, I understand there's a food drive in the town of Montague, and I'm sure we'll see the generosity of Islanders to provide some food for the less fortunate on Prince Edward Island. I believe Islanders have a great compassion for the needs of others and I'm sure it'll ring true as well in this weekend.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to rise today too and welcome our visitors in the gallery, and those watching at home, and I'd like to say a special hello to all the seniors in the province.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise as well here today and welcome everyone in the public gallery and, as well, everyone who's joining us on EastLink this afternoon.

I, too, would like to extend a special hello to all the seniors, in particular those in District 1. I'd also like to remind those seniors that this Friday night is the Souris Lions Club annual Seniors Christmas Party at the Souris Legion. It's a great time each and every year, and we expect a large crowd, lots of good food and good music, and there's transportation provided. We hope to see a lot of seniors out on Friday night.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I rise to welcome our guests in the gallery today and look forward to a productive and positive proceedings here in the Legislature.

I want to acknowledge all of my constituents who are watching from District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale and to remind them, if they're in the neighbourhood, Parkdale Elementary School tonight is hosting their annual Christmas concert in Parkdale. I'm hoping to be able to get by and certainly wish them luck in their big event tonight.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-

Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome those in the gallery and those watching on EastLink, especially Eddie Lund there. Always, Eddie greets us with a lot of enthusiasm every time we come to the Legislature.

Wanted to also mention some things going on in my district. Judy Bertling today is having a book launch for a children's book that she just finished publishing. It's called There's Poo on my Shoe! Anyway, it's at 1:00 today at the O'Leary Library. It's going to be her initial reading and launch of the book. As well, she's having another reading tomorrow at the O'Leary hospital at 11:00.

Also wanted to congratulate a few constituents in my riding who have birthdays. At the Lady Slipper Villa, James Palmer's celebrating his 85th birthday on December 14th, and also wanted to wish a happy birthday to my sister up in Kingston, Ontario. She celebrated her 47th birthday on December 7th. Also had the opportunity last night to attend the annual meeting of the PEI Potato Blossom Festival. That had a successful year and I'm really pleased to note that they identified that Valene Gallant and her committee, that they had the second-largest parade entries in the Island. That's a good thing for them to note, and they're going to ask all other parades to challenge us for that. So they're going to make the 43rd Potato Blossom Festival the biggest and best ever.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome all our visitors today to the gallery, and especially mention Mr. Eddie Lund. I don't believe - I think he's been here every day since the House opened, and it's a pleasure to meet him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: It's always great to meet him at the door every day.

A couple of constituents I'd like to make special mention to. Muriel MacDougall was in the hospital and she's now back living at the Valley Lodge and I'd like to say hello to all the residents that live at Valley Lodge in Tyne Valley. Special mention to a gentlemen who's been a great supporter of mine, Mr. Leigh Winchester. Lives in Miscouche now, so I'm sure he'll continue to be a great supporter of the Member from Evangeline-Miscouche in the future.

I'd like to say hello to my mother, Pauline Diamond, who watches the proceedings every day to see what's happening. Special thoughts are going out today to my mother-in-law Helen Callbeck who's in hospital in Prince County Hospital.

Just to finish up, this Sunday evening in Lot 16 is the Christmas House Tours. It's a wonderful event for the community from 6 to 9. There's lots of lunch being served at the Lot 16 Hall so I encourage everybody to get out and enjoy the festivities and take in some of the house tours.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a privilege to rise and welcome all to the gallery today. We have a few familiar faces that are back. Eddie Lund, of course.

Wilfred Richard I believe is in town picking up my Christmas present today, so it's good to see you, Wilfred, as well. Also, I'd like to welcome all residents of the Sherwood area who may be tuned in either EastLink or via the Internet today. Had a chance to speak with many over the last few days and everybody's busy getting prepared for the holidays and some family that are coming home.

As well, I'd like to say hello to my daughter Megan who is very busy the last several days preparing for exams at UPEI, as with all her friends who have been spending a lot of time studying, some of it together at our house, so I think they're prepared. I think they write their last one on Monday, first of the week, and some on the weekend as well. So hopefully they all do well on their exams and get to enjoy a great Christmas.

As well, I'd like to say a get-well wish to an old friend of mine, Parker Baker. The other night I had my executive down to the house and Parker was unable to come. He's been down with the flu but he's on the mend, so hopefully, Parker, everything's going well for you and you'll be able to get back to Red Shores Racetrack this Saturday.

With that Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's indeed a pleasure to stand and welcome the people who have joined us in the gallery and also those who are watching on EastLink and following us online.

Today, it seems earlier a lot of people were sending messages to our seniors and I, too, would like to do that because in my District of Summerside-St. Eleanors I have a lot of

seniors' housing. There are a number on Linden Avenue and on Lefurgey Avenue in Summerside, so I'd like to extend a warm greeting to all of the seniors in those housing units who watch us faithfully.

Also, I'd like to send special greetings out to Roma Phaneuf. Roma is the mother of our Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour and right now Roma is having a difficult time, and the family is with her at this very special time for them. We wish, Roma, all that is in God's hands.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today as well as viewers on EastLink cable, and a special welcome to the seniors in Andrews of Charlottetown. I wish them well.

I'd also like to extend greetings to my Uncle Edsel who is having health issues. We were very close growing up. We worked a lot together and he's having some difficulty and is in O'Leary Community Hospital. So Edsel, if you're looking today, I wish you well. Also would like to say hello to Verna Shea that's in there and to my mother Bessie, who's still sewing at 94 years of age, and she's a wonderful lady that just keeps on going.

While I'm on my feet, I'd just like to say that my wife and I are eagerly looking forward to our daughter Moya who's returning tomorrow night at midnight from Kingston. She's attending Queen's University and we can't wait to see her tomorrow night.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise and welcome all to the gallery today. Wilfred Richard is here, and Eddie of course. Our regular supporter Eddie Lund is here. Of course, Eddie is a constituent of mine and I'm very fortunate to have Eddie Lund on my team because he's there when you want him and he's just a tireless worker.

I would also like to say hello to all my constituents in District 8 and to everybody who's watching on EastLink.

Just a reminder to everybody that during this season of giving and sharing we must not forget that there are people who have less than we do and don't forget those people. Don't forget to give and share to those people, too. And don't let it stop at Christmas, let it go all year through.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to rise and welcome all those and the folks up in the public gallery, and I'd also like to welcome all those that might be watching via EastLink.

I'd like to offer best wishes and get well soon to Betty Hardy who used to be my next-door neighbour but she's moved to a different location. I understand she's in Western Hospital there. I'd also like to wish all the folks that are out there, just in case the House might be closing in the near future, a very happy holidays.

I might also like to mention that I'm hosting a skate at the Jacques Cartier arena in Alberton on Sunday at 1:50 and all are welcome to come out and skate to your favourite Christmas carols and enjoy some hot chocolate.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I want to welcome all to the gallery today, especially Eddie Lund. Like the Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough said, he's an absolute awesome gentleman and he's as dedicated to the member as he is to our House here. It's great to have a guy like that around. A good friend of mine as well.

I want to say hello to those who are watching from Vernon River-Stratford on EastLink, and I want to say hello to my mom at Park West Lodge who had a fantastic evening last night. They had a big supper in there with lobster sandwiches and stuff. It was awesome. I also want to say hello to the Coffee Club out of Southport Home Centre. They gather there in the morning and in the afternoon, but they are hurting a little bit today because one of their members has passed away. So I want to express my condolences to the Jenkins family on the passing of Donnie. It's a very sad day and hard on the Jenkins', but we want to express condolences to them on behalf of all the House.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise and say hello to everyone in the gallery and all those at home, especially a couple of special people in District 20, Patricia Brooke and her 101-year-old mom that watch just about every day. As well, a special friend, a new friend to myself, a good friend - Wes MacAleer's mom watches each and every day and she cheers very hard for this Liberal Party, she tells me. So it's very nice to have her onside.

As well, last night I met with the finance committee in Kensington for the town council. The mayor Gord Coffin, as well as deputy Paul Chessman, Rowan Caseley and Jeff Spencer, were all there and gave us an outline on all the challenges that are in municipal politics. Time very well spent. Thank you very much for your time.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery, say hello to everyone at home in the District of Evangeline-Miscouche.

Last night I also had the pleasure to be at Pierre Eloi Arsenault's retirement party, that's Father Eloi Arsenault, and I want to wish him all the best in his retirement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to welcome all the people that are watching from Smith Lodge in Haviland Court, and I want to thank all the constituents of District 12 over the year for their valued advice.

I also want to thank Bruce MacIsaac for the wonderful haircut I got.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Ms. Dunsford: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Welcome to everyone in the gallery, especially to Dunja Stajic. It's good to see you up there. Dunja, if some of you aren't aware, is going to be participating in the Model United Nations, something that I had the experience of doing when I was your age, so I know you'll have a great experience. Also, a big hello to the beautiful and growing District of Stratford-Kinlock.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, a point of privilege as well.

Thank you for that. I'd like to extend sympathy and condolences to Zachary Muttart, our Page down here, in the passing of his grandfather. Funeral yesterday and passing two days prior to that. He was a great individual in the community and a great supporter of Knights of Columbus and so on. So he was a great community-minded individual that lived a great healthy life. So we want to extend our sympathy to Zachary. Great to see him back in our midst on this day, which could be our last day. One never knows. So we want to extend those sympathies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to rise and welcome everyone to the public gallery. I, too, would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to Eddie Lund. Eddie Lund is here every day, like everyone has said, and he's always here with a happy face and he cheers us on and it's great to have his support. He's a great person and he's a great support to his wife who is at Beach Grove as well.

I just want to take this opportunity to also thank District 18 Rustico-Emerald for all their support over the last year, and I also want to thank those people within the communities of North Rustico and Hunter River. Both had tree lighting ceremonies over the last week, and I want to thank them for all the organizers to those events. Lots of school concerts going on in our district. Lots of church services. All those take lots of hours to prepare, and it's part of the season of Advent and of Christmas, and I want to wish everyone a very merry Christmas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: Thank you very much.

I just want to welcome all the viewers and people of the gallery, especially Eddie Lund. I remember when I was in here myself alone, taking on all those groups that were over here at that time, Eddie was very instrumental in helping out with some questions and that. Took great interest, and people like that sort of kept us going there. It's just too bad that side didn't have somebody like that working for them.

Also, I want to welcome everybody. To the

viewers today that are watching, keep the phone calls coming. I appreciate all the comments that are coming through.

I just came from the government garage where they had an annual Christmas dinner, and it was proven down there. A lot of them talked about that the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal can take a backseat to nobody in the way they get work done. It's a lot of new equipment and stuff that's gone in there. I will give the former minister credit also for starting some of the equipment drive. It's great to see so many people there today that can hold their head up high and that because, I'll tell you, whether it's plowing roads or paving with everything, they don't take a back seat to anybody.

I want to also send a Christmas present down to the former minister of development sitting on that side now, the critic for transportation. The fact that he hasn't asked me only one or two questions, I sent him a brand-new plow down there, Case 821 loader, to plow his roads for this Christmas for him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: Hon. members, this is the part of the daily routine where we do the Statements by Members. It happens now.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Community Schools

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Every year over 3,000 Islanders participate in community schools. These schools operate in over 34 communities across PEI and offer a wide array of courses. When the

first community school started 45 years ago the courses offered were generally typing and sewing and knitting. Since then the courses offered have changed with the times and now over 100 different courses are offered.

Each community school has something unique to offer to participants and that varies from school to school. The course subjects may include bridge - which I happened to take this year - rug hooking, computers, scrapbooking, photography and guitar.

Without the over 700 volunteers this great community program would not happen each fall and winter. The volunteer base allows schools to keep costs so low that price is not a barrier to participation. The course costs range only from \$10 to \$20, depending on the course and the materials.

I had the opportunity to participate this fall in the Vernon River Community School. I found the experience a rewarding one. I was encouraged by the camaraderie that existed, and it is truly heartwarming to see both young and old learning a new skill together.

Our community schools are another example of capable volunteers, like Betty Wichers and her committee, organizing and coordinating a unique Island experience where friends and neighbours gather to learn from one another.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Congratulations to Shannon MacDonald

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

One of Prince Edward Island's own has

been named one of Canada's most powerful women by the Women's Executive Network. Shannon MacDonald is a board member with Deloitte and is Atlantic managing partner. This award celebrates women who are proven achievers in their fields. Though Shannon now calls Halifax home, she still has family living here and I'm sure, like many Islanders, still calls PEI home.

After Shannon graduated from UPEI in 1990 she joined Deloitte's Halifax office and earned her CA in 1992. In 1996 she transferred to the company's Toronto office, where she completed her Masters in Health Sciences from the University of Toronto. Shannon returned to the Maritimes in 2008 to become Atlantic managing partner with Deloitte.

Within Deloitte she has led a number of women's initiatives. She was a founding member of the firm's diversity council as well as Atlantic Canada's talent and diversity council. She also led the women of Deloitte Halifax in hosting the Showcase of Women. This event brought more than 534 exhibitors together for an evening of networking.

As a mother of three children, Shannon is a mentor to others who struggle with the challenges of raising a family while pursuing their ambitious careers. I am sure that Shannon has had many challenging days but has managed to accomplish so much.

On behalf of my colleagues in this Legislature, I want to congratulate Shannon on being named one of Canada's most powerful women. In fact, she is in the top 100.

Shannon is the daughter of the late Anne MacDonald and John B. MacDonald of Blooming Point.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Montague Food Bank

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This Sunday, December 12th, at 12:00 p.m., the Montague Food Bank will be celebrating their grand opening at their new location.

I was honoured to be able to assist them in getting a new location for the food bank. It was a real pleasure to work with Lawrence Power and his wife to make progress on this very important matter.

The food bank feeds about 125 families a month in southeastern PEI and that demand continues to increase. My sincere thanks go out to the residents and area businesses, such as Sobeys, who have given to help the food bank stock their shelves at the new location.

I would also like to highlight the important role that all Montague churches have played in advocating and educating about the food bank and supplying food. Their support has been a vital part of the success of the food bank.

The food bank is an essential part of our Montague community and I am quite happy that the new location will open and be accessible to families in need this Christmas season.

Madam Speaker, sincere congratulations and best wishes, and season's greetings, to the volunteers of the Montague Food Bank.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

PEI Lending Agency

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Just responding to the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, the question that he had for me yesterday, and that was with regard to the PEI Lending Agency. Currently there is \$193 million dollars sitting in the lending agency portfolio.

Thank you very much.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

PNP and Bill Dow

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In Hansard in the fall of 2008, the former minister of IIDI, the present minister of environment and energy, confirmed that Bill Dow was the department's lawyer at the time of the PNP debacle. In the fall of 2009 in this House we learned that this government lawyer was also the legal counsel acting for the Member from West Royalty-Springvale who received PNP units.

My question to the Premier. Premier, you've had over a year. Have you personally gone back and reviewed all the dealings that Mr. Dow had a role in?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, we're very fortunate to have great solicitors in the province. Bill Dow happens to be one of those, and we're very fortunate to be able to use him in government. If, obviously, the Leader of the Opposition has any issues with that, I suggest she take it up with the law society.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Premier, my issue is with you and how you have allowed people to have special privileges around this PNP. My question. In the fall of 2008 the former minister of IIDI confirmed in the House that Mr. Dow, the government's lawyer, IIDI's lawyer, travelled in various trips overseas, and I quote: He is our lawyer in the department. He went over to find out legally, and he knew the act, he knew the regulations. He was advising us.

Premier, did you personally review Mr. Dow's work to ensure fairness? Fairness to the 600 companies that were refused. No preferential treatment to certain people or certain businesses that we see PNP units that Mr. Dow worked on. Did you do that work?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Absolutely, Madam Speaker.

I know Mr. Dow is one of the best solicitors in the province. We're very fortunate to be able to use him in government. I find it quite amazing that the Leader of the Opposition is choosing to attack a high member of the Law Society of Prince Edward Island on the floor of the Legislature. I think it's quite

shameful. If she has issues I suggest she bring them up with the law society.

As Premier of Prince Edward Island I can say I feel very fortunate to be able to have Mr. Dow be able to help out the Government of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I spent the entire summer going across PEI. In fact, at the Biz 2 Biz Expo that the present Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning held, and I heard from business people, especially the 600 that were refused.

So my question to the Premier: Premier, in the PNP debacle you allowed MLAs to receive PNP units; Brooke MacMillan, who was managing the program, received PNP units - you gave him a promotion; people in the Premier's office; in the IIDI office itself; in particular, some families not only received PNP units, but they actually received more than 12 units.

My question to the Premier: Would Mr. Dow, who was employed by you, who acted on behalf of other clients, including the Member from West Royalty-Springvale, in dishing out PNP units, who else did he represent and how many units did he dish out?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition refuses to recognize that there was an

Auditor General's report that came back and indicated that the government did a good job on the file. There were 21 recommendations that we followed. She's failed to recognize also that the conflict commissioner has come out and indicated the same as she's gone out and was able to get loans through the lending authority, the same as she was able to get jobs with MRSB that was an intermediary, the same as the Leader of the Opposition was able to get a job at Holland College while she was an MLA.

All that's fine, and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner did look into all those matters with regards to MLAs, and they were fine.

Also, if the Leader of the Opposition chooses to attack a member of the Law Society of Prince Edward Island, thinks that they're doing an inappropriate job, I suggest she take her concerns to the Law Society of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some day that anybody would like to ask me any questions as to when I had a loan with the lending authority -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Leader of the Opposition: - how I had received work, I'd be happy to answer that. But today's not about that. It's actually about the Premier, and it's about the Premier's management -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Leader of the Opposition: - and it's the

Premier's personal inner circle who refused 600 businesses, but at the same time made sure they took care of themselves.

My question to the Premier. Premier, with regards to your lawyer, your personal friend, the lawyer that gave legal counsel, who operated not only for giving advice on the PNP file - my question to the Premier: Did you go back under Treasury Board guidelines and review all Mr. Dow's work to ensure that you're doing your role as Premier, taking care of Islanders instead of a select few? Did you do that review yourself?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I have the utmost confidence in the work that Mr. Dow did for the department, and all work that he does. He belongs to a great law firm by the name of Carr, Stevenson & MacKay. I know that his law partners take it very seriously when the Leader of the Opposition chooses to stand up and make slanderous remarks behind the rail here in the Legislature.

We're very fortunate to have him doing the work he does. The Auditor General reviewed the files. There was no preferential treatment. The Leader of the Opposition can stand up here and try and make slanderous remarks all she wants. We all know that none of it is true. I'm not sure why she chooses to go down that road.

I just want to point out for the Leader of the Opposition's information, I'm not questioning whether or not her working at MRSB for an intermediary, or whether or not getting a contract at Holland College, or whether or not getting a contract at the AVC while she was an MLA, is inappropriate. It's not inappropriate because she cleared it with the conflict commissioner, the same as our

MLAs clear things with the conflict commissioner.

The issue that I have is: Why is there a double standard for the Leader of the Opposition and everyone else in the Province of Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Actually, today, Premier, we're talking about Mr. Billy Dow. We're also talking about - the Auditor General, by the way, never reviewed Mr. Dow's work, period.

In January of 2009 a senior government aide working with the former minister in IIDI quit over the mishandling of the PNP program, and I quote: As a necessary first step, Mr. Cobb urged a major shift in management of the nominee process, beginning with the removal of the deputy minister Brooke MacMillan and Charlottetown lawyer Bill Dow from the file. It was known within government that Mr. Dow was in charge of PNP and he made decisions about what happened with the management and the direction of the PNP program. Mr. Dow is a close confidant of the Premier.

My question to you, Premier, is just how many PNP units did the Billy Dow family have?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I can assure -

An Hon. Member: Hundreds and hundreds.

Premier Ghiz: - I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that if she wishes to ask that question I'm sure Mr. Dow would be more than happy to take her call this afternoon, or perhaps she can go down and see the law firm down there that I know has some big supporters of the Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island in it, or used to.

It's really quite unfortunate that we have a Leader of the Opposition that chooses to stand up and slander individuals when she knows full well that there's nothing there. She's taking advice from folks like Rob MacEachern and Gordon Cobb that really do not know what they're talking about. We have a Leader of the Opposition that chooses, in this province, to go down the slanderous route rather than ask decent questions in this Legislature, and I find it quite unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition is going down this road.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's not my telephone recorded this message to Mr. MacEachern telling him by you that you're taking care of him in the PNP. But my problem - and we are so different - is about fairness, fairness to the 600 businesses across PEI in good faith who applied to participate in the program -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Leader of the Opposition: - and who were refused -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Leader of the Opposition: - (Indistinct) the end of July. But my question, Madam

Speaker -

Speaker: Order, please!

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Dow, your lawyer, your personal friend, advised government on PNP, was paid by government. He acted as an agent for the MLA from West Royalty-Springvale with his PNP units. He acted as a lawyer for the Dow family with their PNP units.

Premier, will you today finally go back to the Auditor General and ask him specifically to go in and review the PNP files that Brooke MacMillan and Billy Dow were involved with for fairness for all the businesses across PEI? That's what your job is.

Some Hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I can assure the Leader of the Opposition and all Islanders that we did use the utmost fairness, Madam Speaker.

It was our government that when we got elected in 2007 chose not to fire 800 individuals and break their human rights. It was our government that chose to come in and clean up the Provincial Nominee Program by bringing in Use of Proceeds and more rules around the PNP.

I have the utmost confidence in Mr. Dow. I find it quite unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition chooses to slander an individual who is a Queen's Counsel in our province, that is well respected within the law society, that is a professor at the University of Prince Edward Island, and also slanders that individual's family, that immigrated to this country, has worked hard to build up a lot of local family businesses in this province.

It's really quite unreal that the Leader of the Opposition chooses to go down that path. That is the difference between the Leader of the Opposition and myself. I choose to take the high road, the Leader of the Opposition chooses to slander individuals in this province.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

PNP and 600 businesses

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Provincial Nominee Program had good intentions. It was a program that was meant to treat all businesses equally. It was also meant to treat immigrants equally and have them welcomed here

But under your leadership, Premier, in 2008, your government informed, the end of July, 600 businesses that there was no more PNP program. Then of course on the magical August 5th and 6th it was reopened for a few. How do you explain, Premier, that one certain business family can get 19 units, another one gets 15 units, and then some good companies get zero units at the same time? How do you got out and face those 600 businesses across PEI and tell them that you believe in fairness and fair competition? How do you do that, Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously the Auditor General looked into that. There was no issues there. The program closed down. We treated everyone fairly who came in, that applied under the Provincial Nominee Program. Whether or not they were Liberal, Conservative, Green Party, NDP, it made no difference to us. We

tried to help out individuals in this province, individuals, companies, and that's exactly what we did, and I make no apologies for it whatsoever. We're very proud of what we've been able to do for Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

PNP and review of Bill Dow and Brooke MacMillan

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the Premier. The PNP debacle is about you, Premier. It's actually about your leadership, it's about your management, it's about not allowing witnesses at Public Accounts, it's about allowing your present Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning to not bring information back to the House.

You constantly talk about the cost-benefit analysis and how great the PNP - that minister still has yet to deliver to the House the Grant Thornton Report, the PricewaterhouseCooper. We're not still allowed witnesses at Public Accounts. And here today, we find out that another member of your inner circle, which you're condoning the behaviour of, you didn't even have the decency to go back and check the work of Mr. Dow. The family got 15 units when other businesses are refused. It's about Billy Dow and what you're allowing Billy and Brooke to be able to do.

My question to you, Premier. You have a choice today, you can either let this keep going and going and you'll deal with it on the doorsteps of every household in PEI, or you can go back to the Auditor General and ask him to personally review Billy Dow and also Brooke MacMillan's work. Which is

your choice, Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Can I just point out that I'm extremely proud of the work that our government has done? I'm extremely proud that I have great advisors and great Islanders like Mr. Dow. I'm extremely proud of the Provincial Nominee Program that brought millions of dollars to the Province of Prince Edward Island, that has increased our population, that has helped out local businesses. I'm just as proud of that as I am of our kindergarten system that we introduced here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. I'm just as proud of the Provincial Nominee Program as I am with the Family Medicine Residency Program, with the Accelerated Nursing Program, with the Cancer Patient Navigator, with the Colorectal Screening Program, with the mammography screening, digital mammography, with the Tyne Valley Health Centre, with the Palliative Drug Program, with the elimination of ambulance and out-of-service transfers, with the 11 million contribution to the QEH hospital.

All those things I'm extremely proud of, the same as I'm proud of the Provincial Nominee Program. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to have the debate on the doorsteps, I'm ready any time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Health PEI and Florida

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My first question is for the minister of health. Minister, can you tell me - and I've been told by people that your Health PEI staff are down in Florida sunning themselves at the present time on taxpayers' dollars. Can you tell me what the staff of Health PEI are doing in Florida?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, we have many staff under Health PEI. Right now, something that the previous government didn't do, is go out and recruit professionals to our province. We have, I believe, two individuals from Health PEI that are down at a conference recruiting professionals for the health care system on Prince Edward Island.

There you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, a question to the minister of agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Taxing farmers

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, it seems that this government goes out of its way to harass farmers. I received a call today from a farmer who is furious at you, minister, just furious. Minister, why are you taxing farmers for helping out their neighbours?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, the primary industry of farming is very important to Prince Edward Island and the well being of all PEI.

We encourage farmers to work together on a regular basis, and a lot of farmers do. They help each other out if someone's equipment breaks down or otherwise. I assume there's a good relationship out there and no one's brought an issue to me as the hon. member has stated.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: To the same minister, Madam Speaker.

Minister, you know what I'm talking about. Your government sent out a letter last week telling farmers that you have hired a certified accountant that is going after farmers for using coloured gas to help plow their neighbour's driveway. Minister, why are you doing that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, we're not involved with taxation with regards to the farming community.

We're out there supporting farmers as much as we can. We do put a lot of funding in a lot of different sectors and categories of agriculture. That's our high priority. We are not involved in the taxation aspect of the province. That's left to the minister of finance.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, they're telling me

that you are the Christmas Grinch now, that you won't help out farmers, that you are now going to tax them for going in and plowing out a neighbour's driveway (Indistinct) free, that they're not even charging him.

They're going in and -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Bagnall: - minister, your government has just hired an accountant -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Speaker: Order, please!

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir has the floor.

Mr. Bagnall: I can understand why they'd be touchy, Madam Speaker.

They've just gone out and hired an accountant for \$150,000, and he's sending out letters to farmers telling them that they want to collect the 30 cent tax maybe on the gas that they're going to be doing.

Minister, why would you do that to farmers just before Christmas that are helping neighbours plow out their driveways? You won't even stand up for the agriculture industry and the farmers. Why are you doing that? I can understand why they're calling you the Christmas Grinch.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, the farming community is part of the fabric of rural Prince Edward Island.

I do know farmers that clean neighbours'

driveways for nothing, on a complimentary basis, just to be neighbourly. That happens everywhere. I know folks tell me that on a regular basis.

Madam Speaker, the question is a bit ridiculous, totally ridiculous.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, the minister is right.

Farmers did go in and plow neighbours free of charge. They went to help out their neighbours. They cleaned out their driveways for them. Now, according to the letter that has been sent out from the government, they're not allowed to do that any more because they got to pay tax on the gas. They got to fill out forms, and if they don't fill out the form and they don't talk about this, they're going to lose their tax number. Why would you revert to letting farmers lose their tax number when they're trying to help a neighbour? That is terrible, minister. Have you got no respect for rural PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I have great respect for rural Prince Edward Island and the farming industry.

Everything we do we try to grow agriculture and make rural PEI part of the major economic stream on Prince Edward Island. We do the right thing for rural Prince Edward Island, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, the right thing is not to charge some tax.

They're not charging the customers anything, they're doing it free, yet he wants to charge them tax and make them fill out forms and have an accountant send them a letter telling them they're going to lose their tax number if they help their neighbours. That's what's called - is happening here. This minister won't stand up for his (Indistinct).

Lobster marketing

So I'm going to go to another minister. I'm going to go to the minister of fisheries. Minister, you're doing a lot of travelling. You've spoken out on your market initiatives for the lobster and fish industry. Minister, how is your marketing working out for the lobster industry in PEI?

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

Mr. LeClair: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Marketing initiatives are working out very well. We're putting our product right around the globe.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I noticed that.

Getting the lowest prices in the history right now in Atlantic Canada for our lobster, so you're marketing strategies are working great. You tell the lobster fishermen that, that are trying to survive, getting the lowest prices they've got in the last 15 years.

Minister, is it true that a lot of your marketing and exporting of lobster products goes into the United States?

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

Mr. LeClair: Yes, Madam Speaker, a lot of our product goes into the United States.

It has since the beginning of our fishery, basically, on PEI. What we're doing now is expanding it to go to China, to Japan, India - I guess any country you'd like to - Ireland. Wherever they eat we want to put lobster, and it certainly it's working.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So, minister, do you have somebody in charge of marketing in your department that is promoting the product over? Who would that be?

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

Mr. LeClair: Yes, Madam Speaker, we hired a marketing officer as part of our plan to promote lobster and promote it around the world.

He's doing a great job of it, and he's certainly putting our product out there on shelves from here right square to China. And it's working very well.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, question back. Who did you hire?

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

Mr. LeClair: Dave MacGuire.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess I can understand why the marketing part is not working here in North America. I (Indistinct) he's not even allowed to go into the United States. So how is he going to market our lobster when he can't even get into the States? Can you tell me that?

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

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, our market development officer's doing a great job around all the countries of the world.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Minister, what are your market initiatives for next year for the lobster industry?

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

Mr. LeClair: Madam Speaker, we'll continue to do what we have done.

We've entertained people from Henan province in China, we've entertained delegates from Russia, Scotland, Ireland. We've entertained delegates here on the Island and we put trade missions across the United States and across the world, and we'll continue to do that because it is working, and certainly we're getting great results from that.

When the time that the economies in the world start to come back we'll be in a position to reap great benefits for the industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Charlottetown school inspections

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is to the minister of education.

Mr. Minister, recently, as a result of the Elm Street School closure due to mould problems, you've stated a number of schools would be inspected for similar problems. Minister, some people that I've spoken to are wondering: Have these inspections been started on any of the city schools in the Charlottetown area as of yes and, if not, when we might expect to see them begin?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I do want to acknowledge the leadership of the Western School Board in respect to the situation they were dealing with that led to this process. Also, the students and staff for their patience and commitment to allow the Western School Board and the department of education to deal with the air quality issues.

Right now, what we've done is we've tasked a committee, particularly from the school boards across the province, the department of education and from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. They've had one meeting. They're meeting today as their second meeting. They'll be listing criteria to go in and to prioritize buildings in respect to what buildings need to be addressed. There was a number of retrofits in schools all across the province in the late 1990s and there is potential - there are some concerns, maybe, that those schools will be identified as first priorities.

But I haven't an update on what that actual list will look like and which schools will be addressed first. They're setting the criteria to look at which schools fit the criteria and what are the schools that will be assessed as a priority.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Supplementary question to the same minister.

Mr. Minister, would prioritizing perhaps be done by the age of school? For instance, Sherwood school in my district, a 50-year-old building, would that take priority over a younger building, per se, for inspection?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

There will be a range of criteria in the assessment of all our buildings in the province. It's not necessarily the age of the building but, as I alluded to, there are newer buildings that had retrofitted windows. That was the issue that presented the huge problems at Elm Street School. So we will be setting the criteria. I will be updating the House or the public on what schools will be addressed first, in respect to the professional assessments that are done by Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Once again, our government is committed to safe school and we're committed to making sure that our schools have the air quality that is conducive to positive learning

environments in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Price of oil and 2011 paving budget

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is to the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

The price of oil has risen to approximately \$88 a barrel. Could you please tell us what affect this will have on your department's paving budget for 2011?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: Yes, that's correct. Price of oil today is around \$88 a barrel. My budget's made up of \$75 a barrel. So basically what you're looking at is about a 14.6% or 14.7% increase in oil right now. It's too early to tell what it's going to be in the spring, in May, and what it's going to be.

But in the budget, I've got a tremendous staff there, as you know. What we've been able to do, if you look at the total budget, all the paving you see in PEI, I believe I got about 3.3% of the total budget. We've not only been able to do that paving, but we also were able to give, I believe, about 4 million from Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal back to finance there to help him out.

Plus we were also, out of our budget, being able to give back (Indistinct) pay for the building up in Tignish, that new great building going up there, leaving 1.5 million to do paint shop and that, and sandblasting.

Yes. Without going for a special warrant. It was all done by the great workers I have in transportation and the public of Prince Edward Island, and also the contractors, which came in at about 12% to 14% below our projected prices on jobs. It goes to the contractors and everybody working together.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you, minister. The question's to the same minister. So that's what you did in the past. What will your department be doing to cope with this increase in the future, for next year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: What we have done is we've started - the previous government used to put the tenders out in June, July and August and it was just a big mess trying to get to them and nobody could plan. So what we'll be doing is putting the contracts, which we've done, in February. This year contracts will start going out in January so the contractors can plan on what their work is going to be.

Mr. MacKinley: We'll look at some jobs. Maybe we'll do a little tweaking here, a little tweaking there, for instance, on the budget to find out what will happen in the spring. But what we have done - and then there could be more money from the federal government. Our leader of the party here has been working hard on the Atlantic Gateway file for us.

Ms. Bertram: The Premier? Yes.

Mr. MacKinley: Our Premier.

Ms. Bertram: Yes.

Mr. MacKinley: It looks like there's going to be lots of paving done next year, especially in your riding.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Freedom of information act

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, I know a lot of people in this province have made a request for information regarding government expenditures. I have made a number of requests over the last couple of years for information on secret backroom deal on Aliant, secret deal on Maritime Electric, or whatever you want to call them.

I think what has happened is that the freedom of information legislation is perceived by the public and the media as a joke. Now Premier, you promised to be open and transparent. Will you see to it that this act now is allowed to operate freely?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I'm pretty sure, Madam Speaker, we have the exact same act that was in place for the 11 years while he was in government and I think it worked well during those 11 years, so I presume that it's working well now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, it was our government that brought the legislation in.

The Premier has a short memory. We're very proud of that, because what it does is it allows to streamline the process and allows

the free flowing of information that government makes expenditures on. It seems that there's political interference now and this has paralysed this freedom of information act. So will you ask your staff to stop interfering on this process and allow this information to flow freely?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Madam Speaker, it must be makeup day over on the other side of the House because I have no idea what the hon. member is referring to.

We follow everything according to the legislation. It's important to point out the Leader of the Opposition likes to attack individuals and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters likes to attack companies, but it's important for us to point out that the deal that we did with Aliant was a deal that was very good for the people of Prince Edward Island. There were three different times while the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters signed the exact same deal with Aliant that we signed. What did the government of the day and the taxpayers of the day get in return for that deal? Absolutely nothing.

When we signed the deal with Aliant we made sure that they reduced down their price and that they had to make contributions to the Province of Prince Edward Island. So perhaps the hon. member should be thanking the Government of Prince Edward Island today for the great deals that we are doing in an open and transparent manner.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, absolutely nothing is what information is coming back

from government.

A lot of people in the public and in the opposition have made requests, and all I'm asking is that the Premier and his staff over there respect the legislation and respect the requests that are made for information and allow it to run freely. Will you do that, Premier, make that promise?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: That's exactly what we do on a regular basis, Madam Speaker.

I'm very proud that it was our government that is the government that is going to respect the laws of this province. We are the government that came in with regards to fixed election dates. We are the government that came in with audited financial statements that have to be done before a general election.

I just want to point out that the previous government was the government that hid from transparency. How did they hide from transparency? Over a two-year period, between 2002 and 2003, they estimated that their deficit was in an \$8 million position and an \$11 million position. They called a general election. Somehow, miraculously, after that general election, those deficits jumped from \$8 million to \$85 million and \$11 million to \$125 million. That is the way the previous government operated, and we've brought in legislation to make sure that you can never have a government like that again that operates like that. Our government is the government that believes in openness and transparency, and it was their government that fired 800 individuals, rewrote electoral maps three times, changed around fixed election dates so it happens after they could call a general election.

It's our government that's about openness and transparency. It was that government

that hid, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, we know who's hiding and we know who was the most secretive government in the history of this province, and all we're getting is a runaround process with an act that's put there to operate as it was intended, to allow the free flow of information.

Now, Premier, I asked for information on Aliant, I asked for information on Maritime Electric, I asked for information on re-zoning and the closing of schools, and none of that has come. So are you telling me now, your government now is going to release all of that information? Is that a promise from you?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

We release anything that is under the freedom of information that we are able to release in a lawful manner. But it's important to recognize - let's look at the three issues that the hon. member is talking about. We were able to sign an agreement with Aliant that lowered down the government's telephone costs. He's against that. Then we were able to sign a deal with Maritime Electric that is now going to lower the average cost to ratepayers in this province by 14%. Then we were the first government ever that took our head out of the sand and made sure that we listened to the work of the Eastern School District and reports that had been done over the last 20 years indicating that small schools in this province should be closed.

That is what the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is against. He's actually against

doing good things for the taxpayers of this province. We know what he's for. He's for Polar Foods. He's for telling Islanders they have an \$8 million deficit that grows to \$85 million. He's for firing 800 individuals when he comes into power. He's for breaking human rights. He's for breaking contracts. That's what that member's for. Our government's about openness and transparency, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, the Premier has not been forthcoming with a lot of information, not only for the opposition office, but for all Islanders.

Everything is a secret deal. He hides behind everything. He will not consult. He will not go to meetings. He doesn't allow his ministers to take questions. It's a legacy that this Premier's leaving and it's a very secretive government. All I'm asking is all these requests for information under this FOIPP act, will you allow this information to come forward now? Of course you will.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

One of the other things that we did when we first came to power, because we believe in openness and transparency, is I had the privilege to serve as Leader of the Opposition of this province over a three and a half year period, and I took that job very seriously. Our job was to hold the government accountable of the day.

We operated with a budget that was very tight over in our office because it's important to be able to hire staff to be able to do the research necessary. One of the first things we did when we came into power was

increase that budget to the opposition office so they were able to go out and hire more researchers. That is also about being open and transparent, is making sure that more resources were available for the opposition office. To make sure that there was more resources available for the legislative office. So while the previous government chose to starve the opposition office because they didn't want openness and transparency, our government is about helping them out so that they can get better researchers.

I suggest perhaps they should start using the researchers' questions instead of making up their own questions on the floor of the House, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, final question.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, we are sure that the Premier is not going to provide us any information now or in the future, so a final question would be for the minister of tourism.

West River bridge

Minister, it has been discovered here just lately that we now have an optical illusion in this Gentle Island. I'm just wondering if you would take the time to insert a picture of this sinking bridge in West River in the visitor's guide for the next coming year and make sure that proper signage is in place for the tourists.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Vessey: Hon. member, I'll take that under advisement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General. Commitment

All Female Carpentry Class

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to update members and all Islanders about a unique pilot program taking place at Charlottetown Rural High School.

As part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's commitment to, and response to, the PEI Trades Strategy (2005), we are working with the Eastern School District and the Charlottetown Rural High School to pilot an all female offering of the newly implemented Carpentry 701A-Introduction to Carpentry.

The Trades Strategy challenged all stakeholders to address the skilled labour shortage by increasing the number of skilled trade people in the province. At the secondary level, our role is to expose as many students as possible to the occupations available in the skilled trades through our relevant and rigorous Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs.

We are also committed to developing relationships with other stakeholders to promote the skilled trades. Females are one of the largest untapped demographics in the skilled trades. The new Career and Technical Education curriculum is open to all learners across Prince Edward Island's school system. It contains information and ideas for teachers around making their programs gender equitable and welcoming to all learners.

Research indicates that when female

students are part of the mixed skill trade class, and the instructor asks the student to engage in the hands-on activity, girls tend to take a step back and the boys step up. There are a number of reasons why this is the case.

Historically, Career and Technical Education Programs have been designed to meet the needs of male learners. There are very few female CTE teachers or role models for young girls and females are under-represented in the industry.

The all female carpentry class is a pilot designed to address the shortage of girls choosing to engage in CTE programs. We need to work together to find ways to encourage more students to consider pursuing a career in skilled trades. The class being piloted is the carpentry 701A course which is the pre-requisite for the next five carpentry courses.

By providing this class to a small group of girls, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development hopes to provide a positive experience in Career and Technical Education. We also hope to see an increase in the number of girls who choose to continue taking carpentry courses throughout high school.

I commend the staff at Charlottetown Rural High School, the Eastern School District and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the commitment to this initiative.

As minister, I would also like to wish participating students all the best as they continue to learn and study courses in Career and Technical Education.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and

Wellness.

Recruitment and Retention Secretariat

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise again today in the House to recognize the outstanding work of our Recruitment and Retention Secretariat. Under our government the secretariat was established and it plays a vitally important role in ensuring the proper health resources are put in place across our One Island Community.

In addition to the regular advertising, job fairs, and organizing site visits, our secretariat has many initiatives underway to support students in their training and encourage them to find a place in our health system here on Prince Edward Island.

We have a tremendous Family Medicine Residency Program to train new physicians and foster closer links to our province. The residency is a full complement with 10 participants. As well, we have double the number of medical seats at Memorial University. I've actually visited with many of the Island med students at MUN and Dal, and they are encouraged by the support the province has shown them.

Closer to home, we have introduced the Accelerated Nursing Program at UPEI. As well, our Nursing Sponsorship Program is thriving, this year with a 95% uptake from UPEI students. These students have signed return-in-service agreements to work in PEI upon their graduation.

The province has, also, a seats purchase program with the New Brunswick Community College where three eligible PEI residents are guaranteed access to the Medical Laboratory Technologist Program at NBCC. Very important.

Sponsorships are also supporting students

from PEI in a number of Allied Health professions. Currently there are sponsorships in place for hard-to-recruit professions such as Radiation Therapy and EEG/EMG Technology.

This past summer our Health Care Futures and our Nursing Summer Programs were very successful. I'm pleased to report that 72 students were hired to work with Health Care Futures and 85 students with the nursing program. These students gained valuable insight into work within the health care sector and the facilities really enjoyed - and I've heard many from the site directors that it's been very positive.

Currently, a new pilot program is underway with the first year Accelerated Bachelor of Science in nursing students at UPEI. These students were unable to participate in the summer program based on their classroom and clinical time required for the accelerated program, so these students presented us with a proposal this year, a proposal to work with facilities when their schedule would allow.

I am pleased today to announce that recruitment and retention staff have worked with the QEH and PCH and UPEI to allow 11 interested first-year accelerated students to work from January to March this coming year, which will allow them to gain valuable work experience in their field.

As you have heard, we have many initiatives underway to find and keep health care providers that Islanders need and these initiatives are certainly working.

Since August 1st, eight new physicians began practising on Prince Edward Island. This includes two new family physicians, Dr. David Morgan in Souris and Dr. Paul Jewers in Hunter River. Six new specialists: Dr. Peter Dawes, a general surgeon at Prince County Hospital; Dr. Tamara Zagustin who works in physical medicine - she is working

from the QEH but will be available for referral services to all physicians throughout the entire province; Dr. Barry Nuechterlein, our new anaesthesiologist at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital; Dr. Jennifer Fesser working in hematopathology based at the QEH - she will also be providing services to the entire province; and Doctors Siddarth Chibber and Claude Helpert who have both joined our complement of radiologists.

We are very fortunate to have secured the services of these physicians from a very limited human resource market. They are talented individuals and are a wonderful addition to our complement and our health care team.

However, Madam Speaker, I will ask to have your indulgence again, because we have so much good news to report.

In addition to these eight new physicians, there are three committed family practitioners who have signed letters of offer with the province are scheduled to practice in December 2010 - this month - April and in September respectively. These physicians are currently working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI to complete the licensing requirement. That will mean a lot for the communities that they will serve.

We have eight family physicians and one specialist who have signed contracts with the province to return to practice on PEI upon their completion of the residency training within the next two years.

There are several other physicians who have expressed interest and are currently in discussions with our Recruitment and Retention Secretariat.

In closing, I am so pleased to stand in the House today and report that under the leadership of our government the current number of vacancies in our number of

physician complement is the lowest it has ever been in a number of years. So the most physicians we had. This is a great success.

The recruitment and retention efforts of our government are paying off. Our government has seen great accomplishments, our government is providing the health resources Islanders need, and our government is proud that we will continue to work hard to recruit and retain the health care providers that we need to operate our health care system on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Community Internship Program

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last September my department was pleased to announce the Public Internship Program, which gave recent post-secondary graduates either a year-long or six-month-long job in the public service doing work related to their degree.

As minister responsible for advanced learning I was pleased to see the strong response to this program from recent graduates looking to become part of the workforce and build a life on Prince Edward Island. Because of the number of eligible candidates who applied, government went on to create the Community Internship Program, which gave 138 recent graduates six-month-long placements with non-profit groups.

These programs have been a great success, and I am pleased to announce that government will be renewing the

Community Internship Program, which is tentatively scheduled to take a new round of applicants in June of 2011.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Campbell: This program will subsidize interns' wages at non-profit organizations.

Government is working to build a strong, skilled workforce on Prince Edward Island. Many of the recent graduates applying to these programs are young people who need work experience in their chosen field of study to break into the job market and start their career. By offering them well-paying jobs we are giving them a reason to keep their skills on Prince Edward Island and become part of the province's labour force.

I look forward to seeing this program benefit both the graduates and the non-profits who hire them. By investing in people, government is laying the foundation for a strong Island economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier.

Sledge Hockey

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, sledge hockey is a sport which is growing in popularity among its participants and attracting a wider audience among the public.

Canada's national sledge hockey team has been a full member of Hockey Canada since 2003, and it has won a number of world championships. Among its achievements was a gold medal at the Paralympic Winter Games in Turin, Italy in 2006. One of the members on that gold-medal winning team

was Billy Bridges, a former resident of Summerside.

Sledge hockey offers an opportunity, mainly for persons with lower body disabilities, both male and female, to participate in an exciting and highly competitive sport. Many non-disabled people are also attracted to the sport to develop their skills.

This coming Sunday, Parasport and Recreation PEI's sledge hockey team will be holding a spirited practice at the Gateway Arena in Borden-Carleton beginning at 10:00 a.m. Following the practice, at 11:00 a.m., there will be an opportunity for anyone who is interested to join the team on the ice and to experience that nationally played sport.

I encourage anyone who is interested to come out this coming Sunday, learn more about our sledge hockey team, and try their hand in an exciting and challenging sporting activity.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table documents from the Office of the Attorney General, Corporate Service Division, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document containing 315 signatures from the participants of the Westisle Relay for Life calling on government to restrict and regulate the use of artificial tanning equipment, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the *Consolidated Financial Statements University of Prince Edward Island* for the period ending April 30, 2010 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the report on borrowing required pursuant to Section 47 of the *Financial Administration Act* since my last report dated March 31st, 2010 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Pursuant to Section 59(1) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, I hereby present the annual report of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the period ending 31 December, 2009, and I move that the report be received and do lie on the Table.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, opposition would like to call Motion No. 25.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 25.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, the following motion:

WHEREAS Rotary Youth Parliament approved a resolution in 2010 in support of specialized programming in Island schools;

AND WHEREAS an estimated one out of every 10 individuals has a learning disability in Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* gives a constitutional guarantee to equality, including equal benefit and protection under the law for those with mental disabilities, which would include learning disabilities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that

the Legislative Assembly encourage the government to support Islanders of all ages with learning disabilities;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED that the government consider expanding specialized learning disability programming in Island schools;

AND THERE BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED that the government further consider expanding school-work transition and overall supports for adults with learning disabilities.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, to open debate on the motion.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's my pleasure to bring forward opposition's motion of support for people with learning disabilities. Some of our colleagues in this Legislative Assembly may recall that the topic of learning disabilities was raised by Island students during the model Rotary Youth Parliament. At that time the students recognized that this was an issue, an important one, and took action, tabling a very similar motion.

The motion that we present today reflects the great work of those students.

If you remember at the time, a former Page, Ellen Luxton, was actually the premier of the day. We had Kirsten Marsh, government house leader, Dunja, provincial treasurer; Malloy MacDonald, minister of environment, energy and forestry; Logan Graham, minister of agriculture; Leith Rankin, minister of health, care of seniors and social development; Simon Doucette, minister of fisheries, aquaculture and rural development; Josh Rack, minister of transportation and public works; Lucas MacLean, minister of community and

cultural affairs; Greg Landry, minister of education; Richard McGuigan, attorney general; Candace MacIntosh, minister of early childhood development; Yolanda Gallant, minister of tourism; Daniel MacDonald, minister of innovation and advanced learning.

At that time the opposition was led by Caitlin Kimmert; Travis Gordon from Evangeline-Miscouche - it was actually Travis that was one of the students that really wanted to participate and do this particular motion; Julia MacMillan, Charlottetown-Brighton area; Dylan Doucette, from Morell-Mermaid; Jessica Gallant, Tracadie-Hillsborough Park; Erica MacDonald, Souris-Elmira; Tyler McNeill, West Royalty-Springvale; Ricky Clow, York-Oyster Bed; Vita Evans, Charlottetown-Lewis Point; Barry Ryan, Georgetown-St. Peters; Amy Doyle, who's a Page with us now, Cornwall-Meadowbank; Shayleen Martin, Montague-Kilmuir; and Andrew Bond, Kensington-Malpeque.

Every one of those students on the opposition side had gotten together and had worked on the motion and why they wanted to debate that. After the youth parliament was over they actually met with myself a couple of times and asked would I bring this motion forward, and we negotiated a little bit back and forth, so it's a little tiny bit different.

But the students were so passionate about it because (a) they either knew someone that had a learning disability or (b) over experiences they found out how difficult it was for some individuals who are learning in a special way to have the kinds of supports that they need.

Everyone in Prince Edward Island has been affected either directly, or indirectly, by learning disabilities. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Prince

Edward Island, a learning disability is a disorder that affects how a person understands and uses information. This disorder affects the ability to learn. This is in spite of the average or sometimes above average intelligence. Because learning disabilities are invisible and complex, early identification, assessment and interventions involving home, school, community and workplace settings are vital. The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability, and at minimum include the provision of specific skill instruction accommodation, compensation strategies and self-advocacy.

Types of learning disabilities. A learning disability is not an intellectual disability. Rather, a learning disability is a disability that affects a person's ability to process information. Contrary to popular belief, people with learning disabilities possess average to above-average IQs.

Dyslexia is one of the most common forms of all learning disabilities. It's a language based disability in which a person has trouble understanding words, sentences or paragraphs. People with dyslexia often have problems with processing or understanding what they read or what they hear. Many dyslexic people are notably talented in arts and music, 3-D visual perception, athletic and mechanical abilities.

Dyscalculia is a math-based learning disability that affects the ability to grasp and solve math concepts. People with dyscalculia often have difficulty manipulating numbers in their head, and remembering steps in formula and equations.

Dysgraphia is a writing disability where people find it hard to form letters and write within a defined space. Many people that have this possess handwriting that's uneven and inconsistent. Many are able to write

legibly but have to do so very small or very slowly. Typically, people with this are unable to visualize letters, do not possess the ability to remember the motor patterns of letters and writing, and require a large amount of energy and time.

Nonverbal learning disabilities is a neurological syndrome that develops in the right side of the brain. People with NLD have a very strong verbal ability, remarkable memory and spelling skills and strong auditory retention. Some people with NLD may experience weak coordination, balance problems and difficulty with fine motor skills.

Learning disabilities are not static but, rather, they can range in severity and many interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following: speech or oral language development, listening, speaking and understanding; reading, decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehensive; written language, spelling and written expression; and mathematics, computation, problem solving.

According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Prince Edward Island, learning disabilities may also involve further difficulties with coordination, organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

As I've just mentioned, learning disabilities include a number of disorders which affect how a person processes and uses information. Some additional facts are as follows. Approximately one in 10 people have some form of learning disability. The definite causes of learning disabilities are unknown. However, research indicates that learning disabilities are due to genetic or neurobiological factors or injury that change brain functioning in a way that affects one or more of the processes related to learning.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. The majority of people do not grow out of learning disabilities though they may develop effective coping strategies. Learning disabilities are not caused by hearing or vision problems, socioeconomic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching. However, these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are complex and may coexist with various conditions including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, neurological, sensory impairments or other medical conditions. Long-term consequences of learning disabilities include higher unemployment or under-employment and poor physical and mental health.

Clearly there are economic benefits to society for effectively addressing and supporting people with learning disabilities. The economic benefits accrue from the reduction and the uses of health, justice and social service programs and systems. A continued emphasis on research is imperative to help understand the causes and consequences of learning disabilities. It has been argued that early remediation is beneficial. It can greatly reduce the number of children meeting diagnostic criteria for learning disabilities.

There are many effective interventions to support individuals with learning disabilities, to help them learn, to thrive, to become productive members of society. No situation is identical. Rather, each person with a learning disability is unique. Intervention should therefore address a person's unique set of needs and the environments in which they can work and learn. Factors that impact intervention include: the manner in which the person is affected by their learning disability; coexisting conditions; their particular needs and major activities during their life; their

social and environmental context, including support systems.

What is clear is that intervention should occur at the earliest possible age. Supports and structures, including accommodations, are vital interventions throughout the lifespan. Building and maintaining health is virtually important to build capacity and resilience and maximize the well-being of individuals with learning disabilities.

Learning disabilities are lifelong, legitimate disability. People with learning disabilities merit protection under human rights legislation to ensure that they enjoy all the rights and privileges and have the potential to become productive, contributing citizens. Tolerance and understanding do not always occur for people with learning disabilities. While there has been progress, there remains significant opportunities for improvements to ensure that:

education is a fundamental for all people, including those with learning disabilities. People with learning disabilities must have access to effective education that addresses their learning challenges at the earliest possible point in their education careers;

public policy is defined to support people with learning disabilities to use accommodations to demonstrate their mastery of a subject area in basic and post-secondary education for trade or journeymen certificates and when they enter the workplace;

public sector agencies improve their communication with their clients to ensure that written material is prepared in a manner that respects reading difficulties. Communication with public sector should not be restricted to only the written form.

When it comes to understanding learning disabilities, the focus in the field has mostly

been on cognitive factors. Many studies and professionals try to understand access remedial problems that the learning disability individual experiences in school and work which may prevent them from fitting in with their peers.

Until recently, there's been little focus that's been dedicated to the psychological welfare of the same individuals who, because of their cognitive deficits, are more likely to experience emotional and social difficulties, both with their interactions with others as well as within themselves. Sometimes you'll find that a person with a learning disability may have a lower self-esteem or self-concept.

It is important to distinguish that although serious problems such as delinquency, difficulty socializing and forming relationships and depression are associated with those who have a learning disability, these problems do not necessarily always coexist with a person with a learning disability. Having an learning disability is not in itself sufficient to have a social difficulty. Being diagnosed with a learning disability is only considered as a potential risk factor for developing such social difficulties.

Risk factors may originate from an individual's internal as well as external characteristics from motivation, frustration, self-esteem to community, family and school. For instance, a child with a learning disability may become frustrated as a result of repeated failures at school, but the presence of a supportive family network and the presence of certain island of competencies - something that they do well, whether that's sports or a particular subject area - may counteract the repercussions of the negative school life resulting in a fairly well adjusted child.

Conservative estimates of learning

disabilities place its incidence at one in every 10 people. It's commonly accepted that the incidence rates are much higher with some students citing a level of one out of every five people.

A factor which adds to the complexity of learning disabilities is that it frequently coexists with other conditions. It's estimated that as many as one-third to one-half of people with learning disabilities are also affected by attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In addition to ADHD, there are many other conditions which coexist with learning disabilities.

People with learning disabilities have average to above-average intellect and reasoning and are fully able to learn given the right intervention. Without effective intervention, learning disabilities are lifelong, chronic, handicapping conditions.

In terms of supports for persons with learning disabilities, the bottom line is that strong supports need to be set in place and continuously monitored and assessed for their success. Supports such as, for example: the earliest possible identification of a learning disability; identification of learning disabilities throughout their lifespan; improved pre-service and continuing education of health educational professionals to enable them to both identify and support people with learning disabilities.

Also: support and intervention throughout the person's life; support for accommodations for individuals with learning disabilities during basic and post-secondary education and in the workplace; recognition by public sector agencies - must always make sure that they're communicating with people of many forms; strict and unwavering adherence to human rights; continued and active support to conduct research to the cause, interventions

and implications of learning disabilities; recognition that by maximizing the potential of people with learning disabilities, everyone's potential is maximized.

I have a sister of mine that actually works in the area of adults with learning disabilities. She actually works at Holland College and her name is Velda. She's the person that's actually at the college that, if someone needs an individual plan or support and they have a learning disability, she helps set that up as well as she has tutors and other people, as well as some specialized equipment, to help that student be able to excel. Also, Joanne McCabe was also, at one time, head of special services at the University of Prince Edward Island doing the same kind of work.

In closing, learning disabilities is a very important area that deserves priority attention from government. The earlier the intervention, the better. The more supports that are available on a flexible basis for everybody, the better the outcomes. I look forward to some good discussion this afternoon, and we're looking forward to unanimous support for this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to second the motion.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion of support for individuals with learning disabilities across the province.

Learning disabilities affect every person differently. The disorder can range from mild to severe and some people have more than one learning disability. Regardless, people of all ages with learning disabilities are protected against discrimination and they

have a right to different forms of assistance in the classroom and the workplace.

We know that learning disabilities involve an altering of brain function and it will often affect the student life long. But we also know that great strides can be made to help persons with learning disabilities live happily and have meaningful lives.

More children in this country have a learning disability than any other type of disabilities combined. Of the children with learning disabilities in this country, more than half have - 59.8% have a learning disability. In 2006, 3.2% of Canadian children had a learning disability. That's the equivalent of one child in every school bus full of children.

As children make the transition from home to school, the number diagnosed with a learning disabilities grows by nearly 25%. These transition years are a key time during which we need to access children and begin accommodating those with learning disabilities so they can reach their full potential. More than half a million adults in this country live with a learning disability, making it more challenging for them to learn in universities and colleges and on their jobs.

Learning disabilities increased considerably between 2001 and 2006 among Canadians age 15 and over by almost 40%, to 631,000 people, making it one of the fastest growing types of disabilities in Canada that isn't related to aging. It is never too late to get help for learning disabilities. Indeed, taking the initiative to seek out support and services is the first step in dealing with learning disabilities.

Different types of assistance can be provided, depending on the type of learning disability and how severe it is, as well as the person's age. These options should be

considered when planning instructions and support at school or in the workplace. Finding the most helpful type of support is a process of trying different ideas and observing what works best.

Government has a role to play here by making testing specialists available for people of all ages and offering assistance for every stage of life. Learning disabilities should not prevent a person from reaching their goals. Many adults, some of who are unaware of their learning disabilities, have developed ways to cope with their difficulties and are able to lead successful lives. Regardless of the situation, understanding the specific challenges and learning strategies to deal with learning disabilities directly at every stage can alleviate a lot of frustration and make successful living much easier.

Prince Edward Island students deserve to have a continuum of special services with a wide range of interventions that may include oral testing, extra time, written board notes, technology supports and other individualized educational plans. Indeed, students with learning disabilities deserve to have access to a wide range of professionals in our school system to work with students with learning difficulties, including special education, resource teachers, school counsellors, student services teams, educational assistants, youth workers, special education consultants, consulting, educational psychologists, Reading Recovery TM teachers and tutors, and more. Students with learning disabilities face particular challenges when they get ready to leave high school. They need advice, cooperative work opportunities and community spirit.

I encourage government to commit to providing additional supports as these students transition from school to work for further learning. Learning does not end after

high school or university or a training program, but continues throughout life. Every year we are inspired by Islanders who upgrade their skills to adult education classes at Holland College who go on to receive their GED or grade 12 equivalent.

I encourage government to commit to improving adult literacy skills by training more adult educators, increasing workplace learning opportunities and increasing awareness for adult literacy and learning programs such as the GED. These positive steps can help Islanders with learning disabilities and low literacy levels improve their skills and contribute to society through meaningful employment and increased pride to becoming positive role models for families, friends and neighbours. There are no quick fixes for a learning disability. Dealing with this problem is tough. Most often it is a lifelong battle.

The Government of Prince Edward Island must commit to support for early identification and treatment because they are of a primary importance. With the proper help, children with learning disabilities can become quite successful later in life. For children with a learning disability, nothing can replace a good educational program, proper management, although support of parents, family and friends also play a vital role.

I encourage the government to continue to build on the successes of the learning disabled community for Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to the motion before I go to the mover to close debate?

Are you ready for the question on the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All in favour of the motion, signify by saying “yea.”

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Contrary minded, “nay!”

Motion’s carried and it is unanimous.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, I would like to call Motion No. 23.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 23.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, the following motion:

WHEREAS the front-line health professionals of Prince Edward Island have expressed significant concerns regarding the hasty implementation of government’s new ‘Model of Care’;

AND WHEREAS without due consultation the Model of Care has resulted in the deletion of registered nurse positions in all areas of the health system across the province;

AND WHEREAS additional duties and responsibilities tacked on to excessive workloads will have a negative impact on health care workers and the public;

AND WHEREAS the government’s decision to prioritize budgetary constraints has created significant patient safety concerns among health care professionals at our manors and acute care facilities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Members of this Legislative Assembly urge government and Health PEI to review the schedule of implementation of the new Model of Care and make adjustments afterwards to develop a workable, yet inclusive Model of Care.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is outside.

I don't have my notes, but I will ask we wait a minute until she comes in.

Speaker: Hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, we can go to you to second the motion.

Mr. M. Currie: To second the motion?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: No, we're on another motion. Motion 23 has just been read, so the hon. Leader of the Opposition to open debate on the motion.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On the Model of Care, before I actually start the motion, I will read actually a paper that was written from an RN who wanted to make sure people were aware what the issues were around Model of Care. She starts by talking about a story for three fishermen.

Three fishermen are fishing together on a river, the trawling motor on each of their boats working against a strong current to keep them stationary in the water. All too soon, however, their motors begin to run out of gas. As the boats start to move backward in the water the fishermen begin to ponder their predicament. The stuttering motors were the only source of power for the boats, and the river is now rapidly sweeping them

downstream towards a huge waterfall. They knew about the fall but thought nothing of it while they each had plenty of gas. Now they realized it will surely kill them.

The first fisherman considered the problem and becomes depressed. Seeing no easy way to escape, he broods about his impending demise. All he can think about is that final plunge over the falls. He's consumed with hopelessness and regret. As he approaches the falls he's just sitting motionless, thinking sad thoughts.

The second fishermen considers the problem and tries to avoid depression. Seeing no easy escape, he refuses to even consider his impending demise and instead contemplates the good things in his life. He tries to calm himself by whistling a little tune and manages to convince himself that all is going to be well. As he approaches the falls, he's rocking back and forth to his own music thinking happy thoughts.

The third fisherman considers the problem and recognizes it as an exciting challenge. Seeing no easy escape, he lets his mind roam far and wide, rejecting no idea that might prove useful. He thinks: I am a fisherman and fishing is what I do best. So he hits upon an idea to save himself. He will cast his line into the river and with all his angling skill he will catch a big fish, big enough to pull him back upstream to safety. As he approaches the falls, he's fishing, thinking: Boy, I love my job.

The purpose of the RN that wrote this paper is to provide an evidence-based view of the issues surrounding the nurses' shortage on Prince Edward Island and evidence-based strategies to help overcome these issues. The paper was written in response to the recent implementation of the Model of Care health care sustainability plan at the QEH hospital that resulted in the elimination of 10 full-time registered nursing positions.

The five main strategies proposed in the paper are adopted from the Canadian Nurses Association Research and included increasing registered nursing, RN productivity, reducing RNs' annual absenteeism, increasing enrolment in the RN entry to practice education program, and reducing attrition rates in RNs' entry to practice programs. Two other strategies that influenced recruitment and retention of RNs included psychological rewards and job satisfaction. The importance of adequate RN-to-patient staff ratio cannot be undermined. Most of the research in this area has concluded that patient outcomes are negatively effected by lower nurse-patient ratios.

In comparison to the parable above, health care delivery on Prince Edward Island has qualities of all three fishermen. With the area of increasing RN productivity the province is rocking back and forth to his own music. Finally, in the areas of increasing the enrolment of RN entry to practice in PEI is the fishing. The province is doing some things well and going toward the waterfall in other areas.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the issues surrounding the registered nursing shortage and to provide concrete resolutions to these issues that would be applicable to the PEI health care system, derived from evidence-based research data. It would also outline a summary of what Prince Edward Island initiatives are in line with the evidence-based resolutions, what strategies are out of step with the research data, and what possible future avenues we could benefit from.

Prince Edward Island is not alone in the struggle to recruit and to retain RNs. In 2007, despite 217,000 RNs practising in Canada, there was still a shortage of 10,000 full-time RNs. It is predicted by 2022 Canada will be short almost 60,000 RNs.

The problem is compounded by the worldwide nursing shortage. Factors contributing to the worldwide nursing shortage include, but are not inclusive to, increasing elderly population, lower fertility rates, increasing incidents of chronic age-related diseases, and an increase in the life-sustaining technology and the outflow of RNs to more lucrative regions of the world.

In Canada, like all other countries, an aging workforce means that 21% of nurses will retire in the next 10 years. The nursing shortage has resulted in less than adequate numbers of RNs in each facility.

Unfortunately, the aging population and the increased acuity levels in acute care facilities result in less than optimal working conditions for the remaining RNs. As obesity rates rise, so do obesity-related illnesses and the physical demands on RNs. RNs are working an increasing amount of overtime each year and this contributes to the growing job dissatisfaction among nurses. A recent survey released by the PEI Health Sector Council revealed that 46% of RNs, LPNs and RCWs have felt frequently they were always overworked.

The nursing shortage is a very real, very complex problem that can be broken down into two main concepts: supply and demand. There are not enough nurses in the workforce and the demand for RNs has increased. The results are many PEI facilities with large numbers of vacant RN positions. Despite the waterfall solution or situation this province appears to be in, hope is not lost. To sit and do nothing is not an option. To pretend the waterfall does not exist is not an option. The only option is to keep our minds open and try new and innovative ideas that have an upstream approach to solving their RN shortage on Prince Edward Island.

The Model of Care implemented by the PEI government has features in it that are in line

with research-based evidence regarding ways to maximize current resources. Unfortunately, the new Model of Care implemented by the PEI government involved eliminating 10 full-time RN positions from the medical unit at the QEH. In an economic era where every dollar and cent matter, from a distant and monetary point of view, this may at first glance seem like a practical and reasonable solution. However, in reality, it's a costly error from both a humanistic and financial standpoint.

When there are higher numbers of RNs on a medical surgical floor there is a reduction in patient falls, an increase in the patient's satisfaction with their pain management, and an increase in positive inter-unit working relations. A higher number of RNs on a medical surgical floor did not result in an increase in the health care expenditures because of the savings generated due to overall better patient outcomes. Lower 30-day mortality rates were associated with hospitals that had a higher percentage of RNs on staff. RNs with more experience on current clinical units were associated with lower mortality rates in hospitals across Ontario. In a finding that magnet hospitals characterized have (Indistinct) stronger, professional nursing practice environment also had a lower mortality rate. In a study conducted, a 10% increase in the proportion of RNs resulted in six fewer deaths per 1,000 discharged patients. Better patient outcomes equal overall cost savings within the entire health system.

The Canadian Nurses Association concurred there's a body of evidence supporting that patient care provided by Rns correlated with a decrease in adverse events and improved patient outcomes.

A higher portion of RNs had been associated with shorter hospital stays, lower rates of shock, cardiac arrest, urinary tract infections, pneumonia and respiratory

failure in medical research in patients. There are fewer rates of medical errors and wound infections within long-term care facilities. There are a reduced numbers of pressure ulcers, hospital weight loss and deterioration in the ability to perform activities of daily living.

As stated above, better patient outcomes and a reduction of adverse patient events led to dollar savings that are directly related as a result of a larger portion of staff being RNs. Dal estimated that one full-time equivalent RN position equals \$60,000 US in avoided medical costs. This number did not take into account the dollar savings associated with reducing RN turnover rates, lower risk of readmission by patients or fewer malpractice claims, which could essentially make this number an underestimate.

As important to the nursing shortage is reducing nurse turnover and nurse absenteeism. The average cost for a Canadian nurse leaving their held position is about \$25,000 Canadian. Unfortunately, nurse turnover is also associated with a higher probability of medical errors, increased overtime hours, decreased job satisfaction. If the elevated rate of RN absenteeism could be reduced by 50%, the government and the taxpayer would have saved an estimated \$500 million Canadian in salary alone.

At first glance the task of solving RN shortage seems to be daunting, but it can be broken down into simply supply and demand. Increase of the supply of available nurses reduces the demand on the nurse. This is where evidence-based research combines with human creativity to formulate innovative ideas. This is where the attitude of the third fisherman comes into play. What Prince Edward Island and Canada have been doing in the past is now not effective. The motors are out of fuel and the new plan must be devised that is cost

efficient, open-minded, evidence-based and humane.

How do we ensure the proper numbers of RNs in Canada, on Prince Edward Island and in each individual facility across Prince Edward Island? Two of the most obvious ways are by increasing the numbers of seats in the UPEI School of Nursing and offering an accelerated program to allow undergrads to become RNs in a shorter period of time. That's positive.

Other strategies that focus on current practice on RNs include increasing the productivity of working RN, decreasing rates of absenteeism and retaining the RNs. What is being done well? The number of PEI school nursing seats did increase dramatically in the last 10 years, and in May of 2009, 14 accelerated program seats were added for undergraduates of a minimum average of 75%. All positive. These students could finish the four-year nursing program in two years.

The Model of Care was intended to increase the productivity of practising RNs by expanding the scope of LPNs and bringing patient care workers into the acute care setting to alleviate the RN workload and focus on more complex patient cases. With respect to retaining RNs the PEI government had three initiatives in place that had been effective. One was the health care projects, two was the Bachelor of Nurses Summer Employment Program, and also the Bachelor of Nurses Sponsor Program.

What could be done differently? The PEI version of the Model of Care eliminated RN positions and replaced them with LPN positions. This is not part of evidence-based. In areas where it's actually worked, the LPNs complement the RNs. A pilot project aimed at educating practicing RNs in intensive care units in emergency department across the Island in exchange for

two years of return to service has not received commitment from the provincial government to date.

American hospitals with a comprehensive nursing education system had the lowest mortality rates in comparison to ICUs that did not have use of clinical education support. ICUs have high turnover rates, secondary to other factors that contribute to burnout and to job dissatisfaction. The insidious benefits of education cannot go unnoted. Recruitment strategies are stagnant on Prince Edward Island and no new efforts have been implemented to improve job satisfaction and reduce absenteeism. At the time, the writer of this essay felt that she was very unaware of projects directed towards helping with the attrition rates at the UPEI School of Nursing.

The role of nursing education and recruitment and retention. An informal survey of the fourth year of nursing class at UPEI conducted by the writer demonstrated that 84% of the students who responded agreed to offer two years of service for speciality training in the intensive care unit or emergency departments of Prince Edward Island. This demonstrates the value of our young PEI nurses, how much emphasis they place on education. Increasing professional development opportunities in health care settings have been shown to affect nurse retention and job satisfaction. This is a well that needs to be tapped. It's not the return of service that's lucrative, but more importantly, the feeling of job satisfaction derive from the professional development. However, the return of service locks in the nurse and helps establish social and emotional ties that are essential for nurse retention.

Recognizing reducing funding for continuing nursing education is counterproductive. From a cost point of view, investing in the continuing education

of nurses demonstrates, not only the quality of education results in enhanced knowledge and skills, but that there is also a positive correlation between professional development and factors such as staff satisfaction, staff retention and quality patient care.

Prince Edward Island has completed a pilot project funded by the federal government, provincial government and the Canadian Federal Nurses Union, which successfully graduated 16 Island nurses in critical care and emergency for a return of service for two years. No commitment from the provincial government has been made to date to support the program. The long-term gain for the program would be beneficial and cost-effective. These nurses will experience greater confidence in the areas of high stress, high turnover regions of acute care, greater job satisfaction and give a higher quality of care to patients they care for. This program is an excellent retention strategy that is already developed that needs a financial commitment from the province and the provincial government. In other words, this is one of the big fish waiting to be caught to help us from going over the water fall.

It's difficult to see the financial benefits of making education available to professionals initially, but the benefits lie in the higher quality of care and in the prevention of adverse patient outcomes. One simple question to ask is: Where would any of us be without education and learning experiences?

Historically on PEI, a nurse is rewarded with a standard increase in pay every few years. This increase in pay is universal no matter what type of front-line nursing you do or how well you practice on a day to day basis. This is the old carrot-and-stick approach to behaviour modification. Back in the early 1950s, the famous psychologist Skinner was observing the direct

relationship between reward and behaviour. Interesting new studies on human behaviour are now revealing that monetary rewards are less powerful than psychological rewards.

Nurses consider the financial rewards as being standard and not linked to their personal performance. They also found that psychological rewards from the people of authority significantly impact nurse turnover retention, job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. This is a very cost-effective strategy that is easy to implement to alleviate the nursing shortage. Simply educating the leaders within a facility on the importance of acknowledging a job well done is a very inexpensive tool.

Monetary rewards will always have a place. Nurses on Prince Edward Island remember the 7.5% rollback during the Liberal reign of Catherine Callbeck in the early 1990s and the devaluing message it sent. Registered nurses are professionals who practice under a code of ethics in generating a unique body of knowledge with nursing specific research. The profession of nursing is poorly understood by the public. The public professional knowledge and critical thinking skills are primarily exercised outside the view of the public. For the public and policymakers to value and respect the nursing profession is imperative to educate people on what exactly the nurse does.

The public image of the nurse continues to show nurturing characteristics and feminine characteristics. The need for increased public awareness that nurses are scholars and leaders are underscored.

As mentioned earlier, if the rate of nurse absenteeism was cut by 50%, this would save the country \$500 million in one year. The average nurse uses 14 sick days per year. Although this topic is complex and not easily generalized to every nurse, evidence does show that if an individual nurse has a

positive prior attendance record, work attitude, job satisfaction, organization commitment and work in job involvement, supportive retention factors, then nurse absenteeism is reduced, whereas burnout and job stress actually can increase absenteeism.

The question then becomes: How does a facility prevent burnout and job stress? High rates of burnout in nursing are well documented. A research study published in Austria by (Indistinct) confirmed this strong correlation between working hours and burnout. Of the 303 nurses surveyed, 58% were showing strong symptoms of burnout. Increasingly, this study revealed that the leadership styles of ward managers had the strongest impact on staff burnout. This points to the vital importance of effective leadership practices in each facility and how education directed towards nursing managers and facility leaders on leadership theory may also be part of the solution.

A change in health care landscape requires nurses to care for more patients with higher acuity during their shifts than ever before. The harder working conditions are leading to increased burnout. To build healthier workplaces where safe care is provided, formal teamwork training is recommended. A common thread in most of the literature on the topic of burnout is the importance of empowering the nurse. As in all professions, and in one's personal life, it is important to feel informed and to be part of the decision making process. Empowering nurses also involves continuing professional development.

All of these strategies are related to the decreased rates of burnout, decreased absenteeism and higher rates of retention. Nursing is a female dominated profession. A certain number of sick calls are related to having a sick child, or lack of child care. The cost of child care can be significant.

When a full-time nurse becomes a parent, it's often necessary to go to a part-time position to reduce the need for child care. A family-oriented solution to the problem would be to offer an on-site child care facility within their health care facilities. This has worked well in other centres and could be heavily supported by Islanders and their families. These are the sort of innovative, outside-the-box ideas that government must dabble in in order to become a lucrative place for RNs and other health care professionals.

Nursing is a profession that results in many muscular-skeletal injuries. Private massage therapy, physiotherapy, a fitness centre onsite, would be a wonderful health promotion, illness prevention, money-saving strategy that could make Prince Edward Island a very productive place to work.

Policy makers could also benefit from looking at a magnet hospital in North America and the model to their approach in health care delivery. Turnover rates in magnet hospitals are very low. They're well known for supporting professional development and have high quality patient care.

The nursing shortage in Prince Edward Island is no different than any other region in the world, so it must find unique ways to ensure patient safety and become a positive place for RNs to live and work. In no way, when this writer had written this paper, was it to not get people actually looking at some of the possible solutions. Like the third fisherman in the parable, it's imperative that decision makers consider each new idea with open minds, but always keeping safety and evidenced-based practice at the forefront.

If you can remember, in the spring of the year we had a number of RNs and LPNs who visited the Legislature who were really

upset with the process that the government was using and the lack of involvement of front line decision makers around health in the implementation of the Model of Care model. Some of those RNs and LPNs had come to the Legislature, and again, with the Model of Care, continued to have questions.

One question that they had for government is: Where is the evidence-based data that supports the strength of the current model of care in the following categories: patient outcome, length of stay and morbidity? When you have poor outcomes, longer length of stay, the costs are actually higher.

The second question: Where's the evidence based data to support that the model will improve nurse retention? In the past, and even as recent as today, the minister of health has talked about nurse recruitment. But the big issue is: How do we help with the retention issue? What method of measurement is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the model? What data is being collected and how is it being collected, and who's actually collecting the data? Again, it would be interesting to see the work plan and also the business plan for the Model of Care, to see what are the anticipated costs, but what are the anticipated savings. What types of methodology are used in the evaluation and the actual collecting of data? It's one thing to look like your salary costs are down, but quite another thing if you actually have a higher number of patients readmitted constantly because of not receiving the care they needed in the first place.

The hope is that government would base their health care model decisions on proven, evidenced-based strategies. In the world of medicine mistakes certainly can be made. Hypothetically, sometimes nurses are under extreme pressure. I remember speaking with one of the LPNs that was here this spring who talked about having four days on the

floor with an RN to give her the experience and the confidence to pass out medicines, but how she felt when the RN was no longer there.

In terms of this particular Model of Care, it comes out mostly by the Corpus Sanchez report, and again, there were many different ways that such a model could be put in place, but the big part, and why so many nurses are frustrated, is why it seemed to happen just overnight. Again, instead of slowing it down, many RNs especially feel that government's actually turning their back on them. I know I continue to hear it by emails and in other areas just how the health care system is having such a problem, especially in the Model of Care.

We remember one of the letters that was written to the editor, it was a letter that appeared on Tuesday, May 25th, 2010, and the letter was addressed to the editor:

RNs fully support our LPN colleagues in attaining their full scope of practice. We diligently put forth our collaborative efforts to provide quality optimal health care. Part of the issue is removing the very health care practitioners that unite the other disciplines. We have the training and the leadership skills that allow us to assess, implement and evaluate patient care.

The other place is the introduction of RCWs to the acute care setting. This particular RN had written that she didn't feel that that particular move was in the best interests of Islanders or for the RCWs. She goes on to say they do not require a standardized knowledge base or a license. As a registered and licensed nurse professional, our RNs and LPNs have to be accountable. She goes on to talk about job loss if the new model of care continues to unfold. RN surpluses will be identified on every unit. Let's clarify the difference between a position and a job. A position is when you have a schedule of

shifts, whether they may be an eight hour or a 12-hour day or evening or nights. A job is an opportunity to work. Part-time positions were eliminated drastically and shifts were made mainly into full-time 12 hour shifts. Nursing professionals faced the challenge of working 24/7. Personal sacrifices are continually made and finding a position that allows a nurse a balance between work and home is vital.

What was traumatically taken away from the staff at Unit 3 hangs in the air to their counterparts: to be shuffled to an area where they're not trained or not as effective. It is a challenge to the weak of heart to walk a mile. What this lady was challenging people was to walk a mile in the nurse's shoes.

Certainly not the least of this travesty is the breaking of a collective agreement with our union. This alone would merit an outcry from any group. The registered nurses of Prince Edward Island needed your help. Now is the time to lobby government and show your support. Let the people on the front lines have a voice in shaping our own model of care. You wouldn't call a teacher if you needed a bed pan. Just because everybody else is doing it, doesn't make it right.

That was written by Patty VanDiepen, RN.

Another letter to the editor around the same period was from another lady that had a great background in nursing. I quote: As the changes are being rolled out, Islanders are learning that a key component of the new Model of Care is the replacement of skilled, regulated nurses, RNs and LPNs. She talks about: The Province of Prince Edward Island government is changing the way you'll receive health care in Prince Edward Island. The driving force behind these changes is budgets, not improvement to health care. Health care workers have been forced into taking a backseat throughout the

manufacturing of the new Model of Care. That should worry Islanders as it worries nurses. Prince Edward Island nurses have worked with government in the past to achieve results for better health care in Prince Edward Island. Nurses in Prince Edward Island and across the country have cooperated to achieve efficiencies in the delivery of health services and to address the nursing shortages without compromising care.

In Prince Edward Island, since 2002, the national nursing strategy has developed joint initiatives with employers, associations, the university and the government, all working together to retain and recruit nurses. This represented a new cooperative, interdisciplinary and evidence-based approach to the renewal of the health care system. This time around, the Prince Edward Island government has chosen to rely on a private consultant, Corpus Sanchez, rather than the PEI health professionals. Nurses are being advised of the conclusions after the fact. As the changes are being rolled out, Islanders are learning that a key component of the new Model of Care is the replacement of skilled, regulated nurses, RNs and LPNs. This is a dramatic de-skilling of health care workforce. It's dangerous and wrong-headed. Ironically, it's also expensive.

During the 1990s, radical restructuring of provincial health systems wreaked havoc with the health care delivery across the country and in the provinces as provinces tried to address short-term budget shortfalls by reducing the numbers of health care professionals. Nurse-patient ratios were reduced to a dangerous level. We lost much of a generation of nurses as some left the profession, others left the country and still others were never able to realize their dreams of becoming a nurse. More than a decade later we're still facing challenges recovering from those short-sighted

decisions along with the realization in the end that this did not save government any money.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information reported in 2009 that there were almost 7,000 RNs and LPNs registered to practice in Canada and were now working outside the country. We recognize that this is not the same government that undertook the devastating HR restructuring in the 1990s, but this government can and should learn from those costly mistakes. We are asking the government - involved nurses have been committed all along to working for sustainable quality care in this province and make decisions based on evidence and experience.

Research published in the *Journal of American Medical Association* and the *Online Journal for Issues in Nursing* has found that higher nursing staffing in both numbers and skills means better patient outcomes. Data from more than 100 studies has concluded that the number of nurses and their skills and their experience have a direct impact on mortality, length of stay, falls and infections.

The last Prince Edward Island election was fought from this lady's perspective, Linda Silas on health care. Fifty-eight per cent in one survey reported in the *Guardian* in May of 2007 claimed it was an important issue. What this lady is suggesting again is that health care is heading in the wrong direction and that RNs and LPNs have to be paid attention to.

At the same time, there was also another letter to the editor, and an article written by Wayne Thibodeau on the subject of angry nurses and how they were protesting changes at the QEH. There was also another article in the *Journal Pioneer* that again talked about up to 13 nurses at the QEH surgical ward were told that they were no

longer needed, their services. Also another article: Nurses at QEH facing a job shuffle. Again, you can imagine the lack of morale. Finally, there was also another article from the then-nursing president Barbara Brookins, and it was a guest opinion she had written.

Over the past few weeks the PEI Association of Nurses had presented a PR campaign in relation to the upcoming changes in the PEI health system. The campaign was aimed at educating both the public and the nurses members about these changes, and in particular the loss of RN positions at several health care facilities throughout the system.

The campaign has generated much discussion, both positive and negative, especially among health care providers. Regardless of some of the negative discussion, at least the discussion was occurring. Up until a few weeks ago, the only people talking about Model of Care were the employees who were about to be impacted in the showcase units and the union. The concern that the nurses union wanted to make clear was that in each of the four showcase units where the new Model of Care was going to commence, RN positions were going to be eliminated. Currently, with the loss of these positions, the employer has replaced RNs with health care providers that will cost less to employ.

Registered nurses recognize the importance of the various roles of different health care providers and have been working collaboratively with these different providers for years. We want to assure both our members and the public that we'll continue to work collaboratively within the health care system. The issue is not about a lack of respect for other health care providers. The issue is about a system that will attempt to continue to offer quality health care with fewer RNs. The PEI

Association of Nurses does not feel that the deletion of RN positions should be used to finance the new Model of Care.

During the past year the nurses union had struggled to obtain timely information on the impact of the Model of Care changes, what would happen to their members. The first concrete information the union received about the actual staffing impact was in December of 2009. Since then we have only been offered definitive information in relation to three of the four showcase units. We cannot stress enough that each of the units will see a reduction in RN positions. What we're seeing across the board is a dramatic increase in non-regulated health care workers.

The PEI Association of Nurses want to emphasize that the changes that are about to occur are just the beginning of wholesale changes that will impact the way our RNs, our members, are able to provide care. Every service is going to be impacted. Although some may disagree with the method by which the union has tried to draw attention on these changes, we ask that the public take seriously how you're going to view the RNs' role and value it in the health care system. We urge you to ask questions about the changes that are coming and how they're going to impact on the services provided.

This is not a pilot project. The new Model of Care is going to role out across the entire system unless the 1,200-plus RNs take notice and voice their concerns. RN positions will continue to be deleted. Those working in the health system and the general public need to recognize that this is not a question about the ability of all health care providers to work collaboratively. It's about whether RNs will be there when you actually need them.

The file continues to grow as people

continue to voice their concerns about how government's actually rolling out this Model of Care. You cannot expect that you are going to work nurses off their feet and continue to tell them that there's going to be more cuts coming and then expect them to maintain their physical and mental health. That's just not reasonable. The government continuously indicates that no RNs will lose their jobs, that they may be redeployed or redistributed throughout the health care system to fill vacancies. But how can an employer guarantee there'll be no job loss in the face of deletion of vacant positions on all the showcase units to date?

The nurses are trying to get information out to the general public because, in the end, it impacts very much on health care in the province. We know, for example, that Maplewood Manor has a reduction of 3.3 RN's full-time positions that's coming. Summerset, 2.8 RN full-time positions. Prince Edward Home, a reduction of 10.2 full-time RN positions. Riverview Manor, a reduction of 0.8. Colville, a reduction of 2.6. These are very difficult times for our nurses in the province.

I'll stop here and let the mover second the motion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to second the motion.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to second this motion regarding our model of care. A model of care is one that should be framed to bring out the best in our health care system and make the most effective use of our health care workers. What I see from this model of care is that it's asking all our health care workers to do more and for less. I think that they see a

solution to their health care situation is cutting jobs and having to reduce services.

Because of the direction of the Premier and the minister of health, what has happened is now we see ourselves - forced people that are sick and sitting in emergency rooms for upwards of 10 and 14 hours, allow them to leave still not treated. Just frustrated with the system. That's unfortunate that Islanders have to go through that, even though the Premier made a promise that every Islander would have a doctor. Of course, we know the Premier is good at making promises but never follows through on them.

He's made numerous promises over this. He even promised a clinic three times now for Murray River and we don't see that, a health clinic. The member says it will come again. They'll be another promise next year. That's how this Premier acts. That's how he delivers for Islanders, especially in rural PEI. We're scared to see him come out there because all he'll do is put a padlock on something. He has a reputation for that and he doesn't get invited out now for public speaking engagements anywhere in rural PEI. They're just terrified to death to invite him out.

We saw where this government said their Model of Care now is the right way to go, and the first thing they do in Unit 3 in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is announce: We're going to cut 12 jobs. Although you're not going to lose your jobs, we're just going to give you a job somewhere else in the health system. We don't know where, but bear with us and we'll look after you. That's not what providing a good health care system is, cutting jobs. Now I think the nurses union has already indicated that they have 80 vacancies in the system and there are shortages every day on every shift across PEI.

This government, this Premier, is doing

nothing about it. He's more interested in signing secret deals, hiding information, working under the cover of darkness and not dealing with the nurses. They also went out then - and what this Model of Care that they're now implementing by this Premier is shutting down their hospitals in rural PEI.

We saw the Montague hospital emergency room was shut down and the government got up and they promised - again, another promise by this Premier and the former minister of health - this was temporary. This is short-term. Short-term pain and it's going to fix this up for you a little while. Just bear with me. Two years later, and guess what? Two years later they're still not open. Just another broken promise by this Premier and this government.

Every day our nurses are under more and more stress. They're knees are buckling under the pressure from this. I guess, when you come to the line-up for emergency rooms, the line-ups for operations is even longer and it's just horrible the way they treat our Islanders in regards to no doctors.

When I speak about doctors, you think about why this government would allow a bylaw to go in place that will muzzle doctors from speaking. They're not allowed to go out and talk in public about the health care system in support of their patients and how the health care system should be delivered. No, they put another gag order on our doctors. It's unfortunate, but that's the way this government works. They're secretive. Everything has to be done in secret. Hide everything behind the backroom. We have secret deals with Maritime Electric. We have secret deals with Aliant. We have broken promises and we don't know about that.

All we know is that the Premier says: Trust me. Of course, Islanders know that we can't trust him because he's broken his promises

so many times, whether it's emergency rooms, whether it's doctors that he was going to give Islanders, whether he was going to improve health care.

This is what this government does. They do not consult with Islanders. They just dictate. You saw what they did with the ambulance drivers the other day. They're in negotiations, and there's a bill comes to the floor: We're going to take your right to strike away. Nobody did speak, and of course, that was the minister that doesn't answer any questions.

It's shameful how this government has dealt with the health care system in this province. They have diverted all their responsibility over to Health PEI. The minister does not take any responsibility now. She just says: I have a \$490 million budget and I transfer it over to them and they deal with it. Well, they were elected to be responsible. They were elected to look after Islanders. They promised Islanders that they were going to be different. They promised they were going to be open and transparent and they were going to provide us with good health care. All we're seeing is longer lineups.

People can't get operations. People can't get medicines. They're closing our emergency rooms and we see our nurses' jobs being cut. I think it's time for this government to start listening to Islanders and live up to the promises that the Premier made in this government, and to be more responsible and provide better health care for Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak before I go to the mover to close debate?

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am proud to stand today as Minister of Health and Wellness in the Province of Prince Edward Island and discuss the issue around the collaborative Model of Care on Prince Edward Island.

The hon. members of the opposition would like to lead the public astray in terms of -

An Hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, the collaborative model of care is working, and we are moving ahead like we discussed on the floor of the House about this time last week.

As I stated last week, there has been a lot of change, and change is not always easy. But I have to say there has been a lot of great people on the front lines, nurse managers, RNs, LPNs and physicians, working together to see this project, this initiative, through the early stages. We're entering into the second phase of the collaborative Model of Care.

Just as the Leader of the Opposition had told the House they are bringing this resolution to the floor today, I contacted our new clinical RN position, Brenda Payne, who is our director of clinical nurses on Health PEI's leadership team. It was an interesting document that was commissioned by the Nova Scotia government. There's been a lot of work done over the last two or three months with the Nova Scotia government. They've done research because they've already implemented in parts of their province the model of care. I've just been told that it's now a public document and that, in fact, the facts that are coming out from that are extremely positive for our province.

The facts are there's less - and I'm just awaiting our officials to get that document here today before I finish my comments

because I think that's a very important document for people to see.

What's important is the Leader of the Opposition in her remarks - I listened - and where she talked about the mortality rates if we are going towards this more collaborative model of care. In fact, the Government of Nova Scotia has conducted the research, and their research is telling that there is a decrease in mortality rates with the collaborative model of care and this team approach with health professionals. The list goes on.

Our department, and the Health PEI division under collaborative care, will be using that to assist us as we continue to move forward with collaborative Model of Care.

I think it's disappointing when the Leader of the Opposition talks about the registered nurses in this province because there are many registered nurses across this province that are pleased, that want to work as part of a collaborative team. There was consultation with people across the system, whether they be RNs, whether they be LPNs, there were stakeholders, part of the organization.

What we have to understand is if we did not go down the road of collaborative Model of Care we would be irresponsible, and I've often said this on the floor of the Legislature. The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters talks about the 80 positions, or the 70 full-time positions, that are open in the system. We need positions in the system, and we're trying to fill them as quickly as we can with the professionals that we have, whether we're recruiting, whether it's through our nursing program at UPEI, our accelerated nursing program that we've initiated at UPEI. All those things have assisted the system, but at the same time there are still many vacancies that we are trying to fill.

With our licensed practical nurses, they are assisting the system with their scope of practice. They have been trained, they've been trained to administer medications. They have great training through Holland College or other institutions, especially in the Atlantic, they have followed courses and have their accreditation.

Yes, we're trying to bring all wages in this province to reflect the Atlantic wages so that we actually have a good reason for people to be retained in our system. We do not want to lose our health professionals, our allied health professionals, to other jurisdictions within our country. We want to be competitive, and through arbitration there have been great decisions that have been dealt to support fairness across our system with wages.

But the Leader of the Opposition and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters talk about taking away. This is not about taking away. Government has invested in health so much. We have invested - if you compare the budget line, since 2007, even just this past year, we have a \$508 million dollar budget in the health department and with Health PEI. What's important to know is government increased the budget in health by \$24 million. I think that's a good indication that our government, a Liberal government, is committed to health care in this province.

We're not like the previous administration. And you know what? We have to look at the past, because back in 2005 the previous government did a whole reorganization. They gave pink slips to about 300 health employees in our system -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Bertram: - and we have taken time - it's taken years to get things back in place, and we're finally getting up to that place

where we were back in 2005.

You have to look at wages. Recruitment. We talked about that earlier today in the proceedings with physicians. We are at an all time low in vacancies in this province for physicians, so it just shows you what we're doing in this province.

As I said with RNs, a new school of nursing is going up at UPEI. We have the accelerated nursing program, 95% retention rate of our graduates from the RN program at UPEI. That is phenomenal, I think, that they're getting jobs here in PEI, return in service after they are completed.

Some of those affected RNs that have been part of the QEH Unit 3 or other facilities that have been the showcase units, they all have jobs today. They all have jobs, and if we go back to the Unit 3 issue, those individuals all could have jobs at the QEH within that building that they were in. One individual, their choice, was to go to another position, but they all have jobs, and those were vacancies that were in the system. So we are doing exactly the same as every other jurisdiction in Canada with a collaborative model of care.

I urge the public to look at this new document from the Nova Scotia government on their collaborative model of care and its success. Our government, PEI, would be irresponsible - if Islanders want a sustainable health care system for the future of Prince Edward Island to serve their children, to serve their grandchildren, to serve their nieces and nephews or their parents, or their ailing grandparents, we need to put in place systems that will make us sustainable. Because if we don't, do we want to have everyone travelling to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick for all their services, and having people live here? No, we don't

Do we have to do that today for some of our services? Yes, but we want to have a sustainable system here on our Island and support our local communities, our one Island community. Our government has committed so much in terms of primary health care and resources to help support our local communities and local physician services, RN services, public health, mental health, so many areas in the health care system. Our government has - and I think our record speaks for itself. Like I said, this past year the budget for health went up by \$24 million to \$508 million. Last September we announced the co-pay for seniors going down by 25%.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: Another commitment that our government made during the 2007 election campaign. Half a million dollars invested into our primary health care networks, with the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, new centres going into their districts to support communities across PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: We have only added to hemodialysis supports in this province, which obviously impacts the nursing profession in this province. We've hired for those areas.

We are now paying for ambulatory services in terms of those Islanders needing ambulatory, whether it's emergency services for seniors. An election promise. Did we realize that? Yes, we are paying for emergency ambulance fees. We are airlifting people for free now. That was another election promise. Interprovincial transfers. All part of our election health platform.

Another one is the diabetic test strips and

that is a big savings to our seniors.

Another area which does impact RNs and other health professionals has been the announcement of our stroke unit and the implementation of the first phase of our stroke unit -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: - at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

All these new things that are supporting health in our province take very skilled professionals within our health profession and specialities in the stroke unit. You go and talk to those that are working in that. We're now moving towards our second phase of our stroke policy, and there are great things to continue.

We have the QEH, the ER, the redevelopment. We have had to need more RNs in that new development. We have a beautiful new facility at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which was part of the \$60 million capital project campaign for the QEH. We also see the ambulatory care addition going up now.

Since May, if we look at the registered nurses in this province for the emergency room at the Queen Elizabeth alone, we've put in about seven positions in the ER alone since May. Where were they going to come from? We are trying to transition and make sure that those personnel that we have are working to their full scope of practice, whether they be in ICU, whether they be in ER, whether they be in the rehabilitation unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or the PCH, or Tyne Valley, wherever you want it. We want all our health professionals in this province to work to full scope of practice. That's what's key.

I'm proud that our government has also put

increased funds into home care. We have increased the home care budget by 60%, another area that we've needed registered nurses for in this province, for home care, and we're reaching a total now of \$13 million, probably one of the highest investments of change year over year to any other province in Canada, because the previous administration had gouged the home care budget -

An Hon. Member: Gouged.

Ms. Bertram: - gouged it for years, and our seniors didn't have that support.

So there's another area that we needed more nurses for. Yet the Leader of the Opposition and the members from the opposition don't tend to talk about that.

Where were they to come from?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Bertram: We also look at the cancer treatment centre at QEH.

Mr. MacKinley: The Leader of the Opposition got hurt. Ask her how quick it was when she went to the hospital.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, if you look at the cancer treatment centre at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, this has been a very important development and something that supports and it has - also, as we know, cancer affects many Islanders.

We've actually put in nine new positions this past year into the cancer treatment centre. Again, where do those positions come from? This is what we're talking about. We're talking about how we use our - all those people that are working within our health system effectively to better serve health care needs in this province. Does that mean hiring more? Probably does. We'll be

hiring more and we'll be recruiting more. But it doesn't mean taking away, and that's what's important.

There are so many other positive things that are happening in our system. We talk about consultation. This resolution just talks about consultation. The process of consultation with the Model of Care started many months before it was ever implemented. We can digress on those that wanted to partake at the table and those that didn't want to or perhaps those that didn't like the terms of those coming to the table. I don't want to get into that today, but the reality is, the system had stakeholders at the table and that's what's important.

We had showcase units at the Wedgewood Manor. We had the home care project in Summerside. We had the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Unit 3 as a model show case unit. We had the surgical restored at Prince County Hospital which was implemented in the new nursing schedules in June. We have Kings County. Overall there are many more great steps to go in the second phase.

But like I said last week, has our system learnt) from the first phase? Yes, we certainly have. Like in any department or anything one does in life or those that are part of the system, we are recognizing things that we might do a little differently in the next phase. But I think what we have to be thankful for is those that were part of the first phase - because that was the first step. Brenda Payne, who is now our clinical nurse director within the leadership team of Health PEI, this is the first time - and nurses should be so happy - this is the first time an RN has been at the leadership table for decision making with Health PEI, (Indistinct), Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: Very key. She has been hired

and she's doing great work. She has a wealth of knowledge. She's instructed nursing. She has accompanied me with the recruitment secretariat to UPEI for numerous meetings with the nurses. I am so pleased with her professionalism and the work that she is doing to be that positive voice, to assist the system in that collaboration and in that consultation because her approach, I feel, is very positive and can only serve to help the RNs and the LPNs in this province.

But it's not just about RNs and LPNs. We have the RCWs as well. We can't forget about them as well. They are part of this model of integrated and collaborative Model of Care. As I said, they want to - and I've met with the RCWs and the LPNs. They are happy. The Leader of the Opposition should go and talk to Alana at the - in charge of the LPN Association. Go and talk to them and hear how happy they are with the government's decision to go with the collaborative model of care. She's only hearing one side of the story.

It doesn't even matter whether it's LPNs, whether it's RNs or RCWs. We have an aging workforce on Prince Edward Island and we have to prepare for the future. That's what we have to remember in all of this with the aging workforce that we have. The Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning, with the changes that are taking place with the workforce and crossing borders meeting provincial - the new legislation that is coming forward to protect those going between borders nationally, recognizing credentials across provinces. Very important as Canadians, and that will only help support the RNs in this province.

But I guess what's important is ensuring that those students, RNs, those that are in the programs at Holland College, for the LPNs, those individuals that are at UPEI with the Accelerated Nursing Program or the four-

year BN program, that we are keeping them in the system.

But the Leader of the Opposition and opposition members would continue to lead the public to believe that the health system is not working efficiently. I would say that this is the highest time of efficiencies within our health care system and service delivery in this province. You look at our community hospitals. You take the Community Hospital in O'Leary or Tyne Valley, or in Souris or at the Kings County Memorial Hospital - with the Prince County Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital - we are working as a system. Do we make changes? Certainly we make changes.

We're affecting change to support a sustainable quality system for patients, their families, for individuals in this province, and that's what's important. That's what we need to do. We have great community hospitals in this province and the hon. members from this House - the members that represent those areas - we've had great tours of those facilities, meeting staff and patients and talking with them. Great facilities, top quality. We truly have to see that our system is working in collaboration, an integrated health care system.

But I'm saying as Model of Care that we would be irresponsible as a government if we did not initiate a model of care, the collaborative Model of Care, back over a year ago. Well, work even happened before that with the consultation process - that we would not be in a good place moving forward for our health care system in Prince Edward Island.

As I said, our government has invested in health and education. A Liberal government invests in social programs in this province. We have supported seniors with health, with the diabetic test strips, with the seniors co-pay reduction, with the emergency

ambulance fees reduced, more drugs that we've added to the Provincial Drug Formulary, and the list goes on.

The home care budget has been increased by 60% and we're increasing monies to primary care and a service delivery to rural Islanders. We want every individual on PEI, no matter what age, to have a family physician, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: One hundred percent coverage.

We are committed to that, and I just announced today how we have more family doctors in the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: We will continue to recruit. We have the less vacancies in this province for physicians in the history of PEI. All of those very important.

Government is investing in specialties, we're investing in registered nurses, we're investing in licensed practical nurses, we're investing in registered care workers, we're investing in lab technicians, radiologists. The list goes on. We are investing in services for Islanders in the health care system of PEI.

The Leader of the Opposition and opposition members need to go and visit our facilities, talk to the front line, hear both sides. They need to hear both sides of the story.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Order, please!

Hon. members, the hour has been called.

This House is in recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 4th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 4, *Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act*, (Bill No. 18), in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I call on the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford to come down and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (McIsaac): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into

consideration a bill to be intituled *Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Our House leader has gone over this and I think he was briefed on the bill and he expressed his concerns to the minister, and with that we will carry the bill.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Sheridan: I move the title.

Chair: *Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Sheridan: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Sheridan: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act*, I beg leave to report that the Committee

has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford for recognition.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I want to recognize Fred Martens. He's the past-president of the Cooperative Council of PEI and very interested in the passing of this legislation. So welcome to the Legislature, Fred.

Ms. Biggar: Good to have you here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, that the 13th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act*, Bill No. 33, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, that the said bill be

now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act*, Bill No. 33, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I call on the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park to come down and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Watts): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, could -

Ms. Biggar: Explanation, please.

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Mr. Brown: Right now, the department has to have an internal auditor audit the books of the *Beverage Containers Act*, which audits how much beverages come in, how many goes out. This is the can act. They want to have the flexibility to appoint an external

auditor to do the audit of that facility.

Mr. M. Currie: Like a Grant Thornton or somebody can come in and do an audit on it. So how many have you got across PEI that are buying bottles or cans? Is this what you mean?

Mr. Brown: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: These people?

Mr. Brown: No, no, no, no.

Mr. M. Currie: Yes, it is.

Mr. Brown: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: That's a revenue source, so you have to pay them and you have to quantify that they received and got paid so much, so there's an audit on that.

Mr. Brown: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: How many of them are there on PEI?

Mr. Brown: About nine or 10.

Mr. M. Currie: How much do they receive, minister? What's the total revenue?

Mr. Brown: About \$4.8 million. This is a rough estimate. Of a 10-cent can, they get 3.5 cents.

Mr. M. Currie: Oh, we must be more than \$4.8 million then.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Brown: We pick up four. Five cents go back to the person that returns the can. The other five cents is split between the government and the person that is doing the work.

Mr. M. Currie: And you're supposed to give some to the watershed groups.

Mr. Brown: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: And this is where you're cheating them.

Mr. Brown: No, no, no, no, no, no.

Mr. M. Currie: You slid it over to that ALUS program.

Mr. Brown: Yes. But that's part of the watershed too.

Mr. M. Currie: No, it's not. That's the farmers getting that.

Mr. Brown: Yes, and they're part of the watershed group.

Mr. M. Currie: No, they're not.

Mr. Brown: No, no. The watershed groups.

Mr. M. Currie: Will you call for tenders or you just appoint somebody?

Mr. Brown: It's up to the minister of finance.

Mr. M. Currie: It's not his.

Mr. Brown: It says here: permits the minister of finance.

Mr. M. Currie: Okay. Would you tender this?

Mr. Sheridan: Yes sir, buddy.

Mr. M. Currie: You'll tender?

Mr. Sheridan: All of that, you know how that goes with regard to those.

Ms. Biggar: Carried.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Brown: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Brown: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Brown: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act*, I beg leave to report that the Committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, that the 15th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 15, *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act*, Bill No. 32, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act*, Bill No. 32, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I call on the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland to come down and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair (Docherty): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Greenan: Let's have an explanation from the minister.

Mr. Brown: When the IWMC was set up - and this is co-sponsored by me and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal - it was set up by regulation, and in regulation it was that all Crown corporations in Prince Edward Island - the *Civil Service Act* does not apply to the Crown corporation. So this is just enacting that this Crown corporation does not apply to the *Civil Service Act* also, like every other Crown corporation.

Mr. M. Currie: Has there been a request? I'm just wondering why you're doing this. Is this your wish or the employees?

Mr. Brown: It's the wish of the Crown corporation to do this because it was just a clarification of what we're doing.

Mr. M. Currie: How many employees out there?

Mr. Brown: About 40.

Mr. M. Currie: Oh, because they're up in Miscouche there.

Mr. Brown: Yeah, and in the call centre and everything.

Ms. Biggar: Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Mr. M. Currie: This was always public works. Why is it under you now?

Mr. Brown: The Crown corporation, IWMC - the *Environmental Protection Act* has a section in it that says the government can set up a Crown corporation to administer garbage on Prince Edward Island, and in 1998 the Crown corporation was set up, IWMC, under (Indistinct) -

Mr. M. Currie: It's under transportation and public works.

Mr. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. M. Currie: The minister was here last year. Remember when he did that backroom deal on those rubber tires and he brought that guy down here. Brought him onto the floor. I don't know how he got on the floor but he brought him on the floor. I think it was 3.5 million that wasn't tendered - it was that un-tendered backroom deal. It wasn't tendered. And it was another one.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. M. Currie: It was another one of those optical illusions.

Chair: Any further questions, member?

Mr. M. Currie: Bill's carried.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Brown: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Brown: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Brown: I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Chair: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of a Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the following orders of the day, with unanimous consent where needed from the entire House, be now read.

Unanimous consent?

Speaker: Do we have consent? Agreed.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much.

The following orders will be now read, Madam Speaker.

Order Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: The following bills were ordered for third reading:

Order No. 3, *Government Reorganization Act* (Bill No. 12);

Order No. 4, *Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act* (Bill No. 18);

Order No. 6, *Student Financial Assistance Act* (Bill No. 21);

Order No. 7, *Income Tax (Dividend Tax*

Credits) Amendment Act (Bill No. 26);

Order No. 8, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2011* (Bill No. 27);

Order No. 9, *An Act to Amend the Provincial Court Act* (Bill No. 29);

Order No. 11, *An Act to Amend the Labour Act* (Bill No. 35);

Order No. 12, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act* (Bill No. 34);

Order No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act* (Bill No. 33);

Order No. 14, *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2010* (Bill No. 28); and

Order No. 15, *An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act* (Bill No. 32).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said bills be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: The following bills ordered read a third time:

Government Reorganization Act (Bill No. 12);

Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act (Bill No. 18);

Student Financial Assistance Act (Bill No. 21);

Income Tax (Dividend Tax Credits) Amendment Act (Bill No. 26);

Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2011 (Bill No. 27);

An Act to Amend the Provincial Court Act (Bill No. 29);

An Act to Amend the Labour Act (Bill No. 35);

An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (Bill No. 34);

An Act to Amend the Beverage Containers Act (Bill No. 33);

Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2010 (Bill No. 28); and

An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act (Bill No. 32).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the said bills do now pass.

Speaker: These are bills introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to Committees of the Whole House, reported agreed to with and without amendment, as the case may be, read a third time and it is now moved that the bills do now pass.

All those in favour say, “yea.”

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay.”

Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Madam Speaker, that concludes our business for this session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. members, I’ve been informed that the Honourable Lieutenant Governor is on her way. This House will be in recess for about five, 10 minutes until Her Honour arrives.

[Recess]

Speaker: Hon. members, I am now advised that the Honourable Lieutenant Governor has arrived in the Confederation Chamber to receive this House and its address and reply to the Speech From the Throne.

I now propose to leave the Chair and would ask all hon. members to accompany me to the Confederation Chamber to greet Her Honour.

Hon. members, I’m advised that Her Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor has arrived at Province House to consider the grant of Royal Assent to bills passed to date during this Fourth Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly, and I now propose to leave the Chair in anticipation of Her Honour’s arrival.

Clerk: Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has passed certain bills during this, the Fourth Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly, and now begs Your Honour’s consideration of the grant of Royal Assent for the following bills:

Bill No. 3, *An Act to Amend the Fathers of Confederation Buildings Act;*

Bill No. 5, *An Act to Amend the Volunteers*

Liability Act;

Bill No. 6, An Act to Amend the Child Protection Act;

Bill No. 7, An Act to Amend the Registry Act;

Bill No. 8, An Act to Amend the Financial Corporation Capital Tax Act;

Bill No. 9, An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act;

Bill No. 10, An Act to Repeal the Health Authorities' Employees Act;

Bill No. 11, An Act to Amend the Health Services Act;

Bill No. 12, Government Reorganization Act;

Bill No. 13, An Act to Amend the Canadian Judgements (Enforcement) Act;

Bill No. 14, An Act to Amend the Maintenance Enforcement Act;

Bill No. 15, Loan Act 2010;

Bill No. 16, Highway Traffic (First Responders) Amendment Act;

Bill No. 17, Highway Traffic (Migrant Workers License Exception) Amendment Act

Bill No. 18, Community Development Equity Tax Credit Act;

Bill No. 19, An Act to Amend the Agricultural Insurance Act;

Bill No. 20, Early Learning and Child Care Act;

Bill No. 21, Student Financial Assistance Act;

Bill No. 22, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act;

Bill No. 24, An Act to Amend the Credit Unions Act;

Bill No. 25, Electric Power (Electricity-Rate Reduction) Amendment Act;

Bill No. 26, Income Tax (Dividend Tax Credits) Amendment Act;

Bill No. 28, Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2010;

Bill No. 29, An Act to Amend the Provincial Court Act;

Bill No. 31, An Act to Amend the School Act;

Bill No. 32, An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act;

Bill No. 33, An Act to Amend the Beverage Container Act;

Bill No. 34, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act;

Bill No. 35, An Act to Amend the Labour Act.

Also, Your Honour,

Private Bill No. 100, An Act to Amend the Retail Business Holidays Act; and

Private Bill No. 200, An Act to Amend An Act to Incorporate International Trust Company; and

Private Bill No. 201, An Act to Amend An Act to Incorporate the St. Thomas D'Aquin Society.

**Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor
Barbara A. Hagerman:** In Her Majesty's

name, I assent to these bills.

Speaker: May it please Your Honour, we, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island in session assembled, approach Your Honour at the close of our labours with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government. We do humbly beg for Your Honour's acceptance of a Bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2011*, thus placing at the disposal of the Crown the means by which government can be made efficient for the service and welfare of the Province.

Clerk: Her Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, accepts their benevolence, and assents to this Bill in Her Majesty's name.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor Barbara A. Hagerman: I wish to commend all hon. members for the conscientious manner in which you have conducted your deliberations to this point of the Fourth Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

At this time, I pray that until the Legislative Assembly again meets, each of you enjoy good health and prosperity and that peace and freedom for all people shall be more nearly achieved.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that this House adjourn and stand adjourned to the call of the Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. members, I'd just like to thank you for the respect shown to each other and to me as your presiding officer. I

wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year, and we'll see you all in the spring.

Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned to the call of the Speaker