

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Carolyn Bertram

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone.

An Hon. Member: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

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

Mr. Webster: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise. We do have some guests in the gallery and I do want to acknowledge the guests we have here today.

We are probably in the dying days of this session as we move forward. It's been a great session and hopefully it will continue that way.

Also, in our midst, there may be a couple of stars developed over this weekend. I understand Saturday night there is a fundraiser for the hoedown folks so we may have a couple of superstars here next week or later on, or they may change careers even.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) December 6th, next Saturday.

Mr. Webster: Next Saturday, and it's a great cause, the Salvation Army, who do great things for the people.

Also, it's a bit of a snowy day and we do wish everyone safe travel. On my drive in this morning there were three vehicles off the road in the ditch and through the fence and those kinds of things, so it was an interesting day, drive in early. We do wish everyone safety on the highways and –

Mr. LaVie: Where was the transportation minister this morning?

Mr. Webster: – and great, good days ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to welcome Eddie Lund to the gallery today. Eddie is the lone soldier in the gallery today and it's probably fitting if this were to be the last day –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Oh, sorry. I didn't see you come in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: So I'm wrong.

Mr. Aylward: She's undercover.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, I didn't realize there were two up there.

Mr. MacKinley: You're watching too many of those movies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Hey, I wasn't the one that sat on the remote.

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Leader of the Opposition: Anyway, Madam Speaker.

To those that are following along at home today, and I imagine there's quite a few of them being as it was a storm day and there were many of them around for the storm day. I hope that they're following along and you enjoy the afternoon. Yeah, there was a blizzard last night.

Also, I would like to thank the plow operators. I know I was on the road late yesterday evening and the plow operators were going hard. I know this morning they were out very early getting the roads cleaned up, at least down in my area, so a lot of credit deserving to the plow operators for the great job that they do in that blizzard.

Last but not least, I wanted to inform the House that last night I did manage to come out of my 15-year hockey retirement to play with the Cardigan Bay Foggers Old Timers

team against St. Peters. I must say, my hands weren't nearly as fast as my brain last night, but thinking back 15 years perhaps they weren't then either –

Mr. MacKinley: Must have been really slow.

Leader of the Opposition: – Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Brown: You opened the door to that one.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. Welcome today.

I would also like to remind people to slow down as we all see what a dangerous day it is today out there.

I'm sure the students are having a wonderful day at home and I hope they have a wonderful, safe day and I'm sure they'll be out playing in the snow.

Also, I would just like to mention, we must be ever-mindful of the honour we have to sit in the Legislature. As the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Deputy Premier said, things could be winding down but even if they aren't, you look around outside and things are being marked for the renovations. This is a historical building and we should all be very humble to be here. I know I am and I know you are as well, and it's quite a thing to be able to sit in here. When we come back, hopefully we'll all be coming back when it's done, but who's to say when that will happen?

I'd also like to say a great big hello to everyone back in Evangeline-Miscouche, and drive safely today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to say hello to everyone in District 1 that are watching on EastLink right now.

Just for people right across Prince Edward Island, next month we know is Christmas, and when you're putting up decorations make sure you use the proper cords and make sure you use the proper lights and please – and this is as a fire chief, I experience this very much, I lived it – do not use live candles in your home. Please. They have candles out there now, there's a little light that flickers in them and they're battery-operated. I just would entice everybody to go that route and try not to use live lit candles during the holiday season, or any season, because they are dangerous in the home.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise today as well. I would just like to send greetings out to all of my constituents in Stratford-Kinlock, and similar to the Government House Leader, I just want to express how much of a privilege it has been to represent my district in this very historic Chamber.

I want to ensure my constituents, even though the next session we will be relocating out of this building into the Coles building, I will continue to do my best to represent you to 100% of my capacity.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

Recognition of Scott Wilson

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today I rise in this House to recognize and congratulate one of my constituents, Scott Wilson.

Scott was elected as president of the Appraisal Institute of Canada in June 2014. He has over 20 years of extensive real estate industry experience including 18 years in the appraisal industry. He has owned, managed and worked in both real estate and appraisal firms. He is employed as the project manager of the Workforce Strategies Research Group at the University of Prince Edward Island School of Business.

Additionally, he has six years serving on the board of the PEI Real Estate Association and has chaired and directed on several volunteer boards.

Scott has two University of British Columbia Urban Land Economic Diplomas, and was awarded his MBA in 2011 as part of the first graduating class at the University of Prince Edward Island. As an AIC volunteer, Scott has served as a member of the Executive and Insurance Committees, as co-chair of the Professional Practice Committee, as chair of the Audit and Finance Committee, and chair of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee.

Please join me in congratulating Scott Wilson on this new milestone in his career.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Eddy Arsenault – Fiddler Extraordinaire

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On Thursday, September 18th, 2014, a light flickered and began to burn in heaven while a light here on earth was extinguished. This is the day PEI lost legendary Acadian fiddler Eddy Arsenault, just short of his 93rd birthday.

Born in St. Chrysostome in the Evangéline Acadian region, he was the son of Arcade and Madeline Arsenault. He was known as Eddy à Arcand.

Arsenault was a fisherman, a carpenter, and for more than 55 years a choral singer, but was best known as one of the most influential fiddlers on PEI. Arsenault always found time for music in his life. Fiddle music could be heard pouring out of the Arsenault home after a busy day of fishing, and if there was a house party, you could find Eddy performing in the kitchen. No wonder four of his children became musicians. It was in their blood.

Arsenault began playing the fiddle at the age of 16. He recorded two albums during his lifetime and received numerous prestigious awards, including the Acadian of the Year, the Stompin Tom Award and the Inaugural Golden Fiddle Award.

The list goes on, but one thing is for sure, he will never be forgotten for his contribution to the revival of traditional fiddle music when it was disappearing on PEI.

Eddy lived life to the fullest, as it appeared to be the motto of this fine Acadian gentleman and outstanding musician.

Even though Eddy's candle has been extinguished here on PEI, his music will continue to burn strong in the hearts of his Acadian family and community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Glen Stewart School – Indigo's Adopt of School

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

Recently the Glen Stewart School was successful in clinching first place in Indigo's Adopt and Don't Stop Campaign. I know for a fact the amount of hard work the school and the entire community put in to making this happen.

Students, staff, parents and the community campaigned tirelessly to get the votes they needed to make this successful for their school. I know the students of Glen Stewart School are very deserving of this prize. The school's librarian, Carrie St. Jean, also believed her students were very worthy to win such a prize.

Ms. St. Jean has always believed in passing on the love of reading to her students. As she said in a story in the *Guardian*: It's very satisfying to put the right books into a child's hand and to be able to give books to teachers to put in their curriculum.

Literacy is an integral part of education and this will be a major benefit to the school and the students. I cannot stress enough the importance of ensuring that students are getting books in their hands and reading them.

Glen Stewart received a \$10,000 reward for receiving the most votes. This will go a long way in ensuring students are given the opportunities to succeed in their learning.

Again, I congratulate the students, staff and parents of Glen Stewart School on their accomplishment, and you all should be very proud of yourselves.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

FEMA minister and tabling of London trip documents

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question to the finance minister: Why do you still refuse to table the details of your 2012 secret London gaming junket after a week of public calls by us, by the media and by Islanders?

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

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

As I said in the House here yesterday, I did not go to London in 2012.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

What you said in the House yesterday was you had the information. You refused to table it to us. Why are you still hiding that information after publicly committing to the House that you would table those documents?

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

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

As I said yesterday, I made a trip to London in 2011, January 2011, and said that I had the documents from McInnes Cooper showing that my full bill was \$4,623.17.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's easy for him to say that, and we all know how great his credibility is with Islanders, and we'd like to see him table those documents. It doesn't sound like he's going to.

FEMA and FOIPP request denial (further)

Question to the minister: Can you explain to this House why you say you didn't attend the conference in 2012 if your department refused our freedom of information request for the records to that trip in 2012 citing trade secrets?

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

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

Very clear that the department said there were no records associated with the trip in 2012. Whether it was a code that the hon. member is speaking about that he would regard as trade secrets, I don't know. But what the office turned in, and I asked the person that was in charge of going through the records, was that there were no records associated with a trip in 2012.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That's not at all what the letter said, and I tabled the letter earlier. I'm surprised that the minister hasn't gotten himself up to speed. The media all has it. Islanders have it. They've seen it. What was actually said was that they couldn't release the details of your 2012 trip – and they said the 2012 trip – because of trade secrets.

Your refusal on that freedom of information request, it looks like the minister got a gift from somebody, and you've been to London twice now, according to you, because you've been there in 2012, according to your department, and you said you were there in 2011.

Question to the minister: Who in the Premier's office ordered you to stonewall the public on this file?

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

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

Very important that the member and everyone that's listening understand whenever you're trying to work on a file like this there are confidentiality pieces to it.

We were attempting to be first mover into this sphere. Very important that we were trying to make movement before three other provinces in Canada and as many as 12 – we knew three active files that were taking

places in the United States of America. There is an awful lot of confidentiality around the actual movement into this sphere.

But, however, we're very open to Islanders that this was something that would have been very advantageous both for the coverage of those that play in this game and for the dollars that would come forward for health, social services and education in this province.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

FEMA minister and legality of online gaming

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We all know that this minister's good at taking orders from the Premier's office, and there were lots of orders given from the fifth floor on this file. His actions on this file speak very clearly.

Today in the *Guardian* there was a story that said the treasurer pulled the plug on this failed gaming scheme in February 2012 after he got back from his London gaming junket.

Question to the minister: Did it really take you at least two free trips to London to figure out that your online gaming scheme wasn't even legal?

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

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

If the hon. member would please refer to it as the trip in 2011, as we know very clearly that I did not make a trip to London in 2012. Very important. His information is incorrect. He's following a report that has many errors in it. It'd be very open to the public to know that that is incorrect information.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As a matter of fact, what I'm following is a freedom of information request that we put in, where his own department said: We can't give you the details of the 2012 trip because of trade secrets.

So we know he was there in 2012. He told the House he was there in 2011. So he's been to London free twice for something that wasn't even legal in Canada.

Gaming re: HST

The timeline of this story is particularly interesting.

Question to the minister: Is it a coincidence that you begin planning to bring in HST the very same month that you pulled the plug on your online gaming scheme?

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

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

I think it's about time that the hon. Leader of the Opposition start to focus on what's happening on Prince Edward Island in reality instead of speculation.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We're all speculating what might have happened in London. As you recall, your little gala dinner there that you were at. There's a lot of speculation going around about you and your motives. Those aren't all my speculations, they're widely speculated.

We all know what's happening here. Thanks to years of failed leadership, this government, they were desperate, they were desperate to get a get rich quick scheme and try to balance the books. The huge bet on online gaming didn't come at the last minute. I mean, he's out there trying to bet this money so he can save himself because

he can't balance the books. Then he shoved HST down Islanders' throats.

Question to the treasurer: Is this what really happened?

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

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

I think that the record for this government stands on its own. Very clearly we're the only jurisdiction in North America that did not fall into recessionary pressures in 2008-2009. We're the only province in Canada that did not have negative growth from 2007 to the present time and that is because of some very advantageous priorities that were brought forward by our Premier and in fact this entire government. The way that we have handled our immigration files and have seen growth each and every year inside our province – an incredible feat during the greatest downturn since 1929.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Common knowledge here, and it was proven here yesterday when he tabled his state of the province here, and we're in terrible shape. Seven and a half years, eight budgets that he couldn't balance. The books are in terrible shape and he was desperate, so he gambled. He went on a gambling junket. When that failed he came back and he shoved HST down Islanders' throats.

Question to the minister: Why did Islanders have to pay because of your failed leadership?

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

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

On this side of the floor, we're very proud of the harmonization of our sales tax and bringing a level playing field into the

Province of Prince Edward Island. For many years we were trying desperately to play on this level playing field for industries in every corner of this province from two-man operations on a welding shop right to the largest manufacturing shop here on this Island.

Now we've levelled the playing field and what has happened? Twelve hundred full time jobs in one year. That's incredible. This tiny little province producing that type of job opportunity. A lot of it can be –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Sheridan: – attributed to harmonized sales tax, and we were third only in this country behind Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Gaming re: pensions

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question again to the treasurer: When did you decide to break the collective agreements and roll back the pensions of civil servants here in the province? Was it before or after your secret online gaming scheme crashed and burned?

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

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

Very proud to say that we sat on the floor of this House last night to finalize the deal with our unions to make this the best pension system in the country. Very proud that over two and a half, almost three full years it took to find this solution, and this solution will work in most jurisdictions and it is groundbreaking. We have found a way that we hyper fund this portfolio to allow a very great possibly of indexation for years and years to come without encumbering this province with a liability that we cannot afford to keep up.

On behalf of the government I'd like to thank all the unions for their work, for saving the taxpayers the dollars that are necessary, and making sure that everyone has a good retirement in the years ahead.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister put all his eggs in one basket, and when that failed he had to bring in HST, make Islanders pay for it, he had to cut and slash collective bargaining agreements with unions to help save himself from this big flop that he had.

Question to the minister: Isn't that how it went down?

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

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

Again, to remind the Leader of the Opposition and anyone that's listening here today, this province has done extraordinarily well from 2008 in the greatest downturn this globe has seen since 1929. This was an incredible feat.

Bringing forward the immigration files that we did brought new spending into this province, and by seeing the growth in the housing starts, which we led the nation per capita for three years, new car sales that we led three out of four years – an incredible act by this Premier and by a couple of ministers that handled this file extraordinarily well.

We have been prosperous on this Island. We hardly have realized what the downturn has meant. Are there tough times still fiscally across this nation? There are definitely tough fiscal times. When we look at the deficit that is here with this province and put it in perspective with regard to our number versus the deficits that are being run across this country, yes indeed, we're in great shape. We stimulated the economy and we kept this province (Indistinct).

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Gaming file (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

They ruined any chance for there to be a future on Prince Edward Island unless we can get some real leadership in this province.

Every day we hear from Islanders in need who are told by government that money's just too tight, they simply can't be helped, there's no help for you, the money's too tight. Yet when it came to a project where millions of dollars of taxpayers' money were needed to gamble with, there was all kinds of money.

Question to the treasurer: What made your online gaming scheme so good that it was that much more important than dealing with the needs of Islanders?

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

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

As everyone in this House should know and everyone listening today, there's not a single solitary cent of taxpayers' money that went in to this initiative.

We were trying to bring dollars back to the province. This is from activity that takes place on offshore gaming. This unregulated market needs to be policed and regulated and taxed. Those dollars that are leaving the shores of Prince Edward Island and all of Canada must come back here to our coffers to ensure that we have all of those dollars for health care, education, social services, all the great values that a Liberal government stand for.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So to the Island taxpayers, if you're following at home, which many of you are, what the treasurer is basically saying is the money that you make he wants –

Speaker: Please direct your question to through the Speaker, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: He'd like to have more of the taxpayers' dollars in his pocket. He doesn't want to see any taxpayer do well. If they have money at all he wants it. It's because he needs it because he can't balance the books because he refuses to make good decisions for Islanders.

The secret failed online gaming scheme was a huge priority for the government. It was being directed right out of the Premier's office by the Premier's top staff.

Question to the minister: Who in the Premier's office told you that this scheme was more important than the needs of Islanders?

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

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

We look back at the time when we talked about harmonizing the sales tax here. It was very important that we level this playing field. Now today, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition does any driving around in his district, he would go out to the far reaches and look at a dairy farm, take a look at a potato farm, go to the welding shops that may be existing in his district, and talk to any one of these individuals. They will quickly tell you that now the input tax credits that they're receiving are creating jobs right across our Island.

It is creating all kinds of opportunity so that we can keep Islanders here, keep them in full-time jobs, just like the 1,200 jobs we created last year.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I do spend quite a bit of time in my district driving around talking to people. What they tell me is they can't wait till this government's gone.

You know what? Islanders really know what's going on here and this government puts greed before need and personal interest before public interest. When this minister lost on this gambling Islanders paid the price in HST, in higher fees, taxes, cuts to pensions, cuts to school, cuts to health care.

Question to the treasurer: Why did Islanders have to pay the price for your failed bet?

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

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

One more time, very clearly to all that are listening, there isn't a single solitary penny of taxpayers' money that has gone into this initiative. It was just the opposite. What we were looking at was to see what opportunity is out there. If you're going to be like the previous administration, like this group that are across the floor, yes, you are going to sit on your hands, do nothing, make no change, do not move forward, do not bring in new tax systems that make it more advantageous to have a level playing field for our manufacturing. Sure, sit still and perish.

This government is not like that. We're looking for ways to make Prince Edward Island the greatest place in the world to live, and that's exactly what we're doing with this initiative. Not one single solitary cent of taxpayers' money went into it. But what it did do was look at an opportunity that would maybe, possibly, enrich the lives of Islanders by putting more money in the coffers of education, health care and social services.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This government does have money into this failed gaming scheme. It was a loan, and the minister knows full well that's true.

FEMA minister and budget

After all the scheming by this government and all the pain by Islanders, this treasurer is still at least \$50 million over budget.

Question to the treasurer: Do you think that Islanders consider that to be good management?

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

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

As a percentage of our entire budget it is a very small number. No one wants to be in deficit. Not any of the provinces across Canada. We look at New Brunswick, at Nova Scotia, at Newfoundland and Labrador, at Quebec, at Ontario, at Manitoba and British Columbia – every single one of these provinces are in deficit, and why are we in deficit? That is because in 2008-2009 we suffered the biggest setback globally since 1929.

What we did as a group of finance ministers, including the late Mr. Flaherty, we decided that we would stimulate the economy. For five years we put extra cash into the system, into policies that would create jobs, create opportunities, make sure that cash would continue to roll across our provinces, and yes, Prince Edward Island led the pack. We were the very first province to go into the stimulus project, and because of our small jurisdiction, that very first year we escaped going into recession. We were the only province, the only state of the union, that did not go into recessionary pressures that year, 2008-2009. Because we moved quickly and because we had a very aggressive immigration policy, we avoided it.

It was great management and we take full credit for that. What we need now, as you've been watching, four years in a row we've brought the deficit down, and next year we will present a balanced budget.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Gaming file (further)

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

An online poll today suggested that 75% of Islanders don't believe that he's capable of balancing the budget. I agree.

Islanders can see through his spin too. This was a get-rich quick scheme that was cooked up by some of his Liberal back room there, and when the deal went back Islanders got stuck with the bill. When the Premier's inner circle tried to get greased, Islanders got fleeced.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Leader of the Opposition: Question to the treasurer: Don't you think Islanders deserve better than that?

Speaker: Hon. member, please use parliamentary – watch your parliamentary language (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Don't you think that Islanders deserve better than that, treasurer?

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

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

To be very clear, this was an initiative that was brought about to bring prosperity to Prince Edward Island. This is not anything dreamed up in a Liberal back bench or a back room. We're talking about a commission that was put together with some of the most talented people on Prince Edward Island. They included a previous deputy finance minister, Mike O'Brien, that led a very good government. We had a couple of other lawyers that have great corporate knowledge and legislative regulatory advice that they could bring forward.

These individuals worked very diligently to finding a solution for this province so that we could stop this outflow of cash leaving Prince Edward Island and all of Canada. This needs to be policed, regulated and taxed. We've said it for a number of years and we'll continue to work at that as we move forward into the next year or two.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Deep-well irrigation

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was shocked to read in the *Guardian* that the agriculture minister plans to expand the current level of irrigation. Minister, the legislative committee on agriculture just held a series of public meetings to get input on the irrigation issue.

Minister of agriculture: Why did you allow the committee to waste its time, waste the taxpayers' money, when you have already made up your mind?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, the standing committee on agriculture reviewed the whole irrigation file and they came back and recommended that the moratorium stay in place until all Islanders are consulted and the rest of the science is gathered.

I believe that we need to gather that information and that science and make a decision based on all the information, not on incomplete information.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the minister of agriculture, you were quoted as stating that the customers' needs must be met.

Minister of agriculture, what customers are you talking about?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, there's a whole network of customers out there that buy food from Prince Edward Island that's important for them and their lives and their business.

As a minister of agriculture, how could I stand up anywhere in front of any producers or any of society and say: I don't want to develop agriculture?

Mr. LaVie: You did it in the *Guardian*.

Mr. Webster: That's not what I do. I promote a solid, well thought-out agriculture plan.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier. Your government promised that no decision would be made on lifting the moratorium on deep-water wells until a new water act was passed. Do you still stand by that statement?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, absolutely, I do stand exactly on that sentence the hon. member made.

Thank you.

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

Atlanticade

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A question for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. This week we learned that the organizers of Atlanticade are pondering moving the annual motorcycle event festival away from my community, Summerside. The organizers are in talks with Tourism Summerside about this. I was wondering if

the minister could elaborate on his department's involvement on this file.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There's no question that Atlanticade has been one of those tourism products that has brought visitation to Prince Edward Island. In fact, in 2014 there was about 2,100 motorcycles attended that particular rally with a direct spend of approximately \$682,000.

Our department has been supportive of Atlanticade through Tourism Summerside where in fact we had a three-year contract that's going to end in March of 2015. Obviously, Tourism Summerside is the sponsor, so we are awaiting a decision from them whether they want to proceed or not.

Speaker: A supplementary question, the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Mr. Greenan: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister: When can we expect this decision? Any idea?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Henderson: Madam Speaker, Tourism Summerside is the sponsoring organization, and they had numerous partners involved with Atlanticade in the past.

Our department was one of those, I believe ACOA, and the city of Summerside is also a partner in that. To my understanding they are having some consultations to determine the return on investment on that event. Hopefully they'll be back to us in early December with an answer, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Bar clam season

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

Minister, a fish buyer from my district contacted me with concerns regarding the fact that the bar clam season is quickly ending at the end of this month, in particular for the area of Nine Mile Creek.

To the minister: Is there any way that this could be extended for another two weeks since we've had some inclement weather in the last month or so?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. MacKinley: Yeah, it's a good question. When I first became minister in this portfolio there was a group of fishers in Nine Mile Creek area that had a market to a buyer in the Summerside area. They were only allowed to fish until October 15th.

We got together. We went and worked with DFO and we extended that season till November 30th. That was a great help for that particular time. But what we have done is open new markets, and there's a big demand for these bar clams.

Those people, fishers, have got an application into DFO now. I have great success working with DFO, but we'll have to look, though, at the science. The time before, if I stand to be corrected, they had to stand up to give up a month and a half. They wanted fish so you could go I think it was August or something. We extended their time till the end of the season when the clams are better.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Substitute bus driver shortage

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There's a real shortage of substitute bus drivers for school buses in the province. My question is to the minister of education: What is he doing to alleviate this problem?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

It is an issue that's brought to my attention on a regular basis. Example, just last week I had talked to a bus driver from down in Montague area who had said they had five spare bus drivers at the time down there but since then they've all become full-time.

The crux of the matter is, right now, it takes about \$4,000 to take the bus driving course. If you're going in as a sub driver, a lot of people do not see that – they see that as a little extensive. They need to take a lot of time just to pay back for the course.

What we're looking at is looking at an alternative route of training these teachers. Also, the idea of perhaps the drivers putting some money up front. Possibly paying them back, the rest of it back, from their wages. But we're looking at whatever way is possible to make sure that we do fill that gap because there is presently a serious shortage.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: A supplementary question, the hon. Member for Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The throne speech had mentioned new dollars for people, especially if there's an opportunity for employment.

My question to the education minister: Could the English school board, or the French school board actually apply for some of those training dollars and use that to train the substitute bus drivers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

Again, a very excellent question. Not out of the *Guardian*, too, that must have come off the top of her head. It's terrific.

It is a good question and there is a definite need there. We will be looking at what

dollars are available – whether we have to go to some other department to look at – for training dollars or whatever that may be. But we certainly will look into that because we do have a serious problem in that area. It is not just in the Montague area, it's across the province, so we will look at every avenue possible.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: A second supplementary, the hon. Member for Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On today's job line, actually, Summerside and O'Leary are looking for substitute bus drivers as well.

My final question to the minister: Would you make sure the CUPE union is involved in that as well?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

I did speak with the CUPE representative on this several times to look at what avenues we might look at at solving this problem. There is the dollar issue, the \$4,000 training issue. We have to tackle that piece. We also have to make an incentive that we can draw people in to fill those positions. We're going to look at all avenues to make sure we can fill some of those because there is a shortage, not just like I said in Montague, but up west as well, and even in the Charlottetown area.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member for Souris-Elmira.

Deep-well irrigation (further)

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the minister of agriculture again. Your government has obviously already decided to lift the moratorium on deep-water wells for farmers who need it.

Minister of agriculture, why bother with more public discussion when you have already made up your minds?

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, that certainly is not a decision of mine.

It's a decision of all of Prince Edward Island. The folks that are going to host the white paper on the new water act for Prince Edward Island. We're the only province in Canada, I believe, without a water act, so we need a water act so we understand –

Mr. LaVie: The piece in the *Guardian's* wrong?

Mr. Webster: – where the water is used –

Speaker: Allow the minister to respond, please.

Mr. Webster: Where the water is being used currently, Madam Speaker, and we need to understand our complete system.

It's a decision that will come from dialogue and discussion with all Islanders.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member for Souris-Elmira.

AFDP minister and conflict of interest

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again to the minister of agriculture. Minister, you were a farmer, your companies are big farmers. Will you admit today that you're in a conflict of interest of interest and should not even be talking about the irrigation issue?

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

Mr. MacKinley: You're talking fishing all the time.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I can clearly say that I'm not in the farming business now.

Everything I did own is in filed under the conflict of commission – with the conflict commissioner and it's in a blind trust. I do have a lot of experience farming, and my goal would be to make the right decisions that are best for all of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member for Souris-Elmira.

AFDP minister and deep-water wells

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again to the agriculture minister. Minister, you already told the potato board you will allow careful expansion of deep-water wells. Minister, tell the House today that you support lifting of the moratorium on deep-water wells.

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for Souris-Elmira is correct, I said careful expansion if the science says it's okay to do it.

That's the key behind this. Let's collect the information, let's collect the science behind it, and make sure the right decision is made, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member for Souris-Elmira.

Souris dialysis

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is to the health minister. Minister of health, you've shut down the dialysis in Souris, and he allowed these patients to travel over these rough roads of PEI for the last six months. You told the patients that there was a deadline of opening dialysis in Souris – January 1st. Is that still the case?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As government we're committed to hemodialysis across the Province of Prince Edward Island. We recognize the incidence and rise in chronic disease, so we're very pleased to be investing, approximately, an additional \$400,000 in the dialysis unit in Souris.

The unit was closed because the water quality and water filtration system was of low quality and wasn't meeting national standards. We're pleased, and we currently are paying approximately \$1,000 a week to transport the seven patients from Souris to Charlottetown for their dialysis treatment.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I understand what you're spending. I understand it's costing you to transport these patients. But I get these calls. These calls are coming to me. I don't wake up in the morning and think of a question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: These guys are coming to me with the questions, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Order, please!

The member has the floor.

Mr. LaVie: Question to the health minister: Minister, will this be open by January 1st like you told these patients?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As part of the new water filtration system there are major renovations to expand and to improve the dialysis unit in Souris. RFPs have gone out, tenders, and the work will be starting immediately. I can't commit to January 1st, but we will be monitoring the start and the opening because I recognize the inconvenience for patients travelling. But it's short-term and we will have a state-of-the-art facility in Souris for the Member from Souris-Elmira's constituents.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Stratford intersection

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

Question to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. You and I, as you're aware, we've had several meetings over in Stratford, actually, to look at safety and traffic concerns that we have over there.

I'm just wondering if you could update me at this time on the potential realignment of the intersection between Sobeys and Home Hardware on the Kinlock Road.

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

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, safety in our department is always in the front of our minds and we've been looking at different areas in Stratford trying to make the traffic flow better.

The intersection the hon. member is speaking of, I believe, is the one between Sobeys and the Home Hardware location. I just want him to confirm if that's the right one.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Correct, Madam Speaker, that is the intersection I'm referring to.

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

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, that is something – that intersection has been designed by staff in the department and we'll be realigning that intersection to line the Home Hardware entranceway up to the entrance into the Sobeys to make it right across from each other as opposed to the staggered intersection that was put in when they were both put in back many years ago under the previous government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I wonder if the minister can advise me when that work will be done.

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

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, that work will be started next summer.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

MacKinnon Drive

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

Another question to the minister of transportation. Minister, there's also another concern that we have in Stratford. Currently, our two schools essentially are land-locked by only one road coming in, and that's Glen Stewart Drive. As we had discussed, and I had toured you through and showed you the area, MacKinnon Drive that comes down behind Sobeys naturally should be connected at some point to Glen Stewart Drive.

My concern is if there was ever, God forbid, an emergency at the school that we see quite often happening in the news around the world, the first responders would only have one road, one entrance, into those schools.

Minister, what I would like to see is MacKinnon Drive connected through to Glen Stewart Drive. Can you tell me if there's any update on that?

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

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, I did look at that area this summer with my chief engineer.

A partnership would have to be developed there between the town, the developer and the province, but there would be increased traffic in that area as well around school zone. So we have to have a look to see if

that would offset what the hon. member's asking. But we are looking at it in the department. I'll get an update from the chief engineer and I'll let the hon. member know when I do that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

McEsso Corner

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

This time I'd like to take the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal a little bit closer back to Charlottetown and talk about the –

Mr. Brown: Esso Corner?

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Actually, we refer to it as the McEsso Corner because there's a McDonald's there at that Esso. It's a very dangerous intersection, it's a very dangerous parking lot with, unfortunately, cars cutting through the parking lot because we do not have a dedicated right-hand turning lane there.

I wonder if the minister can tell me if there's any update on that, if there are possibilities of redesigning that intersection.

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

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, we're trying to work where we can with the hon. member, but we must keep in mind we have more than one area in the province to work on.

That intersection in question has a turning lane in it. It empties the intersection well. The problem to have another turning lane off through that area would have two lanes going in front of a commercial business that would almost make traffic impossible to get back out to the main area.

There's a lot of moving pieces to that, but we are looking into that as well.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I'd just like to remind the minister that it's not only residents of Stratford that utilize the Trans-Canada Highway, it's actually all kinds of Islanders, and a lot of tourists as well travel the Trans-Canada Highway. It's very important that we do keep our road safety.

Again, I stress that that is a very dangerous intersection. We've had many very serious accidents there as well. Currently the design just simply is not working the way it should.

Hillsborough Bridge pedestrian/bicycle lane

Another question to the minister: We've talked lots with regards to the town of Stratford. The minister of health has talked about go!PEI and getting our residents more active. Now, there are many people who would like to be able to bike or walk to Charlottetown from Stratford and areas further out.

Have you looked at, and is there any update on, providing a safe pedestrian/bicycle lane on the Hillsborough Bridge?

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

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, we are currently looking at some options on the bridge, but we have a report done that's not back yet to see if the structure's able to put a bike lane on it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

CIHI report

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

The Canadian Institute for Health Information, known as CIHI, recently released a report looking at mental health illness hospitalization and numbers of

patient days for mental illness. I'm just wondering if the minister of health would like to venture a guess as to where PEI placed in that report.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As the minister, as all of us are here in the Legislative Assembly, we're very much aware of the issues and concerns about mental health and addictions in our communities across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

That's why our government has stood tall and made the investments. We just recently announced a new 24/7 youth recovery facility in Summerside. We opened a new transition unit. We've increased frontline supports and we continue to do the work.

We have one of only two provinces in Canada right now that has a chief public mental health officer on the ground, every day, looking at our mental health system and advising on policy and change in investment to improve our system.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Funding for mental health

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

PEI, in fact, had the highest rate of mental health hospitalization of any province in all of Canada coming in at 838 individuals per 100,000. Surely you know your own statistics show this as well. Yes, I understand that you're putting \$9 million over a three-year period into mental health and addictions. If we hadn't have pushed you on that, minister, I'm fearful that you wouldn't be doing even that.

But minister, why are you continuing to fail to put the real necessary dollars in mental health here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

I want to remind the Member from Stratford-Kinlock that we're not really concerned on this side of the House about who gets credit for the investments –

Speaker: Order, please!!

Mr. Currie: – that are being made in mental health and addictions.

Our government recognizes, just like every other region, every other province, we have huge challenges with mental health and addictions. Government is responding and is making appropriate investments. Actually our investments have been strong, and yes, we've got more work to do.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Currie: Madam Speaker, Dr. Rhonda Matters is meeting regularly, she's advising, she's now looking at the adult side of mental health.

Our focus over the last 10 months with all our investments have been on the youth mental health and addiction side. Now our focus continues to be looking at how we can be a more efficient, more streamlined, more accessible system for mental health and addictions for adults in this province, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

The minister here spends roughly 75% of the entire budget and yet can't seem to take a quick decisive action and has failed to invest solid dollars into mental health.

Now, this minister has been the minister of health on and off for about six years.

Minister, why are you failing to add a significant and necessary number of mental health beds and mental health professionals, clinicians, into our system?

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) from behind you there.

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Currie: The health budget consumes –

Ms. Sherry: You can't answer the question (Indistinct).

Mr. Currie: – approximately 42% of all provincial –

Leader of the Opposition: He's got some great ideas.

Speaker: Order, members!

Mr. Currie: Just a correction from the statement by the Member for Stratford-Kinlock. Health care is approximately about 42% of all provincial spending. As government we've sent a clear message 10 months ago when we started with the investments that we made by hiring Dr. Rhonda Matters. We opened a transition unit. In 2009 we built the Strength Program. Now we're continuing to expand on that to open up our own 24/7 youth facility here in the province. We are opening up a new youth mental health unit and wing for Island youth and families struggling with mental health.

We are spending money, we're implementing policy, we're looking at our current admissions and protocols. We are looking at improving and making better access. We are doing some positive work but I recognize that more work needs to be done. There's not an Islander or anyone in this Legislative Assembly that doesn't know

somebody that is struggling with mental health or a neighbour or a friend or a family member.

We recognize the challenges and as we continue to balance the ongoing demands and pressures in our health budget we'll continue to make sure that mental health and addictions are paid attention to, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Final question, the hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

This CIHI study also reported back for a population of 10,000 people on PEI a patient day's rate of 1,012 – that is 1,012 days of hospitalization for mental illness amongst a sample of 10,000 Islanders.

Minister, this problem goes against your quick photo op template. Will you agree to finally recognize your failing leadership around mental illness and take some decisive action?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Our government has been very decisive. Our government is being very decisive by backing up with investment, new facilities, more staffing, more resources today. We have more psychiatrists than we have in a number of years in the province.

But I recognize that we have more work to do, and we'll continue to work on improving access to mental health and addictions to make sure that the appropriate resources and supports are in place for Island families, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Grad Planner

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

Research is clear that young people with a clear career direction succeed in post-secondary and make easier transitions to work. With this in mind, our government is committed to helping students prepare for the transition to post-secondary education and to the labour market.

This work is ongoing, and I'd like to provide members with a quick update on the progress so far.

Using the Student Graduation and Transition Planner resource, students will start to think about what they need to do to make their career goals a reality.

The Grad Planner includes a workbook that guides students in developing a plan for high school and for after graduation. There is also an interactive online tool to help students match their interests to potential careers, starting to build a resume and create a financial plan.

In order to help students with these decisions, teachers are taking part in a professional learning opportunity to help them guide students through career planning.

In August, representatives from the Canadian Career Development Foundation worked with the department and school board staff to provide a common understanding of career development. In October our grade 9 health teachers, intermediate school counsellors and administrators took part in professional learning on how to facilitate the career development conversation with their students.

Grade 10 teachers who teach the career exploration and opportunities course, along with senior high counsellors and administrators, will participate in this same training in the spring.

Grade 9 students will begin using the grad planner resource early in 2015 before they register for their high school courses.

I think this is a great step forward in ensuring that when our students graduate from high school they are prepared for post-secondary education and the labour market.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

PEI Envirothon Winners

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate Three Oaks Senior High School in Summerside on winning the 2015 Provincial Forest Envirothon Competition.

Students from seven Island high schools participated in this unique environmental science competition which involves classroom and hands-on outdoor learning. Through their studies, students learn skills in problem solving, team work and communications as they solve real issues involving the environment, the economy and society.

They studied forests, aquatic ecosystems, soils and land use, wildlife habitat, and this year's special environmental challenge, urban forests.

It is impressive to note that the students undertake all of this work and study on their own time under the guidance of their teachers.

The Three Oaks Team won the right to represent Prince Edward Island at the 2015 International Envirothon in Missouri next summer, where 500 students will meet to continue that competition.

I would like to congratulate students Hannah Arsenault-Gallant, Mia Campbell, Curtis Lough, Kathy Clark and Karen Farag, along with their teachers Heather Pringle and Chris Higginbotham.

I would also like to congratulate the 40 other students from Westisle, Kinkora, Bluefield,

Charlottetown Rural, Morell and Montague who also took part in the competition.

We cannot overlook the importance of providing students with the insights and science knowledge they require because soon they will be caretakers of our environment and the natural resources that sustain the quality of life we enjoy right here on Prince Edward Island.

I would also like to acknowledge some of our partners in the 2015 competition: Department of Environment, Labour and Justice; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Ducks Unlimited; and the city of Charlottetown.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature, I congratulate the team from Three Oaks and wish them all the best in Missouri next summer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table questions for the Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs and Community Services and Seniors and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a response to written question No. 33 from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table response to written question No. 32 from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.
Are there any further documents?

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management and yourself as Chair, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter, that a report of the said Committee on the reappointment of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The committee recommends in this report as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly, on the receipt and adoption of this report, reappoint Mr. A. Neil Robinson of Charlottetown as Conflict of Interest Commissioner for a further five-year term (term of appointment to expire on 10 December, 2019).

On behalf of the committee I would like to commend Mr. Robinson on his work in administering the *Conflict of Interest Act* in a professional and conscientious manner in which he conducts his responsibilities as the Prince Edward Island Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter, that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Opposition House Leader, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly Act*, Bill No. 103, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That's a bill that we are bringing forward to tie MLA raises to a balanced budget.

I have another one here.

Speaker: You have the floor, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Pursuant to notice given, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Quality in Education Act* and I move, seconded by the Opposition House Leader, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *Quality in Education Act*, Bill No. 102, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That's the education act that we're bringing forward with some changes to help improve the quality of education.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

Madam Speaker, at this time opposition would like to call on Motion No. 12.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 12.

The hon. Opposition House Leader moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, the following motion:

WHEREAS on any given week, at least 500,000 employed Canadians are unable to work due to mental illness;

AND WHEREAS according to the World Health Organization, depression will be the single biggest medical burden on health by 2020;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly recognize the significant impact that mental illness has on our workplaces and our economy;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly encourage Island workplaces through collaboration with the PEI Mental Health Association and provincial government sources to promote greater education and sensitivity in the workplace for employees and co-workers who may be dealing with mental health issues.

Speaker: To open debate on the motion, the hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

Just before I begin to speak on this motion, I wonder if I could indulge in the House in acknowledging a guest here in the gallery.

Speaker: Certainly.

Mr. Aylward: I would like to recognize Sarah MacLean. Of course, everyone will recognize her as she was a Page here in the

Legislative Assembly sometime ago, and also one of my great constituents.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I rise today to address what is a major issue in the workplaces of our province, in our nation and around the world, an issue that still, for the most part, remains hidden within the walls of our workplaces, cloaked with whispers and rumours.

According to the Health Commission of Canada, in any given year one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem or illness. Nearly a quarter of the country's working population is currently affected by mental health problems or illnesses leading to absenteeism, presenteeism – coming to work but being less than fully productive – and turnover. Adults in their early and prime working years are among the hardest hit.

Approximately 30% of short and long-term disability claims in Canada are attributed to mental health problems and illnesses. Of the total economic burden caused by mental illness in Canada, about \$51 billion per year, a staggering \$20 billion stems from workplace losses. These are astronomical figures and should be of great concern to our nation and our province.

I have no doubt that everyone here knows someone who has either fought mental illness in the past or is currently struggling with some form of mental health disorder today.

According to the commission, no workplace is immune from the risk of mental health problems, regardless of size, sector or specialization. Yet a 2008 Canadian Medical Association study, cited in the Mental Health Strategy for Canada, found that only 23% of Canadians would feel comfortable talking to their employer about a mental illness.

Research shows that mental health issues, anxiety in particular, are growing in our country and around the world. The trend of workplace depression is ultimately having a major impact on the Island economy, and the Canadian economy as a whole. The Mental Health Commission of Canada's 2008 report on mental health in Canada says

mental health costs roughly 2.8% of the national GDP. It states that more than 6.7 million people in Canada are suffering from depression or another form of mental illness.

These numbers represent our family members, our friends, our neighbours and our co-workers. Depression is a crippling disease that causes people to lose all motivation in their daily lives, and it is a disease that will or may have already affected several members even sitting here in this Legislature today.

If there is a way that we can help to reverse this trend, or to help those who are grappling with this disease, then we need to try and reach out to make it happen.

Various studies outline various reasons for the rising trend toward workplace depression and mental illness. Some put it down to workplaces that are more vulnerable to downsizing as a result of technological advances as well as to the pressure of 24/7 access to technology that means many individuals are accessible to workplace issues at home, as well as the workplace. Today's workers are becoming overwhelmed as the demand on their work time and their free time, the balance between work and home, takes its toll on their life.

There is a dearth of information on the Internet relating to mental health issues that are being faced by our society today. Studies have proven that stress compromises a person's cognitive thought process, which inhibits their ability to contribute fully to their workplace environment.

The impact that mental illness has on the workplace cannot be overstated.

According to data released by Statistics Canada in 2012, there has been a significant increase in the number of people, both men and women, who are struggling with mental illness. In 2009 there were 639,425 men battling with mental health and mood disorders. Just three years later, in 2012, that number had increased to 776,500 men. The same trend can be seen in the numbers related to women. In 2009 there were 1,172,661 women struggling with mental illness, and by 2012 that number had grown to a staggering 1,329,381 women.

Here in PEI we are seeing the same rising trends in numbers. In 2009 there were 2,665 men in our province suffering from mental illness. By 2011 the number had increased to over 4,000 men. In the case of women on PEI, there were 4,364 women battling depression and mood disorders in 2009 and by 2012 that number had increased dramatically to 7,940 women, almost double.

All of this data only on people who had been diagnosed with a mental disorder. This means that there are likely many other cases of mental illness in PEI and across Canada that have gone without formal diagnosis.

We only have to look towards our families and our communities to see and to realize that many individuals are not diagnosed, who have not been diagnosed, and there are many reasons for that. It's unfortunate that still at this time there's a shadow overcast on mental illness. People unfortunately hide it and are simply afraid to bring it out and acknowledge it for fear of ridicule within their own community or possibly the workplace, and in some cases also within their own families. We really need to work on that and turn that trend around.

Again, it is unfortunate that there is such a stigma that comes with mental illness that many people who are struggling refuse to seek help. In many cases these people do not want anyone to know what they are going through, particularly at work, because they are afraid of losing their jobs.

Due to the social stigma people have become ashamed of mental illness and do not want to discuss the issue.

In a 2011 survey, 40% of parents said that they would be embarrassed to admit if their children struggled with mental illness.

If people will not even admit that their children are struggling with mental illness, then it is even less likely that they would admit to their own struggles.

I think we've turned the page somewhat on PEI with regards to addictions, because addiction's similar to mental illness, there was a stigma around it and people didn't want to discuss it. People didn't want to acknowledge it. But we've seen, particularly

in the last three years, I find, that addictions, people are much more free to discuss it, to explore it, to seek help.

We really need to concentrate and determine how we can turn the page on mental illness as well so that people aren't afraid to come out and actually seek the help they need and discuss it publicly.

Unfortunately, as a result of their fear, many individuals do go untreated. Whether it is through absenteeism or simply non-productivity at work. Studies show that workplaces would be more productive if treatment was made available to those who need it.

In one particular study conducted by Harvard Health, employees who received phone psychotherapy increased their productivity to equal an additional 2.6 hours of work per week. In their particular setting this worked out to \$1,800 per year in savings for a treatment option that only cost the company between 100 and \$400 per person.

According to this study companies were able to earn an additional \$1,400 just by offering services to employees who needed help. After conclusion of their study, Harvard released three key points for employers, and those three would be: one, the symptoms of mental illness may be different at work; two, that although mental illness causes absenteeism, the biggest loss is in productivity; and then finally, three, treatment improves performance, but it is not a quick fix.

It's important to remember that treating mental illness is not a fast process. It often takes time, and some employees may need to take a leave of absence to aid in their recovery. However, all of the studies so far have shown that when employees are able to receive treatment their productivity increases.

In Canada the number of people battling mental illness is continuing to rise. Unless we can do something to stop the trend, the cost to our provincial and national economy will only increase.

As you know, we are currently awaiting the release of a comprehensive mental health

strategy as a part of the provincial mental health system, and we would hope that the issue of workplace mental health will receive considerable attention. We need governments to take steps to address the issue of mental health in the workplaces of our nation.

In Ontario the Burlington Chamber of Commerce published an article entitled, Corporate Mental Health. In it they outlined the issue of mental health in the workplace, and they also discussed possible solutions that the provincial government could pass down to businesses.

Prince Edward Island has the potential to make a major impact. If we create work environments where people can access mental health treatments, without the fear of stigma or losing their jobs, the outcome could be extraordinary. It is estimated that for every dollar spent on mental health and addictions, \$7 are saved in health costs and \$30 in lost productivity and social costs. These numbers speak for themselves.

This government needs to recognize the importance of investing in mental health treatment programs within the framework of a working environment. Investing in the employees and their mental health is fast becoming a necessary component of competing in the global economy.

Perhaps the most important thing to know about mental health treatment is when it is most successful. Studies have shown that early treatment of mental illness is instrumental in the recovery process. If a person receives treatment within the first few months of their illness, the duration, frequency, and severity of the symptoms will lessen dramatically. In addition, the early and effective treatment of mental illness greatly increases the chances of the individual making a full recovery.

Sadly, as stated earlier, too many Islanders are living with the symptoms and trying to function to the best of their ability without seeking treatment. Unfortunately, that is most often not good enough and many individuals do spiral downward. Statistics show that 15% of people suffering from mental illness ultimately, and unfortunately, commit suicide. This is more than an economic issue. It impacts the safety and

well-being of people living here on Prince Edward Island. It is imperative that this government take the steps to encourage businesses in developing workplace strategies to combat workplace depression.

Some recommendations that have been made to other provincial governments include: developing a comprehensive mental health strategy to align with the provincial mental health system and the work of the Mental Health Commission of Canada; creating a public education and awareness campaign on the social and economic value of workplace mental health; and introducing tax-based incentive programs to encourage employers to develop their own workplace mental health plans

These are just a few possibilities for the government to consider regarding the development of a workplace mental health strategy.

The reality is that this is an issue that can no longer go without notice. It is not only an issue of economics and financial stability within the province, but also a matter of quality of life and, unfortunately, death for some people working in PEI.

I believe this issue needs more focus, more action and I would ask that the members in this Legislative Assembly support our motion.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Seconding the motion, I'll call upon the hon. Member for Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to second our motion to call for greater awareness of mental health issues in the workplace.

As the seconder of this motion, mental illness comes at a cost of over \$51 billion every year to the Canadian economy.

In a time when we are worried about our out-of-control provincial debt we ought to be looking for ways that this province can save money. By raising awareness about the

issue of mental health in the workplace, and creating greater access to treatment, this government could save hundreds of thousands of dollars every year in health care costs.

It is the human toll that we are most concerned about as, unfortunately, the social stigma around mental illness has caused many people to have a tainted perception of this issue. It has caused many Island workers to suffer in silence. Perhaps the biggest problem, and the leading reason why people do not receive treatment for their illnesses, is the stigma surrounding mental illness.

Social stigma typically takes the form of stereotyping, distrust, fear, and can negatively impact a person's pursuit of treatment, employment and income, self-worth, or family. Due to the way many people think today, those who are fighting mental health illness are afraid to seek treatment as they feel that it could impact their social standing and their job security. Many labels often occur as a result of the negative depiction of mental illness which is to (Indistinct) in our society.

If we could have more opportunities for people to be educated about the reality of mental illness.

It is truly unfortunate that so many people are misunderstood by their peers and their co-workers due to mental health struggles. There are even situations where stigma impacts the family and friends of the person who is struggling with this illness.

As we discuss the social of mental illness, it is important to know that education about the issue has proven to be the most effective way to increase understanding and lessen discrimination against the mentally ill.

Despite the fact that chronic depression is widely accepted as a disability, people still struggle with stigma and discrimination in the workplace surrounding the issue.

Studies have shown that many people indicate they feel more comfortable around a person with a physical disability than they do around a person with depression or some other form of mental illness.

It is unfortunate that many of our most vulnerable in society are the ones that are becoming isolated and finding themselves fending for themselves and hiding away from society. It is time for our governments to take action that will stop the discrimination and the isolation of these individuals.

As I mentioned before, there are many misconceptions in today's society about mental illness. Some people believe that mental illness is a characteristic of personal weakness and lack of self-control. But those struggling with mental illness often have little or no control over the onset of their symptoms. It is this kind of perception that results in many people who are struggling with mental health issues choosing not to talk about their illness and not to seek or to further pursue treatment. There have been cases of people who are struggling with depression losing their jobs for having spent time in the hospital.

In many situations the only way for these people to get better is to admit themselves to a hospital where they can get the help they need, and what do they get for doing this? A pink slip. This discrimination has to end. It is time for action to be taken to make sure that employers are implementing workplace mental health strategies to assist people in getting the help and treatment they need.

Perhaps one of the most telling statistics to be offered regarding this issue is the fact that 61% of people with mental illness are outside the labour force; 40% to 60% of people with major depression are unemployed; 20% to 35% of people with anxiety disorders are without work; and 80% to 90% of people are unable to find employment. The sad part about these stats is that the majority of people with mental illness are willing and able to work, but nobody will hire them due to the social stigma and stereotypes surrounding their condition.

Even more alarming is that 25% said that they would dismiss someone who had not disclosed a mental illness. If people will not be hired because they are open about their mental illness, but they are at risk of being fired if they do not disclose it, how will they ever receive the help that is needed? Based on those stats it is not surprising that only

30% of those struggling with mental illness seek professional help and only 10% take some form of medication to help treat their illness.

A recent study conducted by the Depression Alliance revealed five aspects of depression that have a severe impact on the victim's life: anxiety; loss of interest; low energy; poor concentration; and poor sleep. The study revealed seven stats that provide insight into mental health issues in the workplace: 83% of people say their work is affected by poor sleep; 62% said that lack of sleep caused them distress; 65% said that their lack of sleep negatively impacted their overall quality of life; and 60% said that it interfered with their ability to perform everyday activities.

Again, in this study 79% of people felt that disclosing their depression would be detrimental to them. This goes to show that people are afraid to seek help because they believe it could cost them their job or their livelihood. It made me sad to read that 37% of people fighting depression felt that support was seldom or never available when they needed it. These people are very vulnerable, and even being ignored can have a devastating effect on their lives.

Our government needs to ensure that workplace support systems are put in place to help workers who are struggling with their mental health. In many cases, just having someone to talk to would make all the difference in the world.

This study also revealed three factors that are said to make depression worse. These were based on a survey conducted among people who were struggling with depression in their own lives. The three factors they mentioned were a high workload, long hours, and poor relationships with management.

Nearly 33% of people surveyed said that they had experienced bullying in the workplace. What people often do not realize is that even the smallest comment can trigger a reaction from someone who is suffering from mental illness. To make a joke about their struggles, even in passing, can be devastating to them. It is alarming that nearly one-third of people felt that they had been bullied in the workplace.

A workplace is somewhere that people should feel like a part of the community, but instead these people experience social isolation and feel like nobody will support them in their struggles.

By working with the Mental Health Association of PEI our government could develop and implement a workplace mental health strategy to help people get the support and treatment they need.

It was disheartening to learn that 32% of people felt that they had been turned down for a job because of their depression. Once again, this goes to show the social stigma and discrimination that occurs in the workplace with regards to mental health.

There have been several studies conducted recently with regards to the best way to help stop the stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace. The results of these studies have come back to show that education and awareness of the issue is the best means of stopping discrimination and stereotyping.

The Canadian Mental Health Association developed what they refer to as STOP criteria for determining what is discrimination toward people struggling with mental illness. The four factors they consider to be discrimination are stereotyping, trivializing, offending and patronizing. The CMHA believes that if these four factors could be eliminated the problems with social stigma would be greatly reduced.

I believe all of these stats and studies speak for themselves. It is clear that mental health in a workplace needs to become a priority. I believe if we encourage individuals to seek help for their mental illness we will have a healthier population and more productive workplaces. This would involve offering treatment options to those who are struggling with mental health disorders.

In addition, in the implementation of a workplace mental health strategy, the government should offer education opportunities for people to learn about the effects of depression and our mental health problems. If people were more aware of the illness and its effects, they would be more sensitive to people who are struggling.

I believe we have an opportunity to be leaders in the implementation of a workplace mental health strategy that would not only benefit this generation but generations to come.

If this government is concerned about the well-being and safety of Islanders, they would support this motion.

Thank you Madam Speaker

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Speaking to the motion, the hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General.

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct) podium.

Speaker: You may. The minister to have the podium, please.

Ms. Sherry: Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to rise and offer my support to the motion that's being put forward here this afternoon.

As was noted in detail by the mover and seconder of the motion, mental illness in the workplace is a very important topic that deserves care and attention.

As the provincial minister responsible for labour I've had many discussions around this very topic and the challenges that we face when addressing specific situations. During my labour ministers' meeting held in September mental illness in the workplace was a main agenda item. We released a statement from this meeting that I would like to share with the members of this House:

The federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for labour recognize the impacts that psychological health and safety issues in the workplace have on individuals, their colleagues, their communities, as well as for businesses and the Canadian economy. The ministers responsible for labour agree that finding ways to prevent and address psychological health and safety in the workplace is an integral part of keeping the labour force strong and healthy and the economy competitive.

Ministers believe that governments can play a significant role in promoting awareness of psychological health and safety issues in the workplace through research, knowledge transfer and education to advance the dialogue on psychologically healthy and safe workplaces within their jurisdictions.

Ministers also noted the importance of engaging workplace parties on awareness initiatives aimed at reducing the stigmas associated with workplace psychological health and safety.

As ministers of labour we agreed to encourage the promotion of the Voluntary National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace as a best practice within our jurisdictions, and we agreed to share research, information and best practices within our governments as well as across jurisdictions to address workplace and psychological health and safety.

I also know that staff persons within the labour division of my department are aware that the issue of mental health in the workplace is one that comes with great challenges.

There are some pieces of legislation in place that do provide broader guidelines around a healthy workplace. For example, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requires employers to whom the act applies to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Also, the Workers Compensation Board has adopted a policy around stress in the workplace which outlines entitlement to compensation benefits for a psychological or psychiatric condition where the condition is diagnosed by the treating physician and confirmed by a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Having said that, do I think there is a lot of grey area around the topic of mental health in the workplace? Yes, I do.

The challenge we face is that mental health is not easily defined. It is defined by the World Health Organization as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

In this definition we see that a person's psychological well-being is not as black and white as a broken arm, for example, and that is why we face challenges with determining a black and white response to this issue.

In closing, I would say that I do support this motion's resolution that the Legislative Assembly recognizes the significant impact that mental illness has on our workplaces and our economy and that we all encourage continued collaboration and the promotion of education on dealing with mental illness in Island workplaces.

Before I close, I would like to an opportunity to extend my appreciation and recognition to the Canadian Mental Health Association. Before coming to government I spent 16 years working with that organization, working on the frontlines with people who were coping day to day with severe mental and emotional illness. I can tell you that that experience certainly enriched me as a person on so many levels that I could not really begin to describe that on the floor of the Legislature, but one of the things that became very clear to me in my work was that people don't choose to end up with a mental illness. Sometimes, a life experience happens, a serious life trauma, a trauma with a family member, the loss of a loved one – there are many things that contribute to people finding themselves dealing with a mental health issue, and it is crippling.

I also want to say that the hon. members talked about stigma in the workplace. I think we've come a long way in the last 10 or 15 years in accepting and realizing – when you talk about one in four Canadians who are dealing with a mental or emotional illness, all you have to do is look around and know that's a pretty high stat when you think of it. I know at the Canadian Mental Health Association their program is rich and I saw it work for many people, empower many people to come beyond their mental illness.

Another one of the parts of their program is what they call a transitional employment program, which is geared to helping those who are coping with mental illness to re-enter the workplace. Through that program I think a lot of employers have a different vision today and recognize that there's lots of people – it doesn't matter what your

socio-economic standing is or your level of education, anyone of us can have a mental health episode in our life that changes things.

I've always said that when somebody comes to me and says it's all in her head, or it's all in his head, that makes me very worried because that's a very lonely place for people.

In closing, I do want to recognize the Canadian Mental Health Association. I do want to applaud our own government and the work of our health minister because all of this collaboration and talking about it and recognizing it helps one more person to become more well and to take charge of their life, and I support the motion moving forward.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the motion?

I'll go to the mover of the motion, the hon. Opposition House Leader, to close debate.

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

I thank the hon. member across the floor for speaking to this motion, and very well. As well as she mentioned she worked with the Canadian Mental Health Association for 16 years, which of course is a great organization here on PEI and across our great nation.

I'm looking forward to the vote and having a unanimous support of this motion.

Just in closing, I wanted to say what this motion was really about was exactly what the hon. member across the floor was saying. It is to bring more attention to it, to bring it out, to talk and have a greater discussion around the whole issue. We saw, as I said earlier, approximately three years ago when we started talking about addictions, particularly youth addictions and opiate use, and all of a sudden we started to see great dialogue in the community. We started to see a lot of organizations, a lot of

support groups, a lot of community groups really rallying and got behind this.

The more that we can do in this House, the more that we can do as legislators on PEI and community leaders, I think will benefit all Islanders.

Again, I look forward to the vote.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Are you ready for the question, members?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Speaker: Shall the motion carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay.”

Motion carried unanimously.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

At this time opposition would like to call Motion 64.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 64

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the Honourable Opposition House Leader, the following motion:

WHEREAS jurisdictions around the world have obtained success in tailoring their education systems to suit their cultural, economic and social needs and aspirations;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island has a unique culture and is best equipped to identify methods of improving the education system that uphold our values and traditions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly urge our government to adopt a Made in PEI

approach to identifying the solutions to address the challenges which currently exist in our educational system.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

To open debate on the motion, the mover, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We have spent great lengths talking about the challenges in the education system this fall and what the problems are. We are opposition and that is a huge part of our job. But today I'm not here to talk about what the problems are. Today I want to talk about how we need to approach a solution.

We have spent a great deal of time discussing how other countries around the world have built successful education systems, best practices, new and emerging models, and how they are contributing to their economy as a result.

While the methods of these countries may vary, one thing that remains consistent in the places we reflected upon has been their ability to tailor their education system in a way that reflected their collective values, the needs of the parents, students and the needs of teachers.

Most importantly, we have reviewed the desired outcomes for students and their future in those jurisdictions. Just as every student and child is unique, so are jurisdictions around the world, and so is their education system. Many of our challenges in PEI are unique to us, so why should the solutions be any different?

When reflecting upon how to improve our own system we need to think about: What do we value as Islanders? What sectors do we want to support and grow in Prince Edward Island? What activities do we want to have in schools that support learning outcomes? We do need to think of what is best for our students.

We can continue to look to other people for answers or we can begin asking ourselves what needs to be done to fix education in this province and trust that we have the answers that we do have. Cut and paste

answers simply won't work. No one knows our children better than us. No one knows our communities better than us. No one cares about the future of PEI more than we do.

We can't rely on Superman to swoop in and save us from the burning building that is our education system. We need to save ourselves and we need to save our children. No one understands the challenges better than those who live it every day, our teachers, parents, and students. These people are the victims of our failed system.

We can look to examples around the world and see how they have done it for themselves, but we must keep in mind that the reason that they were successful is because they designed a system that worked for their kids, for their future, and for their goals. Let's set our own goals, our own agenda and our own pathway for our students' future.

Somewhere, somehow along the way, we allowed someone to tell us that we are not smart enough to do it on our own, and somehow we have to tell that little voice in our head that – or we let that little voice in our head say that we are too small to do it right and take over. I think we need to throw that away and not worry about what people think when it comes to that, and we can show them that we can do it because we can.

We are at a fork in the road in this province when it comes to education. The reality is that we have been at this fork in the road for a while, and instead of picking a route and venturing down it, we have stood at this fork and scratched our heads because it seems too complex, too complicated and too hard.

I was once told not to talk about education, that politically it's too much of a landmine. To quote, somebody said: It's something that you can't win on. Then I was told that education was fine the way it is. I was told that if I talked about education in a negative way that it would reflect poorly on the teachers.

But as we hear in this House all the time, and let me be very clear: I am so glad that I didn't listen because this problem is not one that we can point at someone and say it's their fault. The challenges in our education

system belong to us all, and they go on forever, and if we continue to do what we have always done they will continue to go on, these problems.

I mean "we" as in every Islander, every stakeholder, and that includes everyone from politicians of the past, present and future; current school administrators and those who have since retired, teachers, support staff, parents, the business community, coaches, club leaders, the students themselves, bus drivers, community volunteers, professors, employers and employees and the unemployed.

By merely allowing the status quo to continue, by doing nothing, we are all adding to this problem.

Since this is all our problem, what would happen if we all took a small piece of ownership for the shortfalls in education? What if we aimed to stop pointing the fingers and instead asked ourselves: What have we done to get us here and what are we going to do help fix it? What if we collectively accepted responsibility of our success and failures to ensure our children receive the best possible education? What if we accepted responsibility for the way our actions manifested the problems?

On the flip side, what if we celebrated what success we have obtained thus far and build on our accomplishments? By doing so, would we give ourselves the permission to make changes in Prince Edward Island that are needed to build a better future for our children?

It is time to break the cycle. The cries of our children's future must be louder than the roars of fear and of doubt.

We know this change isn't easy. If it were easy we would have done it already. It's tough. It's going to take time and patience. We cannot be afraid to fail because as our children would be the first to tell us, our mistakes are often the most effective form of learning. Changing our education system will force us to take a hard look in the mirror at not only who we are, but who we want to be and who we want our children to be. It will require us not only to look at what we have done, but what we need to do, and then we need to do it.

Our education system is not just a set of curriculum books and tests. Our education system at its very core is a reflection of who we are, what we think of ourselves and what we want for our future.

We need to put hard thought into what we want our province to look like in 30 and 40 years, and then we need to construct an education system which reflects it.

By accepting a sub-par education system for our children we are accepting a sub-par extension of ourselves. When we ignore the challenges in education we are telling our children that they are not good enough for the best, we are telling them to run away from challenge, to give up when things get tough. Is this really the message that we want to send?

If we don't find our own solutions that meet our needs we are telling them that someone else out there will fix our problems for us. We are telling them that we are not strong enough or smart enough to solve our own problems. We are telling them that they are not either. We know in this province that none of that is true.

But what is true is that we got ourselves in this place, and we are the only ones who can get ourselves back out of it. We are smart enough. We are good enough. Our children do deserve the best possible education, and they are capable of achieving this.

I'm sure that everyone has somebody who somewhere along the way has told them that they can't do this or there's something that they couldn't accomplish, or maybe somebody has been told that they couldn't become an MLA that is an MLA today. Simply by walking away because somebody told you you can't do it, you aren't good enough. I know if you listen to some of the more successful people in the world and what they have to say about their own successes, many people doubted them, many people told them that they couldn't do it, many people told them to abandon their dreams, but they didn't, they stuck by it. By sticking by it they managed to build their own success for themselves.

I think that's an important message for us here today and I think that's an important

message that we should be sending to our students in this province.

We can do this. We can change this. It's possible. But in order to commit to tackling the education challenges on Prince Edward Island we need to commit to being a better version of our own selves. We all have something to lose if we don't, but on the reverse we all have something to gain if we do.

We are rated the lowest in Canada and we don't really have anything to lose at this point. There's only room to gain, so why not try? If not for ourselves, for the children in this province. Change is scary and the challenge that comes with it is scary, but the idea that our children may have missed an opportunity to be their best selves because we all failed to act is the scariest thought of all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Seconding the motion, the hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

As the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters has raised, the time to take action to change education is now or never. There isn't a moment to waste. For too long we have kicked the education can down the road without taking into consideration who is most affected by our lack of action, and that would be our children.

Every day that we fail to acknowledge and address the fundamental problems in our system is another day that we rob Island children of their full potential. Every day that we spend ignoring the problems is another day we risk losing another student through the cracks of a broken system.

We need to build a system that reflects the future that we want for our children in PEI. We need to ask ourselves what we want PEI's education system to look like for our children.

Does it involve learning related to skilled trades? Does it involve programs targeted

towards agriculture, fisheries, tourism or emerging sectors? Does it educate our students on the community they live in? And does it engage the local community in making this happen? Does it promote respect for oneself, each other and the community? Will it tolerate bullying? Will it empower our students to be contributing members of society? Will it compete on the national and international stage?

These are just a handful of questions we need to be asking ourselves.

The reality is that there are no easy answers. Our world has grown and shifted more in the past 10 years than it really has over the previous 100 years. There is no question that it is difficult to keep up.

Our caucus commends those who continue to give their heart and soul to the current education system. Teachers and administration are asked to do more with less. Who we admire for their creativity because they always seem to find a way to do this.

As the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters pointed out, this afternoon is not about pointing the finger, it is about pointing ourselves in the direction we need to go.

We are not suggesting that the changes that are needed in education are easy. We are stating that they are necessary. They are necessary for every student that is left behind because they don't learn the way our system tells them they should learn. They are necessary for the student who reads at a grade 3 level in a grade 7 class but is promoted year after year, falling farther and farther behind. They are necessary for every Island student who enters post-secondary institutions lacking the tools they need to succeed. They are needed for those same students who enter the workforce with a lower skill level than their peers in the neighbouring province.

Change is needed for those teachers who are doing more with less, for parents who want their children to receive the very best. Change is necessary to show the rest of the country and the rest of the world that just because we are a small province we are not small minded. Our students are bright, our teachers are dedicated and our parents love

their children, and want nothing but for the best for them.

We need to build a system which reflects the change that is needed for PEI to be independent and sustainable well into the future. Waiting for someone to come in and give us the answers will not solve anything nor is it likely that that will actually happen. We know ourselves, our province and our students and we know better than anyone else what we want for our children's future. So let's find our own answers.

Can we ask for help from other people at other jurisdictions? Absolutely. But at the core of our actions, as a province, we need to be the ones to take control and lead the charge toward a better education system. We can't rely on someone to swoop in and clean up this mess we created. It is ours to grab the broom and get sweeping.

Our children's futures depends upon it. Our province depends upon it. We can be better. We can be the best.

But in order to do so we need to commit. We need to collectively take responsibility and collectively pledge to make education better for our children and for the generations to come after them. The time is now or never, and we hope that the government will see that and finally listen.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

It's a pleasure to rise to speak about education. I thank the opposition for their resolutions that they brought forward during this session on education.

There seems to be a lot of gloom and doom in their statements, but I do support the motion. I will ask my members to support it as well, because in the main clause there it says that the Legislative Assembly urge our government to adopt a made-in-PEI approach to identifying the solutions to address the challenges. That's exactly what

we're doing. That's exactly what we have been doing since we came to power.

There was lots of talk in the session as well about looking at other countries and what they are doing, and that's exactly what we have been doing. We discussed that in the three motions brought forward by the opposition there with regards to Finland and Japan and the Netherlands.

We will continue to look there to study what other countries are doing and apply that to our system, those items that we feel are best suited for PEI.

The Leader of the Opposition says, too, which I'm really disappointed in, that was the comment that we have a failed system. We definitely do not have a failed system here on PEI. I want to emphasize that point. He thinks he's scoring points by that kind of talk, but that's really demeaning to our department, which is made up of teachers, demeaning to our teachers in the field, demeaning to the school boards, which are made up of teachers as well.

We have made vast gains, great gains in the education system since we came to power because of investments that we have made in education. We've come a long way in the eight years while we've been here.

There is, of course, more work to do, but there will always be more work to do. Even when we become number one, when we reach that level, there will still be more work to do. Because we want to have the best system of education on Prince Edward Island that any student could receive anywhere.

The Opposition House Leader stated that the time to act is now or never. Actually, that's wrong. The time to act was eight years ago, when we came to power, and that's exactly what we did. We made significant investments there and we will continue to do that.

I just want to talk about some of the investments that we did make since we came to power. In 2007 we made major financial increases in our budget. We went from \$170 million to \$232 million, where we are today, which is a 36.5% increase over that time period. We have renovated the Souris

school. Renovations expected to be completed early next year, but the students are back in that school right now. We invested in new school construction as well in Montague Regional High School, Stratford elementary, École Saint-Augustin, Spring Park school. We've had school expansions in École François-Buote, École-sur-Mer, Westwood Primary, Miscouche Consolidated, Montague Regional Intermediate, Elm Street, the Birchwood Intermediate sports fields with dollars there. Kindergarten additions were at West Royalty Elementary, five classrooms added on there; LM Montgomery, five classrooms there; Sherwood Elementary, added two mobile classrooms and some interior renovations.

The department purchased 151 new school buses because they were past bound being on their last legs or last wheels, and we had to ensure the safety of our students. Now we have a plan in place where school buses cannot be on the road in the regular fleet past twelve years of age. They can be a sub bus if they're –but no longer after 14 years in the system, and we will continue to do that. We have new bus initiatives of 60 new buses coming over the next few years and that's the \$4.8 million budget item there. And we're addressing long-standing school air quality issues that we inherited that was not looked after, but we are looking after it now and we will continue to do that as issues pop up.

In technology, last year's capital budget for the department of education included \$1 million in technology and a budget of \$3.75 million over the next five years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: Over 1,500 new computers in schools and more than \$2 million in computers and software over the last four years. Laptops for every high school teacher. Eight million dollars in infrastructure upgrades including the (Indistinct) link project which includes a partnership agreement with EastLink. The LCD projector project was completed which saw every classroom equipped with these devices, and the new communications and information technology curriculum was put in place.

Teachers and support staff. In 2006, before we came to power, the student-educator ratio was one educator for 14.4 students. We had in the system at that time 1,484 teachers. Now today, in 2014, we have 1,565 educators in the system and the student-teacher ratio went from, as I said, one in 14.4 to one for 12.8. Significantly better.

The autism (Indistinct) services and funding for our children and youth with autism to maximize learning opportunities. We put a lot of funding into that and continue to work with our specialists in that area, and we now have a team of eight highly-qualified autism specialists and consultants at the department, along with more staff at the school board.

In the early years program, which we implemented since we came in, fantastic program, and recognized by the *Globe and Mail* several years ago as being the second-best in the country. We found out this spring, in the early year childhood education report, that we are now first, tied with Quebec for the country, which is fantastic for our early children before they enter our school system. In kindergarten, almost 6,000 children have completed a full day free kindergarten before the end of the grade 1, and we have 1,540 kindergarten students in 2013-2014 school year. This was a program that was not in place before we came to government, and we feel that this is a major contribution to the education of our students when you put it on top of the early years' program. So when our students reach grade 1 they are really prepared and ready to go.

We also, for the kindergarten, purchased kindergarten equipment, books, curriculum supplies and classroom furniture. New computers were purchased, 103 classrooms were reconfigured, hired additional custodians, educational assistance, bus drivers. We included over 132 kindergarten educators in the system, 112 kindergarten teachers and 20 specialists and on and on in that area there.

In the early years centres and preschool excellence initiative – 45 early years centres is what we have in the province at the present time, supported by an investment of \$12 million with 2,089 spaces for our children. The infant spaces increased by 130% and the wages for early years educators were enhanced to reflect the

importance of that role. We really feel, in our government, that was a major investment and we will continue to invest in that.

Investment in the CHANCES program has increased significantly over the last five years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: So what have we gained by these investments?

In the pan-Canadian assessments that just came out, PEI students showed more improvement in reading and mathematics than in any other province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: In science, 93% of our students achieved the expected level of performance, 2% above the Canadian average. In our provincial assessments in grade 6 math 75% of students are at or approaching the standard, a 14% improvement over last year.

In grade 9 math 71% of our students are at or approaching expectations, a 34% improvement over 2011. In grade 3 reading comprehension in 2014, we had 80%, in 2014; we have 80% of grade 3 students reading at grade level; and another 7% approaching expectations – an 18% improvement over 2007. Between 2007 and 2014 the number of children experiencing difficulty is also being cut in half.

Among grade 6 students 78% are now meeting or approaching expectations in reading, approximately a 25% increase since 2009.

We've restructured the school calendar for 2014-2015 which includes two more professional learning days; a third day which will be reconfigured for professional learning as well; same number of instructional days as this past year and fewer short weeks. New embedded professional learning days provide an opportunity for teachers to learn new concepts, collaborate with other teachers in their school or grade level, pilot new programs in their own classrooms and evaluate the effectiveness of these concepts with our students.

Our system is not broken, it is really improving, and our students are showing that in the assessments. We will continue to make those investments. We will support this because we believe in a home-grown educational system for our province. But we'll do that looking outside our system, looking in other provinces, working with other ministers in the other provinces, looking at the international scene as well, wherever we can find the very best interventions to improve the education system in our province. We will do that.

Our system is not broke. It's improving in a great way. We see that through the PCAP test just lately and we will see that again when our students write the PISA next year.

I'm quite willing to support this motion and love to talk about education at any time.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the motion?

To close out debate, I'll go to the mover, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I guess my natural inclination is to rebut many of the things that the education minister said. But this motion was meant to be positive because I believe in our students in Prince Edward Island and I believe in our future on Prince Edward Island, and I believe we need to start working towards a better future for everyone.

I think it's important to tackle a made in PEI solution and I've talked about it extensively, and it's why we talked about the different jurisdictions. It's why I mentioned things like trade missions we're taking, business to other places in the world, because we can compete there because we're competing with the best in the world with our business community.

I think that we need to view education from the exact same way. I know this is the third time I said it but it's a really solid comparison. We can do it as a small

province, we can do it with business. As a small province we can do it with our students.

We need to look at ways to best tackle that and the only way we can tackle that is a homemade solution. It has to be a solution that works for Prince Edward Island. It has to be a solution that works for the communities in Prince Edward Island, the people of Prince Edward Island, the future of Prince Edward Island, what we actually want to look like, what we're actually planning to be down the road.

When the minister can say that he thinks everything is great, I have a unique perspective on it because I'm a parent with two children in the system. I can tell you he's wrong in his assessment that it's not broken. The teachers who are friends of mine tell me all the time it's broken. They know it's broken. Why do they know? Because they're in the middle of it and they know it's broken.

How come all these people who would stop me at the grocery store – my colleagues at the grocery store – and tell them how the teachers are looking to retire early because they have to get out of a system that's broken? Parents who are frustrated with the system that the system isn't broken?

This isn't meant to be negative, this is meant to be positive. A way to look at the best for all Islanders. Something that we can work together on, something that we should all be able to support in this Assembly. It is important that we look towards the future and our future obviously starts with the students of Prince Edward Island.

With that, I'm done. I was happy to be able to bring several motions about education to the floor and have a greater discussion, and it's good to see that some of them are going to committee. I think this is an important one to pass because it talks about solutions for PEI, designed for PEI, for Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are you ready for the question, hon. members?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) standing vote.

Speaker: A recorded division has been requested.

I'll call upon the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the bells.

[The bells were rung]

Mr. Dumville: Government members are ready for the vote, Madam Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Madam Speaker, opposition's ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

I'll call the Clerk to read the operative clause.

Clerk: The operative clause, Madam Speaker:

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly urge our government to adopt a Made in PEI approach to identifying the solutions to address the challenges which currently exist in our educational system.

Speaker: Those not in favour please rise at this time.

Those in favour please rise.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development, the hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, the hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning, the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General, the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough

Park, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: Motion No. 64 carried unanimously.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Madam Speaker, at this time we'd give some time to the government side.

Orders Other than Government

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

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

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that the 11th, the 19th, the 21st, the 22nd, the 23rd, the 24th, the 25th orders of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The following bills were ordered for third reading:

Order No. 11, *Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accounting Act* (Bill No. 15);

Order No.19, *An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act* (Bill No. 20);

Order No. 21, *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Superannuation Act* (Bill No. 25);

Order No. 22, *An Act to Amend the Teachers' Superannuation Act* (Bill No. 24);

Order No. 23, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2015*, (Bill No. 22);

Order No. 24, *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2014*, (Bill No. 23); and

Order No. 25, *Municipal Statutes Amendment Act 2014*, (Bill No. 27).

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

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that the said bills be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The following bills read a third time:

Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accounting Act (Bill No. 15);

An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act (Bill No. 20);

An Act to Amend the Civil Service Superannuation Act (Bill No. 25);

An Act to Amend the Teachers' Superannuation Act (Bill No. 24);

Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2015 (Bill No. 22);

Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2014 (Bill No. 23); and

Municipal Statutes Amendment Act 2014 (Bill No. 27).

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

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that the said bills do now pass.

Speaker: I'll ask you to please rise, members.

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 or 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.

The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

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

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that the 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 17, *An Act to Amend the Fisheries Act*, Bill No. 21, ordered for third reading.

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

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

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira wishes to speak to this.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

When the second reading came up on this bill and it was on the floor of the House and the minister was on the floor with his assistant, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole House shut the bill down.

Speaker: Hon. member, I would you ask to please not to question the Chair's authority during that time.

Some Hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. LaVie: Okay, Madam Speaker, sorry.

Speaker: That's out of order, yes, but you can continue to comment, if you wish, on the bill.

Mr. LaVie: The bill was shut down, Madam Speaker, without opposition having some questions on the bill.

It wasn't that the minister of fisheries wouldn't answer the questions. The minister of fisheries didn't know the answers. He had an assistant on the floor with him, Bobby Creed, a very smart man. Bobby Creed came from a fishing community. His father fished all his life. He has fishing in his background.

The minister wouldn't allow the questions. This minister of fisheries, he grew up on a farm, he was a great farmer, all respect for farmers, but putting a farmer all his life in a fisheries ministry – dead wrong of the Premier to do that, to leave him as minister of fisheries.

Speaker: Are you speaking to the bill, hon. member?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. member, as I stated in my ruling yesterday, the third reading and debate, as you are doing right now, which you are in full order of doing, you're supposed to focus on the bill itself.

Mr. LaVie: Okay, we'll focus on the bill.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. members, the member has the floor, please.

Mr. LaVie: Focus on the bill. We couldn't get questions out – the member from Belfast had questions he wouldn't answer on the fisheries act. He wouldn't answer the questions, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. member, I would ask you to focus your comments on the actual bill, please.

Mr. LaVie: What's in the bill, it was about a levy. This minister said that he has to sell

this to the fishermen. He has to convince the fishermen. What he said, he only has less than half the fishermen's vote and he had 64.4% of the vote.

When the bill came on the floor, the question was asked of the minister on behalf of the fishermen. All the fishermen want to know is they want to know where their money is and what's going to happen to the money.

This bill that this minister put on the floor is putting all the power back into this minister's hands to do what he wants to do with the fishery of Prince Edward Island. We've got a fishery here – and it's a good problem to have – is too much fish on PEI. I've fished since I was the height of that desk and I've seen times when there was no fish, so all the things that the fishermen have done over the years, your trap limits, your ring size, your trap sizes, your escape panels – are working.

But the only thing that nobody told fishermen was: What happens when there's too much fish?

Fishermen understand about marketing, fishermen understand about promotion, but when the minister presents the bill on the floor to change the fishing act, fishermen want to be involved. That's all fishermen want. They want a fair chance. For this minister to put a bill on the floor and get less than half of the vote, 500 fishermen voted, and 64.4%, he didn't do a very good job of selling it to the fishermen.

When a bill like this is on the floor fishermen have questions and the only way the fishermen can get their questions is through me, and that's exactly what I tried to do for the fishermen of Prince Edward Island. It was my phone that was ringing off the wall when this bill hit the floor. This bill was on the floor for two days and this minister made a mockery out of this bill on the floor. He wouldn't allow the questions.

Speaker: Hon. member, those questions were referred to through the Chair.

Mr. LaVie: Those – yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: So, Madam Speaker, just stop and listen now, this is a serious problem –

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. member, are you questioning the Speaker?

Mr. LaVie: No.

Speaker: Okay. Watch your commentary, please.

Mr. LaVie: No, not whatsoever, never. Never do it, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Yes, thank you.

Thank you, hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. MacKinley: You're getting all mixed up (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: Madam Speaker, he wouldn't –

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: Madam Speaker, do I have the floor?

With the bill, I couldn't make any headway on the bill and the bill was – there was roaring and hollering in the House here on the bill with the members back and forth.

I would like to see, if possible in the next sitting, if this minister would definitely not be minister of fisheries no longer, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Speaking to the bill, hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Now with the bill off the floor and I –

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: – we'll be –

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: I will be supporting the fishermen on the bill, on the fishery act, but

there are fishermen out there that really don't know what the bill is about and they had a lot of questions on the bill. That's why they didn't cast their vote. Their questions weren't answered and couldn't be answered.

Fishermen do know where they want to go with marketing and promotion and they know there's a glut. Because a lot of these fishermen, they went through the good times and they've been there in the bad times, and right now they know we're in the good times. They want to protect the good times. They know there are young fishermen that are coming up through the system and these fishermen want to know that the fish is going to be there for them.

Today fishermen are well educated. Some fishermen have university degrees. There are well-educators fishers out there today. Back in the days, fishermen had to go to work to support their families, and fishermen had huge families back in the day. Twelve was a big family, six was a small family. When the fishing industry was declining these fishermen were smart.

Speaker: Hon. member, bringing back to the bill that's before us right now.

Mr. LaVie: Getting back to the bill –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. members, please respect the speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Getting back to the bill, Madam Speaker.

This is exactly what I say when there's a bill that comes on the floor like the fishery act bill comes on the floor. When a member's asking on the bill and his answers are not getting questions on the fisheries act, and this is exactly what happens today.

To the bill, I support the bill. I support the fishermen. The fishermen want marketing. The fishermen want promotion. And to change the legislation, it has to be changed. The only changes the questions that weren't getting answered were this minister's taking all power into his own hands.

Into the future for our future fishers, these fishermen are independent businesses and

they want to stay independent businesses. When this fishery act hits the floor, they definitely want to know where their future's going to be in the fisheries.

When a fishery minister like this over there

—

Speaker: Hon. member, focusing on the bill.

Mr. LaVie: — they're —

Speaker: Focusing on the bill, please.

Mr. LaVie: When the fishery minister brought the bill on the floor, fishermen were very worried about their future. With the marketing and promotion and what this bill does for that, I'll probably support the bill.

The fishermen, they do want marketing, and they do want promotion. But they want to definitely know where their money is going, who's going to spend their money and how it's going to be spent, who is going to collect it. I couldn't find that out for the fishermen.

Hopefully, what the minister will do in the next few weeks is make sure he gets word out to the fishermen who's going to collect the money, who's going to spend the money, who's going to handle the money. Hopefully, in the next two weeks, he'll have his department go out and do that for him because I know there was a petition out there against the minister. Hopefully his workers, his EAs, can go across Prince Edward Island, across the Maritimes actually, and see what's going to happen with their money, who's going to spend their money and who's going to handle our money, who's going to look after the money, and where's the money going to be.

With that, I was just a little disappointed the other day, but when a bill hits the floor, and everybody works together in here, it's a lot easier for these bills to be passed. We just had one on safer communities, and there was a bill on the floor, and there was great discussion in the House here. We work well together when we have great discussions.

When the fishery act hit the floor, if there was better discussion we probably wouldn't be having discussion today. I wouldn't be

standing here speaking on the fishery act, because we weren't working together on this bill. When you sit down and everybody works together, it goes so much easier.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: So — question?

Speaker: You have the floor, hon. member.

Mr. LaVie: I thought somebody had a question, Madam Speaker.

The next time there's a fisheries act, and this Cabinet will probably change, I'd say, within the next six months or so, hopefully when a fishery act hits the floor, we can all work together on the floor. That's what it's all about, working together, getting work done, not coming in here and it's all about you or it's all about me. It's all about working together to make sure these bills get passed, make sure our work is done for the people and our industries of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development speaking to the bill.

Mr. MacKinley: Speaking to the bill, it's quite clear this bill will allow the buyers (Indistinct) be collecting — there'll be an (Indistinct) set up to collect the money, the one cent from the buyers. The fishing bill is under the *Natural Products Marketing Act* which we don't even discuss here. I tried to explain that a few times on the floor.

The amendment was debated on the floor of the Legislature — it's a good amendment that will support the future —

Speaker: Amendment, hon. minister, or the bill?

Mr. LaVie: The bill.

Mr. MacKinley: No, the bill.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) the bill.

Mr. MacKinley: But we made a, yeah, we made a –

Speaker: Yes, hon. minister. Just making it clear.

Mr. MacKinley: Amendment to the bill.

Speaker: Yes, okay.

Mr. MacKinley: Basically what it does is allows the first, the buyer on the wharf, whoever buys the lobster to collect their cent a pound. That's what it does. This is a bill that is – first time in history this has come in since Confederation, and it's going to be huge for generic marketing, Advertising lobsters and intelligence. I hope the fishers and the buyers or processors can work together.

When legislation to our government changes regulations, to allow buyers greater access to the wharf to buy lobsters, we did that also earlier, but this is to collect at the wharf.

I'll be calling for a standing vote on this, just to make sure that they know which way they're voting. That's democracy. If they don't like to vote for it, they can vote against it. Ever since I've been minister, the fishing critic has missed about half –

Speaker: Staying on the bill hon. member.

Mr. MacKinley: Yes.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. MacKinley: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: You didn't pay for it.

Mr. MacKinley: But –

Speaker: Be fair.

Mr. MacKinley: Madam Speaker –

Mr. LaVie: You have a credit card.

Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. MacKinley: This is a good bill. It's coming through and I'm sure it's going to pass in the House. That's democracy. It's great to be in the House to be able to get up and debate this.

This will help the lobster industry in the whole province. It'll help everybody in the lobster industry when this is implemented, this bill, and it's great to see that the minister and all other ministers are here today (Indistinct) right behind this bill and the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

So democracy will be when the standing vote comes and we'll see which side they want to listen to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition speaking to the bill.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, didn't have much of an opportunity to get to speak to the bill because the member had to pull it off the floor. I know there was –

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, it was in second reading.

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We are asked many questions about it. I know one of the major components of the bill was the minister took away a lot of his own powers and responsibilities and duties within his department. Not necessarily a bad thing if your – if you fish on Prince Edward Island that's probably a good thing. All Islanders probably view it is a good thing any time we can powers away from this particular minister especially.

I know the hon. member doesn't like to be questioned on these things, but it's –

Speaker: Sticking to the bill.

Leader of the Opposition: It's very important to note that we did push this minister to help make changes in this, and we support that a levy would come in, because it is important to address the issues surrounding –

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Would you like to go again?

Speaker: You have the floor, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I know that the minister did take himself out of play in the legislation – and like I say, that is important. It seems like he's scared to make any decisions around the fishery on his own and now they'll be going to Cabinet as per the bill, the changes in the bill, will send all those decisions to Cabinet rather than to be in his own hands as they once were.

We do feel that some of the changes that he made in here, he didn't have a great idea on what was actually happening and it was a great opportunity for us to be able to express through questions some of the things that (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacKinley: I hear you moved your date over there.

Speaker: Hon. minister, the member has the floor.

Leader of the Opposition: It's great that you're concerned about what I'm saying. I'm glad you were listening.

It was very important, and it's a good process to go through to have questions on that bill around some of the concerns about how things would be administered and who would be doing what, and what the timelines would be and how the fees would be prescribed and those types of things and where that decision would be made, whether it lies – the decision would be with the processors, whether the decision would now be with Cabinet.

There was some great debate on it, and it was unfortunate that it took the debate of the bill to actually learn what the answers were. He was lucky to have Bobby Creed with him. Bobby's a good guy, and he's got a lot of answers when it comes to the fishing file on Prince Edward Island. The minister is lucky to have a guy like Bobby with him, who understands the industry, because obviously he doesn't, who can give him the answers that he doesn't have, which

obviously he didn't, and help move this file forward, because this is an important file.

I know this is the processors' side of it, this bill, but it's part of a larger issue on Prince Edward Island that, as we can all recall, back during the tie-up how important it became, and through some reports and stuff, and this was a recommendation that came out of it.

Sometimes it takes a bill on the floor for the minister involved, in this case the minister of fisheries, to learn what his portfolio is actually about and what happens inside his own department. Like I said, he's very fortunate to have some people around him who understand the issues, understand the industry, and are willing to do the things that are necessary to help fix some of the problems around Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Sheridan: Just to carry it first.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried!

Mr. MacKinley: No, (Indistinct) standing vote.

Speaker: The recorded division has been requested, hon. members.

I'm going to call upon the Sergeant-at-Arms to ring the bells.

[The bells were rung]

Mr. Dumville: Madam Speaker, government members are ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. LaVie: Madam Speaker, opposition's ready for the vote.

Speaker: Hon. members, the question is that Bill No. 21 proceed to third reading.

Those not supporting this bill to go to third reading please rise at this time.

Those supporting Bill No. 21 to go to third reading please rise at this time.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development, the hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, the hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning, the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General, the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: It has been voted upon unanimously that Bill No. 21 proceed to third reading.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Mr. Clerk.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Fisheries Act*, Bill No. 21, read a third time.

Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

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

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that the said bill do now pass.

Speaker: Please rise, hon. members.

This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do now pass.

All those in favour say “yea.”

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Contrary “nay.”

Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

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

Speaker: Please rise, hon. members.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

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

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

[Recess]

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier, that this House adjourn and stand until the call of the Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. member, I’m sorry, we need the Royal Assent first.

Hon. members, I’m advised His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, has arrived again at Province House to grant Royal Assent to the bills passed during this session. I now propose to leave the Chair in anticipation of His Honour’s arrival.

His Honour Lieutenant Governor H. Frank Lewis: Please be seated.

Clerk: Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has passed certain bills to date during this, the 5th Session of the 64th General Assembly, and now begs Your Honour's consideration of the grant of Royal Assent for the following bills:

Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accounting Act (Bill No. 15);

An Act to Amend the Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act (Bill No. 20);

An Act to Amend the Fisheries Act (Bill No. 21);

Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2014 (Bill No. 23);

An Act to Amend the Teachers' Superannuation Act (Bill No. 24);

An Act to Amend the Civil Service Superannuation Act (Bill No. 25);

Municipal Statutes Amendment Act 2014 (Bill No. 27).

His Honour Lieutenant Governor H. Frank Lewis: 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 intitled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2015*, thus placing at the disposal of the Crown the means by which government can be made efficient for the services and welfare of the Province.

Clerk: His 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.

His Honour Lieutenant Governor H. Frank Lewis: I wish to commend all hon.

members for the conscientious manner in which you have conducted your deliberations to this point of the 5th Session of the 64th 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: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Deputy Premier, that this House adjourn and stand until the call of the Speaker.

Speaker: Before putting the question to the members, I wish to wish you all a very Merry Christmas, as your Speaker. As your presiding officer, it has been a pleasure working with all of you this session.

To our staff at the Legislative Assembly, to our Clerk and Assistant Clerk and our Pages, our Sergeant-at-Arms and all of our support staff, I thank you for all of your cooperation this session, and to the media that's here on a daily basis as well, and our security – everybody.

It's a very historic day today, everybody, because today ends the session before the big renovation in this lovely building. It is an honour for all of us, I know you all feel the same way, to be sitting in the chairs tonight. We don't know how long it will be until it reopens so it is a great moment.

Before we put the question I wish you all the very best.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good evening, everyone.

The Legislature adjourned until the call of the Speaker