

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS	344
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	347
SUMMERSIDE-ST. ELEANORS (College of Piping)	347
O'LEARY-INVERNESS (PEI Potato Blossom Festival).....	347
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Public Service Week).....	348
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AS NOTICE.....	348
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT (Ammonium Nitrate Import Amount-further)	348
ORAL QUESTIONS.....	348
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (School Staffing).....	348
BORDEN-KINKORA (Power Cable and New Generator-further).....	352
BORDEN-KINKORA (Ratepayer Cost for Generator)	353
BORDEN-KINKORA (PEI Energy Corporation Debt Load)	353
BORDEN-KINKORA (Generator Debt and Power Cable)	354
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Women's Health)	355
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Women's Health Clinic)	355
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Repatriation Strategy).....	356
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Career Opportunities).....	356
SUMMERSIDE-ST. ELEANORS (Culture Movement to EELC)	357
SUMMERSIDE-ST. ELEANORS (Culture Visibility)	357
SUMMERSIDE-ST. ELEANORS (Culture Portfolio Funding).....	358
BORDEN-KINKORA (New Generator Financial Projections-further)	358
BORDEN-KINKORA (New Generator Life Expectancy).....	359
BORDEN-KINKORA (Power Cable Priority).....	359
BORDEN-KINKORA (Power Cable Funding in Budget)	360
BORDEN-KINKORA (Power Cable and TIE Minister)	360
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS	361
PREMIER (Inquest Recommendations)	361

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES (Recognizing PEI's Aquaculture Industry).....	362
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY (Update on Souris Bridge Construction).....	363
PRESENTING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS.....	364
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Local Access to Abortion Services and Women's Health).....	364
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	365
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT)	365
REPLY TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE	365
SOURIS-ELMIRA	365
BORDEN-KINKORA.....	368
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE.....	377
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY	379
MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT.....	384
MOTION 17 (In support of the PEI film and digital media industry)	384
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE.....	385
MORELL-MERMAID.....	386
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM.....	388
SOURIS-ELMIRA	388
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER.....	390
STRATFORD-KINLOCK.....	391
RUSTICO-EMERALD.....	393
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY	393
WORKFORCE AND ADVANCED LEARNING.....	393
MOTION 1 (Out-of-province health care expenditures-further).....	394
HEALTH AND WELLNESS AND FAMILY AND HUMAN SERVICES	394
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.....	398
STRATFORD-KINLOCK.....	400
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES.....	401
RUSTICO-EMERALD.....	402
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE.....	402
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.....	403
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY	404
STRATFORD-KINLOCK.....	405
MOTION 27 (In support of Ground Search and Rescue Services on Prince Edward Island).....	406
STRATFORD-KINLOCK.....	406
MORELL-MERMAID.....	410
ADJOURNED.....	411

The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, first I'd like to welcome back to the Chamber all of our colleagues, members of the House.

Hope everyone had a great weekend. I see quite a few people with evidence that they've been out in the fresh air and wish everyone a happy and productive week.

To you, Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your participation in the intertribal dance at the powwow at Scotchfort on Saturday.

I note in the guests in the gallery, members of – represent my constituency, John Terra and his family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everybody back here for another week of the Legislative Assembly. I want to welcome those that are here in the gallery and those that are following along at home via EastLink or the Internet.

I wanted to make special note of one of the guests here today. I know her Internet was choppy last week and she wasn't able to follow it as close as she likes, so she decided to make the drive in from Cardigan today to watch it live, and that's my mother who's in the gallery today, so I want to welcome mom. I also want to say today that being as my mother is here, I know that 44 years ago today she was doing something quite different. I want to say happy birthday to my sister Lisa who is 44, and she'll be happy that I said that. I'm sure she'll be happy that I announced that for her.

Also, I want to congratulate Brad Richards on another Stanley Cup win last night.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: He had two assists and he had a great playoffs and I think he's done PEI proud once again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd just like to recognize a couple of my friends in the gallery, Becka Viau and Lorne Yeo, who are both here.

I'd also like to congratulate the city of Charlottetown who joined St. John's, Yarmouth, Vancouver and a host of other Canadian cities in becoming the 62nd Canadian city to recognize its citizen's rights to live in a healthy environment. They did that last night with a unanimous vote of city council. They passed a municipal declaration that protects fresh air, clean water and healthy food, and provides their residents with a say in the decisions that impact their health. I think I'd like to congratulate the city of Charlottetown. I'd also like to congratulate Blue Dot PEI and the citizen's alliance, and particular Don Mazer and Cindy Richards who were really instrumental in those efforts.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a privilege to rise. I'd like to welcome all the guests in the gallery today and certainly those that are at home watching.

Today I'd like to recognize Patrick Holland. He's the son of Dr. Bernard and Joanne Holland. Last Saturday night in Calgary Patrick won the Canadian Angus Foundation Robert C. McHaffie Junior Ambassador Award. The junior ambassador is sponsored by the Canadian Angus Foundation and he acts in a role as a model for youth and represents members of the association. It's an opportunity to network with leaders in the agriculture industry and to learn from them. These ambassadors have the

opportunity to attend at least one international event and several major agriculture events in Canada during their one-year term. It's a very important award in the Angus world. This is only the second time someone east of Ontario has won it in the last 14 years.

On behalf of this Legislative Assembly I'd like to congratulate Patrick on this significant achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, appreciate it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery today and say hello to everybody in District 20 Kensington-Malpeque.

I'd like to wish a happy birthday to Viola Fogarty today, it's her birthday, and a happy anniversary to Barry and Georgie Bertram.

Also would like to give my condolences to Hopgood Rayner. His wife passed away over the weekend – Pauline – and I just want to express my condolences from the House to Hopgood.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome those to the gallery and those watching on EastLink and online.

But especially I want to acknowledge the minister of health and social services for the Yukon, Minister Mike Nixon is here in the gallery. Mike's had the opportunity to tour around Prince Edward Island and he's telling us what a great province we have, although he does describe some of his riding as almost as big as the whole Province of Prince Edward Island. He is finding it very interesting here on the Island.

I also want to inform the House, too, that the potato industry, they're pretty well all done

of planting in O'Leary-Inverness. A lot of farmers are out now cultivating and making those pristine perfect rows that you see when you drive up the roads of Prince Edward Island. Wishing everybody a safe cultivation process in growing some of the best potatoes in the world.

I also want to send out a happy birthday to my father-in-law Warren Laird. He celebrated his 90th birthday on Saturday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, along with my colleagues, are pretty excited about the win last night with the Chicago Blackhawks. I want to congratulate Brad Richards. The cup will be coming to District 4 again, down to Murray Harbour, and I think everyone in Murray Harbour, and really across the Island, should be very proud. Brad had two great assists last night. I just want to congratulate him, and his mother and father, Glen and Delite Richards.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I'd like to recognize a Summerside-St. Eleanors resident, Betty Aubin. Betty gave me a call last night. She's in Prince County Hospital and she was undergoing surgery this morning at 7:00 a.m. However, she wanted to let me know that she had her t.v. hooked up and she would be watching the session at 2:00 p.m. today from her hospital bed at Prince County Hospital. Welcome, Betty, I hope you're feeling well and I hope you enjoy the session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody into the gallery today.

In particular, I'd like to draw a little special attention to one of our guests in the gallery today and give a little bit of advanced notice on something that's actually occurring tomorrow.

Barry Flynn is with us today, and I believe tomorrow, the 17th, Barry will turn 60. Just to let the good folks of Charlottetown know, when they see Barry tomorrow, extend a hand and offer him congratulations on his birthday.

Also, I would like to recognize a couple of individuals who are employees with the department of environment. They are actually members of the PEI forest fire team who, during the last week of May, joined forces with a contingent from Nova Scotia to head west to Alberta to fight those forest fires. I'm happy and delighted to say those two individuals, by the name of Andrew Ing and Mike Montigny, have returned to PEI safe and sound. I would like to welcome them home. I would like to thank them for their participation in those forest fires in the west. Also to thank their families for allowing them to go to develop some new skills that they will be bringing back to PEI to teach the other members of our forest fighting team here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome Pastor Bill here from Faith Court Centre on the Loyalist Road. He's always available and gives good counsel and he's a great constituent. So welcome, Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to welcome Daniel Larter to the gallery. Dan grew up in the same neighbourhood as I did in Stratford.

I'd also like to recognize Steven Forbes, Christina MacLeod, Matt Cassidy, Matt Sullivan, Mathieu LeBlanc, Steven Jackson, Shannon Courtney, Mike Fitzpatrick, Duncan Sturz and Matt Campbell, some of who were here last week, who graduated from the 21 Inc. leaders programming this weekend.

I can inform the House, too, that I had the opportunity to lead them through an updated 100-year vision session for this province on Sunday morning. That was a great pleasure for me.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to say hello to the members of District 7 today, especially a couple of the biggest Blackhawk fans probably in the district, Father Brian and Trixie Dunn.

I'd also like to thank all the members of the House for the wonderful Post It Positive notes that they provided me. If there's anybody that would like to still put one forward, please get a hold of me today and we can put them out towards Roisin. She was quite thrilled with the reception.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I rise to welcome all our guests in the gallery today. Especially, I believe Becka Viau is with us today. Becka was a candidate for the Green Party in District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale and was an exceptional candidate and did an amazing job during the course of the election. Also is

a curator, an educator, and provides leadership for Art in the Open, Victoria Park, which has become a very popular art exhibit here in the city of Charlottetown.

I also want to say a special hello to my mom and my oldest girl who are sitting on Confederation Street watching the proceedings today.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

College of Piping

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise in the House to recognize one of my favourite places in Summerside, the College of Piping, on their accomplishments and programming.

The College of Piping's mission is to: inspire excellence in Celtic performing arts through quality educational programming.

The artistic disciplines taught at the college connect young people to our rich Celtic heritage in the Maritimes and across Canada. Students come to the college from all over the world, and while they may come for the Celtic arts, they leave with much more. Students, ranging in age from three to 80, gain self-confidence with their achievements and by taking many opportunities to perform.

Both the Highland Dance and Step Dance program are flourishing. Since its creation, the dance troupe has made many public appearances to appreciative audiences. Also, for the second time, a team of dancers will travel to compete together at the Canadian Highland Dancing Championships in London, Ontario, July 6th through 10th.

The College now has four pipe bands. Two pipe bands competed at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, last summer and both bands did extremely well, and both qualified to compete in the final round.

All three of my children have gone through different programs at the college and they have enjoyed every second of their time with them. I always look forward to seeing these performers in action. It is always an enjoyable event to see and execute their passion. I encourage all members of the House to take in one of the many shows this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

PEI Potato Blossom Festival

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As summer approaches, many Island communities are the home to numerous community festivals that bring tourists to our rural communities, and are an opportunity for local residents to celebrate what makes their town or community special.

The town of O'Leary is celebrating its 47th annual PEI Potato Blossom Festival July 11th-19th. Once again, the town of O'Leary, which is the self-proclaimed capital of the potato industry on PEI, gathers to celebrate the importance of this vital industry and its importance to the PEI economy and, in particular, to the O'Leary community.

The Potato Blossom Festival chair, Valene Gallant, and her many volunteers, put copious amounts of hours organizing this festival. The Potato Blossom Festival is famous for the special events including one of PEI's most interesting community parades where potato equipment from past to present line the parade route with other community and corporate floats on humorous potato commentary and activities is presented to an inquisitive public lining the streets of O'Leary. Even the official opening is potatoized with the cutting of the potato into sets. It's hosted at the Canadian Potato Museum where tasty potato treats are also provided.

Numerous competitions occur crowning champions in provincial potato peeling and provincial washer toss specialties. There is

the crowing of the Miss Potato Blossom Queen and community adult singing competitions, youth talent, potato trivia, potato photography challenges, the selection of the PEI Potato Ambassador who will represent the potato industry at the industry events on PEI, as well as at the Royal Agricultural Fair in Toronto.

There is the PEI Farmers banquet where recognition is given to those who work in producing potatoes, including farmhand of the year, potato grower of the year, future farmer of the year, and volunteer community member of the year.

I encourage all Islanders and visitors alike who have an interest in anything potato to come to the riding of O'Leary-Inverness, drive by thousands of acres of potato fields in full bloom with a variety of blossom colours in the backdrop of a diverse rural landscape, and participate in and witness one of PEI's most important potato events in the agricultural calendar, potato blossom time in O'Leary, PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Public Service Week

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Public Service Week, and I'd like to take a moment today to recognize the valuable work of public servants across Prince Edward Island.

Public servants work day and night in every corner of the province to help enrich our quality of life. They help keep our roads safe. They help care for us when we are sick. They can help protect our natural environment. They administer programs that help our communities to thrive and our economy to grow. These men and women come from diverse backgrounds, but share a common goal, to serve the public.

Public Service Week is a time to celebrate the valuable work that public servants do to improve our province. A range of activities are taking place across Prince Edward Island to make Public Service Week. More can be

learned about these activities online at www.gov.pe.ca/pscweek.

Along with our entire caucus, I want to recognize the valuable work done by public servants every day to support Islanders.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Ammonium nitrate import amount (further)

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table response to a question from the Leader of the Third Party around ammonium nitrate 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.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

School staffing

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There seems to be a lot of confusion around the staffing levels for schools next year.

Question to the minister of education: Has your department completed the staffing complement for Island school boards for the coming year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department doesn't do the hiring of the school teachers. That's up to the school board. They make those decisions.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Your department provides the school board with a number and that's the number that they don't have. We know that it's done.

Question to the minister of education: When was the staffing complement completed by your department?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department has prepared a budget and they offer a grant to the school boards, and the school boards then take that budget and make up their composition.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Friday the minister told the media that he has the number but he won't share it with the school board.

Question to the Premier: Premier, why is your minister keeping this information a secret from the school board?

Mr. Perry: I can answer that.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) scared to answer my question. (Indistinct).

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition is making a statement that I didn't say on Friday. I did not release any numbers nor did I give any numbers out –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Mr. Perry: – to anyone.

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Perry: Thank you.

Speaker: When somebody is speaking, let the person speak.

Go ahead, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: Premier, can you tell this House why it's such a secret that the school board cannot find out the information that they need to plan?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, all departments and organizations that receive funding from government have participated in a budget-making process that's gone on over a number of months and in many ways it's a cycle that continues throughout the year.

Departments, including the school board, have been asked to take part in that process. There will be a budget presented, presumably before very long, in this House that will include the estimates, that will include the various allocations and grants to departments and organizations including to the school board.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hiding behind the budget's a bit of a smokescreen that the Premier's using here. Sharing the budget number with staff so that they can accurately plan for school next year isn't a matter of secrecy, and I think it's important that the Premier recognizes how important the school board is and how important schools are and how important planning is.

Question to the Premier: Why is your minister using the budget process as an excuse for not sharing the number with the school boards?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Through this whole process of budget preparation, the board has been involved with the preparation and planning of this, so they do have an assumption of what they're working with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly listening to the *Compass* story on it the other night didn't lead me to believe that the school board had any idea. As a matter of fact, I think that's what Cynthia Fleet said, that she had no idea what was going on and what the number was. Budget secrecy of this level usually only applies to tax measures.

Question to the minister, if the Premier doesn't want to answer any questions today: Is this some sort of secret tax measure that's taking place here under the staffing levels that's preventing the minister from sharing the staffing number with the school boards?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our budget, we're waiting to have that budget presented to this House and the sooner that's presented the better.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Embarrassing is the word that first comes to mind when I hear that answer. Embarrassed for the member over there. I'm embarrassed for his inability to share information and

embarrassed that he's hiding behind the budget process.

It's strange that other departments – and all through this House last week there were announcements made from different ministers of how they were spending money. There were all kinds of announcements here on how money was going to get spent.

How is sharing the staffing number with the school board confidential, even? How is sharing that staffing number confidentially violating a budget secrecy, but making announcements of how you're going to spend your budget in this House isn't? Question to that minister.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the board has been involved with the preparation and planning process of our budget and they are now working under assumptions.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's not what Cynthia Fleet said the other day. This minister himself had an announcement here last week about the school breakfast program. Is he stepping outside the budget secrecy that the budget should lay on the floor of the House before he makes an announcement like that? It appears so.

Three weeks ago UPEI and Holland College brought in their budgets for the next fiscal year and both said they're calculating their tuition hikes based on a projected 1.6% increase to their operating grant. Both of those institutes said they got that information after months of working with this very government.

Question to the Premier: Premier, why is your department of education not working closely with the school boards?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the department of education and the school board work very closely with government as a whole, including with the Department of Finance, in preparing budgets, going through a budget review process.

The numbers are quite familiar to everyone involved, including to the school board. Frankly, I think the school board should have a very good idea of what its position is in terms of making commitments for the coming year.

That said, any department of government, including whatever was said about the school breakfast and lunch program, if we can speak about funding, but those funds are only fully available and confirmed when the budget has been presented and the estimates have been approved by the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There we have it. The Premier just said it right there now. It's okay to make the announcements, it's okay to say it, without the budget, is what he just said. Then the funds will come through when the budget gets passed in the House.

Yet, the minister over here won't share that information with the school board that's responsible for 20,000 children in our school system and how the principals are planning for next year and how the school board's planning for next year.

Maybe the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning could give some advice to you all because back in 2007 there was a May election, and that year the budget wasn't passed until November. That was seven whole months into the fiscal year.

Question to the minister of education: Can you explain why sharing staffing numbers with the school boards wasn't an issue in 2007?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With all due respect, I wasn't part of the government in 2007.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course he doesn't know why. Maybe the reason that it wasn't an issue that year is because it was a status quo budget. You can get somebody to explain to you what that means after Question Period. If it's status quo in the staffing numbers for next year there shouldn't be any reason why you can't share that number with the school board.

Question to the minister of education: Is it a status quo number?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'll have to wait until the budget is presented before those numbers can be finalized and shared.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Just to help you answer the question, status quo means the same. It seems like the only reason the minister would be keeping this a secret is because the number isn't the same, it's not status quo.

Question to the minister of education: Again, will you confirm that the staffing numbers for the school board next year are not a status quo and that's a reason that you're keeping this a secret?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we do have to wait for that budget to come onto the floor before any numbers can be finalized or can be shared.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the Premier had said here earlier is that's not the case. The Premier said here earlier you can make all the announcements you want and that the funding will come through when the budget hits the floor. But that's not even true. The funding won't come through until the budget passes which won't be till the end of the whole session.

Back to the minister of education one more time. If it's not a status quo number, then the minister must be planning on cutting teacher positions.

Question to the minister of education: How many teaching positions are you looking to cut in Island classrooms for the next school year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister responsible for Education, Early Learning and Culture, I do not make any decisions on cuts to teachers.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: There's a minister without any decision-making power and probably, for that fellow over there, that's not a bad thing.

I want to go back to the Premier for this one because apparently the minister of education has no control over education at all.

If the Premier and minister are planning on cutting teaching positions, or if they're planning on cutting the funding to the board so the board has to do the dirty work for

them, would the Premier tell the House: If teaching positions are being cut, why aren't you sitting down with the board and levelling with them right now?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there have been ongoing and continuing discussions with the school board, including with the superintendent, going back several months as we've built a budget and gone through a budget review process to prepare the budget that will be presented –

Mr. LaVie: Don't blame it on the budget. (Indistinct)!

Premier MacLauchlan: – later this week. The discussions –

Mr. LaVie: Don't blame it on the budget.

Premier MacLauchlan: – between the ministry and the school board –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)!

Speaker: The Premier has the floor.

Premier MacLauchlan: Discussions between the ministry and the school board take place on an ongoing basis. I'm quite confident that those discussions have taken place as recently as late last week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Now we'll go to the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Power cable and new generator (further)

Mr. Fox: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Good afternoon to the House.

Over the last week we saw more movement in announcements from both Maritime Electric and the government on the power situation than we've had in the last two or three years. Over the last two or three years we've known the time is critical. The power cable is needed. However, we have not seen any movement on that in the last two years.

That is really a priority now. The question to the Minister of Transportation,

Infrastructure and Energy: What is the plan for the cable and/or the generator?

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

Leader of the Opposition: He doesn't want to answer mine. He wants to answer hers. (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct), that's fine.

Premier MacLauchlan: – I will speak on the question of the power cable.

To be very clear, this has been a matter of priority for the government and, frankly, for predecessor governments going back the better part of 10 years and longer. You might say it was a priority from the time the two cables were put in place in 1977 with a projected life span of 30 years.

The good news is that because those current cables, which have a combined capacity of 200 megawatts, were not used to their capacity in the first couple of decades of their life they are in pretty good health. We're aware, nonetheless, that they need to be replaced. This matter was in the forefront of the work of the energy commission appointed by this government in 2011, reporting in 2012 with a report adopted by this House in 2013.

The electricity cables have been on our minds through that period. To be quite precise, from the time the Building Canada fund was unveiled a little bit more than two years ago –

Leader of the Opposition: Is this a guest lecture?

Premier MacLauchlan: – in the winter of 2013, the discussion has been quite active, dialogue very active, between the government and the Government of Canada regarding the funding of those cables.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Premier. The cables aren't in good shape. Let's make this very clear. The cables have had leaks. Yes, they haven't been used to full capacity because they can't. We have reduced flow coming over from the mainland at certain points of the year and we have for the last while. Third thing is we've had power outages. So we cannot say that the cables are in good shape.

Maritime Electric has been sounding the alarm for the last little bit. The cables are in bad shape. Let's make no bones about that.

Ratepayer cost for generator

The question to the minister: How much will taxpayers pay, or the ratepayers, pay in interest on this 50 million over the life of the project to buy a backup generator for Maritime Electric?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we noted, Maritime Electric needs to put a proposal forward to IRAC, and we've had discussions on them. We're in agreement that there is a need. However, before the installation of a new generator by Maritime Electric can process IRAC has to approve the project, and when they go to IRAC they have to actually prove the necessity for that generator and the cost that will be associated with it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) the professor or Gilligan, one or the other.

PEI Energy Corporation debt load

Mr. Fox: So we don't know, Mr. Speaker, how it's going to be financed.

There's something going on but we don't know what.

If we put the generator over to the energy commission, what is the current debt load – let's switch tactics here. What is the current

debt load of the energy corporation today? Or as close as you can get to today.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the actual financial present status of the energy corp, I'd have to get that information and bring it back to you. But we can use our ability to borrow at lower rates than Maritime Electric can. It does provide a cost to ratepayers. Presently –

Leader of the Opposition: You're already at a billion dollars since you've been elected.

Ms. Biggar: Presently Maritime Electric's blended cost of capital is approximately 7.5% and the energy corp is presently able to secure our financing at approximately the rate of 5%.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll answer the question for the minister. Public Accounts last year, thereabouts to the debt of the energy corporation stands at roughly \$188 million.

Supplementary question. If the minister proceeds with the plan on the backup generator the debt load of the energy corporation will be pushing close to a quarter of a billion dollars. Does this level of debt trouble the minister? Can the energy commission service this debt?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PEI Energy Corporation has been developing a number of projects which have been very profitable for us around our wind energy and our biomass, and we are quite confident that we are capable, and I think you'll see in the upcoming estimates that we can certainly handle that debt.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: You fellows said GeoSweep was the answer to it all. (Indistinct) gamble with your money.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: You're still betting on squares over there.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Generator debt and power cable

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we proceed to the minister – or maybe the Minister of Finance might want to answer this. If the minister proceeds with this generator plan, will the extra \$50 million of debt for this generator limit the government's ability to get this power cable on the go?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, we're very confident. The estimated cost of the CT4 as was provided by Maritime Electric in our discussions is approximately \$54 million US. In the near term the planned upgrade is not going to affect our need for the oil-fired generation, but in the medium time, the construction of the new generation or the transmission on the main line, we can reduce and eliminate the need for more oil-fired generation.

We're quite confident. The proposal that's going forward will save electricity, approximately \$1.7 million in the first year – that's (Indistinct) CT4 is operational – and approximately \$30 million over the lifetime of the asset, which I think you asked the other day is 25 years.

It will save residential customers that use 650 kilowatts per month \$8 a year, on top of the other savings that we put in place with our electrical energy programs that we offer to people through the Office of Energy Efficiency. It will save Islanders money, and actually, that's what our ultimate goal is.

Speaker: Now we will go to the hon. Leader of the Third Party for a question.

Women's health

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

On 2 June, government announced new measures to reduce some of the bureaucratic and economic barriers that stand in the way of Island women seeking access to abortion services on Prince Edward Island. While these measures represent a significant improvement on the situation, and I commend the government for these steps, it was also implied that they were simply the first steps towards better overall health services for Island women.

A question to the minister of health and wellness: What are these next steps?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

We were very pleased on June 2nd to make some very significant moves forward in respect to eliminating barriers for access for Island women. We will be and have signed an MOU with the Province of New Brunswick. The new clinic, which has just recently opened, which is currently providing access for New Brunswick women, is just recently opened and Island women will be able to have access as of July 1st, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party for his first supplementary question.

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

I asked what the next steps would be.

Discussions around women's health often revolve solely around the issue of abortion, to the exclusion of many other critical and common women's health concerns including such things as post-partum depression, access to midwifery, infertility issues, and perinatal nutritional health.

Does the minister plan on addressing access to any of these other women's health issues,

and if so, could he give us an idea of when we might expect some action on this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

Very good questions. We have been in discussions in respect to advancing midwifery in the province. We've also been in discussions and updating the women's advisory and the women's network here in the Province of Prince Edward Island recently. We've had conversations with issues around access for obstetricians here in the province.

I will make a commitment here today that we have a number of initiatives moving forward. It's very difficult for me at this point in time to give clear dates on those initiatives, but our priority is and will be to continue to improve access to a range of women's health services here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party for his second supplementary question.

Women's health clinic

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

Thank you, minister. Do these future plans include the establishment of a women's health clinic here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

We have been in discussion with a women's health centre in respect to look at a range of services that could be incorporated, which would be examples that I did site – midwifery, looking at supports in areas of post-partum. So the women's health centre concept is being looked at.

We are in discussions with our obstetricians very lately about ways that we can continue to expand access. Recently we announced training for family physicians to work with Island women, particularly in the early

stages of their pregnancies. We are moving. There is a number of initiatives moving forward. As a government and as the minister we see tremendous opportunity looking forward in the near future at ways that we can sort of centralize and collaborate to make sure that we have better access to a range of services for Island women.

Thank you.

Speaker: Question from the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Repatriation strategy

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is directed to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. In the Speech From the Throne there was mention of building our workforce and about a comprehensive, long-term repatriation strategy. Can the minister update the House on the government's strategy to repatriate Islanders who have left for economic opportunities elsewhere?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are three points to our strategy: recruitment, repatriate, and retain current and future newcomers to Prince Edward Island. We are working on a comprehensive strategy to make sure that this happens.

I also wanted to thank the member for her effort, and MP Sean Casey, for working with newcomers to Prince Edward Island.

But most importantly, some of the best companies are companies that are developed within the province or from Islanders coming home. We just heard on the radio there this morning, two young Islanders coming home from Alberta opening up a company here in Stratford, creating employment here on Prince Edward Island. That's the kind of thing repatriation can do for Prince Edward Island. We also have companies like Aspin Kemp, a former Islander that came home, has now created a number of jobs in the Montague area and in Stratford area.

These are major components to making PEI more prosperous in order to generate more revenue to provide more services to the people of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point for a first supplementary.

Career opportunities

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, what specifically are you doing to create work and career opportunities for young people so they don't have to leave the province, and for skilled immigrants who want meaningful employment so they can stay and prosper?

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, what are you doing?

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

Mr. LaVie: You must be some busy.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things we're doing right away is anyone that drives out to the University of Prince Edward Island and sees the new engineering building that's going up out there, 75,000 square feet of new and innovative building, a place where Islanders and people from away can come –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: – and do their engineering here on Prince Edward Island. It's like MIT. MIT in the United States is a major university of engineering.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) building (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: A lot of innovations have come out of it. I think –

Leader of the Opposition: This isn't MIT.

Mr. R. Brown: – the new –

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. R. Brown: You know what, Mr. Speaker?

I think it can be an MIT if we allow it to work.

Mr. LaVie: How are you going to keep them there?

Mr. R. Brown: The University of Prince Edward Island has done great work over the last number of years in innovation. You just have to walk the university and find out the bioscience –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: – the engineering that's occurring out there.

Also, I don't want to steal anything from the minister of innovation, but he is working on Sales Force PEI. My department will provide the labour, he'll provide the opportunities, and together we'll make Prince Edward Island a better place for Islanders to live.

Thank you.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) for 10 years now.

Speaker: Now we'll go to the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors for a question.

Culture movement to EELC

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PEI has a rich, vibrant culture. I am fortunate to represent a part of our province that has much to offer culturally. The greater Summerside area has the College of Piping, Eptek centre, Spinnakers Landing, Lefurgey Cultural Centre, and Wyatt Properties, just to name a few.

Since the most recent secured mandate, the departments have changed quite a bit. The department of culture is now part of the education profile. Many people in arts and culture feel that it fit well with tourism and are now concerned that culture will be swallowed up in the education department and won't get the direct attention it deserves.

Question to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Can you explain the thought process behind moving culture from tourism to education?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are actually very excited to have the culture file part of our department and I think it's a great fit.

Culture and heritage is important. It's important in our Island schools, in the system and in the curriculum. It's also great that culture was added to a social policy department like ours.

It will also help emphasize not only the economic impacts on culture but also its importance to society and to our day-to-day lives.

It's important to note that this also includes the PEI Public Library Service and the PEI museums. These two important services are a great fit because many of our Island students access their services on a regular basis.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors for her first supplementary question.

Culture visibility

Ms. Mundy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

What will you do as a minister to ensure that culture will be a visible department that dollars, efforts, and attention are given to preserve and enrich the culture and history of our Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The culture file is one that is very close to my heart and I do have a personal interest in it. I know that our government is committed to developing a long-term strategy for culture here on PEI, and as my department begins to work on this strategy and

continues to work on existing programs and services, I'm certain that you are going to see great things happening.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors for her second supplementary.

Culture portfolio funding

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, has the whole culture portfolio been moved to education or just parts of it, and is your department expecting any funding changes to the portfolio after this move?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The culture portfolio that was at tourism has now moved to my department along with the budget that came with the culture part of it. Culture is a priority for our government, and I expect other departments will invest in the arts and culture as they have done so in the past, which will put culture at the forefront of many government initiatives.

Speaker: Now we'll go back to the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora for a further question.

New generator financial projections (further)

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Going back to the minister's answer a minute ago. I was doing some rough calculations in caucus amongst the group of us here. Get your pen and paper out.

Based on what you said on the US dollar, today that takes up to \$65 million Canadian. If we look at a base rate of interest of 5% over 25 years that takes it to \$380,000 a month payment. If we look at the savings of \$1.7 million, that would take up the total cost of that project to being somewhere in the vicinity, with interest, of \$114 million.

So a project of roughly \$50 million to purchase a generator is going to take up to

\$114 million over the course of 25 years. Can you agree with that?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we will be doing is working with Maritime Electric and helping make sure that once they are finalized with –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – their application to IRA that actually provides the need for this generator, we'll continue to work on that.

Our policy, as part of the recommendation in which we've adopted part of it by the PEI Energy Corporation, is that we will own a generator going forward for those assets.

But you ask also a little bit about the PEI Energy Corporation, hon. member, and I highlighted some of the activities there. I want to highlight the Hermanville project, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: That particular project generates \$8.8 million annually to the province through – and that comes from a 20-year power purchase agreement with Maritime Electric.

Leader of the Opposition: You're running an \$80 million deficit this year.

Ms. Biggar: So all the power from that project –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – from the wind farm, is being sold to Maritime Electric. It's another way that we can offset our emissions in our province, and it also is a big generator for the community down there – \$350,000 goes back to that community. It's provided a lot of jobs. We'll continue to do programs like this, like the Office of Energy Efficiency provides, to make sure that Islanders are saving money.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

New generator life expectancy

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell me what she believes the life expectancy of this generator would be?

Because what I had figured out is we have to keep this thing going for 67 years. What would be the life expectancy of this new generator?

Mr. R. Brown: Sixty-eight.

Leader of the Opposition: Sixty-seven and a half.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All these generators and other products that we need to generate electricity on Prince Edward Island, it's all part of an ongoing process in combination with our partner Maritime Electric.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)? How many years will it last?

Ms. Biggar: So as I said –

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Ms. Biggar: – there's always a need to upgrade generation as we go forward –

Leader of the Opposition: How many years, is the question. How many years? How many years?

Ms. Biggar: – so we'll continue to work with Maritime Electric –

Speaker: The minister has the floor! Let her answer the question!

Ms. Biggar: – as our partner and in determining the needs of Prince Edward Island, and as we said, our policy will be, going forward, is to own the future assets –

Leader of the Opposition: You can't answer a single question on the file!

Ms. Biggar: – of those generation requirements.

Leader of the Opposition: After five days, you can't answer a single question on the file.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Leader of the Opposition: You should be embarrassed. I know you're not.

Power cable priority

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I was glad to hear the Premier say a minute ago was that the power cable's a priority. We now know that the generator is a priority also. So we have two big energy projects that are a priority in the last two weeks, the power cable and the other one.

Question for the minister: Should the power cable not be the main immediate priority of the government and the generator be after that we get that cable in service?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. LaVie: Now here's an answer.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the replacement of the underwater power cables has been a priority of this government –

Leader of the Opposition: Never a priority.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and of the predecessor government –

Leader of the Opposition: No, it wasn't.

Premier MacLauchlan: – going back more than a decade. Those discussions have been on the record and they continue.

The issue of the sustainability and the predictability of our power supply is the top priority. In fact, the projection is that the replacement cables, provided the funding is put together the right way, will amount to 360 megawatts of capacity, and that will put us in a position to negotiate even better power purchase agreements. There are many reasons why those cables are necessary.

As for the generator, the first question that will be addressed by IRAC when that matter is brought before it by Maritime Electric is the question of the need for the generator, and that will be addressed in its fullness by the regulator and the case put forward by the utility.

As between the two, the priority in terms of our power supply, our power future and our power rates is the replacement of those electricity cables.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Power cable funding in Budget

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, a snap question for the Minister of Finance.

Is there money in this budget for the power cable?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

An Hon. Member: Snapper, a short snapper.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, the budget of this province has and always been a collaborative effort.

We speak to the public, we speak to our departments, and I'm looking forward to, in the very near future, delivering that budget.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I guess it was the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning that met with Mr. Strahl, federal minister. They can say that the cable is a priority but it never made the list, it never made the top 20 list for years.

Final question. To the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Mr. LaVie: This is a new government.

An Hon. Member: Twenty eleven, not on the list.

Mr. Fox: Minister, \$50 million from the feds is announced and ready to go for the cable. Now you want to buy a generator. Maritime Electric needs the cable. They told me that, they've been in the news about it. Will this budget put a cable in the water?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: The funding arrangement for the electricity cable that was put in place in 1977 was that it was owned by the province, that it was funded \$18 million by the federal government on a grant, \$9 million on a low interest loan from the federal government, and \$9 million from the province. In fact, that was in 1977, and in 1985 a further federal government, different political stripe, made a further \$18 million grant, and in fact paid for the full cost of those first two cables.

In the current (Indistinct) – the arrangement for that cable was that it was owned by the province with a lease-back and maintenance agreement with Maritime Electric to be paid for through the rates of Maritime Electric, the part that was not provided for by a grant. That is the same arrangement that is projected for the cable that is being talked about now, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: Final question from the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Power cable and TIE minister

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we don't know if it's in the budget or not. Will the minister do the right thing? Stop stalling, get this cable project rolling, and will the minister commit to moving forward on the cable within 90 days?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of reasons why it would be imprudent to make that commitment.

For starters, there is a request for proposals that is currently out with responses due on 19 June. We don't know what those responses will contain and they (Indistinct) some assessment of what we receive on

Friday and undoubtedly some further discussion.

As has been clear over a period of time, the funding arrangement has not been finalized between the federal government and the province. There've been meetings over the past two weeks with Minister Shea and we're continuing to conduct those negotiations and that discussion in a spirit of partnership and in a spirit of collaboration, and we contend for that to continue.

It's a priority but it would not be – we simply don't have enough information to be saying that they're going to start work within 90 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: That ends Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Inquest recommendations

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I rise as Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and Attorney General.

For four days this March a jury of Islanders sat through a very difficult inquest following the deaths of four-year-old Nash Campbell and his mother Patricia Hennessey. Sunday, 21 June, marks the two-year anniversary of these tragic deaths and our thoughts are with the families and friends of Nash and Patricia.

Our government has received the inquest recommendations from the chief coroner and will be taking immediate action to prevent similar tragedies. Our government agrees with the recommendations which focus on the need for better sharing of information and greater collaboration across government and agencies working with high-risk families. It is clear we need to break down barriers and ensure our focus is always on the best interests of a child, with government and agencies working together to best support the needs of the child and family.

Intervention and supports must be timely, accessible, and collaborative. We will focus

on improving training for frontline workers, timely access to services and ensuring all agencies are working together. Health care workers and frontline employees delivering child and family services will receive additional training in recognizing high-risk situations, strategies for prevention, as well as mandatory training on domestic violence and child abuse.

Our government will work with our justice system to ensure timelier access to child custody assessments in high-risk family court cases and work to remove any barriers to successful resolution of dangerous situations. Child protection policies and procedures will be strengthened, particularly as they relate to high-risk cases, and we will improve information sharing between families, government services and the justice system. We will provide additional training to Child Protective Services, particularly as it relates to parental engagement.

This work will be undertaken collaboratively across government departments and agencies. The Deputy Ministers' Social Policy Committee has been tasked to lead this important work and report back on how we can best achieve these changes. As our work progresses, it will be shared on a dedicated webpage, part of our government's commitment to open government.

We also heard from the coroner on ways to improve the inquest process for jury members. We thank the jury members and all who participated in the inquest, recognizing how difficult this was. As part of our work moving forward we will hear from a jury representative to get a firsthand view of where improvements or additional supports are needed, particularly in tragic cases.

We will work with our partners, both inside government and outside, to meet challenges exposed by this tragic situation together.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Responding to the Premier's statement will be the Opposition House Leader.

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

I, along with the Premier as he just stated, would like to most sincerely thank the jury members that worked this inquest. It would have been very traumatic case to be involved with. There was a lot of research done and investigation to come to these conclusions and recommendations.

I would like to suggest to this Premier and to this government just another step forward, as well. We actually talked about this as recently as last year in the Legislative Assembly that Prince Edward Island desperately needs a child and family advocate on Prince Edward Island. Most jurisdictions, if not all jurisdictions across Canada, currently have this service in place. I truly feel, as do my honoured members beside and around me, that this would be a very important move, a positive step moving forward, and that it would be advantageous to all Islanders to have this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also responding to the Premier's statement would be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to thank the jury for what must have been a very difficult and troubling task. I think it's always important when we have a tragedy like this that as well as absorbing the pain that must have come from this to those involved, that we learn from this and that we change things so that we can reduce the chances of this occurring in the future. I like the initiatives that the hon. Premier just suggested. I think it's really important that we develop a more collaborative model between the various departments of government.

I also think that it's incredibly important that we develop a comprehensive approach to mental health and addictions on Prince Edward Island. An approach that looks like a preventative range of things that we can do: counseling, of course, exercise, diet, reduction of poverty, education. All of these things together can reduce the incidence of

mental health and addictions on Prince Edward Island. I think we need to look at that to make sure that this does not happen again in the future.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Recognizing PEI's Aquaculture Industry

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

I rise in the House today to recognize the accomplishments of the Prince Edward Island aquaculture and shellfishing industries. The hard-working men and women in these industries produce very high quality products that are well recognized and in high demand across the world.

The PEI mussel industry has grown from an experimental industry with a production of only 100,000 pounds in 1980 to being the largest producer of mussels in North America, with an annual production of 45 to 50 million pounds each year, 80% of the North American production.

The oyster industry is another shining example. Prince Edward Island oysters are grown and fished throughout our productive waters. Both industries work together to make PEI the largest producer of oysters in Atlantic Canada.

The finfish aquaculture industry is also an important industry to PEI with salmon and rainbow trout hatcheries that produce eggs, fry and fingerlings produced here and grown to market in marine farms in the other Atlantic Provinces. PEI also has a land-based halibut farm where halibut are grown in tanks for sale to the restaurant trade.

PEI's food sector is a vital component of our provincial economy. Combined, the aquaculture industry contributes \$80 million in economic benefits to our province and employs approximately 3,000 people. Total value of production increased 42% from 2007 to 2013.

Our government will build on these successes and promote our PEI brand to the world as premium quality, and our province as Canada's Food Island. The aquaculture sector has an important role to play in this strategy. The industry is young and has been successful because of the innovative thinking, entrepreneurial spirit, and hard work from all the people involved.

In my short time as the minister responsible for the aquaculture and fishing industries in PEI, I have heard many positive comments about the industry and have had the opportunity to meet with many of the individuals that contributed to this success.

I would also like to recognize the work of industry organizations such as the PEI Shellfish Association and the PEI Aquaculture Alliance. I'm looking forward to meeting more of the industry and seeing firsthand over the upcoming months the industry at work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Aquaculture on Prince Edward Island is very important and it does, the minister is right, put millions of dollars into the economy of PEI, and that's what we need.

These are hard-working people. This is not easy work. This is morning, noon and night. This is hard work. I have a young gentleman in my own district, he started a number of years ago and now he has a processing facility. It's Johnny Flynn, and he's growing that processing facility into holding facilities now. He's building holding facilities up beside the Ocean Choice plant, and that's work for everybody.

As far as the halibut, I had an opportunity to visit a halibut farm. Coming from a fishing background that used to fish halibut, it's just incredible what they do down there in Victoria with the halibut farm. I suggest to

the minister, if you get a chance to visit the halibut farm in Victoria, I would suggest it because you would be quite impressed how they grow this fish in stages and they sell it in different stages.

Aquaculture, mussels – any kind of fishery on PEI – it's one of our major industries on PEI and everybody works hard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I have said in this House before that I think the Canada's Food Island has a tremendous potential here for Prince Edward Island, but it has to be backed up by a government that is willing to go forward and aggressively brand Prince Edward Island products as the best in the world.

We've done it with mussels. We can do it with oysters. We can't compete in the global marketplace against North Carolina oysters and nor should we. Ours are far superior, so I think we need to look at branding that Prince Edward Island products, whether they be from the farm or from the water, as the best in the world.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Update on Souris Bridge Construction

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to provide an update on the Souris bridge construction for the House and for the community.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: I had a great conversation with the mayor of Souris, David MacDonald, earlier this week and we discussed some of the options that we had been talking about

over the last few days in regard to the new Souris bridge.

I want to give a little bit of background on that bridge. The existing bridge was constructed in 1976. This new bridge will be a \$7.3 million investment in the Souris area. It will span over 128 metres. It will stand a metre higher to account for the expected rise in the sea level over its lifespan. The anticipated new bridge will open in August, and as a result of those consultations with the community and the mayor and council, we have decided that the construction of the new bridge will proceed without the use of a detour. Motorists will continue to travel on the temporary structure.

I want to thank the community for their patience and resiliency during this construction time and particularly given the record-breaking winter that we've just experienced.

Also, to note, while the construction continues using the temporary structure, we do expect some traffic delays in that area over the course of the summer, but we will also provide an alternate route if people wish to. We'll have that posted as well for the convenience of everyone and to ensure, as well, that the bridge will remain open over the course of the tourism season, and we are still on target to have that completed in August.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the minister taking my advice and going to meet with the Mayor David MacDonald, and I did –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Don't shake your head. I suggested it: Go and talk to the town of Souris. I did. Give me credit for that.

I am a little bit disappointed that she is going to have delays. I made a suggestion to

her, she wouldn't take my suggestion, but that's –

Ms. Biggar: You're the one in the papers saying you don't mind a detour.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Biggar: Yes you are, yes you are, hon. member.

Mr. LaVie: No, no.

Mr. Speaker, there was going to be no delays on the Souris bridge –

Leader of the Opposition: Bring back Vessey.

Mr. LaVie: There was going to be no delays, but I do appreciate her going and getting the advice from the town of Souris.

The first bridge was actually built in 1939. That was the second bridge that was built in 1976.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I beg leave to present a petition containing over 1,000 signatures from residents and concerned citizens of Prince Edward Island regarding access to care for abortion and a variety of other women's health issues and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, that the petition be received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Mr. Speaker, this petition states that there is inadequate and/or limited access to health care on Prince Edward Island for several women's health concerns including, but not limited to, abortion services.

The petition prays for the Legislative Assembly to encourage the government to establish a full-time, full-service women's health centre on Prince Edward Island where

women can freely access confidential, non-judgmental services on a full range of sexual and reproductive health issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the *Guardian* article I referenced in my questions today and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: I have another one.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the cover of the 2007 Budget Address and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, adjourned debate on the draft address, and it had been adjourned by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: Thank you.

We will call on the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira to continue his address.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone back again this afternoon. Last week when I was replying to the Speech From the Throne I talked on priorities, where the government has got to be with priorities. I talked on tourism, where we are in tourism in eastern PEI, and I just want to remind the minister about what he has in eastern PEI to make sure it's marketed. That's what people want. They just want to be marketed in eastern PEI. We just want our share and you have a lot up there to offer them.

We started with the traffic coming through Souris for the Magdalen ferry. We talked about your provincial park at Red Point Park, a beautiful park overlooking the Northumberland Strait. It's on a nice little hill there and you've got a beautiful park up there.

You have your Basin Head, number one beach in Canada, and we don't hear it. It's the number one beach. You've got the singing sands, you've got a fisheries museum up there. One of your biggest industries. It's a museum. You have restaurants up there, you have ice cream. It's an old port. It used to be a port, Basin Head Port, they fished out of there for years, and the province has it now as a day park. Number one beach, and there are a lot of tourists, a lot of visitors, go to that beach.

You go east a little farther – and I'm just touching base here, I can get into details, there are lots of details that – and I suggest that some of you, if you get a chance, that you visit some of these areas. I know the former minister was good at visiting these areas. If you go east a little farther you've got your – say, your North Lake Harbour. North Lake Harbour puts so much into the economy. It's a fishing port. There are 110 fishermen out of there. In the summertime it's hard to tie up a boat at North Lake Harbour. It's the tuna capital of the world.

The biggest fish, over 1,400 pound, was landed there. It's the tuna capital. You have your commercial tuna fishery, you have your charter fishery. It puts millions of dollars into the economy in eastern PEI.

You can keep going down. That's the coastal drive. It has so much to offer, like your lighthouses, your admired train station, nice little train station. To have a nice little train that goes through the woods – the history of the trains on PEI. It's beautiful little scenery.

You can go down to – once you hit East Point, you have the two tides that meet there at East Point, and it's just amazing to watch those two tides meeting. Then you can go down to the north side, the west, you've got to do (Indistinct) harbour. There's great history.

That's what people want. They just want to be marketed. They're not looking for much. Just market us. Let people know where we're at, and once we get them there we'll show them what we have to offer. Just market us, that's all we ask.

I talked on priority, I talked on tourism. Another thing that wasn't in the Speech from the Throne was our main industries. We've got to really support our main industries. I know we have a new minister in there now for agriculture and fisheries and he's gung-ho to go – he has farming in his background, so he knows exactly where the farmers are at and what the farmers need. There are a lot of challenges facing farms today. Not only do we have the weather. The weather's a big challenge for farmers. Look at this here last winter, this late spring. It was tough, but they did. They got their planting done. I know east anyway. I'm not sure right across PEI, but I was talking to farmers over the weekend and pretty well all are done planting.

Let's work real hard, and I know this minister will because of his background. Let's work hard because farmers are hard workers. There's another group that – any farming, if you're a hog farmer, potato farmer, dairy farmer, or beef farmer, blueberry farms, this is 24/7 care.

Farms have changed quite a bit. Some of these farms you go into, you can eat off the

floor. They take care of that. You drive onto a farm now and the buildings are nice and the grass is cut. I'm not saying that it wasn't done in the day, but today they have the equipment, today they have the (Indistinct).

When you go on the farm today, there are people that work there 20 years with the farmer, 30 years, 40 years, 50 years. Farmers are great to get along with. If you want a great employer, go work for a farmer, because these farmers got great employees, they've got long employees that work with them and there's great respect on a farm for one another. You see that. It's just like a little family when you walk on a farm.

We've been producing the best potatoes on PEI as long as PEI's been producing potatoes. Potatoes are our main industry. As long as we've been producing today is the best potato in the world. We do. Let's work closely with – and it's not only potato farmers, there are blueberry farmers, you take your hog farmers, your dairy farmers, or aquaculture, or your beef farmers, and they all need support.

Our fisheries face the same challenges, especially with the weather, the late winter, the late spring. Whenever it's late, everybody's waiting for the farmers to get on the fields and the fishermen to get in the water so the economy can start booming. You can notice a difference, you can see the traffic flow. You drive by a car dealer and you'll notice they've got trucks in the yard, so they know that farmers are going to have a good year, the fisheries is going to have a good year. They'll have the trucks in the yard. It does make a difference when – we've got to show support for both our industries, our fishing and our farming.

Fisheries. At one time you used to start fishing in April and you finished in December. Now, Mr. Speaker, you know yourself, you were a fisherman for 50 years, the majority of the fishermen, they set their traps in May, they finish in June.

We haven't got a herring fishery like they had, we haven't got a cod fishery – the cod fishery shut down in 1991 – we haven't got a hake fishery like we had, we haven't got the flatfish fishery like we had. Fishermen are – and they're good at it, they're starting – they're doing tours now. They're doing

tours with their boat, they're doing charters, they're doing tuna charters. They're supplementary for the fishery that they lost. It's great that they're getting into the tourist industry side of it. It shows the people – and it's worth big money to the economy in PEI because these people that are coming are coming from all walks of life anywhere in the world they're coming.

We've got to show great support for the fishing industry, and that takes in the tourism. Tourism plays a big part on Prince Edward Island, it does. That's a big portfolio is tourism because you can do tourism in the fishery, you can do tourism in the farming, you can do tourism in the centre of PEI, you can do tourism on both ends of PEI.

The minister of health, when I was campaigning, there were a lot of issues at the door. Seniors are on a fixed income. We're trying to keep seniors in our homes, but when you're on a fixed income, something's got to give. It's hard to live day to day on a fixed income. No pensions, just the old age and the supplementary, with a little bit of Canada pension because the seniors today, they were probably late starting with the Canada pension. I went into some homes and I sat there for – I was there for quite a while and there were tears shed. When I was sitting there, and it was in May and it was cool – or April, sorry – and it was kind of cool in April. I was in the kitchen and they were telling me their stories: the ceiling is leaking, they had no wood, they were going outside to cut pine trees to put in the stove in the kitchen. I had to get up and walk around the kitchen, just back and forth, just to keep warm.

The last thing they give up – seniors got to eat, they got have electricity, they got to have heat. It's their medications, that's what they give up is their medication and it's not right.

I had a personal experience with my own father back three or four years ago. He couldn't afford his medication. He was living on a fixed income. He would cut his medication in two so that would last him and then he'd run out. There's great difficulties I have there with seniors, and we're trying to keep them in their homes. We have seniors on fixed incomes that can't afford oil barrels. We're trying to keep them in their

own homes and they can't afford oil barrels. They can't afford medication. These are necessities for seniors in their own home.

What I suggested on the campaign is we should have an outreach program for these seniors. What this outreach program – even for seniors living in provincial housing, some of them don't drive, they got no way of getting groceries, they got no way of getting mail. There should be an outreach program, even to shovel their walkway, shovel their driveway, shovel their whatever. These seniors don't know who to call. They don't know the kids in their hometowns anymore. If we had an outreach program where they'd call – say it be a 1-800 number and there's a program set up there, and they have all the outreach that these seniors need that are living in their home or the provincial homes. If they need a taxi, if they need somebody to shovel, if they need to get to the doctor, if they have to go to Charlottetown for their doctor. We put these seniors – and we say we want them in their own homes, but they can't afford to be in their own homes.

We have grants out there for seniors and I hear it all the time. How do you get to these grants? I had one senior – a number of seniors – that has been trying to get a grant now for three years. These grants were gone in six to 12 minutes. If you're not in that lineup in six to 12 minutes you don't get that grant.

To the minister of health – it's under his portfolio now with the seniors – I hope he takes a look at seniors living in their own homes, and not only their own homes, but seniors living in senior housing.

I have a senior living in a home living on \$600 a month. How is that possible to live in your own home for \$600 a month? When I went there the driveway was half gone because the snow was running off the field and washing out his driveway. I asked him: Does anybody fix this for you? This fellow, he can't work, he has a bad leg and he can't work, no one will hire him, but he says: No, I'll fix that driveway myself. He said: The farmers around here will give me some rock and stuff and I'll fix it myself. He's not a big wanter, but he lives in his home and he's living on \$600 a month. This gentleman

can't live on \$600 a month in his own home. It's not possible.

I know I was up to the Speech From the Throne. When you're talking about your district you can get – once you get into your district you like to talk about your district. I got a big district, I got four harbours in my district, I got community councils. I like to touch base on everything, and Friday I got kind of tied up into my district. But today I am going to shorten it up.

To the minister of transportation. When you're doing up your budget for your roads – what I found when I was campaigning, especially on a lot of the roads, a lot of our roads are getting in bad shape. The minister will agree with me, we got to start looking after what we have. Don't be putting bulldozers and stuff through Bonshaw, let's look after what you got.

I'm a little disappointed in the Speech From the Throne. There was no mention of our primary industries or rural PEI, especially when I'm from rural PEI and have a district up there that's full of tourism and we don't get the markets that we should get. I'm sure after my Speech From the Throne the minister of tourism will be talking with me and he will come up and he will do the tour. I'll be glad to be the one to take him around for the tour. I invited you two years ago and you haven't come yet. So don't point your finger –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Yes, you do. I invited you. I'm going to put that out on the floor again.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to cut it short, and I appreciate the opportunity to get up and allow me to reply to the Speech From the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

I am honored to rise today to speak to the Speech From the Throne. I personally have the utmost appreciation for public office and would like to remind all the members that the public has entrusted us to perform in the most respectful and democratic manner in this Assembly and also outside the House.

I'd also like to take this time to thank the volunteers on my campaign team for their time and all their efforts. Their work is greatly appreciated. I would not be standing here today without their hard work and support. Neither would any of you.

In addition, I would like to state I was very happy that there was a high voter turnout in this election. It speaks well for the province that we all serve. Politics is changing and we must change with it. We now have Facebook and Twitter. Everybody is using it, especially the youth. We must also join the bandwagon and become involved.

Voting is a right that not everyone in this world has access to, so I am pleased that Islanders recognize this and are exercising such an important democratic freedom, and would like to recognize each of them for doing so.

I am pleased to be the representative of the vibrant constituency of Borden-Kinkora. District 19 is different. It includes five municipalities, more municipalities than any other place in the province. We have the town of Borden-Carleton, the community of Kinkora, the newly amalgamated community of Bedeque, the community of Crapaud, and the city of Summerside. People of my riding are extremely involved in their respective towns and municipal councils.

I am very proud to represent this rural and urban area, which offers such a diverse cross-section of fishermen, farmers, businessmen, industry, and commerce, as well as everyday Islanders trying to support their families.

With a large number of potato producers and two of the most successful seafood producers on the Island, Captain Cooke's Seafood Inc. and Confederation Cove Mussels. I also want to recognize another group. It's called Islanders for Farmers. This was founded by three family farming

daughters: Sarah Jane Barrett of Summerside, Jessica Reeves of Freetown, and Kelsey Lynn Rose of North Lake. They're a group of likeminded friends of agriculture who want to establish a presence on social media to share positive stories about the agriculture sector in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

IFS supports Island farmers and seeks to highlight their innovation, their dedication and commitment to Island communities. We celebrate farm families and their achievements. We are fortunate to have many award-winning farms right in our district and across this Island, and we hope to recognize their great work. We believe Island farmers are vital to our Island's culture and economy. They're foundational to the values we hold dear as Islanders, being hard work, cooperation, and neighborliness. They help steward the beautiful land that draws tourists from across the globe. Farms and agriculture-related businesses employ many Islanders from tip to tip.

Islanders for Farmers also seeks to provide balance to discussions regarding agriculture by providing good information to the public about where their food comes from and how they, too, can support local farmers across the Island.

I also want to recognize another group, and we touched on it briefly last week. It's a new group of farmers that's taken steps to build more of an environmentally sustainable agriculture industry. I hope someday the minister of agriculture and I will get together and we will meet these individuals and have an open discussion.

The East Prince Agri-Environment Association is a newly formed group representing 12 local family farms who share a common interest for building a more economically, environmentally sustainable industry. I have met these individuals and I can tell you they mean well.

For years they've been subject to bad publicity of what the farmers are doing and how they're actually handling their farms. I want to tell you farmers are doing a better job and they don't want to hurt the environment. They want to work with the special interest groups and the watersheds.

This group of forward-thinking professionals is very motivated and understands the need to work with each other, the government, the industry, and the public to make agriculture on PEI economically sustainable and evolutionary while at the same time leading smaller environment footprints for our community and our children. The group has targeted a large number of key areas that they wish to improve, including soil erosion, nitrate reduction, and the relationship between researchers and farmers.

All farmers across Prince Edward Island are dedicated to making farming more sustainable for families they support and for the environment. The farmers who have come together to form this association want to take action now to ensure the practices are improving the health of the environment and their farming operations.

Collectively, this group represents 20,000 farmed acres of land in East Prince alone, thereby holding the potential of significant economical impact. I can say they farm roughly 8,000 acres of potatoes in that area.

The East Prince Agri-Environment Association is made up of Birch Farms Limited, Bedeque Farms, Carl and Evan Robinson, Country View Farms, Dunk River Farms, Greenfield Farms, Havenlee Farms, Klondike Farms, Murray Farms, MWM Farms – which is made up of the Websters and the Mulligan family – Hilltop Produce and Smith Farms. Truly a great group that is moving forward to help the environment and the industry as a whole.

I also want to take a minute to mention some other farms in my district: 3D Farms Ltd. Bedeque Farms, again the Birch farms, Cameron Farms, Country View Farms, Cradle Isle Enterprises, Brent Craig, Lester and Mark Craig, Dunk River Farms, David Francis, Greenfield Farms, Hamill Farms, Mr. Fulton Hamill, Havenlee Farms, Sheldon Howatt, Huestis and Son, Lyman, Larson Farms – Donald Larsen and Lorne Larsen, they're great cattle guys – MacFadyen Brothers, McCardle Brothers, the Mull farms, the Murray farms, and of course, again, the Websters and the Mulligans. Two farms that joined together trying to work to better their operation.

Postman Farms and of course Eric Robinson's.

These are just a few of the farms in our district, great farming families trying to survive and provide for their families.

In discussions with the potato board over the last while, I've become very good friends with Mr. Donnelly of the potato board, who are trying desperately to put our potatoes on the market as the best potatoes in the world. They've shared with me that there are some strong things that are hampering the farming and issues that are facing them.

They range everywhere from the lack of government support, the amount of red tape they have to deal with, rotation issues, the costs of running a small farm nowadays compared to what it was years ago, environmental issues from climate change and weather, how the marketplaces change, wireworm, labour availability. Go to the farms in the fall and all the farms are having problems getting labourers. Environmental regulations that they now have to deal with and the enforcement of these regulations. The negative impact by the public and also the financial cost.

In PEI, we have other issues that are affecting our farmers: the freight, lack of markets. The potato wart is still there, is still bothering the farms. We have too many buyers. Global competition has increased and declining consumption in the potato market. These are just a few. Climate change is a thing of the future and it is happening now and it does affect our farms.

My riding is also home to three absolutely fantastic community groups that I am proud to represent: the Friends of Seacow Head Lighthouse, the Friends of the Lucy Maud Montgomery Lower Bedeque School House, and the Bedeque Historical Society. All of which are trying to hold on to the past and present it to the future.

The Friends of Seacow Head Lighthouse have contacted this government before, specifically the previous minister of tourism, to see how important the lighthouse is. They want this government to help them with their journey to obtain recognition under the federal heritage lighthouse program act. They are currently trying to take over the

physical lighthouse as well as the adjacent land so they can fix up and maintain this historic property. I'm going to help them as much as I can through my position here and contacts within the federal government. But I'd like to remind government of this important historical structure.

The Friends of the Lucy Maud Montgomery Lower Bedeque School House was formed in 1889 to preserve, protect, and display this important schoolhouse. This is vital to our PEI history as Lucy Maud Montgomery was a teacher there. This organization does great work and I am happy to have them in my riding.

Finally, the Bedeque and Area Historical Society was formed in 2010 and it's thriving in my area. They operate a museum, the old Callbeck store, in Central Bedeque. I am proud to announce they will host, in 2016, the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada annual general meeting. This is at the Loyalist Lakeview Resort, with the focal point being the Bedeque Museum.

My riding is home to a very special place to many Islanders and to many around the world. The International Children's Memorial Place is a gorgeous piece of land and former provincial park where families and friends can go to reflect on the tragic loss of a child. Incorporated in 1999, Bill and Myra MacLean have done a great job transforming this property into such a unique place, which is located at Scales Pond outside of Kinkora.

Furthermore, I am proud to be the representative of the riding that is home to such an important part of our Island. The Confederation Bridge has helped improve the prosperity of all Island industries and has, and continues, to allow Islanders to travel freely. Oh, how I wish that was free, in the money sense.

I am also very excited with the news of the upcoming installation of the new underwater power cables which will find a home in Borden-Carleton. We are now learning of a new generation plant. Power is so important to this Island. Even the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness needs more power to keep the oysters cool, as he mentioned last week. I look forward to the business

opportunities and prosperity this will bring to the riding and to the province.

I am pleased to address the Speech From the Throne. This government has promised some big things that are important to my constituents. As I said before, I have five municipalities in my riding, areas which want to provide their residents with the best services possible. Each one will be affected by the new municipal government act, and I hope this government will support our communities, our towns and our cities with an improved funding agreement. My hope is that this legislation will benefit each of these municipalities now and into the future.

The people who work and volunteer within these municipalities are dedicated to making sure that their community is thriving. I would be gravely disappointed if this government does not deliver on such a promise. I would like to take a second to recognize Basil Stewart as being a fantastic mayor for the city of Summerside. Mr. Stewart served for 29 consecutive years and served time as a member and executive, and at one time president of various confederation committees. District 19, in the city of Summerside, has two subdivisions. We also have ADL, a great Island company. Mr. Stewart shared in the building of these parts of my district and is still active there. I would like to congratulate him on his recent induction in the Canadian Municipalities Roll of Honour and wish him all the luck with whatever he plans to do next.

The city of Summerside and our other municipalities are anxious to see the new municipal act, which the throne speech speaks for – suggests at aiming increased accountability, accessibility, transparency, responsiveness and efficiency. Again, the development of this legislation and our funding formula has dragged on far too long. I must also recognize the city of Summerside's electrical utility. Sometimes this utility is forgotten about, but in fact, this generates 12% of the Island's needs.

I have also said that my riding produces large amounts of products for the agriculture and fishing industries. I would like to say hello, to recognize a group of many young farmers in my district who are trying to succeed in putting best farming practices forward, and I am proudly representing you.

I am hoping that what this government has promised for these industries will be fulfilled.

The Speech From the Throne talks about a new era of engagement that will engage Islanders in the decisions that shape the future. Red tape, (Indistinct), needs to be cut back. I have been engaging not only Islanders but different levels of government, groups and businesses. We all need to do this. The announcement that McCain was closing their facility in my district caught everyone off guard. Suddenly 121 people were facing the prospects of no jobs. This came true. Their lives were virtually changed overnight. I can tell you of one family who lives not too far from me. She was a secretary there. They have three small kids. He worked on the farm and they totally supplied their product to the McCain factory. It's a pretty sad night when you have the family arrive at your doorstep and they don't know what their future entails or where it's going to go after that.

The manner in which this issue was handled was, simply put, not right. I heard of situations where growers were advised the night before the announcement that McCain would take every potato they could provide. The next day they were told not to send any potatoes. The plant workers and the growers were literally in shock. The premier of the day said he met with McCain on that Tuesday, but McCain were not interested in any offer they put on the table. I have to say: I wonder if he actually tried or did anyone from government attempt to save such an important part of so many people's lives?

Many in my district do not believe that the government did much to help to keep this plant and its jobs here. It was a sad day in my district, and it continued. I would hope that government is doing a better job of trying to bring new businesses to our province and especially to the old McCain plant and the surrounding areas.

During the election I received a phone call. District 19 was hit again. We were losing the Roland Mushroom Plant, a facility which has been in business since 1977. With this closure another 133 jobs would be lost, affecting many families and small businesses in my area. We lost 121, now we're going to lose another 133. Think

about it. You were working, a notice goes up on the bulletin board and your job is gone, and that's exactly what happened on that day.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Fox: I was on the campaign trail going door to door and I got a phone call from a girl crying. She said that the boss walked out of the office and took a piece of paper and put it on the bulletin board. It was a letter from Ontario that said –

Speaker: Excuse me. There are too many conversations going on.

Mr. Fox: This lady said that this piece of paper said the plant was closing. I drove out to the plant and sure enough, there was a letter on the wall saying: 133 jobs were gone – 133 jobs, 133 families were affected. It's not right.

Borden-Carleton also lost the Canadian Food Inspection Agency office. It was moved to the city at the expense of the farming community in rural PEI. I guess there are more potatoes growing in the city and the area manager knows what's best for the farmers, and this gentleman knows who I'm talking about because he should be losing his job. I wonder where the provincial minister of agriculture was on that one.

So many farms in Victoria, in Borden, in Kinkora and out through Bedeque and Summerside. Now we're suffering hardships and financial loss because of the moving of that office, and we had not one thing said by government. We had some hope recently that there were some plans in the works for the McCain plant, but I hear that those who were interested decided to back out because of all the red tape. I actually spoke to the McCain family two or three times. I'm from Woodstock, New Brunswick, and I've known the McCain family for years, and they said that the red tape in PEI has got to stop.

Government promised our Island business community several years ago that it would begin the process of eliminating red tape, and again in this throne speech they stated again, right there on page nine, that this government will "support small business by reducing red tape..." Big problem in this

Island is an organization called IRAC. Still, only token measures have been taken and red tape still remains a major barrier to doing business in this province.

Another concern to my constituents is the ongoing road project happening in Tryon on the Trans-Canada Highway. The Tryon realignment project – the parents of the children who attend the Mary Pop-Ins Childcare Centre are still concerned about safety. Friday I went home from the House and there wasn't a stake in the field. I came down this morning and the whole route is marked out and staked. I guess it's bulldozers ahead, don't worry about the concerns of the families and the children, let's get 'er done. Phase I of the project has been completed, but during construction a whole list of people voiced their concerns about safety around this location including all involved with the Mary Pop-Ins Childcare Centre: parents, owner, staff and even the Member of Parliament, Wayne Easter.

First responders and fire departments have also expressed their concerns with this route and a change is going to happen. With phase II fast approaching, this same group of people believes that this project is not leading or heading in the right direction. They have previously sent a letter to the hon. Premier with a few questions, and I'll read some things out of this letter that went to Premier Wade MacLauchlan:

Date May 26th, 2015.

With this project in mind, we are writing today to bring to your attention what we consider an urgent safety concern that jeopardizes such rural sustainability, the issue of the current Trans-Canada Highway Access to the Mary Poppins Centre located 21287 North Tryon.

The letter goes on to say: We believe that safety concerns at this location have actually increased due to the realignment and are likely to increase further with phase II of the project.

It further states: Which is also a provincial licensed early years centre in rural PEI.

They came up with questions: Our opinion remains that the most effective option to

alleviate the concerns is to extend the Tobin Road to include a parking lot for the (Indistinct), thereby moving approximately 80 access entry per day to the highway from this daycare centre back and forth.

In 2014 the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, original response, stated feasibility as a reason for this request not be granted. Given the mandate of TIR, we trust public safety should trump all other parameters. TIR has moved since (Indistinct) the legislative constraints, admittedly we're not versed in provincial legislation, but they are concerned.

I can tell you that there has to be a solution to this centre. There has to be something that can be done and can be figured out. Again, there could be lives at risk here. I can tell you by fact that if we go ahead and change this road system the way they're proposing, it will increase speed. I beg to differ with any person that can stand up and argue this point with me. I can say that with 25 years experience, you take turns out of a road, speeds will increase. Does it concern me? Yes it does.

We have been told by TIR that a turning lane and option offered to commercial businesses is not possible. Yes, I do agree. We cannot make exceptions for one business. However, there has to be a solution that the minister can look at, and the Premier. We do not want to put children's lives at risk. I'm asking that this project be placed on hold until we can come up with a reasonable solution to ensure the safety of our children.

Further in the letter it states to the Premier: The parents and community members who are familiar with this location are sincerely concerned, the parents are concerned, for the safety of the current access. We implore you, we do not want their facility to become a statistic. Please look at it, Mr. Premier.

I hope that my constituents receive response to these (Indistinct) questions, as this is a matter of safety for both them and their children. I also urge this government to look at their suggestions on how to continue with the project. Yes, the road does need work, but there has to be a solution. There has to be.

I would like to talk about the potato belt. I mentioned a few remarks by Allan Rankin from the *Eastern Graphic*. The potato belt is an essential part of the province between rural Queens and eastern Prince County's where there are many farmers, fields, and a large Cavendish potato processing plant. If you look around me today you'll notice that now, after the election, the opposition represent this region. The government has lost the support of the potato belt.

Mr. Rankin states in this article that: Much of Prince Edward Island's potato industry is concentrated in the central part of the province, in rural Queens and the eastern Prince County's. You will find many of our bigger potato farms there in gentle rolling hills as well as the massive Cavendish Farms Processing Plant located near Kensington. It's a region often referred to as the potato belt. The government lost the potato belt.

I believe this is a strong message to the new administration and the Premier, that unsustainable dangerous farming practices are unacceptable to the majority of Island voters. Islanders will live with growing and processing potatoes, however, they are now insisting that clean air and water and healthy rivers and streams are the utmost importance to their families and their communities. Farmers believe in that, but we must involve farmers in the process.

When he assumed leadership of the Liberal Party a few months ago, the Premier spoke about the ten lenses through which he would view policy options. In other words, the criteria for defining sound and appropriate government decisions and action. To the surprise and dismay of many Islanders, environmental sustainability and protection was not among these policy lenses.

He further states: The potato industry contributes hundreds of millions to the Island economy each year, and no one should disagree or disregard that economical impact or the livelihood of the potato farmers. But in the age of mechanism and larger acreages, the demographic reality is farmers now constitute a small part of the rural population and their voting power is far much weaker than it was before.

I'd like to take a second to recognize the hard work of the potato board and all they do for marketing potatoes worldwide. They are very involved in the lives of potato farmers and their day-to-day operations.

We will be anticipating action on both the municipal act and promises for Island businesses shortly. As to establish the advisory bodies that are to be created for the health and education systems. Translating it to mean that government will restore elected school boards.

It also appears that government is turning back the clock to the days of local hospital boards which helped ensure that the health care needs of all residents were being met by our health facilities across the province.

I've spoken to many registered nurses and other health care professionals who stated that we have invested in a computer system that has done nothing to improve the system of health care. My wife is a nurse, and my father had to be taken to intensive care back a little while ago. I got the chance to talk to many nurses. We have a system in place that does not improve efficiency in the hospitals, but we're continuing on with it. It takes a lengthy period of vital time to find information on that system that could be much more easily accessed and readily for the nurses. I would suggest that a value for money audit be conducted on the health care on wheels plan initiative by this government and determine whether or not costs are rising as a result of this plan. I think that information is critical to the future of our health care system and our province.

I am happy to hear that government will be strengthening accountability measures in government, including conducting a review of the freedom of information legislation and introducing whistleblower legislation. This is something that the PC caucus proposed several years, but which was defeated by the government members on the grounds that it wasn't necessary. We need to be accountable. Had this legislation been put into place, perhaps we would have not seen what occurred in the e-gaming file or the PNP.

Something that shocked me during the election was going door to door – I was on the Blue Shank Road and I knocked on the

door and the guy opened and he said: Good day, Jamie, how are you? I said: Great. He said: Come on in. I lost \$1,000 in e-gaming. I sat down at his table and this senior citizen guy said that he was at a card game one night with a bunch of other seniors. A guy came in and convinced him to invest in e-gaming. I don't agree with gaming so that's part of that. But anyway, he said: We all agreed to put \$1,000 in. These people, senior citizens, agreed to put \$1,000 in the pot. They made up a \$10,000 investment and they lost it. He said: Luckily, I had the \$1,000. But some of the other guys that invested didn't have it. I felt a little bit sad for the guy.

But a week later I went down to Tryon and I was talking to a guy down there, a senior citizen. I went into his house – I can take you right to the guy's house. He invited me in and the same thing: Good day, Jamie, how are you? I said: Great. No sooner get in the house and I sat down and he started crying. Maybe I have that affect on people, I don't know. He said: I don't know what I'm going to do. I asked: What's wrong? He said: I heard about this e-gaming thing. My house is mortgage free. He said: My wife passed away, so I went to the bank. I was told it was a sure thing. I was told I was going to make money on it. He went up to the Bank of Nova Scotia and he mortgaged \$40,000 against his house. Took it out and he invested it and he lost it. He said: I'm on fixed income, I've got no pension. I've got my Canada pension, my old age pension. Now he's got a \$40,000 mortgage against his house and he doesn't know how he's going to pay it.

Makes you wonder. These people should be held accountable. There are two other members over there, I think, would agree with me. We threw people in jail for less than that. We've taken advantage. Whatever happened took advantage of people and it should not have been allowed.

We had the PNP. We had mismanagement of millions of dollars in taxpayers' dollars through unauthorized write-offs and loan cancellations. I hope I don't hear of a business in that write-off or cancellations that just paved a huge big parking lot.

These are serious issues and need to be addressed in order to restore trust in our

system of government, in our elected officials and senior bureaucrats.

As for the balancing of the budget in 2016-2017, I believe it can be done by cutting out the wasteful spending practices of the past and the careful determination of priorities that are in line with the needs of the public. Our province, with a debt that is rapidly inclining to the 3 billion-plus mark, is jeopardizing the future of our province and being placed on the backs of our children and our grandchildren. Government needs to spend within their means. Ensure that money they're spending addresses real needs.

Businesses have to do this and we as a government want this, but we don't demand this in the legislation in the government we run and we manage. We should be treating this money that we are in control of as our money. It's the peoples' money and we're responsible to them. That's why they put us in here. A time for throwing millions of dollars at liquor stores, failed lotteries, and parties must end.

We did the 7% rollback. Will this have to happen again? It's a possible question. If we continue on the path we are going, will we have to do that again?

It's time that our government became serious about fiscal accountability. I ran two businesses in two provinces and I learned you have to control your spending and you have to save for a rainy day because you don't know when the rainy day is going to come. We will be watching closely to see how this government meets its commitments in this area.

As the Auditor General alluded to, it is also time we did a cost analysis and determine if our 48 million expenditure on off-Island health care is cost effective. I think in Ontario they have what they call ambulance busses. Do we need to be sending three and four ambulances off-Island a day where we maybe could invest in an ambulance bus? And one bus takes these people off Island.

Mr. Henderson: Health care on wheels.

Mr. Fox: Yeah. Ontario did it. Why can't we look at it?

Which reminds me of a phone call on the weekend. A lady from Kinkora, her husband was into a diabetic attack and there were no ambulances available out of Summerside, and the ambulance had to come into the village of Kinkora from North River. Forty-five minutes she waited as her husband seized on the floor. I passed a letter to the minister of health today which outlined it, and I saw the pictures of this man and his face and the bruising to his tongue and stuff after this attack. Forty-five minutes he waited for an ambulance to get there, and then he had to wait to get to the hospital.

I know there's a burden to those who need to use off-Island facilities, but I believe that most of us would prefer, when absolutely necessary, to be where the best physician and care is available.

Our auditor, however, questions whether we're getting the best value for our money. I question what we are putting our residents through re: pain and suffering. I'm lucky, I'm healthy. I'm very fortunate. I thank God for it all the time. But our citizens must come first. I think it's time an evaluation took place.

I want to take a minute to speak about some of the houses in District 19 which I saw during the election campaign. I can tell you about a house on the back street of Carleton Street in Borden where the woman, she couldn't get a grant to fix her leaking roof. Inside her house, above the sliding glass doors on the back on the patio, she had garbage bags fastened to the ceiling to hold the insulation in and to stop the rain from leaking because the jip rock had come down and she had – there were little pieces of wood to hold these garbage bags up.

Went out to Freetown one day going door to door out there and a guy – and I've got his letter in my computer. I went out and walked into the house and he said: Gee, Jamie, how are you? I said: Good. He said: Will you have a coffee, and don't mind the water buckets – and it was raining out. I said: You've got some really leaky roofs. He said: Yeah, I was \$114 over what was allowed. We cannot spend \$5 million but here this guy had five buckets. He took me into the house, this trailer, and there were five rooms in the house which had buckets on the floor collecting water.

He said he put the grant in, or put the application in to get this money to get his roof fixed and it came to, I think it was, \$1,800 and he was rejected because he made \$114 than what was allowed. Shameful that we have people living in those conditions.

I can tell you about a house in Bedeque, down on the lower side of Bedeque, they call it the pond area. I went into that house there one day, great lady. She lives by herself, and her daughter was up from New York to visit her. She invited me in, we had tea, and she said: Jamie do you know if there's any more money available for the grant program? I told her that no, I don't think there is, I don't think there's any available right now. I want to show you something. She shut the door, she opened the door, and she shut it again and she took a screw driver. She could take the screw driver – she said: I put a grant in to get the door fixed. She took the screw driver and she could shove it out through the top of the door, out through the torn door jam, and you could see light, and that screw driver would move in and out. I said: That's not good, and she said: No.

I said: You applied for the grant, and she said: Yes, I did. And you got refused. Yeah. She said there were no funds left available. I think in the back of my mind, we had \$5 million left here somewhere. I asked: What do you do? She said: You see this roll of duck tape? Sure enough, there was a nail beside the door with a roll of duck tape. She says: Every night when I go to bed, I bring the wood in and I take the roll of duck tape and I put it around that door frame. It sort of makes you wonder.

We have senior citizens out there living who put tuck tape around a door so the cold air doesn't come in at nighttime. It's disgraceful, it's not right. It shouldn't be allowed.

There are people out there that are asking for a little bit of help. It's everyday common, everyday Islanders, trying to provide for their families and provide themselves the best way they can, but they're not getting the help they need.

We go home to our nice warm comfy beds and we laugh and we joke and we have good times, but there are people out there in our

district that aren't having good times. I really hope that some of the members across the floor from me take that to heart or think about it. Rural PEI is hurting.

There is one other place I want to talk about out on the Mcmurdo Road. A young family, man and woman with two small children, their well went. They haven't got the money to fix the pump. They applied to get the pump fixed and got rejected. What did they do all winter long? They rented a construction toilet. I couldn't believe it when I walked into the driveway and it was all mud and there were two-by-fours on the ground to walk on into the house and here is a porta-potty. I went inside the house and the house is clean. The house was really nice. They didn't have much but it was clean, and the kids were running around on the floor and stuff, and she was happy, and I had to apologize. I made a joke. I said about the husband: Does he have a gas problem? Does he have to go outside? We joke and I know her and she said: No, Jamie, the well went, we applied for a new well and pump and we got rejected and no money left, so the only thing we could do is we got a porta-potty. All winter long that family used a porta-potty. I don't like that, it's not right.

I'm coming to the end, Mr. Speaker.

I take this House very seriously. I believe in our old ways and our traditions, and I believe that members of the government and the members of the opposition, yeah, we bicker back and forth and we do things across the floor and try to get each other going and stuff like that, but we're all striving for one thing, and that is to make our districts and our province the best place in the world. I believe we have the best place in the world. I'm from Carleton County, Woodstock, a potato place. My family never had much. We couldn't afford to put me in sports or my brother in sports, but we had family, and I believe in the potatoes and I believe in Carleton County, and I believe in home and Woodstock and down around the lake, and I think that's the greatest place. But I feel closer to PEI.

I will conclude my remarks with a warning, and I'll let you just think about this for a moment –

An Hon. Member: You gave lots of them.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, I gave a lot of warnings over the years –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) tickets.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Fox: I have to laugh about the ticket thing there. We'll make a joke about that. People used to say that Borden-Carleton, we issue a lot of tickets. We actually, in fact, didn't issue a lot of tickets. The traffic count through Borden-Carleton when I was there as the chief averaged around 7,000 vehicles through the year a day. I can tell you if you go back to when Arthur Currie was there and Gail Roberts and them people, that on average we only ever wrote around 650 traffic tickets a year, and somewhere in the vicinity of 100 liquor control acts. Do the math on 7,000 vehicles per day and that many tickets –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Fox: It wasn't very many.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Fox: Yeah, get the minister of finance over there.

I'm going to conclude these remarks with a warning, and I ask, please, that the Premier listen to this: We need to change the manner in which we govern and the path that we have been following.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Next responding to the Speech From the Throne will be the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to reply to the Speech From the Throne as the representative from Kensington-Malpeque. I'd like to start off by thanking everyone

who helped me get here today. A big thank you goes out to everyone who supported me during the campaign and all the volunteers who dedicated their time. I would like to recognize the hard work put in by every candidate in this past election. Win or lose, I think everyone did a great job on the campaign trail and a big congratulations to all the successful candidates. I look forward to working with you in this Assembly.

I would also like to thank all the staff who are getting the new members on both sides of the floor prepared for this session.

Finally, I'd like to recognize my family for all their support throughout this process: my parents Glen and Barb, my brother Ryan, sister Sarah, my daughter Kennedy, and my lovely wife Alisha. Thank you so much for your help and encouragement.

I am very excited to represent the District of Kensington-Malpeque and all of its constituents. My district possesses the main industries here on the Island: farming, fishing and tourism. I grew up in the rural community of French River where I was heavily involved in the fishing industry from a young age. My father was a lobster fisherman for forty-two years and my parents owned a fish market. I have lived and worked in my district my whole entire life and over the last 10 years have been employed in the real estate industry.

I have seen first-hand the ups and downs of the economy here on our Island and the effect it has had on Islanders. My riding is not only my home, but also home to the Island Jr. B champions, the Kensington Vipers, who have now won the Island championship for the last six seasons. We're all quite proud of their accomplishments. The PEI Burger Love 2015 Champion also comes from my district. The Home Place in Kensington was the winner of the big event.

One of the favorite activities of many residents in my riding relates to the harness racing track in Kensington. The Kensington Horseman's Club has about forty members. These members are extremely dedicated to keeping the track up and running. Harness racing on PEI is a large part of our history as a province and I am proud that I have such an active group in my constituency keeping this tradition alive.

My district has some very interesting and dedicated residents. For example, Rendal Casley, along with his wife Sandra, recently walked from Kensington to Summerside, a 20 km hike, in celebration of Rendal's 75th birthday. I hope I'll be that active when I reach that age.

Unfortunately, we recently lost a great constituent in my riding. John Henderson passed away on April 26 at the age of 91. John was a proud World War II veteran, a farmer, and a lifelong supporter of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party. This man never missed a PC event and most recently was allowed out of his nursing home to attend the leadership convention in Charlottetown in a wheelchair. John will be greatly missed, and we as a PC caucus would like to extend our deepest sympathies to his family and friends.

I would now like to turn my attention to the throne speech. As someone who has been involved in small business for a very long time, I am interested to see how this government will work towards reducing red tape for such an important part of the Island's economy. This government, promised eight years ago to reduce red tape and our business community is still waiting. It was a common complaint during this last election campaign. The CFIB has stated that red tape costs our small business community roughly \$110 million annually, although that was stated a few years ago and I suspect the dollar amount has risen substantially. I can attest to the amount of time and effort that goes into operating a small business, and I look forward to action on this commitment.

In addition, the promise to make capital more accessible to businesses is a promise that I hope this government can live up to. Many small businesses are in need of some assistance for expansion and repairs and business start ups. We need our business to grow, we need to see them expand and provide more employment for our population. Easier access to loans will certainly help to ensure growth in our economy and more work for our population.

I am pleased to see that this government plans to introduce a Poverty Reduction Strategy and changes to the *Income Tax Act* that will help low-income families. I believe that this government could certainly help

with the financial struggles that people are facing, not only those who live below the poverty line but those who are now called the working poor.

I would like to indicate what the CFIB has to say about poverty reduction. The CFIB points out that increases in minimum wage are not the answer to poverty reduction. They indicate that according to Statistics Canada, only 5% of workers earn minimum wage. Typical, these are young workers in their first jobs who live at home with family. But while most businesses don't pay minimum wage, only 35% say they aren't impacted by minimum wage increases. Minimum wage hikes often put pressure on the wages for other workers and also mean increases to payroll taxes like WCB, EI and CPP. This forces many small businesses to make adjustments in their operations. Some increase prices to recoup the additional costs, but many have to cut back staff hours or their number of employees. Again, quoting from the CFIB: An effective way of helping the working poor without harming small businesses and their employees is to increase the basic personal exemption, the amount income taxpayers are allowed to keep tax-free. This is something the PC caucus has been demanding that government carry out for the past several years.

In PEI workers are only allowed to keep \$7,708 before they start paying taxes, the lowest in the country. Ideally, government should not only increase the personal tax exemption but index it to the rate of inflation. If government can tie our property taxes and increases and fees to the Consumer Price Index, I see no reason why they would not tie the tax exemption to the Consumer Price Index or the rate of inflation.

I also believe that social assistance rates should also be tied to the rate of inflation. To quote the throne speech: Many Islanders struggle day-to-day to make ends meet. Our caucus has tabled a motion urging this government to review the current tax regime. Having the lowest basic personal amount in the country means we start paying income taxes before any other Canadians, yet we have the lowest wages in the country.

Why is it that while most provinces increase their basic personal amount and tax brackets

every year PEI doesn't? The basic personal tax exemption has only been increased by 4% since 2002, while inflation and the cost of living have skyrocketed. According to CFIB, research consistently shows that raising the basic personal amount does more to help the working poor than minimum wage increases. Raising the basic personal exemption would help the economy by allowing Islanders to keep and spend more of their hard-earned money.

I am pleased that government will be working towards a new municipal act for our municipalities, but I believe the immediate concern is a new municipal funding formula. Our communities need policies that will ensure that they thrive. Currently many are dying. Some of it is a result of an aging population that has left their communities to find accommodation close to hospitals, or is residing in nursing homes and seniors residences.

Also, many communities are suffering from the loss of their young families that have left to find a better life off-Island, and out west. Our municipalities must provide a wide-array of services and infrastructure. Rising costs to provide these services have had a dramatic impact. Prince Edward Island municipalities receive the smallest share of total property taxes collected of any province, and one in three municipalities are smaller than five square kilometres.

In 2007 government changed the rules and many of our larger municipalities found themselves falling millions of dollars short of what they needed to maintain their services. Negotiations have been going on with our Federation of Municipalities since that time, but year after year a new funding formula has not been forthcoming. It's time this business was taken care of. I, like other speakers before me, do not believe that we need more discussion. It's time for action.

I was somewhat surprised to see the lack of commitment in the throne speech with regard to our primary industries like agriculture and fishing. We must not turn our back on our primary industries that, like all Islanders, are dealing with rising costs for transportation, fuel and farm equipment. Running a farm today is big business. As for the throne speech announcement that the government will balance its budget in 2016-

2017, given this government's track record I am somewhat skeptical.

As to living within its means, again, given this government's tendency to throw dollars at gambling schemes, parties, lotteries and liquor stores, I believe they will have their work cut out for them. There is so much to talk about in this throne speech, and I know there are others who are anxiously waiting to have their say.

Once again, I want to say what a great privilege it is for me to be standing here today as an elected representative for the people of Prince Edward Island. I look forward to honouring the commitment to the people of my district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

We will now go to the hon. Leader of the Third Party to address the Speech From the Throne.

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

May I first of all, again, congratulate you on your election and also on your ongoing commitment to fairness and your continued insistence on civility in this House. It's much appreciated by the Third Party. I also want to thank all the members of this House for their most warm welcome during these first few weeks on the new job.

I feel truly humbled and extremely privileged to stand here today as a member of this venerable institution, the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island. If you were to try and chart a course from my birthplace in Scotland 53 years ago to my seat here today in the House, it would not be a straight line. The path meanders, it doubles back, it takes unexpected turns and finally arrives at this place in this time with equal measures of surprise and inevitability.

I say this because I am still somewhat in shock about my presence here, and yet I am aware that in some ways my entire life was leading me to be here in this place in this capacity at this time. I am a lucky man.

Firstly, I chose my parents wisely, I married the kindest person I have ever met, I have a job I love – actually I now have two jobs I love – I live in a very special part of a wonderful country, I have launched four content children out into the world. I have indeed lived a charmed life. The truth is that all of us, all of us privileged enough to be elected members of this Legislature, are lucky women and men. I don't know your personal histories, of course, but I do know that we all, as I said, live in a very special part of a very wonderful country, and that we have arrived here with an opportunity to transform this beloved province into one of the greatest places on Earth in which to live.

But we will only do this if we, as I once heard from a man I respect, call on our better natures and work together with pure hearts and open minds to find the best solutions to the many complicated problems that we face.

Unfortunately, politics has become a dirty word in many people's vocabulary, but it does not have to be this way. We can – and I say we must – return dignity and honour to politics, to restore Islanders' faith in the political process and to make decisions that will truly improve the well-being of all Islanders.

A number of members have referenced Island and family history in their responses to the throne speech, and I want to start by doing the same. Four generations, and 151 years ago, my great-great-grandfather, George Brown, Father of Confederation, arrived in Charlottetown from Upper Canada to be a part of that pivotal meeting in our country's history, the Charlottetown Conference.

Our Premier implores us to call on our better natures, and I love that sentiment, but as long as that idea remains words and is not transformed into political action our better natures will, like Mother Nature herself, under the incessant onslaught of human expansion, wither and perish.

George Brown put aside any personal ambitions he had, swallowed his pride, called on his better nature and, in order to end an interminable stalemate, entered into an alliance with his arch-rival, John A Macdonald, without which, by the way, the

delegates from the Canadian provinces would never have set sail for Charlottetown back in 1864. This ability to see the bigger picture, to project far into the future, to put aside personal goals in order to further the common good, to be noble and selfless and to hold onto a compelling vision, is what is too often missing in contemporary politics.

Of course, I know we live in different times with different challenges, but nobility, honour, and a captivating vision never go out of fashion. It is my intention to always keep the big picture in my mind, to think and promote long-term solutions, and to work consistently and tirelessly to find collaborative, evidence-based solutions that will improve the lives of Islanders – those alive today, and for all future generations.

I believe that politics can be inspiring and it can be beautiful, but it requires the right people with the right attitude committed to the right vision for it to be so.

The throne speech contains fragments of a vision, which I believe could be stitched together to create a fabric of beauty capable of inspiring. The question is: Are we the right people with the right attitude to do that work? Can we break free of historical patterns and habits and constraints and collectively commit to something bold, something special? Can we create a Province that is a beacon of sustainability and contentment, a place of hope for other jurisdictions all over the world?

I believe we can. I look forward to representing the constituents of District 17 Kellys Cross-Cumberland, and to all elected members remembering our first duty, which is not to our party or to anyone or anything else, but to our constituents – to Islanders. It would make my great-great grandfather, and his contemporaries who created this wonderful country, and particularly those from PEI – John Hamilton Gray, William Henry Pope, Edward Palmer, Andrew MacDonald, and the man whose name adorns the building in which we now sit in, George Coles – it would make them all very happy to know that their vision, and that the hard-won rights and freedoms enjoyed by every generation since, were being cherished and respected.

I'd like to now turn to some specifics contained within the throne speech, to give credit where it is due, to suggest ways in which some initiatives might be improved, and occasionally to wonder what on earth you were thinking.

In the throne speech the government outlined its strong commitment to engaging Islanders in policy development. Engagement is a key component of grassroots democracy, which is one of the pillars of Green Party politics, and I'm really glad to see that this government shares that principle. I hope that government will not only engage Islanders more often, but also in a more collaborative and empowering way.

Historically on Prince Edward Island the type of engagement seen most typically has been consultation, which entails asking Islanders for their input on a matter, but making, then, decisions behind closed doors, often apparently with no regard to the opinions and concerns expressed by the public. Examples of such thing are the implementation of HST, changes to the health care system, the Plan B realignment.

All of these have shown how this level of engagement can be insufficient to meet the expectations and needs of an active and democratic society. Such government persists today with a second phase of a realignment of the highway in Tryon, already mentioned by one of the hon. members over here, where local citizens have repeatedly raised concerns about safety and offered solutions, sensible cheap solutions, but have been effectively shut out of the decision-making process. This must change.

Higher levels of engagement move beyond simply asking for opinions to allowing citizens to actively participate in the decision-making process and in policy development. The highest level of engagement, and that to which we should be aspiring here on Prince Edward Island, is where citizens are empowered to make their own decisions and to be active participants in creating their own policies to address all the challenges we face.

I encourage government to explore these higher levels of engagement when they proceed with governance, not just to rely on

the insufficient methods of engagement that have been used in the past. Let Islanders play a central role in creating for themselves the policies that they know are best for Prince Edward Island.

Also in the throne speech, the government mentioned developing a more open policy process, and there are great opportunities through technology for greater engagement and collaboration. I agree and I believe that such technological advances present even greater opportunities to empower Islanders to reach these higher levels of political engagement.

In order to make the best policy decisions people need access to the best information. Some commitments have been made to open government, which are commendable, but I encourage them to go even further and look at some of the good ideas put forward by the other parties. For example, the worthwhile proposal for open data, which proposed sharing government data sets in machine-readable format, which was put forward by PC leader Rob Lantz during the last election campaign.

I am glad to see that government has committed to improved whistleblower protection, access to information, and the integrity of government officials. However, the commitment to establishing whistleblower protection policies within government, instead of comprehensive legislation, is to me a curious strategy. I suggest that what is really required is a whistleblower protection act. I am also glad to see that government intends to review FOIPP, but I hope this review will include measures to bring municipalities and post-secondary institutions under the act as well as ensuring that the office of the privacy and information commissioner has sufficient resources to carry out its work in an efficient and effective manner.

The creation of the ethics and integrity commissioner position is a good start, but PEI is small, and the intimacy of our politics here makes it inherently more vulnerable to conflicts of interest. Therefore I believe that we need the most stringent regulations of any jurisdiction when it comes to conflict of interest. I will be pushing for legislative reforms in order to create a situation where we have civil liability for higher level civil

servants and those who advise them. It is my belief that until we have such legislation in place, we may well repeat the problems of the past and Islanders will never have absolute faith and trust in their government.

Government has made it abundantly clear that its focus for the prosperity of PEI is to rely on economic growth. While PEI and much of the world has made many gains pursuing this strategy, I question the wisdom of following the perpetual growth paradigm over the long term, as it is not collectively possible on a planet of finite size with finite resources to grow indefinitely. Growth has been an attractive principle for governments forever, and only recently has the idea of limits to economic growth been recognized as a serious issue.

Perpetual economic expansion remains attractive politically, of course, because it allows government to avoid those gnarly issues of limits and of sharing. But given today's economic, social and environmental situations, we can no longer rely on continued expansion to provide for future well-being, particularly in parts of the world like Canada and Prince Edward Island where we already use far more than our fair share of the world's resources. If everyone else in the world used resources at the same rate that we do here on Prince Edward Island, living in houses like ours, driving the same number of cars, owning the same number of cottages, owning the same amount of clothes, eating our diet, we would require four more planet Earths to supply the resources to accomplish that. Obviously simply impossible.

We must learn to share the earth's bounty more equitably. We in the developed world must be satisfied with less. In other words, we need to apply sustainable practices to all aspects of the economy to ensure that the long-term prosperity of our province, country and world is assured.

In the throne speech the government outlined its strategy to balance the budget by 2016-2017 through revenue growth and expenditure containment. I wholeheartedly support this drive towards balanced budgets, and I only hope that this administration will be more successful in reaching its fiscal goals than the previous one.

While we agree that revenue growth is necessary, I do not think that an over-reliance on export markets will lead to long-term economic stability. We need look no further than the oil-producing provinces of Canada to see where an over-reliance on commodity markets can lead. Indeed, in this session we have already contemplated the risks should our own primary agriculture commodity collapse.

While some export industries are desirable, of course, we need to diversify the markets on which we rely. We need to focus more on local markets through import substitution, which means supporting local producers to provide what is needed locally. This will also help, of course, address the balance of trade which government has quite rightly identified as a very serious concern.

In order to achieve a balanced budget we will need to contain spending, but I'm really glad to see that government intends to do this while protecting the most vulnerable in our society. Government has said that it wants to support and encourage all enterprises, including globally successful companies. I question the need to offer financial support to large companies that are already established and clearly successful. Government support should, instead, be directed to small local business and sustainable emerging industries, and to attracting established businesses whose employees would benefit from perhaps our most precious competitive advantage, the quality of life that Prince Edward Island offers.

There are many emerging sectors, including bioscience, IT, aerospace, marine technology, but also renewable energy and forestry management, that have great potential for providing good jobs to Islanders. The dialogue about jobs, I believe, needs to be expanded so that we talk not simply about the number of jobs but also about their quality. Are they well-paying, are they stable? We need a long-term plan to shift from low-skill, low-wage, often transient jobs, to ones that are higher-skilled, better-paying, permanent and more suited to our particular situation here on PEI. The government's goal of increasing the number of skilled workers is also laudable, but this goal must also be accompanied by measures

to help already skilled Islanders find opportunities in fields here at home.

The government outlined, first during the election and then in the recent throne speech, their plan for a new brand to promote the Island's food producing industries. I believe, as I said in the House earlier today, that Canada's Food Island brand is an initiative with real potential. But wouldn't it be even better if we implement a brand that is more than just a marketing strategy, one that is backed up by new ways of doing things in our primary industries here on PEI?

We have unlimited opportunities for sustained economic prosperity on Prince Edward Island if we establish first a system and then a reputation for food products that are superior quality, are healthy and sustainably produced, and then become known as the best in the world. People want to know that their food is healthy and they want to know who produces it. This is how we will capture the emerging markets, create potentially thousands of high quality jobs, revitalize our rural communities and protect the health of our land and water.

Many good measures were put forward in the throne speech to improve the quality of our health care services, and the health of Islanders. These include the focus on frontline workers, youth mental health, and the generic drug plan. However, there is still not enough emphasis placed on moving from the current reactive model of care to a more proactive one, where we promote health rather than treating illness. I look forward to further initiatives in this area, and to opportunities for Prince Edward Island to partner with the federal government on pilot programs for innovative public policies in many areas, but particularly in the area of mental health.

A recent series of articles in the *Globe and Mail* pointed out how a more comprehensive approach to treatment and prevention of mental health and addiction issues is not only more effective for those who suffer from these afflictions, but is good public policy from an economic viewpoint. Establishing a test case here on Prince Edward Island would not only help all those Islanders who desperately need help in this

area, but it could revolutionize our society's attitude and approach to mental health.

I am encouraged by this government's commitment to support those struggling the most. Amending the *Income Tax Act* to reduce the number of low-income Islanders paying income tax, and the enhanced support for the school breakfast and lunch programs, are changes that will certainly help to alleviate the challenges faced by many Island families. In particular, the initiation of a long-term plan to reduce poverty is an important step, one that we wholeheartedly support and I look forward to discovering the details over the weeks and months ahead. But today we need to address the root causes of poverty.

I was disappointed to see no mention in the Speech From the Throne about working to implement a basic income guarantee in PEI, a commitment that was made by all four party leaders during the election campaign. I sincerely hope that a serious examination of this important policy initiative is either incorporated into the proposed multi-year plan to reduce poverty or that it is brought forward on its own.

The section of the throne speech dealing with the environment was somewhat short given that it underpins everything else we do. That being said, there are some reasons for optimism in what it does contain. As the Speech From the Throne indicated, the government intends to introduce a water act and update the *Planning Act* and the *Lands Protection Act*, all of which are much needed. I must commend the government on the creation of a new department which brings all of these aspects together. The government's commitment to engagement in all these processes is encouraging, but again, I hark back to what I've said earlier: we must ensure that higher levels of engagement are reached than has been typical in the past. Government must do more than just listen to Islanders, it must give them the tools to decide for themselves how best to protect our land, air and water.

I would also like to commend government on its commitment to increased support for the important work of the watershed groups across this Island. In terms of value for money, I doubt there is any other government program that gets better return

on its dollar, a more spectacular return on investment, for the watershed groups.

Despite these positive steps, there is one glaring omission in the throne speech with regard to the environment: climate change. In fact, the term does not even appear once in the speech. It cannot be overstated how critical it is for our province to take action on this issue. PEI is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change and it affects all aspects of Island life. Whether it's coastal erosion, changing rainfall patterns, more intense storms, or new invasive species, we need comprehensive strategies across all departments to deal with these threats. A government that does not actively prepare for climate change on all fronts is being negligent. To ignore climate change is not just neglectful but dangerous, and will seriously affect the lives of our descendants for generations and limit their ability to flourish.

We have not always been diligent about leaving a healthy Island and planet for our children. Our generation has a lot to answer for. We have overseen the transformation of our province, country and Earth, economically, socially and ecologically, and it is my sense that in doing so we have left some very serious challenges for our children. We can no longer just tinker away at the major problems we have created. It is time for some profound discussions and difficult decisions to be made.

The opening lines of my first ever speech I gave as a candidate went like this: Future generations will look back at the decades we are now living in and they will call them the crazy years. That time when humanity, with full knowledge of the consequences of our actions, carried out the systematic destruction of their only home, planet Earth.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

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

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may be seated.

Motions Other than Government

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time opposition would like to call Motion No. 17, In support of the PEI film and digital media industry.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No.17.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the following motion:

WHEREAS the development of the so-called 'creative economy' can positively impact economic growth;

AND WHEREAS the film and digital media industry is a key component of the creative economy;

AND WHEREAS the value of the film and digital industry in Nova Scotia is valued at least \$67 million;

AND WHEREAS in the last decade provincial government funding for film-making on PEI has fallen from more than \$800,000 a year, to less than \$25,000;

AND WHEREAS the film industry and its potential economic spin-offs can provide much needed employment for our Island communities, additional tax benefits and a venue to showcase our province, culturally as well as esthetically;

AND WHEREAS development of creative sectors such as film and digital media can be a powerful tool in helping retain skilled Islanders and giving them the opportunity to practice their skills and crafts in the province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly show its support to our film community and encourage the government of Prince Edward Island to implement programs that will ensure the growth and development of a flourishing film industry in our province.

Speaker: I'll call upon the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque to move the motion.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise today in this Legislative Assembly and open debate on this important motion in support of PEI's film and digital media industry.

This industry is worth \$5.8 billion and provides 127,000 jobs Canada-wide. I'm wondering why PEI is not trying to tap into this obviously thriving industry. Everything in this world is becoming digitalized, and this government should take note and provide support for the workers who share our culture with the world, broadcast important news information, especially, for the workers who have worked hard for their training, and want to stay here to work in the field.

There is obviously success in the films and television programs that have been previously shot here. In 2004, *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* was filmed here. That film had a budget of \$1.5 million. Even if we say that a third of that was spent on editing time, that was still \$1 million directly into the Island economy.

Television has also been successful here on the Island. The series *Emily of New Moon*, based on a book by our own Lucy Maud Montgomery, was shot here, four entire seasons over three years. That's three years of film crews, actors, and actresses all spending money on catering services, hair and make-up artists, land and equipment rentals, and any other requirements needed to make this show happen. I know of Islanders who were hired as extras for this show, some just children who earned very good salaries.

These are just two examples. There have been many other documentaries and short films made here like the documentary on Rainbow Valley and the National Film Board Documentary entitled *Island Green*. This money that crews of these documentaries are spending goes directly into Islanders' pockets.

Last year we learned that this government had cut film funding by a whopping 97%. This was unjustified. Here on the Island we

have a thriving group of artists who need those grants and funding for their projects. The Island Media Arts Cooperative is a group of these artists who have banded together to support one another in their industry.

In their own words the IMAC website states:

"...the representative of PEI's film sector, is made up of Emmy and Gemini award winning filmmakers and TV producers. We are a rising industry with our own successes that could make our mark if a PEI government would collaborate with us on developing a sustainable media incentive program."

This group of individuals had success in the past year when a short film entitled *Queen of the Crows* was not only shot and produced entirely on PEI, but was chosen to be featured as part of Canadian showcase at the Cannes Film Festival.

In addition, IMAC, in collaboration with the Charlottetown Film Society, are hosting the first ever Charlottetown Film Festival in October which will show works of filmmakers from all over Atlantic Canada.

As much success as this co-operative is having on their own, this group of talented Islanders is currently lobbying very diligently for the creation of more incentives for their industry on PEI. Their most recent news release on the matter makes some excellent points about the benefits that a clear-cut film and digital media incentive would have on their industry:

A thriving media industry shows return on investment through the creation of high-tech jobs and on-Island spending in the form of goods, services, and taxes. Return can be as much as three times the investment, as seen in Nova Scotia.

Investment means retention of young professionals and their families. Investment means Island stories and landscapes get put on a screen to get PEI known around the world as a destination to explore.

Currently PEI is the only Atlantic province without any incentives specific to the film, television, and digital media industry. As we saw in the media the last few months, when

a film and television tax credit in Nova Scotia was threatened, there were many protests and objections because large numbers of people take advantage of this program and it has grown their film industry by leaps and bounds. So why can't PEI do the same?

Presently, the only option for filmmakers looking for assistance is through Innovation PEI. This innovation and development labour rebate is not just for filmmakers. These applicants are competing against others in these areas of aerospace, financial services, renewable energy, information technology, bioscience, and export-focused manufacturing.

There is very little incentive for filmmakers here on the Island to even apply because of these other industries. This industry is booming everywhere else and our talented Islanders in the industry are continuously missing opportunities to build their portfolios, to showcase their home province and all its beautiful scenery, and to pump plenty of money into Island businesses.

We will continue to support the film industry as a caucus and we hope that the government will see the enormous benefits that a better-developed incentive program for this industry could bring to PEI.

I believe that, as a new government interested in job creation and new educational opportunities for students, this industry can offer many the opportunity to develop talents in acting, dance, costume design, backdrop design, makeup, as well as directing, filmmaking, sound and visual effects.

There are so many parts of filmmaking that we could be employing Islanders and helping more creative students learn new trades.

I would ask today that those in our Legislative Assembly support our motion and perhaps help create a new industry that, I believe, can work in collaboration with other performing arts facilities in our province, such as the College of Piping and Confederation Centre of the Arts.

We have so much to offer. We have the seaside villages, the ports, the sand dunes,

the lakes, lighthouses, churches and historical buildings. I believe we have the ideal locations for movie makers and a great opportunity for job creation.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, member.

We'll move to the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid to second.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am honoured to be in this Legislative Assembly today to second this motion in support of our Island filmmakers and digital media industry.

My colleague from Kensington-Malpeque has raised some excellent points stating how important this industry is and how profitable it could be for PEI.

We are very lucky to have an abundance of talented Islanders who are interested in the film, television, and digital media industries. Sadly, there seems to be little effort by the government to keep these skilled workers employed on the Island, and cutting funding to the industry by 97% is not encouraging to these workers.

A recent news article outlined local filmmaker John Hopkins' unhappiness with the PEI government for discontinuing some very successful programs in 2006 that were put in place by the previous PC government and was helping out PEI film and television makers.

He suggested promoting a Music PEI sort of association for the film and television industry. I'd have to agree with him. Music PEI has done an excellent job promoting Island artists from all genres of music. They offer financial support for budding new artists, for mileage to and from gigs, demo costs, and performance coaching. In addition, they receive funding from the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government.

Establishing such an association specific to the film and television industry would be extremely beneficial to everyone involved in

this business or even combining the two. The music and film industries intermingle quite often with music videos being shot often and background music being needed for the films. The industries overlap nicely. Either way, there is much more that this government could be doing to help out the Island's film and television industry.

This government has been able to secure funding for digital media marketing firms such as Melody and Robbie Dover of Fresh Media, who have done excellent work for provincial campaigns on the PEI Burger Love and the PEI School Milk. This is a step in the right direction in recognition of how important technology is to our world today and how effective digital media promotion can be.

This government needs to take one more step in such a direction and encourage film and television makers just as much as they encourage digital media producers. Why not offer incentives for Island filmmakers to promote tourism, or agriculture, or any other vital PEI industry? For example, Chef Michael Smith has done a wonderful job marketing many of our Island industries. Fishing, farming, and tourism have all benefited from the television shows he films on the Island and the appearances he does at Island promotional events, and this is just one person. What if there were a dozen television shows each promoting an Island industry or movies that showcase our best qualities, or documentaries detailing our rich industry? This Island would benefit from such a positively influential industry.

As Nova Scotia's government has just reviewed and made changes to its incentive program, many projects have been cancelled in that province due to these alterations and are looking for new places to film and produce. Why not create a program that attracts these projects and people to PEI?

These filmmakers are already in the region and are looking for a place to spend their budgets, and I think that should happen in Prince Edward Island. We could always use more outside spending here on PEI. If there are no incentive programs in this area of the country, then perhaps the jobs in this industry will head to Ontario, British Columbia, or Manitoba for work. Just like many of the young Islanders who are

involved in film and television have moved to these places to find work in their field. This industry is high tech, which means that it is potentially very high paying.

Why doesn't this government take steps in the right direction to bring home Islanders to work in this creative industry or create new opportunities for those who are just starting out? The Speech From the Throne states that this government can create work and career opportunities for young people so that they do not have to leave the province. Does this government not see how great this industry is for both young people and the good of the province? It says so right in the throne speech that this government is aiming towards retaining young people by providing them with work opportunities and creating new opportunities so young people don't have to leave. PEI's film industry is still doing well without support from this government.

This past year we have had productions on the Island such as *The Amazing Race Canada* and a Parks Canada film about our very own Province House. These, and all other productions made here on the Island, spent approximately \$1 million dollars here on PEI just within the last year. That is a lot of money being pumped into our economy. The fifth annual Island Media Arts Festival happened last October. Over 100 films were submitted to the festival from artists from all over Atlantic Canada. One report said that filmmakers from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia claimed that it was the best film festival in the region. This is pretty good considering both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have some form of incentive programs to produce such films from their provincial governments. Imagine how well the Island filmmakers would do if there were incentives in place for them.

In closing, this industry and its leaders here on the Island want to sit down with the government and develop a media investment strategy that is both responsible and sustainable, something that is attractive to all contributors.

This industry has come to us and wants to achieve their goals. I am happy to be seconding this motion today, and I look forward to hearing the opinions of the other members of this House on the matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Speaking to the motion now will be the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion. There is no question that there is a small, dedicated, and passionate film and t.v. community here on Prince Edward Island. With the success of projects like Crumbfest, Eckhart, Ponderings, Bunny Bop, and the many productions of Chef Michael Smith, there is some momentum and more and more people are looking to the industry as a creative outlet, and as way to help explore our cultural identity.

We have been supportive of this industry. Innovation PEI continues to provide support to Island Media Arts Co-op for their Screenwriters Bootcamp. We have traditionally provided support to the local film festival and to various production companies throughout marketing, capital, and professional services assistants. Innovation PEI has also provided labour rebates to the productions of Chef Michael Smith, given the recognized brand and cross-promotion of our food production and harvesting sectors. There is not an assigned resource for film and t.v. within Innovation PEI, but we do consider individual requests.

Recent developments in Nova Scotia have created increased discussion on the film and television industry within PEI's filmmaking community. The Nova Scotia government eliminated the agency responsible for the sector and reduced the tax credit support. Our government will be watching the developments in Nova Scotia as we consider our role with this industry.

That's where we stand right now, but let me give you a little history of our work with this industry over the years.

Over the years we have had a number of programs to support filmmakers on PEI. Following substantial investment in the film and television sector between 1997 and 2004, the province eliminated the Equity Investment Program, PEI Film & Television

Labour Rebate, and film commissioner services in 2004. At the time, government of the day was not seeing the economic benefit they hoped to achieve through these programs, much like what is happening in Nova Scotia now.=

After lobbying by local industry in 2005, the Innovation & Development Tax Credit, which is now known as the Innovation and Development Labour rebate, was made available to the sector. Applications into those programs are still considered. But because the community here is small, and at a competitive disadvantage, it has had difficulties entering into the market.

As well, the jobs that are supported are short-term temporary positions that last during the applicable stage of production. The result is that the province provides funding against the same positions repeatedly as each new production seeks a labour rebate.

However, support may be considered for specific projects that are beneficial to PEI, providing promotion and exposure of Prince Edward Island in a manner complementary to tourism and other sectors of our PEI economy.

In conclusion, while we do not have a specific program for the film and t.v. community on Prince Edward Island, we do consider support of individual projects.

I suggest this motion be sent to committee for further discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise and offer my support to this motion. I come from one of the most beautiful areas of this province, not only the province, I think, in the whole world. Eastern Kings is the most beautiful in my opinion.

The Eastern Kings area offers beautiful ports and the finest beaches anywhere you'll find in Canada. We have some of the most awesome seascapes, rolling farmland,

fishing villages, and spectacular scenery just about anywhere you go in Eastern Kings.

I believe that our province can create many jobs in the film industry for our residents in PEI. But we all know that the moviemakers who receive incentives from the other areas are not going to come here if there are no incentives for them. If we do not provide them with financial support they just won't come.

We have some of the most creative and talented people right here in PEI. We are well-known in our music – everybody knows we live on a small Island – what our music is like here on PEI. I don't think there's a community you can go in that you don't hear a fiddle or a banjo, any type of instrument at all, even in our schools today. I'm really surprised the kids that play instruments. It's nice to see when you go to a school concert now and all the kids are playing instruments. Or if you go to a ceilidh, you'll see the kids and it's great to see the kids with that talent.

We have wonderful writers who have received national and international acclaim. We even have some well-known actors and actresses right here on PEI. Unfortunately, most have to leave our province to make it in the big time. My thought is, why not bring the big time here? We might be a small province, but the minister of tourism said, but we've got the beauty. We've got it all right here. We've got the talent, we've got the most friendly people in the world right here on PEI. We've got the beauty. We've got the seascapes, we've got the landscapes. There was a film industry here before.

I remember up in municipality district there was a film done right in the town of Souris and they used people from the Souris area in that film. Those people got paid for that, but the spin-offs that go with these film industries – they look for local contractors, local caterers, it's just amazing what they look for. It was probably 10 to 12 years ago we had Daniel Day-Lewis. Daniel Day-Lewis did a movie out in Big Pond, put Big Pond on the map, that's on the north side. They were there all summer. They stayed in our hotels, they used our caterers. Actually, I had the fire truck out there for two days.

There are all kinds of economic spin-offs in the film industry. They just need little incentives, a little support, that's all we need.

We already have facilities like Holland College which has established itself in instruction in the performing arts, the Confederation Centre which offers dance, acting, creative arts programs, as well as UPEI. They have programs out there. What do these kids want to do after these programs?

There are numerous Celtic dance and ballet studios that can provide talented performers for the movie industry. That's what they look for when they come here. They look for local talent. They come with their big stars, but there's local talent that they can use and that's exactly what they did. Certainly the College of Piping has gained an international reputation for producing some of the finest Celtic performers in the world, right here in PEI.

Those already involved in the industry, who are trying to make a go of it here, sponsor various workshops and camps aimed at teaching all kinds of skills such as screenwriting, production management, field audio, editing and sound design. The Island Film Factory, and the Island Media Arts Co-op, have done an excellent job in the promotion and development of our industry.

With such a wide array of talent and established programs plus our beautiful scenery, I believe we cannot help but be attractive to growing a film industry in our own province right here on PEI.

I knew of one young lady, who was only eight at the time of the filming of *Emily of Blue Moon*, who was making \$150 a day for acting as a double on the set for one of the actresses. I knew that young lady. She didn't even require any training. Her aunt was employed in the make-up. The larger films require all kinds of services like catering, trucks, electricians, carpenters, plumbers. You name it, they use it. We've seen it.

We go to a movie to watch a movie at the movie set, we don't realize the work that's behind the scenes in a movie. When you have it right in your own district and you see it in action where I got to see – sit right in on

it – there was a lot. There were a lot of people behind the scene. I couldn't believe it.

Actually, in the Daniel Day-Lewis they did in Big Pond, I'm on the screen with the list. You've got the lights, and you've got sound, I'm at the bottom, but I'm on the list. Not everybody waits for the movie and reads all that list, but I did.

Our filmmakers and screenwriters have earned many awards, some internationally. Even when you go to a movie, when you go to that movie and you're watching the movie and you say: Oh my God, there's South Lake church, there's South Lake fire department, or there's Big Pond, it's actually nice. It's rewarding.

However, the ride to the top has been rocky and most have pretty well made it on their own. It's a rocky road to get to the top. Without some incentive, without some help, it is hard to get there.

We can create the industry in our province. We might be a small province but we're a mighty province. We've got everything we need right here for this film industry. We can create jobs. Minister of the workforce over there, he wants to create jobs, that's why he's there. Four years' time when he wants to be able to pound on the desk and say: This is what I did, I got the film industry on PEI, I created the jobs.

Mr. Aylward: I created 30,000 jobs.

Mr. LaVie: He's going to take the credit for it because the jobs will be there and he'll take the credit for it.

Let's take all these wonderful creative people in our province and let's make use of the incredible talent we do have. We do have it here on Prince Edward Island. We do have it and we're missing it.

I would ask for the support for this motion and let's get going and let's get moving forward on the movie industry here on PEI. Let's put PEI right on the map, right on the big screen. When you go to sit down and watch a movie, the first thing you're going to see is PEI on the big screen. That's what we want.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise in support of this motion.

Just last week in the news Martin Sheen was announced as a new star in the Anne of Green Gables made-for-t.v. movie. He's best known as President Josiah "Jed" Bartlet on *West Wing*, so a fairly internationally known guy. I think we're missing out on a huge opportunity. They're filming that mostly in Ontario. I think it would be a great tourism product for PEI, so another reason to support the film industry.

I'd also like to mention two young women who I know personally. Millefiore Clarkes is an award winning filmmaker. She owns One Thousand Flowers Productions and Millefiore actually means one thousand flowers in Italian, I learned that. It says on this press release she lives on a lonely stretch of highway near Belfast. I would say she lived in the butter factory in Eldon but she's got a lovely spot there and is able to stay home with her young son.

She directs films and edits documentaries. She directed a video about Catherine MacLellan that won video of the year at the Music PEI Awards. She has a feature length film produced for the National Film Board on organic agriculture in PEI, and I'm sure a lot of my fellow members have seen that.

She says: I'm mostly a one-woman show but have hired production assistants, camera operators, sound recording technicians, musicians and a poet. It's contract work but it develops experience and creates exposure and provides networking opportunities for a lot of different people.

She states: I also worked as an editor at an animation company before becoming self-employed. With each job I was learning the craft of filmmaking which prepared me to start my own year-round business.

Very smart young lady who lives in our district.

The second young woman I'd like to talk about is Jenna McMillan. She's a director, producer and writer from Charlottetown. She's developed a keen interest in exploring deep-rooted human issues such as family, aging, and personal strength. She graduated from Ryerson University. She has done a number of films including *Off Season* and *In A While*, both shown in the 2010 Island Media Arts Festival. In 2011 her film *Fine Tuning* was chosen as one of five short films produced for Charlottetown under its cultural capital of Canada designation. Just a note on that. Part of that film was done in our barn at our property down the Ponds Road and another part was down in Guernsey Cove at an old home formally owned by Kimball Lelacheur. If anyone knows his property, it's got a beautiful Island-stone fence around it and great shore frontage. It was, I like to say, loosely based on my father-in-law. It was about a fiddle maker who was mourning the loss of his wife. Anyway, it was very interesting and she did do a very good job, and was able to present at the Homburg Theatre.

She has been production coordinator for *Chef Michael's Kitchen* on the Food Network of Canada. She is an active member of the Prince Edward Island film community and sits on the board for the Island Media Arts Co-op and Women in Film and Atlantic Television.

These two talented young women who work in the film industry need our support, as do all other film workers on PEI. I think it's a wonderful new industry that we should be more involved in and I ask that government support this motion on the film industry.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Speaking to the motion will be the hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise this evening and support this very important motion for our film and media industry here on PEI. I

believe it's no secret to anyone here in the House just the amount of talent that we have out here across Prince Edward Island, not only working in live theatre here in Prince Edward Island, but also in the film industry as well.

We often hear the term Hollywood North. It's a shame that unfortunately Prince Edward Island is not able to take advantage of being a part of Hollywood North due to the severe cuts that this government has placed on the industry last year, with cuts upwards to 97%. Now, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism did state quite clearly that there are assistance programs there available, they just have to apply. The unfortunate thing is that they're not applying just against other film media arts companies, they're actually competing against aerospace, financial services, renewable energy, information technology, bioscience, and export focus manufacturing –

Mr. LaVie: They haven't got a chance.

Mr. Aylward: I mean, that's a pretty big pool, and those sectors that I described there are just as important as the film industry, and I think that they're all very deserving, provided they bring a competent business plan forward.

We just have to look back recently at some of the investments that this government has made for other segments. We look at – it was, I believe, two years ago there was a company named MphasiS that was recruited to come here to Prince Edward Island, presumably to create 200 jobs and then eventually 300 jobs. They peaked at somewhere around 12 jobs. I don't know if there's a single individual still working at the Atlantic Technology Centre. But as an incentive for this company to come here from India, they were presented a \$9.3 million wage subsidy – \$9.3 million – and that would be taxpayers' money. Thankfully they didn't get that money because the jobs didn't materialize.

But can you imagine? One job was created, okay. But can you imagine if we had a vibrant film industry here on Prince Edward Island and they were given the same equal footing to work and to grow their businesses here on Prince Edward Island? The hon.

Member from Souris-Elmira talked a little while ago about some of the advantages and some of the economic spin-off. I mean, accommodations, craft or catering services, transportation –

Mr. LaVie: It's all spin-offs, boys.

Mr. Aylward: – tech jobs, whether it be the sound, lighting, props –

Mr. LaVie: All good for PEI.

Mr. Aylward: – carpenters, etc., and of course, not even mentioned, the actors and the extras that would have work here.

In recent years the Confederation Centre of the Arts and Holland College have entered into a great partnership where they're starting to do programs within the arts, whether it's dance or song. Right now, for any individual living on Prince Edward Island that wants to study either audio or lighting, those types of specialties, they pretty much have to go off-Island. We have here in Prince Edward Island some of the top technicians within the industry working and living here on Prince Edward Island. But unfortunately they're seasonal jobs, as are many of the actors that perform in our wonderful musicals here in the venues all across Prince Edward Island.

It's a very nomadic lifestyle. They essentially can work here during the summer, and then they have to go to Toronto or other parts of the world to find work. I'm not saying that investing in the film industry would create the same amount of jobs year-round, but we have to start somewhere, and if we supported the industry I think that we could get there.

I know of one gentleman who works here, actually at the Confederation Centre of the Arts, probably one of the best carpenters that I know that works in the industry, and he is also a very good sound individual as well. Just as an example, part of his resumé – the gentleman toured with Journey for seven years. He toured with The Who on their final worldwide tour. He toured with Pink Floyd, The Wall Tour, worldwide. He toured with Michael Jackson on The Victory Tour. Actually, he turned down that job three times but the third time they actually called him back he couldn't refuse it

because the money was just ridiculous. This individual's name is actually Steve Lelacheur and he is employed with I.A.T.S.E. at the Confederation Centre of the Arts, and he's an amazing individual, the talent.

That's just one example of some of the talent we have working here. I could go on and on and name many individuals.

I think we're missing a real opportunity here. As I said, Holland College and Confederation Centre of the Arts have created this great partnership and they're growing a whole new educational sector. We look at our post-secondary institutions such as UPEI. I think about the education program out there quite frequently and I question sometimes why we're so focused on putting young people through the education program at UPEI when it's quite obvious that teaching jobs just aren't available on PEI, as we've seen over the last number of years, how this government has cut 100 teaching jobs, and it's starting to look more and more every day that there's going to be a lot more teaching positions eliminated here on Prince Edward Island, and I'm sure once we see a budget that will become a fact.

We can't stay doing the same thing over and over again. There's an industry out there, it's a niche industry. There's a need. There's a need for technicians. There's absolutely no reason why Holland College and various other partners here on PEI could not specialize in teaching the various trades that are required for the film and media industry.

I would really encourage all members here in the House tonight to sit back, to really contemplate and think about the potential we have here. We're always talking about we need to grow new sectors, we need to be innovative, and we need to be creative. Here's a perfect opportunity, and we're not talking millions and millions of dollars here. We're not talking about \$9.3 million to try to recruit a company to come here from India. That just didn't work. We have people here working in the industry that can do more for Islanders, that can employ more Islanders.

I would implore all members here tonight to support this motion and let's get on with it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Speaking to the motion next will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to rise in support of this motion. I realize the motion is fairly broad in support for the film industry, but I'm a particular fan of tax credits because it rewards those who are successful, especially tax credits that can be applied to people who aren't incorporated, a sole proprietor or partnerships.

I know there are people on the Island who are struggling in this area and really want to pursue their craft, and I wanted to recognize, in particular, two filmmakers from District 18 Rustico-Emerald: filmmaker Fox Henderson and his partner Kim Johnston.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I believe the film and digital media world is an incredibly creative wonderful place that could contribute to Prince Edward Island in many ways, both economically and culturally. I think we have a particular opportunity at the moment because Nova Scotia, as you probably know, rescinded its film tax credit in April of this year.

A lot of people in the vicinity here with talent, with experience in the film and digital media trades who are right next door, so I think the time is right for this. I think when we bring creative people to our Island it widens and it deepens our Island community. When you have artists they tend to work collaboratively. They tend to enhance and support and complement each other. It's an odd business in that respect, where musicians and dancers and visual

artists don't behave as if they're competing with each other, they actually enhance each other. I think not only does it support our community economically, but I think it can widen, again, and deepen our culture here on Prince Edward Island.

In this case, small is not a disadvantage. I heard the minister mention that we're small and at a competitive disadvantage. When it comes to arts and culture, that's not true. In some aspects of the economy being small is a disadvantage. But if you look at some of the most successful communities with arts and culture they're small places. Stratford, Niagara on the Lake – closer to home, Fogo. There are places that are incredibly tiny, and sometimes very remote, that do terribly well because they focus on their arts and culture. I think we have a huge opportunity here on Prince Edward Island to do this.

I would encourage the government to support this motion. I certainly am. I think we should go further. I think we should offer micro-loans to small artists, to individual artists here in our artistic communities here, because they don't need a lot of money to flourish. Artists will give you an amazing payback with a small amount.

I stand here in support of this motion and encourage the House to do so as well.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Is there anybody else?

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. R. Brown: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome Eddie Rice to the district, a great city councillor.

It's a privilege to share the geographical district together. Eddie's the councillor for the area and I'm the MLA for the area, and I think we work quite well together and he knows where his water comes from.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, we indeed believe this is an important resolution and this is an important industry to help

Islanders find work, especially in the cultural community, and for Holland College and UPEI, and especially the Confederation Centre.

I represent District 12 which is downtown Charlottetown, which is a big cultural centre of Prince Edward Island. A lot of artisans, a lot of education, is done in this area in terms of the cultural area.

We are in competition. This is a tough, competitive market and I believe that we have to take our time at this resolution and see what we can do about it in terms of the importance of it. Prince Edward Island has limited resources and we have to apply those resources the best we can in order to create the maximum amount of jobs we can and the maximum amount of prosperity we can for Prince Edward Island.

If I may propose that we defer this motion – or adjourn debate on this motion until we get a notice of motion referring it to a committee for a debate and to see what the industry has to say and see what the committee has done – due diligence across the country and see what we can do. It's an important industry, not only important for the people that are employed in the industry, not only important for the companies that are in the industry, but it's also important for tourism.

I agree that if you can get your city or your province on a television network, exposure across the world, it's very important. We've done it with various things in the past. I remember *Emily of New Moon*. The MacIsaacs. Martha MacIsaac was from my district and she was a main actor in that and some of our own MLAs there, I understand, were involved in that production.

If I could adjourn the debate until we introduce a motion to refer this to an appropriate committee when the Special Committee on Committees have determined what committees there are going to be. I'd move that motion, seconded by the Minister of Finance.

Speaker: Hon. minister, just for clarification. You are adjourning debate –

Mr. R. Brown: Adjourning debate.

Speaker: – on the motion?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, I'm just giving an explanation why I'm adjourning it, so we can put a notice of motion forward to referring it to a committee when the Special Committee on Committees meet to form the committees that the committee that this shall go to.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

At this time opposition would like to go back to Motion No. 1.

Speaker: Motion No. 1.

We'll continue with the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I rise to speak to this motion on Out-of-province health care expenditures, Motion No. 1.

Just to sort of recap some of the comments that I did make last week when I did open up to speak on the motion.

It's a small province, Prince Edward Island, with a population of 145,000 people. Has to rely fairly heavily on a level of health care services that are currently provided in the Province of Prince Edward Island, whether it be at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the IWK or the Cardiac Centre of Excellence in Saint John, New Brunswick, to mention a few.

As a result of our small population we just don't have the volume to provide all specialty services because of the simple volumes and the economy of scale, so we do have to rely on the expertise of specialty areas outside the province. As a result of that, we have relationships, we have MOUs and agreements with the province, particularly the Province of Nova Scotia and

a smaller agreement with the Province of New Brunswick. But we do have other arrangements and agreements under *Canada Health Act* with other provinces throughout Canada.

Currently, our out-of-province budget is approximately \$50 million, and that's for any service that's provided to an Islander which cannot be provided here in our province.

As a small province we recognize that relationships in access to quality health care are critical. I've been the health care minister in the province for the majority of my time over the last eight years and have taken great pride in that responsibility, and am looking forward to my new role as Minister of Health and Wellness and Minister of Family and Human Resources, to continue to do positive work and continue to make inroads in improving access for services for Islanders.

Over the last number of years I've had the opportunity to see health care, not only from provincial ends, from regional ends, and also on the national stage when we worked very closely with the innovation health working group. Through that we realized that one of our challenges, and one of the province's biggest challenges, is the sustaining of our health care systems and looking at ways that we can continue to provide good quality access, how we continue to evolve health care services.

I had the opportunity over the last two days to attend the National Health Care Leadership Conference which had over 800 of Canada's top health care leaders meeting and speaking on motions in respect to a range of number of services. Today, in particular, I had an opportunity to go down and to hear first-hand a number of the motions. One motion was on seniors' care, one motion was on improvements in mental health, another one was on electronic health, the fourth one was on national pharmacare and pharmaceuticals. Obviously, the fifth one was another one on expanding scope.

We do look at where we've been over the last eight years. All of these areas have seen increased spending and improved access to services. Now, that's not to say that we

don't have more work to be done. We're committed to that.

In the Province of Prince Edward Island we often hear the number of 9,000 Islanders travelling out-of-province. I do want to clarify that 9,000 does not mean there's 9,000 Islanders on a day-to-day basis over the course of 365 days travelling outside of the province for the service.

Approximately 40% of Islanders are living outside the province, whether it's a student that's attending Dalhousie University or Acadia University requiring access. They use their PEI medical card and that bill is billed back. If you're somebody who's working temporary work in Alberta, you still carry a PEI medical card, and the province picks up those bills when services are required under the utilization of those health cards.

We as a province recognize that a range of services are provided, whether they be specialty services like neonatal care. As I mentioned, cardiac specialty services in Saint John, neurosurgery, medical care for students living out of province, people vacationing or working off Island on a short-term basis.

Currently, today we've seen, since 2007, the province's health care budget growing from 360 million to today, which will potentially see a budget, which is presented here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, which will exceed over \$600 million in over seven years. We've seen substantial increase in physician salaries, probably in around a rate of growth of about 68% to get us competitive with other jurisdictions across Canada. We recognize that our compensation is competitive. We continue to work at attaining and attracting quality physicians.

As the minister, I've seen a number of Auditor General's reviews and reports and have welcomed them. We've seen some great result from the work and the recommendations that are made from the Auditor General as we continue to find good value and efficiencies in our provincial health care system.

The AG reviewed whether Health PEI monitors these expenditures and they

receive prior approval and she found that, for the most part, we are. The Auditor General made four specific recommendations.

One, monitoring. Her first recommendation was for Health PEI to actively seek opportunities for cost savings. In fact, we do a lot of work in this important area. For example, we monitor, through monthly reports, quarterly forecasts and annual budgeting, to identify unexpected changes and areas that require further analysis.

Health PEI recently established a senior claims auditor position to increase auditing of expenditures of physician services provided on and off the Island. I'm pleased to advise that this position has just been filled by Collette Gallant who came from the AG's office and was the very employee who did the primary work on this value for money audit.

Number two, personal health numbers. The Auditor General recommended that we amend the PEI health card renewal form. She suggested the form should include the criteria for coverage, confirmation by the applicant that they meet the criteria, and that the public be kept aware of the need to notify Health PEI of absences and changes in residency. As a result, Health PEI is reviewing its renewal process and will be increasing public awareness of the need to keep their health card information accurate and current and up to date.

Three, approval of services. She also recommended we monitor physician referrals for out-of-province services and take action to ensure policies are clear and followed. I am pleased to advise that out-of-province policies have been reviewed and are now in the final stage of validation and authorization. Policies are scheduled for review every three years at a minimum. Health PEI is now working with physicians to ensure that they have information to access approval for referrals and the process.

In fact, a series of education sessions are now being put on for physicians and key members of their office staff on when they need to refer out of province as well as the processes they must follow. I'm pleased to say the first session was held the week before last in Charlottetown with 30

physicians and staff in attendance. Health PEI is also developing a website to make the information easily available to physicians.

Payment administration. Finally, she recommended we identify services that warrant formal documentations of terms and conditions and formalize them, that we establish internal control procedures to ensure claims meet interprovincial billing agreements, and that we work to obtain out-of-province billing information electronically. As a result, we are working toward the formalization and agreements for some services, such as vascular services, to ensure Islanders have good access to these services.

Health PEI is part of an interprovincial working group to increase electronic data exchange. As a small province, we're leading the country in electronic health information. As part of this we are now working with ITSS to explore how we can exchange data more efficiently through electronic data exchange with other jurisdictions, for example, New Brunswick.

It is important to acknowledge that the AG found rates were consistent with interprovincial agreements, claimed data was being accurately entered, and claims were properly authorized before payment.

We are concerned about the rising costs of health care and the 20% increase in out-of-province costs that the AG noted. Over the last 10 years we've seen governments consistently spending, not only in this province but in this country, an average of over 5% annually which is just not sustainable to continue to operate our health care system.

As government we are working very closely with Health PEI to find efficiencies, to find good value for every dollar we spend on health care to make sure that we get good value and good quality for all Islanders who are requiring any service, whether it's here in a community or in main referral hospitals, or out of province.

A large part of this is the increased cost in regional billing for many services offered in Nova Scotia. These costs are determined by their interprovincial regional billing advisory committee which sets rates in all

provinces. Unfortunately, this is something that is out of our control. The majority of cost increases from April 2011 to March 2014 are related to changes in fees in other jurisdictions for physicians and changes in daily hospital rates that obviously we are impacted by.

For example, at the QEII in April 2011 the daily ward rate was \$1,247. In April 2014 it was \$1,404, a 12% increase. Also in that period, Nova Scotia billed us for 1.7 million in academic funding premium, something we had never billed for before.

Let me assure the House that the auditor's recommendations are something we take very seriously. As Islanders, we are very fortunate to be able to access high quality regional services and we are ensuring that they are delivered as efficiently as possible and as timely as possible. We will continue to work with our neighbouring provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, in our Speech From the Throne.

Our Premier has stated numerous times the need for a more focused and enhanced collaboration between our neighbours New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, more elaborate partnerships, and more better utilization of whether it be in bulk purchasing, procurement.

We're starting to have conversation and have started conversations around the increases on generic fill rates to improve access for Islanders and to continue to look at ways that we really invest back into health care services to continue to meet the demands and the needs that we're facing here, not only in the province but in the region.

As Islanders, we are very fortunate to be able to access high quality regional services. We will be providing regular updates to the AG's office as our work in this area progresses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Is there anybody else who would like to speak?

Mr. Currie: I'd like to make an amendment.

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Currie: Yeah. Okay.

Just an amendment I'd like to make – and I will get – to read the amendment. I'll get these passed out. Out-of-province services health care expenditures.

The first amendment:

Whereas Prince Edward Island – I'd like to include: as a small jurisdiction, has out-of-province partnerships to deliver quality health care.

Delete: residents are suffering from a shortage of specialists and family physicians in a number of critical areas.

And whereas in 2014 there were 9,000 out-of-province billings.

Delete: over 9,000 patients travelled off-Island.

And change the number from 48 to 46 million.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Now, do you have a seconder, hon. minister?

Mr. Currie: The member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Speaker: Okay. Seconded – yeah, the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: Can we speak to it?

Ms. Biggar: He can speak to the amendment.

Speaker: Yes, you can speak to the amendment.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition speaking to the amendment.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I always love to speak to amendments because, well, obviously government doesn't like to be criticized, and government under this Premier in particular doesn't like to be criticized. I'm blaming the Premier more than anything because he's soft-skinned. You've been through the war and he doesn't even answer questions in Question Period because he's obviously scared to answer them.

Let me tell you, when it comes to this motion, it is an important motion. It's important that we have this discussion because a lot of people are going off the Island to receive their health care these days. I think that a lot of it is because we don't have the proper specialists here on Prince Edward Island. I know there's been a recruitment strategy and I've heard it every year since I've been elected here that there's a recruitment strategy and we're trying to get physicians and we have residency programs and we're going to visit schools and stuff, but the fact is that we still have this shortage and people are suffering because of the shortage.

Now, it's fantastic that we're a small province that's close to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and that we can travel over when it comes to being able to see a specialist and we're – from Charlottetown, you're probably, what?, three hours from Halifax and much closer to Moncton – I don't know how close we are to Moncton, but not very far nonetheless.

The travelling off-Island – and it's great for you folks across the way there that are well-heeled, but there are lots of people across Prince Edward Island who don't have the money and the availability or perhaps even a vehicle to travel away.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Are you the Speaker? Oh no, wait, you aren't. I remember the vote, I remember how it shook down, you aren't the Speaker.

It is a very expensive venture for people to travel to Halifax. Like I say, it's great for you folks over there that are well-heeled, but

there are lots of people right across Prince Edward Island who struggle just to pay their basic bills every day and don't necessarily have a vehicle that they would travel as far as Halifax in, right?

That's just the reality. When you hear some of the members over on this side talk about some of the homes that they visited during the election and how some people are really living the realities of life of Prince Edward Island, there's a good number of people who are struggling to provide the daily needs to their family; food, shelter, electricity, heat. Those are things that cost a lot of money. When you look at the winter that we just went through, a lot of people spent a lot more money on heat. I know I had a lot of calls coming down – the stretch of the winter there when it was ending people that were out of oil, out of wood, out of help, out of money.

That's why it's important that we have this discussion because it is a burden to Islanders who don't have the affordability to just jump in a car and go to Halifax or Moncton or Saint John, wherever it is that they need to go.

I understand that government works with the other jurisdictions and I understand that they have interprovincial billing issues, and I understand that they need to rectify that and work it out. That's all well and good, but what this motion is looking for is very simple. We just want to try to provide as much help as we can with people. By and large that's what we're looking for, right? We're trying to make sure that the people of Prince Edward Island get the health care that they deserve. There are a lot of barriers in the way and the barriers are largely created by inaction in this government.

I know that we talked a lot about how the new government and the new Premier were going to bring a new way, but like I've said several times since we've been sitting this summer, there's really nothing new, we've seen nothing new. This Premier's the same as the last premier. He's not open, he's not transparent, he's not accountable, he doesn't care about Islanders, and it's great for him because he's got lots of money.

The people we're talking about that are the most affected by these types of services are

people who don't have the affordability that he has. They weren't born into money, they don't have the opportunity to reach into their trust fund to pay for a trip to Halifax. We need to be concerned about these people.

I know there are people that have had to go see specialists in Halifax who had to put it off because they didn't have the money to travel there. That's the reality. I know several of you members would have gotten similar calls from people within your district who needed to see a cancer specialist in Halifax and couldn't go because they didn't have the money to go there.

Mr. MacKay: They went on a bus.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, and didn't even have the money to go on a bus. There are some of them who just didn't – who already can't pay their bills and they're afflicted by an illness that needs to see a specialist. Granted, I understand we're a small jurisdiction and can't have a specialist for absolutely everything, I do understand that, but in those cases there really needs to be a lot more help for the people to get there.

You seem to be able to income test everything and there seems to be lots of money for the things that you want to put money towards. Last summer there was \$28 million spent on partying. The reality is that you need to make better choices with your money.

I know the health budget is very large and it's very cumbersome, there's a lot going on, but I also know that there are other portfolios here that are spending money on things that just make your head spin. Government needs better priorities. We haven't had good priorities in a long time, since at least 2007, and I think it's time that government gives their head a shake.

This is was such a simple motion and the way it was changed, it's a clear indicator that this government doesn't like any criticism at all. Criticism doesn't always need to be taken negatively. It was a very constructive motion, there was no – it was very quiet, everybody spoke. To everybody that spoke to the motion, it was quiet and they made their points on it. This wasn't a motion that was intended to get anyone

upset over there. The skin over there seems to be getting thinner every day. I'm not sure how you expect to govern for four years under the economic conditions that we have with skin that's that thin. I mean it. Buckle up, because this is your reality, this is what you've chosen to do, and you're here to be leaders and make decisions. Equally, we're here on this side to hold you to account for the decisions that you make and make sure that the best interests of the public are being heard.

That's all we're doing and that's why we bring motions forward and that's why we bring them forward in this manner.

With that, it's disappointing. It's a very simple motion. I would have expected a vote where everyone in this House just stood up and voted for it because it was a good motion.

I know that I talked during my response to the Speech From the Throne about the committee works and how the committees could actually work in this House if the government over there would grow a thicker skin and let them do their job.

We have new committees and at some point they'll be announced, whatever the committee makeups are going to be, and there's an opportunity to send stuff to committees, get the committees to do the work of government, and do the work that the committees are meant to do where we can work together, we can bring in experts, we can have the talk. We could have the minister in if that's necessary, we can have – whatever the topic is. In this case it's out-of-province health care expenditures. We can bring in the proper experts, hear what they have to say and report back to the Legislature. That's exactly the way committees were meant to work.

That's all we were really looking to have done, and it ties into the stuff that's been said in many responses to the Speech From the Throne so far. If we truly want to work together, if you truly meant what you said during the election, if you truly want a different government, lead it. Don't ask us to lead it from over here. Lead it. If you want to lead it, lead it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) facts.

Leader of the Opposition: You know nothing of facts. You live in a fantasy world where you hid in the hallways of the university your entire life. You're in reality now and now you've got to face it and this is it. This is your reality –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: – and you're not the Speaker either. This is your reality and you chose it, and I'm going to stand across from you and you're going to recognize it every day.

With that -

An Hon. Member: Enjoy it.

Leader of the Opposition: I do enjoy it, very much. More than you can imagine.

With that, again, I'm disappointed that the minister decided to make an amendment, but if you want to work together and you want to work with the opposition parties and you want to get the most out of committees, you want to deliver transparency and accountability to Islanders, it starts here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next, speaking to the amendment, will be the hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

Again, as the hon. member sitting next to me stated, it was a pretty simple motion going forward. We're actually trying to help the government. We're trying to help the minister of health. The minister of health continually –

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: – talks about his budget. He's got an envelope that's only so large, and the Auditor General has done a great job of identifying areas that monies can be saved.

Our motion essentially is saying that yes, we agree with the Auditor General and, minister, I'm extremely happy to hear that

you've already addressed some of these issues and are moving forward with recommendations. Furthermore to that, our motion essentially states that we want to help you. We want to bring this to committee. We want to do some of the legwork for you and for your department to identify what some of the issues are, where potential cost savings are within health care.

You talk about a budget of \$600 million and possibly it's going to be higher when your government finally brings down a budget, but again, you want to talk about facts and figures and correcting information in your amendment to the original amendment. You go on to talk about 40% of the out-of-province billed medical procedures are for, I believe you said, students and people working in Alberta. The Auditor General states that 90% of the roughly \$46 million to \$48 million that she's identified is spent or billed in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

I can't fathom how you would get 40%, would be students going to school in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick where the equation comes in as well for those workers out west. Again, your 40%, where you would come up with that number is questionable to me because the Auditor General identified in her report that the tracking system that's in place, or that was in place 2013-2014, it wasn't measurable. They couldn't identify it. They were getting bills from out-of-province that there was no backup for. They had to go back quite often and request additional information. Basically what she states, again, is approximately 90% of out-of-province health care expenditures were for health care services received in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

Again, there's a rather complicated format relating to eligibility criteria. As I said earlier, I'm not going to go into great explanation on that, but the Auditor General's report told us that the administration of out-of-province health services is carried out by Medical Affairs and Diagnostic Imaging Division of Health PEI, while the processing of payments for these services is carried out by Medicare offices of Health PEI's Financial Services and Pharmacare Division. Essentially what she told us is these divisions are not talking.

We're being billed and we need to identify whether or not it's correct.

It goes right back to what happened with the department of tourism back in 2010 and 2011 where she identified \$8.4 million. By allowing this motion to go through without the amendment and to do what the true nature of this is, is for one of the legislative committees to actually do some of this work and assist the minister and bring back more information after we've had presentations and time to consult on this. There would be positive –

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: – there would be a positive outcome on this.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Sherry: I would ask if the hon. member would clarify that he is speaking to the amendment and not to the original motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Carry on, hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly speaking to the amendment and what I'm talking about on the amendment –

Leader of the Opposition: She's not the Speaker. You don't have to clarify anything to her.

Mr. Aylward: – and what I'm referring to when I'm speaking to the amendment –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) vote for yourself.

Mr. Aylward: – is that there was absolutely no reason to amend the original motion because it was factual, it was correct, and all we're trying to do is work with government to make things better for all Islanders. To

me I believe that's why we were all elected, was to work together and do things right and represent all Islanders.

I quite often say I'm the MLA for Stratford-Kinlock. I'm also the health critic, and when I say that I'm the health critic I feel that I represent every Islander on Prince Edward Island, all 146,000 Islanders. I take that job extremely serious. I've worked on many files with the minister. We've cooperated on many things. We have made some improvements, but there are still lots of things that we can do working together moving forward.

I implore all MLAs in this Legislative Assembly to really think about what you're going to be voting on here this evening, to allow the amendment to fail and to go back to the original motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

Is there anybody else who would like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Just on a bit of clarification. We set out to support the motion. The amendment deals strictly with the preamble on the first two whereases. We're in full agreement with the resolution at the bottom. We just wanted to clarify some facts. There was some talk about our skin so thin I think the thin skin is on the other side for sure because we were not attacking the motion at all. It's simply a matter of the health minister –

Mr. Currie: Just helping out.

Mr. McIsaac: – who knows the facts to clarify the preamble in the resolution to get the facts straight so that we all could have a debate –

Leader of the Opposition: We know who is thin skinned.

Mr. McIsaac: – on the original motion and pass that.

With that, I agree, and will be supporting the amendment to the motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

Is there anybody else who wants to speak to the amendment?

If not, are we ready for the vote?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: Question?

All those voting in favour of the amendment, say “yea.”

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Contrary, “nay.”

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Speaker: The amendment is carried.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: How loud do you want me to say it?

Ms. Casey: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Now we will go back to the original motion as amended.

Mr. Aylward: If we say it too loud you’re just going to accuse us of bullying you.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) motion, you have a motion on the floor.

Ms. Casey: Question.

Speaker: Does anybody else want to speak to the original motion?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: As amended. Technicalities.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I would like to rise in support of the motion.

I just wanted to add one thing. There’s this money that’s being spent, and so much on off-Island health care including travel off-Island, which I think was sort of struck from the motion, but I think that’s a key point. Because one of the things, at least when I was going around District 18 Rustico-Emerald, there are many people who lamented not so much that they had to travel off-Island but the expense of doing so. Especially they thought if things like the bridge fair could be covered it would be really good and in their best interest and would help them financially.

The ironic thing is that the Auditor General is saying it looks like we’re spending more money than we should be and we’re not even paying the bridge fair, for example, for these individuals that want to take their own cars. They’re forced to – and it’s based on their means, I understand they are allowed to take the shuttle bus. I wanted to point out that irony and I do want to speak in support of the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Now speaking to the motion as amended is the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to continue on, as the MLA from Rustico-Emerald stated, going door-to-door and hearing some of the struggles.

One thing – I’m just throwing it out there – in a lot of health care systems in Canada and in through the States they have continuous improvement plans. Something like this would keep track and be monitored from the out-of-province health care. We do have the staff on PEI that could easily perform these continuous improvement plans, and it would be astounding how much money would be saved in the health care industry. I haven’t seen it in health care itself, but I have seen it in the business world, and we’re talking

millions of dollars in savings. It might be something that we might want to look at that would help the off-Island health care be monitored a little better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: If there is nobody else speaking to the motion as amended, I will go back to the mover.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like I had said about this motion, it is a very important topic that needs to be dealt with here on Prince Edward Island. A couple of the members talked about going door-to-door and hearing it from people. Not only have I heard it door-to-door, but over the course of the last four years, be it on the political scene, I've had countless calls from all over Prince Edward Island and I've heard lots of sad stories from people right across Prince Edward Island.

I do think it's important that government really has a serious look at how to best handle this. I'm not sure if this is the new reality, I'm not sure if this is going to be the norm from now on, and it appears as though it is. If that's the case, there has to be a way to help the most vulnerable sector of Prince Edward Island to make sure that they are taken care of, that they're actually able to get the equal access to health care.

That becomes a very important topic when you start looking and saying: Do we have a two-tier health care system? In principle, we don't. But when you can't afford to go see your specialist then we kind of do. Because only the people who have the money to go see the cancer specialists in Halifax, the type that don't exist here – like for if you had eye cancer or whatever – if only the people who can afford to go to see that specialist can go, then we actually do have a two-tiered system. We need to make sure that we're doing something for the people who are under the threshold that they can afford to go.

Things have gotten very expensive here on Prince Edward Island largely due to the fact that this government has raised every fee on Prince Edward Island, largely due to the fact that this government has raised taxes here on Prince Edward Island, largely due to the fact that this government brought in HST on Prince Edward Island. Costs have spiraled out of control here on Prince Edward Island.

I said this before and I'm going to say it again. It's a case of I'm not sure what makes you over there think that you're better suited to decide how somebody's money can be spent versus allowing them to decide for themselves. I think there's lots of decisions that Islanders have to make these days that limit them from being able to do certain things because they don't have the money because you guys have taken it from them. When it comes to having to decide a health care need, when it comes to having to decide whether or not I'm going to go see that doctor, whether or not I'm going to go see that specialist, whether or not I'm going to travel somewhere to see them, then it becomes a very serious thing.

I know when the government talked about taking the dialysis out of Souris – and the Member from Souris-Elmira was quite vocal about keeping that from happening. Many members from the community protested it, they fought hard against the government to keep that from happening. I talked to a lot of people who couldn't afford to come to Charlottetown every day for dialysis, basically. That was the story, the cost. That's coming from Souris every day, that the gas and the extra expenses that they would incur coming to –

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, 70-minute drive each way, that it was simply too much for them to handle. We need to be very cognizant of that and the government needs to – and the minister needs to be whenever decisions are being made with how we deal with specialists and how we get people to specialists.

I'm not really asking for a whole lot in this motion because all it's really asking for is to send it to committee and allow them to do the work unhindered by government, without being interfered with by

government, without getting orders from government as to how the committee members need to operate and how they need to block the work of the committee. Let the committee do the work, let the committee report back to its findings to the Assembly, to the minister. I'm sure that the minister, if he wants to present to a committee that had a hearing like that, he'd be more than welcome to come and bring staff with him and give an explanation on how it works from their end to help best to come up with a solution, or help best tackle this issue for all Islanders.

We have an aging demographic. It's been something that's been talked about over and over again in this Assembly and I heard it for years. While this government hasn't really done anything to engage youth to help control our population from aging the rate it is, we're losing so many young people to other jurisdictions and this government really hasn't done anything to attract anybody to come back here. While that's happening we need to be aware that more and more people are going on fixed incomes. As they retire there will be more fixed incomes. More people who need to go see specialists are going to be on a tighter budget to make that happen.

This is something that could quite, over the next 10 or 15 years, be a complete epidemic in the province when we have seniors on fixed incomes needing to see specialists that are in other provinces in Atlantic Canada. Then it's going to be a very costly venture. It's going to be more people deciding: Will I bother, will I go? Somebody mentioned it here today about there's people out there that have several ailments and they're deciding what medications they'll buy, to which one they'll treat and not treat some of them. I'm sure every one of you have gotten a call similar to that by people in your area who are concerned for their own health but don't have the affordability to treat everything that they have. That's what we're up against as a province.

When it comes to the out-of-province travel I realize that it's an expenditure and I realize that it's an additional cost to government, but I think that if this government was to allow it to go to committee and the committee actually do the work that the committee is supposed to do. Then maybe

we'll come up with some great recommendations to bring back to the Legislature, and hopefully something that the minister of health works from and helps him. A tool to help him, not to criticize him, because committees are there to help. Committees are there to help government with their business and take some of the workload off the ministers, not to add a workload on, to help. It's to help plan, it's to help come up with ideas and recommendations on how best to tackle the problem.

If the committee process was allowed to work, all ends of it, I think it's something that the minister would find could be very helpful. Any minister here on any committee could find very helpful.

With that, I still support the motion because the therefore be it resolved is the most important part of this. I think government needs to get really serious when it comes to the work of committees and how they operate. If this government really wants to show that it's different and separate itself from past governments and you really want to work together, that's where you could work together. You have members from all parties represented in this Assembly sitting on those committees. They will work together and they will bring back, and they will get the best ideas for Islanders.

I think that government; if it truly wants to be different, it needs to allow the committees to do that work for this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Is there anyone else who wants to speak to the motion as amended?

If not, we'll go back to the mover to close debate.

Oh, I'm sorry.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I've sat here listening intently. A very good discussion. I'm glad at the way this is being resolved.

But I think one way we could look at this is almost like a trade deficit for our government here. There's a lot of money that's leaking out of our province and going out. Of course, we don't offer reciprocal services here for people to come and return that. But does it have to be that way?

I mentioned in my response to the throne speech today that I think we have a tremendous opportunity here to set up a state-of-the-art comprehensive mental health care facility here on Prince Edward Island that would not only serve the needs of Islanders, but could attract people from other provinces where these facilities don't exist.

I think there's a tremendous opportunity here for a government with foresight and creative thinking to actually reverse this trade deficit somewhat and bring some money back into the province for some health care services that could be provided here.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Anybody else want to speak to the motion as amended?

If not, then I'll go back to the hon. Opposition House Leader to close debate on the motion.

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

I'll be brief.

I do feel that we had some good discussion here this evening. The intent, again, of the motion and as it turns out now, the amended motion as well, is to ensure that the committees are taxed with doing some work, taxed with working together for all Islanders, to find some answers, to work cooperatively together.

It's going to be just a few days that we actually have an announcement on our committee makeup and potentially who the

members are that will be sitting on those various committees.

I have to be honest with you. Over the last number of years since I was elected in 2011 there have been only a few occasions where I thought that we did some really good work cooperatively working together on committees, whether it was on the mental health and addictions or whether it was on the environment issue, I think that the committees did some excellent work there. I commend all hon. members that are here that actually sat on those committees. I'd like to hope that we can move forward with more of that cooperation.

But at the same time, I've also experienced situations, particularly around public accounts most recently, where we had a work schedule that we were trying to put together. The Premier had fully supported the idea of Public Accounts Committee looking at a particular issue. I thought: Great, here we go. Got some cooperation, we're going to work together.

We got to committee only to find out that all the government members that attended voted against that. They didn't want to work. They didn't want to do anything cooperatively. They just wanted to shut it down.

So, moving forward, I really implore all members of the committees that will be named very shortly to work together because you need to remember why you were elected. You need to understand and recall and remember why we're here. We're here to work. We're here to work for all Islanders. We are going to have disagreements, we are going to have debate, but at the end of the day, we need to ensure that we're moving forward, that we're moving the agenda of all Islanders forward here on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I'll close debate.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those voting against the motion as amended, say “nay.”

All those voting in favour of the motion as amended say “yea.”

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Motion is carried unanimously.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time, opposition would like to call Motion 27.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 27.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the following motion:

WHEREAS PEI Ground Search and Rescue plays a critical role in support of police services and emergency services in assisting to find individuals who may be lost or missing in our province;

AND WHEREAS this organization is made up of volunteers from across the province who are dedicated to public service and who volunteer their time for specialized training in search and rescue techniques;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly commend and recognize the dedication of this volunteer organization and encourage its growth and development in our province.

Speaker: I'll now call upon the Opposition House Leader to open debate on the motion.

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

Very proud to stand here tonight and move this motion.

During the recent provincial election, while I was campaigning in Stratford going door to door, I came across one particular street in Stratford that actually had – I believe it was a short street, not a lot of houses. But there were actually three very dedicated volunteers that are part of our PEI Ground Search and Rescue Association here on PEI. Essentially the discussions that I had with these individuals, and subsequent discussions, are why I've asked to put this motion forward and to move it.

I'm very pleased to rise in the House this evening to move this motion in recognition of the great work that the PEI Search and Rescue Association has been doing within the Province of PEI.

The volunteers who serve with this organization contribute greatly to the safety and security of Island citizens, and for that they deserve to be recognized.

I would also like to note that SARscene 2015 is being co-hosted in Charlottetown this year from October 22-26, 2015, at the Rodd Charlottetown Hotel and the Confederation Centre of the Arts.

I do remember back in my day of working in the hotel business that SARscene actually was here once before. There was quite a bit of activity out over the Charlottetown waterfront as the various search and ground rescue organizations from across Canada participated to work together, did training exercises with helicopters, and mock rescue exercises. It's amazing to watch these volunteers and just see the kind of work that they do. In some cases they're putting themselves in harm to make sure that rescues are achievable.

According to the SARscene website, the event will include preconference meetings and training, a field training day, trade show and conference sessions. SARscene is the largest annual gathering of the Canadian SAR community. SARscene brings together SAR responders, public educators, policymakers, and stakeholders from across Canada to share know-how, improve SAR skills and abilities, and encourage continued cooperation and inter-operational across all levels of SAR in Canada.

Hosted by regional search and rescue organizations with the support of the National Search and Rescue Secretariat, each SARscene conference offers delegates a unique opportunity to discover and learn the challenges and opportunities faced by SAR across Canada. In addition to the conference, SARscene is also an opportunity for many national SAR organizations to host their annual meetings for SAR responders to participate in training courses.

Finally, SARscene is an opportunity to celebrate at the annual Natural Search and Rescue Program Awards of Excellence banquet honouring members of the SAR community who have demonstrated excellence in education, training, innovation, leadership and outstanding service.

I want to extend a big welcome to those who will be coming to this event and wish all participants a successful conference.

The PEI Search and Rescue Association supports many programs that help to educate people about the importance of staying safe when they are outside.

The Adventure Smart program is one such program that has been supported by the search and rescue association. Adventure Smart is a national program dedicated to encouraging Canadians and visitors to Canada to get informed and go outdoors.

The Adventure Smart program offers a variety of teaching lessons which include Survive Outside, Land Safety, Snow Safety, Water Safety and Trip Safety. Each of these programs is designed to teach different age groups about how to stay safe when they are outdoors enjoying their favourite activities.

The Survive Outside program encourages people to get outside and play and be active, but also to be informed and prepared before setting out. This is to ensure everyone's safety when they are enjoying what the world has to offer. This program is important for the Search and Rescue Association as it can help to reduce unfortunate accidents that occur to outdoor enthusiasts who may be hiking or boating in our province. By offering programs like Survive Outside, the Search and Rescue Association is working pro-actively to avoid

incidents where there could be tragic outcomes.

I am sure that each and every one of us has a story to relate about a friend or family member who may have gotten lost in the woods while picking berries or fishing, for example. I recall a news article of a young couple who got stranded on one of our Islands during some very bad weather. The Survive Outside program outlines three easy steps to stay safe when outdoors. The first is to take the essentials. When participating in the program, everyone is given a list of essentials that they should take with them any time they are going on an outdoor adventure. The 10 essentials include items such as a flashlight, a fire-making kit, signaling devices, extra food and water, extra clothing, navigational and communication devices, first aid kits, emergency blankets and a shelter, a pocket knife, and sun protection. In some situations any one of these items could be the difference between life and death for those who are adventuring outdoors. Being prepared is arguably the most important step a person can take in ensuring their outdoor safety.

The second step to stay safe is trip planning. It is always important to plan each detail of a trip before you set out. I think sometimes on Prince Edward Island we take our safety for granted. I do recall back a number of years ago I had two friends in particular that, we were all avid sailors, and they had a catamaran. It was referred to as a Hobie 18. These two brothers took it upon themselves one Labour Day weekend that they were going to sail around the Island. They were to land their craft each evening, find a phone, before obviously we all had cell phones, and report to their mother.

This one particular evening we had some inclement weather that came in extremely quickly. That can happen here on Prince Edward Island. There was no word from these young gentlemen all evening. Obviously their mother became quite frightened of what the consequences may have been. The ground search and rescue people were called out as well, as many other first responders. They took to the water. They put themselves at risk to go out and to locate these two individuals. They were not to be found. The next morning we

all thought the worst possibly could have happened when suddenly around 9:30 a.m. there was finally a phone call to come. Unfortunately they hit some heavy seas. Their mast broke, they were able to get their craft to shore, but they were miles and miles away from any communication or anyone that they would know. They were up well off Tignish coming around the north point there. I mean, they were out of their comfort zone. They didn't know where they were exactly, but that's one example of what can happen very quickly when you're not prepared.

The second step to stay safe is trip planning, as I said. It is always important to plan each detail of a trip before you set out. The program recommends handing a trip itinerary to a friend or family member you can trust so they will know where you are at all times. Preparedness is vital when participating in outdoor activities. Without a trip plan it can be very easy for a person to get lost without anyone knowing where they may have gone.

The final step to staying safe as outlined by the Survive Outside program is to get training. Before setting out it is important to receive the many proper training to ensure your safety. This may involve taking a first-aid course or a boating course.

In many situations people find themselves in danger due to their lack of knowledge or training about a particular subject. I would encourage people to look into this program if they want to learn more about outdoor safety. Information is easily accessible through the Search and Rescue Association.

Another program offered within the Survive Outside program is geared toward young children who like to play outdoors. The program is called the Hug a Tree and Survive program, and it is intended to teach young children what to do if they ever get lost in the woods. This program found its roots in San Diego, California, after a nine-year-old boy got lost in the woods and died as a result. The program exists to stop tragic events like this from happening, and I commend the Search and Rescue Association for being so proactive in this regard.

This program teaches young children to always tell their parents when they are going to be playing outside. It teaches them to always carry an emergency shelter and a whistle. An emergency shelter can be something as simple as a garbage bag to help protect them from the rain. Perhaps the most important part of this program is what it teaches children to do once they know that they're lost. Rather than running around trying to find help, this program encourages children to grab hold to a tree and stay where they are. If it begins to rain, children are instructed to use their garbage bag as a form of shelter from the elements. While they are standing by the tree, the children are encouraged to blow their whistle as a way to help authorities who may be looking for them. This program is very valuable, especially in a province like PEI which provides many opportunities for children to play outdoors.

Once again, I commend the PEI Search and Rescue Association for seeing the need for education about outdoor safety and taking the measures necessary to provide quality instruction. As many would expect, the Search and Rescue Association is constantly looking for ways to further ensure the safety of Islanders who are working and playing outdoors. Their land safety education program is designed to teach people of all ages about how to stay safe while enjoying the great outdoors.

The Land Safety program encourages people to wear or carry suitable clothing and proper footwear any time they are going to be spending time outdoors. It is also important to be aware of what cellular reception will be like wherever you are travelling. Even though we are living in an age of texting and cellular communication, it is important for travellers to remember that there are still places without reception. The program recommends that people bring with them another form of communication along with their cell phone to help ensure their safety.

One of the most important aspects for outdoor safety is for people to know their limits. Many accidents occur outdoors due to people trying to do things that they cannot accomplish. By knowing your limits you can have a great time outside while staying safe. The program also recommends that people take a course before setting out on any major

trips as a further measure of ensuring their safety.

The Search and Rescue Association works to educate people about outdoor safety in all areas. They do not just stop at staying safe when camping in the woods. They also offer courses on snow safety and water safety, which prove especially valuable here in PEI. The snow safety course is geared specifically toward people who enjoy skiing. Living in a country like Canada it is important for everyone to know how to stay safe during the cold winter months. There are plenty of opportunities to have fun and enjoy the snow, like cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and sledding, but it is important that people know how to stay safe in the process. The best advice that can be given is to wear a helmet when taking part in these activities. The number of injuries that occur every year due to people not wearing a helmet is far too high.

By raising awareness about the risks associated with not wearing a helmet, the PEI Search and Rescue Association is contributing to the overall health and safety of Islanders. The program also works hard to ensure that people are properly equipped for the cold weather. It is very important for people to be wearing appropriate clothing for the cold weather. This is important to the Search and Rescue Association in their searching as well. People who are wearing clothing appropriate for the weather are likely to survive a longer period of time, which gives the Search and Rescue teams a better chance of recovering them alive.

All of the education programs provided by the Search and Rescue Association serve to educate people while also ensuring that their future searches will be more successful. Here in Canada and Prince Edward Island, pond hockey is always a popular activity in the winter. The Search and Rescue Association reminds people to always test the ice before starting your game. In their snow safety program they teach people how to measure the ice and know where it is safe. To be honest, I believe that this is something that every Canadian should know considering the popularity of pond hockey in many communities. It's not only pond hockey. There's quite often where you see a snowmobile going across a frozen, or perceived frozen, body of water. We hear far

too often about a snowmobile going through the ice and unfortunately, by times, we hear about the rider perishing in the freezing water.

I have a friend actually in Stratford that not just a few years ago was out walking just out the mouth of the harbour on the Stratford side. He's done it many times before, he just assumed that it was safe. He didn't tell anybody where he was going or what he was doing. He didn't have any life jacket or preserver on because he perceived the ice to be frozen. What happened next is unfortunately he fell through the ice. If you're familiar with the particular area that he was in, there's essentially three tides meet there and he was completely taken under and submerged.

This individual's extremely lucky that he is an avid outdoorsman and had the strength and the composure to stay calm and to actually manage to pull himself out of the ice, but if he had have been there for just a few more moments, and again without anybody knowing where he was going or what he was doing, my friend wouldn't be with us here today.

The water safety program offered by the Search and Rescue Association is especially relevant here in the Province of Prince Edward Island as many people love to get out on the water during the summer months. The PEI Search and Rescue Association runs its boat safety program to educate people about how to enjoy their time on the water while ensuring their own safety and the safety of everyone else who may be boating as well.

It is always important to emphasize the importance of wearing a life jacket when you are on a boat. Many people feel that because they are good swimmers they do not need a life jacket, but the currents in the waters of PEI are very strong, and life jackets can help to keep you safe if you end up in the water.

It is also very important for boaters in PEI to be aware of the risks associated with cold water. This is very important as cold water can cause many people to become hypothermic very quickly. In order to minimize these health risks, the Search and Rescue Association strives to educate people

about all of the risks associated with cold water.

The most important part of the water safety program is the emphasis placed on safe boating. It is vitally important for the safety of all boaters that people do not drink and boat. Often, what seems like a fun day on the boat can turn into a dangerous encounter if people are not monitoring their alcohol intake. It is important that people recognize the dangers of boating while intoxicated. This program serves to educate people about the risks involved, and ultimately to lower the number of incidents that occur.

The PEI Search and Rescue Association runs a variety of initiatives which truly show its concern for the safety of Islanders. The work of the search and rescue teams within the province helps to ensure the safety of each and every person living within the province. These trained volunteers work tirelessly in all conditions to find people who have gone missing or have been injured. The selflessness of these men and women is outstanding, and they deserve to be commended for their work here in PEI.

This motion serves to bring recognition to the brave men and women who work within the Search and Rescue Association here in PEI. To be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is a major commitment, and these people accept it willingly. I commend them for recognizing the importance of this association and for working to protect the safety and security of Islanders who go missing. Their work can often be traumatic mentally and physically demanding.

I would like to thank the association for the work they are doing here within the province of PEI and commend them for the great job they are doing.

As I was saying previously, not only when they're called out on a search, but the amount of hours that these individuals volunteer, spend training both in the field and in the classroom, the time away from their families, the commitment that they have to making sure that Islanders are safe. We've seen many times before – we've had motions and resolutions here on the floor before where we've talked about first responders. Most frequently it's relating to our firefighters, or as we call them now our

first responders, and how finally they've been accepted to the level of their volunteer work that they do. They've been given a small tax credit towards the volunteer work and the time and commitment that they put forward.

It's unfortunate that currently our ground search and rescue volunteers do not share that incentive. They also spend a considerable amount of time fundraising for their association. Currently their headquarters is based – I believe it's on Maple Street, out by the Charlottetown airport.

Currently it costs the association roughly \$30,000 to not only maintain their equipment but to pay the rent on this building and to just to keep up with their training costs. Again, about \$30,000 is money that these volunteers have to go out and fundraise for. So I think not only with this motion but at some point we need to start looking at how we're supporting these tremendous volunteers, the selfless volunteers that do so much for Islanders without asking for anything in return.

With that, I wish each and every member of the PEI Search and Rescue Association a year of safety for their members and, indeed, the Islanders they service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: We'll now go to the seconder of the motion.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my privilege to rise in the Legislative Assembly today to recognize the great work being done in this province by the PEI ground search and rescue teams. I'd like to thank the Member from Stratford-Kinlock for putting this motion forward.

The PEI Search and Rescue Association is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to search for individuals who are lost or injured in PEI. Their mandate is to search for and rescue individuals who are lost or injured.

As the member mentioned, member are on call 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. Searching through the night is not unusual and searches can range from very short to several days. The PEI Search and Rescue Association is a resource for police authorities and response to RCMP. They also train with our PEI firefighters, the Canadian Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary.

These volunteers can be found in Island communities stretching tip to tip. Members of the association are required to take year-round training which includes woods navigation, survival, first-aid, searching techniques, search management, and clue identification.

As a former volunteer firefighter I understand the training commitment that these individuals undertake and emergency first responders that they commit to and the association members that are so committed to this cause.

All these factors are vitally important to a successful search. Survival tactics can become especially important as searching through the night is a common occurrence for members of a search and rescue team.

The searches conducted by the search and rescue vary in length. Some searches are completed within hours of being called, where others may take several days before the missing person is discovered. Most individuals are usually found and while some suffer injuries, these injuries are usually treatable.

The association serves as a resource for police authorities and response to the RCMP. Anytime that the RCMP requires assistance in finding a missing person, the PEI Search and Rescue Association is called.

The PEI Search and Rescue Association trains with firefighters and receives applications for new members every year in the late winter and early spring months.

Mr. Speaker, for anyone who's interested in becoming involved with this great organization, there are no costs associated to becoming a volunteer.

Ms. Sherry: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Wednesday, June 17th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.