

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Second Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Thursday, 17 November 2016

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: Yesterday at the conclusion of Oral Question Period the hon. Leader of the Third Party, rising on a matter of privilege and citing rule 62.1 of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, sought clarification respecting the admissibility of his line of questioning to the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

As members will appreciate, rather than a matter of privilege the question was one of order and therefore I will address it as such.

Hon. members, the rules of the Assembly provide as follows. Rule 59:

“Written questions may be placed on the order paper or oral questions may be asked seeking information from ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs, any bill, motion or other public matter connected with the business of the Assembly in which such members may be concerned; but in putting any such question or in replying to the same, no argument or opinion shall be offered, nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain the same; and in answering any such question, the matter to which the same refers shall not be debated.”

62(1):

“Upon the order of business ‘questions by members’ being called, oral questions of an urgent nature relating to public affairs may be put without notice to ministers of the Crown.

“(2) An oral question shall be concisely and clearly put and shall refer only to a matter which may reasonably be assumed to be within the present knowledge of the minister.”

Hon. members, on reviewing this matter I find the questions as put to be in order.

Rule 62(3) provides that a “minister to whom an oral question is directed may:

“(a) immediately answer the question, or

“(b) state that he or she takes the question as notice and answer it orally on a subsequent day under the same order of business, or

“(c) state that in his or her opinion the question should be put in writing.”

Further, hon. members, as you know, it is a well-established practice of this House that even though a question may be directed to a specific minister, any government minister may respond to that question.

I trust this will serve to clarify our rule on this matter.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, it is with some dismay that I rise on a Point of Privilege today pursuant to Rule 46 of our rules.

That rules states that:

“A member may complain to the House of a statement a media report referring to the member personally and relating to some proceeding of the House, or a committee of the House, as a breach of privilege without proposing a motion but shall confine his or her remarks to explaining the matter and no debate shall be allowed.”

I rise as in yesterday’s *Guardian* there was a story by Teresa Wright which included a quote from the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland which indicated:

“Bevan-Baker said he believes the Liberals deliberately ran up the clock to prevent a vote.

“I hope Islanders see this for what it is. This is the way your Legislature works folks... if you think your MLA’s time could be better spent deliberating in a proper manner the issues of the day, then it surely is time for change.”

In a further article from the CBC website by Kevin Yarr, and I quote:

“Filibustering is an arguably valid opposition move because they have no other power in a House ruled by majority

government,' said Bevan-Baker in a statement to CBC News.

“For a majority government to do it is in my opinion indefensible, and tells me that they are simply trying to avoid a vote on the motion.”

Mr. Speaker, we were speaking to a motion that was the culmination of roughly two years' worth of work for a committee which I chaired which was brought to this House without notice on Tuesday evening. I indicated at the opening piece of my remarks, which I understand from the same CBC article were 56.5 minutes in length, that my remarks were somewhat unorganized as I had not had time to prepare.

I believe that I spoke honestly and on the subject matter of the motion, as it is my opportunity to do as a member of this House, and quite frankly, I feel dismayed that a fellow committee member would make statements like that indicating that it was somewhat inappropriate for me to be making those kinds of remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to colleagues and those in the gallery and those viewing at home.

We've got a fine delegation filling the gallery on all sides today. Folks from southern Kings and Queens, folks interested in democratic renewal, a lot of people I know I could recognize by name, but I'll restrict myself to two from my own district: Krista Shaw and John TeRaa, and of course to welcome everyone else.

Today I took part in the flu vaccine clinic that was offered at the St Peters hall by the public health nurses. Many people from the public service and from the neighbourhood took advantage of that. I encourage all Islanders to take advantage of that vaccine offering. That's a big part of staying healthy through the winter, and an important part of

the upstream health service that we offer in this province.

Today at Rideau Hall our former premier and the first female premier elected in Canada, the hon. Catherine Callbeck, is receiving her Order of Canada induction. We want to extend congratulations to the hon. Catherine Callbeck on becoming a Member of the Order of Canada.

This evening at Florence Simmons Performance Hall, Lennie Gallant, Catherine MacLellan, Dennis Ellsworth, and others will be taking part in a fundraiser for the Mikinduri foundation called Fill the Dory for Mikinduri.

Finally, to encourage all colleagues to keep in mind the Engineers PEI reception to which we've been invited later this afternoon. A great opportunity to meet current and upcoming and future engineers who are being kept busy with a lot of the capital investments that are being made in this province.

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 would also like to welcome everybody in the gallery today: Krista Shaw, Mr. Halliday, and also recognize Catherine Callbeck, who is actually a constituent of mine, who lives in Bedeque. I enjoy my chats with Catherine on a semi-regular basis if I run into her. She's a great person with a lot of wisdom, for sure.

I'd also like to recognize a young gentleman by the name of Brett Platts, a constituent of mine, who lives up the road. He won a full scholarship for 2017 to the Southeastern College in Iowa. He'll be participating in the 2017 fall ball program there. He is an inspiring young man and a great athlete, and I wish him all the best.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone here. First of all, say what a wonderful evening myself and the MLAs from Belfast-Murray River and Morell-Mermaid, and my colleague from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, had last night, as well as emcee Teresa Wright was there last night at The Guild to have a wonderful fundraiser. I really want to send out my appreciation on behalf of the PEI Women's Network for all the supporters, but especially to Irish Mythen, who auctioned off three house parties and raised over \$7,500 herself for that particular fundraiser. It was absolutely stupendous.

With your indulgence, I also want to say I'm very proud today to congratulate my nephew, Professor Kyle Biggar, formerly of Summerside. Kyle began his professorship this year in September at Carleton University. Just this week he has been awarded the John Charles Polanyi Prize for outstanding early career research for his research and success as it relates to breast cancer and also applies to prostate and leukemia cancer.

Kyle is the son of Kevin and Donna Biggar of Summerside and he attended Three Oaks High School in Summerside, and as a 30-year old young man, and as his aunt, I'm very proud of him and congratulate him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today. Too many faces to recognize you all. I'll forget somebody. But I would like to put a shout-out to Marie Burge who is here today. She's a very strong community advocate and resident of District 7.

We were at the fundraiser last night for the Women's Network at The Guild. The minister brought wonderful greetings. It was a wonderful event with many community

leaders and role models there. Teresa did a great job coming from behind the print to emcee and host. I was really happy that my good friend Sarah Roach-Lewis received many accolades last night, too. Congrats to all.

I want to say thank you and good luck to all the teachers out there today who start parent and teacher interviews this evening after school and tomorrow as well. I know they put a lot of time and effort into these interviews and have done so over the past week or two – now that the interviews are all on the same day to make time for other teachers that have to do after-school interviews. I just want to say thank you to all the teachers for all they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

(Indistinct) here today and from across the province. Want to acknowledge my twin brother David who is a very avid follower of politics, not only in the country but here provincially, who lives in Ottawa, who does spend a lot of time here in the summer, watching today from Ottawa. Hopefully he enjoys the sitting. He's got a little political background. Back I guess in the mid-1980s he spent some time working as a special assistant with Bob Layton, who was the father of Jack Layton, under the Mulroney government. Very interesting. I know that the opposition is looking for a potential leader, so he is on the brink of ending a career in a very successful IT, very capable, very bright and he's very in tune with the future direction and what needs to be done here in the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I want to welcome everyone to the gallery today too, lots of friends here, John TeRaa, and my former neighbour Marie Burge, before I left Mermaid, Bus Gay of course, and some other people, Keir White here for sure, and Mike Ferguson, Sam Ferguson. Great to see everyone here.

I want to put a big shout-out and a thank you for the great weather that allowed us to get the potatoes in on time. We had a pretty good summer with the lobster fishery and the whole fishery looks very good. Agriculture looks pretty good and they have a terrific potato crop. Tomorrow is the annual meeting of the potato board so we hope to see a great turnout there. I'll be dropping by around noon for that. I think it's going to be pretty well good news so that's terrific for the potato industry, and for the province in general, because it's agriculture and fisheries that drives our economy.

To another member of my district, who today is experiencing her first full day in the Senate of Canada, Dianne Griffin. I want to publicly acknowledge that. I think she will do an absolutely fantastic job for our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody to the gallery here today. It's good to see Eddie Lund, Bus Gay, Sam Ferguson, and all you people that are with us today and sharing in our deliberations.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to all the residents of West Royalty-Springvale and especially the residents of Andrews Lodge of Charlottetown, and to the teachers that do such a wonderful job of educating our children. They got a busy weekend with teacher-parent interviews, etc. My daughter Tara is one of those teachers. I wish all the teachers all the best for the great job they do for the residents of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to recognize everyone in the gallery today. I won't take the time to recognize individuals, but there are a number of people here from eastern PEI today, and I look forward to letting them see firsthand what we do in here and hopefully we will all be on our best behaviour.

I also would like to make a shout-out to everyone in District 4, I haven't taken the time to do that yet, and I just wish everyone a very good day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to welcome everyone in the gallery today, and a special welcome to all of the folks in Summerside-Wilmot watching on various platforms.

I would also like to congratulate Summerside's own Heather Moyse. Today she will be inducted into the World Rugby Hall of Fame. She is an inspiration to all Islanders.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all the folks to the public gallery as well as all of the good people of Alberton-Roseville.

I would like to send a special shout-out to Earle Matthews. He is a patient at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital there. He usually watches. I'm sure he probably has the t.v. on watching now. I hope everything is going well for you today, Earle.

I would also say what a great community I live in up in West Prince. Whenever someone is in need the community rallies around them, and that's going to happen tonight at the centre in Alberton where we have an individual that is suffering from illness and the community is going to turn out tonight and show their support for this individual.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back here again today. I did check my desk when I walked in and there were only two rule books in there today instead of three so I must have been good yesterday. The rule books are going back to a normal number.

I want to give a shout-out to the seniors' federation who had me out to their meeting in St. Peters this morning. It was a great event. I want to thank their president, Donnie Sanderson. I had lunch with him and had a great conversation with him, and he informed me that his granddaughter would be working in here today so I want to give a shout-out to Lindsay Sanderson, who is the president of the seniors' federation, Donnie Sanderson's, granddaughter who is a Page in here.

Also, I just want to touch on briefly for those of you who would recall being part of this Assembly prior to this last election, I had pushed hard for the Seven Mile Road and it has come to a completion and I am quite happy about that. The lines are on it. I want to thank the current minister of transportation and I want to thank the former minister of transportation, and I want to thank the former federal minister who helped us out, and I want to thank Lawrence MacAulay who helped us out. We all can work together and we do work together, contrary to what many out there believe. Come drive the Seven Mile Road and you will see people working together for great things.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

It is a pleasure to rise today and, of course, greet everyone that has joined us here in the gallery and that may be tuning in on EastLink or on the Internet today.

I would also like to say hello to a friend of mine, Marie Burge, and of course Krista O'Brien-Shaw who is with us here today.

I would also like to send birthday greetings out to a friend of mine, Dianne Young. Dianne, as many of us know, is a tireless advocate for mental health issues and the prevention of suicide here in Prince Edward Island.

I would also like to advise all Islanders, if they're not aware of it, that the workers of Canadian Blood Services are back to work officially in November. They were locked out for very close to a year. I worked tirelessly on their behalf to try to bring this situation to a conclusion. Anyway, it did finally resolve itself. The staff is back and I want everyone to know that currently Canadian Blood Services, not just here but across Canada, has an urgent need for O type blood. I received a phone call today requesting that I go in for a donation, which I will be doing, and I urge every other member and Islander that is capable of doing so to please donate.

Just in closing, I would also like to recognize Mr. Bus Gay who is with us here today. Mr. Bus Gay is a resident of Stratford-Kinlock, a very hard-working individual all of his life, and as many people know I am simply keeping this seat warm until Bus finally decides that he is going to run and join us here in the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to rise today and welcome everyone who is watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and welcome everybody who is here in the gallery, quite a full gallery and a large number of people.

I know I'm going to miss someone if I read some names, but I see Krista Shaw is here and William McGuigan is hiding in the back corner over there with Sam Ferguson. I see Dennis Halliday over here and Marie Burge, and quite a number. I wanted to recognize them, thanks for coming today.

I also wanted to recognize our new Page here, Sebastian Arsenaault, who is right from downtown North Rustico. Good to see him here. He plays some Midget A hockey and they play on Sunday nights, in particular right before the Old Timers, so I hope to see him out maybe refereeing us under control in the North Star Old Timers league.

Finally, I just wanted to recognize the Central Coastal Tourism Partnership. They had their semi-annual meeting on Tuesday night in New London at The Table Culinary School and I understand it was a great success, so congratulations to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I would like to welcome all those citizens in the gallery here today as well. In particular I would like to welcome J. Gordon Gay who is a former neighbour of mine and a great community person, and a prime example of what hard work will do for us over the course of our lives.

While we're going around I would like to recognize Officer Mike (Indistinct). I will tell you if you're ever in some trouble you do not want to run from Mike. Your chances of getting away are probably going to be pretty slim.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: At the CrossFit gym, yeah.

I would like to recognize Sam Ferguson today, John TeRaa who has been great to provide follow-up commentary on the democratic renewal process, and I would like to, as the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid did, recognize teachers, and in particular my wife who has spent a great deal of time gearing up for parent-teacher interviews today.

I guess while I'm at it I should recognize her uncle who will be picking up my children from school because my wife is not able and that will allow me to be here participating in this afternoon's and this evening's sessions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to recognize a young gentleman in the House here today and it is one of our Pages. He is Brandon O'Brien. Brandon is a great young fellow in the community, a great volunteer in the community and he is really involved in the Legion. You will hear me talk more on Brandon next week because when you talk about Brandon you could talk for days.

When I spoke to the minister's statement yesterday about fishers taking fishing to a higher level, well, we have two young gentlemen, two young fishers that are out west, Nathan and Evan Whalen. They started a restaurant in Grand Prairie and they call it the Grand Banks Seafood Market and Bistro. It's a seafood restaurant. Nathan comes home, he fishes lobsters, he fishes mackerel, he fishes halibut, he fishes scallops, and when he does he freezes his fish and he takes it out west with him and they have a restaurant when he is not home fishing here in the winter.

They both came from a fishing community, or a fishing family. Their mother and father are Gerard and Dianne Whalen. Gerard also goes out west and Dianne stays home and looks after the household while the three boys are out west. Gerard works out west and the two boys have a restaurant out there, so it's just that our fishers – it's a business

today, like I said yesterday, and fishers are taking their business to a higher level. They are expanding out. It's great that the boys are opening their restaurant in Grand Prairie. I wish them luck with their seafood restaurant in Grand Prairie, and best of luck to those two boys.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in the House as it is today, and I would like to first of all welcome this big gallery that's here today. I look forward to them seeing what takes places here today.

I'd like to make special mention to a couple of people. Marie Burge I see there, and pleased to say the relationship I've had with Marie goes back to the 1990s, I believe, when she first moved back to – kind of fully moved back to Prince Edward Island. We were able to work on some issues back then and I very much enjoyed doing that.

I'd also like to mention, and I know she was mentioned earlier, Sarah Roach-Lewis, on her achievements and the great work and the great accolades that she received last night. I also had the opportunity over the past five years to work with Sarah in her capacity, and I can assure you with her hard work, her inspiration, the things that she's done within that work that she – and the things that she has accomplished, she certainly deserved each and every one of those accolades.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Captain Nichola Goddard Foundation Dinner

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, November 19th, the legacy of Capt. Nichola

Goddard will continue through a gala fundraising dinner in Cornwall.

The dinner has attracted guests such as, astronaut Roberta Bondar, CTV news anchor Lisa LaFlamme, and the band the Trews, to name a few.

As their guest speaker, this year's speaker will be His Worship, the Mayor of Calgary, Naheed Nenshi.

Nichola Goddard was a captain in the 1st Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery when she was killed in combat while serving with the Canadian military in Afghanistan.

Her parents, Tim and Sally Goddard, live in Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

The Nichola Goddard Foundation supports scholarships in her name at the University of Prince Edward Island and the University of Calgary.

The Nichola Goddard Light Up Papua New Guinea project is a beneficiary of the fundraiser. It is a project to improve the quality and functionality of health care facilities in rural Papua New Guinea by installing solar powered LED lighting.

There is a middle school, scholarships, a coast guard ship, the song "Highway of Heroes," a book titled *Sunray*, and even a bagpipe lament all done in her honour.

The length of time afforded to me during this member's statement does not do justice to the legacy of Captain Nichola Goddard, a true Canadian hero, but I would encourage all those listening to get to know and remember her. Lest we forget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Lucas Arsenault

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to congratulate Lucas Arsenault who just this past summer, at the Men's Canadian Freestyle Kiteboarding Championship, in Squamish, BC, came out a winner.

It was on the beautiful waters of the Northumberland Strait that Lucas saw someone kiteboarding outside the family cottage in Mount Carmel and decided that was something he really wanted to do. His mother and father, Cindy and David, finally gave in and let him give it a try at age 13. Ever since that day he has been permanently affixed to a kiteboard.

For Lucas, the most difficult part was our short summers on PEI, so after graduating from high school he took his board and headed to the Caribbean to fine tune his skills.

He has said that the biggest challenge in preparing for competition is the mental side of the sport. Keeping calm and focused has enabled him to land some difficult moves.

In 2014 he won the Canadian National Kite Clash Junior Championship in British Columbia.

However, the following year he was knocked out of the finals due to a concussion. Missing out on the championship last year made this year's win all the sweeter. It goes to show that hard work has definitely helped Lucas reach his goals and accomplish what he set out to do when he was 13.

I look forward to seeing what championship titles this talented young man wins next.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Ray Murphy

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize an outstanding businessman in the Island community, Mr. Ray Murphy, who recently received the Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce.

Ray Murphy's list of accomplishments is long and distinguished. He is a recipient of the Order of PEI, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, and was named by the

Canadian Pharmacists Association as one of our country's 100 most influential pharmacists during their centennial celebrations.

Ray Murphy is the definition of success. He acquired his first pharmacy in Parkdale, PEI in 1981 and over the past 35 years he has established locations in all counties across PEI. Not only has Mr. Murphy exceeded personally, but his business has as well.

He has charted the course for the Murphy health care organization being recognized for pharmacy design, health promotion, patient care, innovation, and charitable work.

Mr. Murphy's charitable work stretches across this great province. He has chaired the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation and the United Way. He has served as chair of Holland College Board of Governors, president of the chamber of commerce, and the chair of the Gold Cup and Saucer Parade.

PEI is very lucky to be in Mr. Murphy's company and we are grateful for his contributions through his business and his charity work. He has also placed others before himself and is a shining example of a great leader.

On behalf of the official Opposition, I congratulate Ray Murphy on his continued success and achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

School Meals and Local Food

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

Last month I had the great pleasure, as did several other members of this House, to meet with a gentleman named Tony Geraci. For those of us who may not be familiar with his name, Tony is also known by the title of a documentary film made about him, *Cafeteria Man*. For decades he has been

promoting healthy, affordable, local school lunches.

Tony took his captivating message to Prince Edward Island at the invitation of Peter Rukavina through the PEI Home and School Federation. Tony's message is clear and compelling – children learn better and are more healthy when they are fed fresh, locally produced nutritious food. But the benefits of such a program go far beyond simply the bodies and minds of our children. By creating a universal school lunch program that sources much of its produce locally and employs Island chefs, it would also have a significant on our provincial economy.

Tony says this: This is a no-brainer, this is something you can do. All of the dollars spent to support this would stay on the Island as opposed to what you're currently doing, and I think it would create a huge economic boom for Prince Edward Island.

When it comes to our unique potential here on Prince Edward Island, Tony says this: You're poised in a place and time where you can capitalize on this and make the benefits realized. Everything about this Island revolves around food, whether it's in the fishery, in the ground, or being served in restaurants and hotels.

I know that our hon. Premier enjoyed cooking a meal for Tony while he was here on Prince Edward Island, and both our education and agriculture ministers had discussions on this proposal, and I look forward to seeing the fruits, and vegetables, of this initiative in, amongst other places, the upcoming local food act.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Travel claim approval (further)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I was asked about the authorization of the travel claims of deputies and the chief of staff.

I can inform the House that the travel for deputy ministers is approved by the chief of staff based on a clear business justification, and that travel for the chief of staff is approved by the Clerk of Executive Council.

Train travel/Meal claims/UK Deals (further)

Yesterday there were a couple of points that I said I would look into regarding the travel while I was in France and the United Kingdom in December of last year.

To just set the context, that was a 10-day trip, seven of which were spent mainly at the Paris climate change conference. Then, as I often do, when there's an opportunity to do so, I'll take advantage to do some business promotion or to promote the Island in conjunction while I'm on the road.

There were two points. One had to do with the amount of the food I consumed during that trip. There was a miscoding of when the answer was given to the member opposite which combined my accommodation and food during that time.

You'll be glad to know that there was \$1,243.57 that did not enter my body –

An Hon. Member: Consume.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and indeed my total, the total expenses for food over that 10-day period, was \$680, Mr. Speaker.

I said I would look into the question of train travel from Cardiff to London. The only class that was available was first-class. British Rail has long since ceased, I guess, if they ever did, offer fine dining. There was an apple and a cup of coffee from a trolley on a (Indistinct) –

An Hon. Member: Fifteen hundred dollar trolley, \$1,500 apple.

Premier MacLauchlan: Probably better for you than \$1,500 worth of meals.

Let me expand just briefly because it's in response to the question of results.

For example, over in Paris I met with the executive vice-president and the international group head of Airbus

International, which owns the largest aerospace company in the province. We explored business opportunities with them. It's a good way of giving colleagues a sense of, I'll say, what the Premier can add (Indistinct) Paris, go to see those folks, thank them for the opportunity to support PEI business.

At one point in that conversation I said to them – these folks run about a, I don't know, how many billion dollar business – I said: It's my understanding that you've got seven sites where Vector Aerospace operates around the world and that Prince Edward Island is your most productive. They said: That's exactly right, we have the most loyal and productive workforce in our Prince Edward Island operation. That's worth a lot to have that conversation.

We met in Paris with an aerospace firm that's considering locating in North America and Prince Edward Island and they came back to see us in January. There were then meetings, as explained yesterday, in Wales and in London and with the embassies in both Paris and London.

Finally, I will be tabling later today an account of the annual operating expenses for the Premier's office for 2015-2016, as well as for five other years that will enable the members to gain a comparative sense of how we're approaching things.

If you take the average for travel and training for those five other years it was \$55,500. That was under two different premiers. In the first year that I served as Premier the amount for travel and training was under \$20,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Write-off date for IIDI egaming loan (further)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday the Member from Kensington-Malpeque asked me a question regarding a loan related to the egaming initiative.

The board of IIDI did not approve the loan when first presented. It subsequently approved the loan on November 14th, 2011.

Mr. Myers: Did you say secretly?

Mr. MacDonald: Subsequently – following a guarantee from the Department of Finance.

The Auditor General clearly stated that the letter was signed by the former minister of finance. Our government has acted swiftly to respond to the recommendations of the Auditor General, and government departments will no longer provide guarantees to other departments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't know where to start, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Future of Kinkora schools

Government's school change plan has parents, teachers, and students and committees across this Island asking questions about what this government has planned for the future of our schools.

This is in the case of Kinkora family of schools, so I'm hoping not to get a lecture or a story here today.

Question to the minister of education: Can you assure residents that the outcome for the Kinkora family of schools has not been decided?

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

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

The Public School Branch has presented and has activated school change policy which, I must add, has never been really truly implemented in this province for decades.

I will assure the Leader of the Opposition that the process is currently underway. We've completed step one which presents the data about the process. Step two is the public meetings. Not only the public meetings that are being held across the province, but also accepting the written submissions, and also having meetings with individuals or groups that want to have an opportunity to share their thoughts.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

School numbers

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

The accuracy of school capacity figures used for the schools like Somerset are in question. At Somerset the actual enrollment is only 20 students of the school's original capacity when it was built. People feel that the government's numbers are being used to paint an inaccurate picture.

Question to the minister: Why is your department playing with the school enrollment and capacity numbers for schools like Somerset to build a case for closures?

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

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

The Leader of the Opposition asks a fair question. I want to reiterate to him as an MLA in his riding that this issue has been raised through discussions with a public meeting. This issue has been addressed and is being addressed with the division of public schools which has the mandate of enrollments.

As minister I'm very supportive of the school change process and I'm very supportive of a very open conversation, a conversation that hopefully will lead to ideas, allow us to take feedback, allow us to listen to the voices of communities across the province.

I, too, am an MLA with six schools that will potentially be impacted pending on the recommendations, and the recommendations

are not in a playbook in my desk. The reality of it is we're listening, we're taking notes, and we're respecting the voices of parents and community leaders across the province.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Population and economic data re: schools

Leader of the Opposition: I think I just heard a page out of a storybook. Many presenters at the Kinkora school families meetings pointed out that the economic impact information prepared for your department didn't accurately capture new housing developments in both Kinkora and Cape Traverse, respectively.

Question to the minister: Why are you using the wrong data on the population and economic growth of these areas to try and frame the conversation in school families?

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

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

Part of the presentations by the community – one of the discussions or areas to allow communities to speak to is local knowledge. Local knowledge is development that is in line or currently happening in areas across the province. That will be part of the conversation, will be put into the discussion.

The real issues right now that we're facing with schools across Prince Edward Island is that we've got an overcapacity and an underutilization reality in areas all across the province.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

New school zone maps

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

Yes, we do have an overcapacity in some schools. It's because it's from problems that your school board and your government has caused in the past.

Parents, teachers, and students from Kinkora family were surprised recently to see your department post on websites maps for the Somerset-Athena school zone that already showed changes made to the zone before these consultations were done.

Question to the minister: Why would your department develop and publicly post new school zone maps before you even finished consulting with the group?

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

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

I, as the Minister responsible for education, early learning and culture for the province, will reassure all Members of the Legislative Assembly that this is a very fair and will be an open conversation.

I will bring back specifics to the question from the Leader of the Opposition in respect to his issue around maps. It's a discussion I did have and I'll bring the specifics back on that.

But I want to reiterate that this is a very open, transparent process, and it's vital and important for parents to come forward with their thoughts and ideas about what the possibilities are in schools across Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, I don't think you are being open and transparent because if you were, then you wouldn't be posting maps of already new zones.

Question to the minister: How can parents and students in the Kinkora school family trust that the school change process is fair when the data collected is wrong, and secret maps for new school zones are being accidentally posted online?

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

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

As the minister responsible for education, I see this conversation as being a very important conversation for the future prosperity of the Province of Prince Edward Island. There's no Member of the Legislative Assembly would disagree about the importance and the value of public education and what it means to our Island youth.

I will continue to pay close attention to the conversations. I've extreme confidence and support in the people that are leading these conversations and gathering the information, not only through the public conversations but through the written submissions and the small group discussions.

I will reiterate that no decisions have been made on any option or any recommendation in this province in respect to the process. We are going to respect the process. We're listening, and I encourage communities and parents to pay attention and to make a voice and make a contribution.

Thank you.

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

School consultation process

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year the Premier was front and centre when he made the announcement of the whole new way, the new direction of schools, and the student-centered learning. Now he's nowhere at all to be seen on the file which is quite typical, actually, for this Premier. He puts a process in motion, then he runs from the consequences of it.

My questions today are to the minister whose lap he dropped this file in after he got what he thought was good news on the front end of it, to let you deliver the bad news.

Whose idea was it to torpedo the consultation process on school changes? Yours or the Premier's?

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

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

I have had lots of good discussions about public education with the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and I have to say that I do admire his vision and his constant reaffirmation of the importance of the changing face and the changing needs of students, but also for us as a system to respond to that.

I would just ask for a little clarification on what he's referring to as "torpedo."

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While I do appreciate that you recognize my vision in education – and perhaps if you could get rid of your leader the two of us could actually do something about it.

School consultation report

You did torpedo the process because otherwise, on the very last day of the consultations, you wouldn't have announced that you had been sitting on a \$10,000 consultation report that told you to close schools.

I guess my question is: Why would you go through this whole charade of having consultations and making people believe that you were actually listening to them when all the whole time you were sitting on a report that you paid someone in Toronto \$10,000 to write for you that said exactly what you wanted it to say?

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

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

The consultant that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is referring to is a gentleman by the name of Dr. Michael Fullan. Michael Fullan is a global leader in supporting policymakers on transforming education systems. He was a special adviser for the Premier of Ontario, which after the 2002 PESA results, Ontario showed dismal results. Michael Fullan was brought in with his experience, the former dean of education from OISE at the University of Toronto, and worked very closely with policy leaders in

Ontario, not only to improve learning in the Province of Ontario but to transform them into a global leader, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I'll take exception for all Islanders, for all young, educated people who come out of the system, who come out of UPEI, who come out of great universities right across Canada, who are from Prince Edward Island, who live in Prince Edward Island, that you overlooked them, that you didn't think highly enough of them, that you didn't think that they could write any decision or that they could give you advice, that Islanders – I think Islanders are getting sick of Islanders like you who think they have to go to Toronto to get an answer.

I'm quite sick of it. There's lots of smart Islanders here. If you guys would quit overlooking them you might actually get some good advice from them.

One of the other people who authored that report was Mary Jean Gallagher. As you remember, Mary Jean Gallagher was the assistant deputy minister who was brought in to close schools the first time you closed schools, so you know her really well. You knew the answer in this report. You knew what she would write for you because you knew what she did.

Having a secret study telling you to close schools was bad enough, but because you didn't even hire somebody from Prince Edward Island to do it, you had to go to somebody who is known to hatchet schools. It's shameful.

School consultant expertise

What expertise did your high-priced Toronto consultant have in closing small schools that you couldn't find here in Prince Edward Island?

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

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

Last November the minister of the day, with the Premier, presented the new vision for the model of education in the Province of Prince Edward Island. It's a model that is principled on engagement with the Learning Partners Advisory Council looking at learning from zero to labour force. We have implemented the Principals Council which is a focus of schools and administrative leaderships for their voice. The other council is the district advisory council which is the voice of students and parents.

Those conversations have led us to some really innovative, positive suggestions in respect to the needs to continue to improve the quality of learning here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that I speak on behalf of the PC caucus when I say we believe in Islanders. We believe that Islanders have the capability to write reports for government. Believe it or not, we believe that Islanders have the capability to write a \$10,000 consultant report to government. But when Islanders write reports you ignore them. When Islanders give you advice you ignore them. When Islanders come out to consult you ignore them because you have high-priced Toronto consultants to do it for you.

Question to the minister. When you were the minister of health and you were trying to shut down community schools, you ran to Ontario at the same time to get advice, the exact same thing. Why, when you want to bring the butcher's knife to rural Prince Edward Island, do you always run to Ontario for advice?

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

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

I take full responsibility as the minister for engaging Dr. Michael Fullan. I see Michael Fullan as someone who could advise, and an individual who is very directly linked to

high-performing school systems in the country.

In early 2000, after the first round of PESA results that the province participated in, there was a clear message by the government of the day, which was the Binns administration, which created the task force as a result of the concern of how Prince Edward Island was performing and how they did up against provinces and territories in this country.

I am very comfortable, I'm very confident in the support and advice that Dr. Michael Fullan provided to the province, and I look forward to continuing to implement – and some of his recommendations have been implemented in respect to improving school achievement here in the province.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I even feel bad for Susan Willis. The Premier brings Susan Willis in, she's got a great background, she's been in the school system forever, tons of experience, should be able to bring a steady hand to education in Prince Edward Island. All kind of the realm of the things that the Premier had said about her, and then yet you have to pay somebody in Toronto to give advice because, what?, her advice is no good or you don't trust her? It's pretty bad when you already don't trust your deputy minister to give you advice.

I'll tell you, it's pretty clear that the plan all along was to torpedo the process, and it follows right along with the Premier's playbook on consultations: consult, torpedo, consult, torpedo. We have seen this from him a lot.

School consultation report leak

Question to the education minister: Why else would you leak details of your secret school closure study on the last day of the school consultation process? Why else would you do that if you weren't purposely torpedoing the process?

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

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

As I shared earlier, the importance of continuing to improve the quality of public education and how our government responds to the changing needs of classrooms in the Province of Prince Edward Island, and also the changing realities of the world. I've got a daughter right now that's in grade 12 and my priority as a father is to hope that the public school system is giving her all the skills to allow her not only to compete with students from Colonel Grey and Westisle and Souris high and Montague. The system allows her to be able to have the skills to compete with children that are graduating in June from high schools in Calgary, Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver.

We are very passionate as a government about public education. We also know the importance that as a small province we can punch above our weight and we will be better and we'll continue to make gains on achievement and continue to work towards the front to the pack as opposed to the back of the pack in this country, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

School change process and learning excellence

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the minister of education. Minister, our MLAs have been at these public meetings on the school changes. We've been at the Home and School meetings to help prepare for these public meetings. We're engaged. We're getting strong feedback about this process. We are hearing about the underlying issues that is impacting learning excellence: programming in the classroom; mental health; teacher allotments; support for our newcomer and special needs learners.

Minister, how will the school change process address these underlying issues that Islanders are saying are impacting learning excellence?

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and that's a great question from the Member from Morell-Mermaid.

One of our top priorities in the department of education is around student achievement. The second priority is around social-emotional, and that's the well-being of schools and cultures in the buildings that we have the responsibility to oversee. The third is public confidence, and that is the ability to engage Islanders, but also to show Islanders that we value – and the importance of public education is key.

To the point that the Member from Morell-Mermaid is making, the issue that we're facing right now is no different than any issue school board across this country. It's about overcapacity and underutilization. It's about the inequitable distribution of students and the impact that's having on the quality of learning all across schools in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

We've got schools in parts of the province that, in grade 12, have lists of class sizes of 44-45, where we go into other schools at the same course in different parts of the province with six students.

All we're trying to do is try is to find better balance, better parity, with an extensive consultation, and to continue to support schools and communities and the province to prosper and be a key success in education.

Thank you

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you know our caucus is fully engaged in this. Actually, I think if you look at the eight of us over here, we have more than double the number of schoolchildren in the system than the other 19 MLAs combined. That means that we're invested personally in this.

Minister, I'd like you to answer a question that keeps coming up over and over from the parents that we're talking to. It's: How can

we improve learning excellence by focusing on school buildings instead of what happens inside the classrooms?

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

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

When I was asked on questions about Dr. Michael Fullan, Dr. Michael Fullan's recommendations were very clear. He was very clear on the approach that we continue to – if we're looking at making gains in student achievement, there needs to be a better alignment in respect to how we're working with instruction, classroom teachers, curriculum, and outcomes via achievement.

As we speak right now, when I talk about the term leading from the middle, we've got high levels of engagement and accountability with the school principals and schools across the Province of Prince Edward Island focused on school goals that target school achievement and social-emotional well-being.

To the point the Member from Morell-Mermaid is making, I, as the minister, am very supportive of the school change policy. I'm not aware or have any idea what the outcomes or recommendations will be, but my hope will be that we'll be able find a better way to use the resources, to distribute them across the province to enhance learning in Island classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, the message is out there that each of these families of schools have to figure out what to cut. They have to figure out what school is in bad shape, who's got the most capacity.

Minister, is there a real possibility that we will see your department and your government listen to parents, listen to these groups, take their suggestions for

improvement, show leadership, and actually invest back into the schools?

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

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

The whole mandate of the school change policy is to continue to find ways to move markers on achievement.

As the minister, I recognize that student achievement is important, but it's also very important as a province that we continue to raise the bar on how we're performing against other provinces across this country.

To the question from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, I'm extremely committed to looking at ways we can support, unaware of the recommendations – we are going to be paying very close attention through the process – how we can continue to reinvest and make firm statements around any potential recommendations that come, and how we're going to support those recommendations for better learning and better outcomes in Island schools, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Demographic trends and health care infrastructure

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank so much, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Does the government use demographic trends when planning major new health care infrastructure?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, anytime we are looking at doing any construction or any renovations to any of our facilities we try to look at how we're going to best utilize the funds and resources and, once again, all factors are taken into

account, and demographics would obviously be one of those.

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

Riverview Manor

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

According to PEI Statistics Bureau's 2015 population report, Kings County seniors make up 21.1% of the population while the Canadian average is only 16.1%. Senior citizens in Kings County increased from 2,828 in 2006 to 3,706 in 2015, a 24% increase in less than a decade.

Question to the minister: Given the aging population in Kings County, why is the planned replacement for the Riverview Manor, already twice delayed, the same size as the existing facility?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, once again, we have done significant investments into long-term care in this province.

In fact, actually, I think we've increased long-term care beds in this province since 2007 by about 145 new beds.

When it comes to the issue of the Riverview Manor, yes, it's unfortunate that we didn't get construction started this fiscal year, but it is going start next year. All the planning is in place.

Mr. Trivers: It's not going to be big enough. Why is it the same size?

Mr. Henderson: We are going to be replacing that facility at the same amount of beds that are currently there.

But we're also in the process of working on a long-term care strategy in this province. Things that we're going to be looking at are the potential of more beds that will be distributed across the province, the situation of how we assess long-term care, and we'll try to be developing that as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

HW and rural PEI

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

It seems to me we have two choices here. We either do what this government has chosen to do, which is to ignore the demographic trends and do nothing to prepare for that, or we look to the future, we take action, and we start to plan for the decline that has been going on in rural communities on Prince Edward Island for decades.

A government official recently stated that the new approach to rural development would include every department.

A question to the minister: How will the department of health contribute to building a vibrant and prosperous rural Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we look at a holistic approach to this province, whether it's regarding the health care of Islanders or whether it's the long-term care needs of Islanders.

When we talk about long-term care and having our seniors age gracefully and with pride and dignity in this province, there's a number of approaches that you can take. One of the services that are out there, obviously through the private, non-profit sector, are the community care facilities that are out there. I believe in the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, there's an expansion going on there in community care.

Ms. Compton: Waiting for the (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: We also look at the issues around home care and supports, Mr. Speaker.

We've increased our home care investment in our department I think about 40-some per cent in the last number of years, and will continue to invest in home care, but also, as

we look and as we move forward about a long-term care strategy.

If you are well aware, we have 1,141 long-term beds in this province. Those beds are distributed in the private sector as well as they are in the public sector. We will be reviewing those, and we do that periodically to make sure that our long-term care beds are utilized properly and that they're distributed across the province properly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Adult literary organizations

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A recent study by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development in partnerships with Statistics Canada showed the province had a rate of 45% illiteracy among Islanders aged 16-65 years.

Could the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning update the House on his department's work with adult literacy organizations on Prince Edward Island?

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

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

We have to go to the individual that has a problem with reading or writing or math. Their world is closed when it comes to the online world, when it comes to working in societies today. We have to do everything we can as a government to assist people in learning to read and write and numeracy.

Our department is working extremely hard with organizations across the province to outreach to as many people that require upgrading in order for them to gain skills in the reading and writing area.

Last year we had a family in this Legislature from Scotchfort. The father said he went back to school because he could not read to his daughter. He went to school, got a reading skill, and that person has a new life now. He can read to his daughter, he can read himself. We are doing everything we

can to increase across Prince Edward Island the skills that people require in order to increase reading and writing, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your first supplementary question.

Federal literacy funding cutbacks

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to compliment the government on their generosity with the *Guardian's* Raise a Reader Program, contributing money to that.

There have been federal cutbacks in literacy funding in recent years. Has the minister reviewed this matter with federal MPs, or the federal minister that's responsible?

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

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

I, too, want to congratulate all the donors of Raise a Reader, it was a great event across Prince Edward Island. I'd say all the MLAs in this Legislature took part in it, raising money to help our fellow Islanders learn how to read and write, a great cause.

I was proud to announce also that the Province of Prince Edward Island made an equal contribution to the number that was contributed by the people of Prince Edward Island. That money goes a long way on helping a lot of people on Prince Edward Island.

The federal government recognizes that there is an issue with this, not only in Prince Edward Island but right across this country. We are working with the federal government to come up with new programs in order to outreach more and more, mostly to people that require the services. We will be working with the federal government in order to ensure that these programs are given equally across the board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second supplementary question.

Adult literacy and Rotary program

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Charlottetown Rotary Club has a literacy initiative, and I just wondered: Would the minister work with this organization, or his department contact Rotary, to advance their program?

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

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

I do want to thank the Rotary Club of Prince Edward Island for their efforts in assisting in this matter. It is great that organizations come forward to assist this. All Islanders recognize this as being a concern, and all Islanders are willing to assist in helping fellow Islanders gain skills that are required.

I will work with any organization that comes along that is wanting to help other Islanders advance themselves. Because if all Islanders don't have an opportunity to advance, that's not the kind of Prince Edward Island, I don't think, any Islander wants. We will do whatever we can to assist anyone requiring skill level upgrades to have those skill level upgrades.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Western Hospital activity director

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a little odd not looking directly at him when he's right beside me to ask the question. Anyway, my question is for the minister of health and wellness.

There are currently a number of patients in the Western Hospital in Alberton that have been medically discharged and they're waiting to get into a manor bed or a long-term care facility. I've been hearing from the families of these patients, and they're telling

me that their loved ones' mobility is declining from lack of an activity director.

My question today to the minister here is: Will you look at finding some funding somewhere to hire an activity director for these folks that are spending up to several months in the hospital?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

It is good to have the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville next to me here. We're kind of partners for the west.

Anyway, it is an important issue here and I would say that the well-being of Island seniors is extremely important to our government, and myself as the minister, and we have and will invest in the care and comfort and independence of our Island seniors.

Just to clarify a little bit about the hon. member's question in regard there, there are currently about 12 Islanders that have been medically discharged at Western Hospital in Alberton and they are awaiting long-term care. There is about four at the Community Hospital in O'Leary and about nine at Prince County Hospital. Together it's very important that we work on trying to improve the transition of those individuals from hospital beds eventually into long-term care.

We are doing that currently. We have offered that our long-term care facilities work and invite those in acute care to go to those long-term care day programs, and we have a number of other programs to help transition those Islanders into long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, your first supplementary.

Transportation and mobility activity

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Is there transportation available for these folks to get to these programs? I think most of them would be in a bed and would have very limited mobility. (Indistinct).

Is there transportation provided for these folks to get this or will you look at maybe, even if it was on a part-time basis, hiring somebody to go into the facilities on a part-time basis and provide different types of activities that they may require to keep the mobility and enhance their quality of life?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, when we do look at the situation there are opportunities to transition people from acute care. The families, we can coordinate things around that. We also have services through Transportation West.

But I think I would want to comment that the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville has made a good point and he has continued to lobby on behalf of his constituents.

He may be also aware that if he read the Public Service Commission website that on October 26th there was a position advertised for the western region as a project coordinator to look at the holistic approach to integrating some of our services around recreation. As well, we also hired recently an occupational therapist in the west and those individuals are going to look at trying to integrate those people into all the services that (Indistinct) enjoy their stay at those hospitals.

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

Ferry service

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This summer our province suffered an entirely avoidable crisis with the Wood Islands ferry service. A number of people here in the gallery, and overflow at the J. Angus MacLean Building, are here today. It concerned them and I'm here to ask some questions on that.

The problem came to light in May and the Premier failed to say a single thing on this issue until the end of July.

Premier, why have you failed to show leadership on the ferry issue?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, within 24 hours of the announcement of the withdrawal of the ferry I was in touch, my office was in touch, with the office of Minister Lawrence MacAulay, and through him with the federal government, to suggest a very precise solution, which was to point out that the *Captain Earl Windsor* ferry that has operated on the Fogo Island run and the Change Islands run in Newfoundland and has now been replaced by a vessel named the *MV Veteran* – the *Captain Earl Windsor* formerly operated on the Nova Scotia-PEI run – and to make the precise suggestion and to urge the federal government to seek out the availability of the *Captain Earl Windsor* to serve on the PEI-Nova Scotia run.

Our approach was to get to work on it and we did.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear that you do have that pull and that you will continue to move this issue. But it would have been good for Islanders, especially Islanders in eastern PEI, to realize that you were working on their behalf. The only thing we heard was blame, and after three months you came forward after I basically said you didn't.

We would like to know, Premier, why you didn't share with us what you were doing on behalf of Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I think is very important for all of us, community advocates, members on all sides of this House, and our government to bear in mind, is that the Nova Scotia-PEI ferry service is an interprovincial undertaking under the full responsibility of the federal government, a constitutional responsibility of the federal government that has been funded by the federal government from its inception, the ferries and the docks and the landing facilities.

Our approach to this was to advocate from day one, to reach out, to take steps, and to let it be known that we were looking for solutions, but not to step into the space where the federal government could get away from its responsibility.

Our view is that it's the Department of Transport, Northumberland Ferries as the company, and ultimately the federal government as the order of government with the constitutional responsibility to provide that service. We have been very direct in every sense in letting it be known that we favour a two-ferry effective, continuous, and modern service on that run because we understand what it means to this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Favouring two ferries is not enough, Premier. We need you to operate and offer some solutions to this province, to Eastern PEI, on the ferry problem that we had all summer long. To say that you made a phone call is not enough. This is affecting ferry workers, truckers, small businesses, and many constituents, Premier. They face challenges in Wood Islands, the workers face challenges with the tourists that were there, how upset they were. This is a vital transportation link of the province.

Premier, why is the Wood Islands ferry not a major infrastructure priority for your government? It affects the province.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

Mr. MacKay: Minister soapbox here.

Speaker: Order, please!

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I first of all want to welcome all of the workers that are here in the gallery and those that are watching.

I want to assure those people that are here and the people of Kings County that my department has been working very diligently in communicating with the minister of transportation, the federal minister, on behalf of our concerns as to why this ferry – and we also want answers from Newfoundland ferries as to why that was let to get to the stage that it got to that it was taken out of service.

Our responsibility is not for infrastructure –

Mr. LaVie: Newfoundland ferries?

Ms. Biggar: – for the ferries and I want to make that very clear.

In regard to the Northumberland Ferries, the federal government is responsible not only for the ferries, but also for maintaining the infrastructure that goes with that ferry.

Now, we do not have a mandate or criteria from infrastructure dollars that was delegated to Prince Edward Island to put towards the ferries, and we are adamant that the federal government should honour their commitment constitutionally to this province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, final question.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great. We understand it's constitutionally a federal issue. Twenty-seven million dollars in the economy of this province comes from that ferry service. This is a provincial issue.

Premier, I am calling on you to set up a ferry task force to be established with local voices, the federal government, our partners in Nova Scotia – including the premier and the transportation minister – and your government.

Will you show leadership and sign on a ferry task force for a development of a long-term plan for our ferry?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I know this matter is to be debated shortly in a

motion, at least that's my understanding, and I'd be happy to speak on that at the time.

But let me say I think we should all recognize, and I think all Prince Edward Islanders do, and certainly people in Eastern Prince Edward Island, that this province and the eastern part of this province are very fortunate to have one of the most capable representatives in an MP and in a regional minister in the hon. Lawrence MacAulay who's represented that district for almost 30 years and is totally committed to this.

We're working very closely with the hon. Lawrence MacAulay and respect the part that he plays, and are totally behind his efforts, and in partnership with the efforts of the federal government, to solve the problem and provide an effective two-ferry service at Wood Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: During today's Responses to Questions Taken as Notice, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism rose in response to my question yesterday and stated the board of IIDI approved the egaming loan on November 14th, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister and his staff were listening, or if they would have referred to Hansard, page 304, they would know that I actually asked: What date did the IIDI board recommend the write-off of the egaming loan to the Treasury Board?

I'd ask the minister to answer this now since he has the information from this staff.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, are you prepared to answer? If not, I will take that under advisement and come back.

Mr. MacDonald: Take it under advisement.

Speaker: Okay. Hon. member, I will take it under advisement.

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) got to listen over there. You're not paying attention. It's not a joke. It's serious.

Statements by Ministers

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SEAM and STAR programs

Our government places a high priority on helping youth develop their skills and make a successful transition to the workforce.

Two successful programs were implemented this summer that gave youth an opportunity to gain valuable life skills and work experience.

The Departments of Workforce and Advanced Learning and Family and Human Services joined forces with community and business organizations to provide summer employment for 30 high school youth called the Skills Enhancement and Mentoring program, or affectionately known as SEAM.

The departments partnered with the community of St. Peters Bay and the East Prince Youth Development Centre in Summerside and Rural Community Learning Inc. in Alberton as project sponsors.

The program included a mentorship, a one-week workshop for students to develop life and work skills, and a six-week private sector work experience.

I'm very pleased to say that of the 30 participants, 29 students finished successful work placements and 27 are back in school.

One of the program participants, who was shy and nervous before the program started, had such a successful work term he was offered a permanent part-time job. He is currently managing the job well while also attending high school full-time.

Another successful program aimed at youth is the Start to Apply Right Program, also known affectionately as STAR.

The Departments of Workforce and Advanced Learning, Family and Human Services, and Education, Early Learning and Culture collaborated with UPEI to provide a unique summer employment program for 10 high school students.

The program participants worked on a virtual wellness site at UPEI, where they gained skills on coding, platform-based web technology, critical thinking, and problem solving. All 10 high school youth completed their internships successfully and are all back at school.

This program was highly sought after by participants. In fact, one student ran more than nine kilometres from his home for an interview to ensure he had an opportunity to be chosen for the program.

The goals of these programs is to motivate youth to further their education, learn new skills, and enhance their self-confidence so they are in a better place and a better position to secure sustainable work.

It's important to offer support to students at a point in their lives when they are making critical decisions which can impact their future direction.

These programs are great examples of how we are working together across government departments to achieve higher levels of employment, including specific strategies for youth on Prince Edward Island.

Our government will continue to work with young Islanders to help them make a successful transition to workforce. The ultimate goal is to have them launch new careers right here on Prince Edward Island where they can become engaged, valuable members of our educated workforce and reach their full potential in a place where anything is possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will concur, this is a great program. I had the opportunity to go to the closing of the

summer one that was in St. Peters. A good friend of mine, Barry O'Brien – some of you might know him from Muddy Buddy, he's a local entertainer, singer – he is active in the program in the St. Peters area. Great individual, top shelf individual, wonderful with young people. It's a great program to help build the skills and the confidence of some of these young people to get them into the work force.

Also, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention in my area Jimmy MacAulay and Mary Burge who have been instrumental in accommodating them, doing whatever they can to find space to help them when they organize the (Indistinct) which is tomorrow, and I'll be attending the one in St. Peters tomorrow afternoon.

It has become, for that community, kind of a community process and the more people that you can get involved in that process it makes it that much easier at the other end when you have the students coming out. There's a wide level of understanding in that area of the program and what's going on. I do want to commend the government for that because I do think it's a program that's much needed and I do think it's a program that's having success.

I can't say enough about Barry who is at the helm of it in the St. Peters area and the great work that he's doing in that area in particular with the youth, and I hope to see it continue and I hope to see Barry continue down there as well.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Of the two programs and the 40 children who were involved in that, it's wonderful, and I commend the department on this. Also, we don't just prepare our youth for the future, we have to hope that their future is spent here on Prince Edward Island. Training for jobs is one thing, but we have to make sure that this is part of an integrated, coherent approach to offering

positions, jobs, for these youth when they finally do come out of these programs.

As I was talking about in Question Period, the enormity of the problem in our rural communities which have been in decline for so long needs to be turned around. I only hope that we can offer the services required in rural Prince Edward Island to revive that part of our province and provide opportunities for these children so that when they are finished and have the skills that they require that there are positions for them to stay here, raise their families, and contribute to revitalizing rural Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

StartUp Zone

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In June of this year our government reaffirmed its commitment to support new companies and young entrepreneurs with the launch of the StartUp Zone. The prime downtown business incubator space was designed to promote entrepreneurial risk-taking and bold ideas, all in an environment that fosters a collaborative and connected culture. It's a great space and a great way to assist new companies and original entrepreneurs.

These innovators among us are a great example of how Islanders know how to pursue their dreams using a recipe of equal parts ambition mixed with hard work.

Approved companies receive six months of subsidized space and access to programming at no cost to the business.

The StartUp Zone has only been open for five months, but already there has been tremendous uptake on the supports, services, and space.

The StartUp Zone is currently home to 16 startup companies including: Airbly, Forestry.io, Found, Lift Media, Toon Animation, Mighty Pebble Games, Rabbit

Hole Studios, Remote Vision, Screen Breaker Games, StoryBrush Studios, TopFeed, TNT Food Experience, AlphaTech, Stay Golden, Contact-DB, and AD Blocking Aware.

For example, Forestry.io has been selected to participate in Tech Stars in New York City, one of the top incubator spaces in North America.

Mighty Pebble Games is a one-man company founded by James O'Halloran who just had his game, Miner Meltdown, selected to go on the platform known as Steam for sale around the world. He's working around the clock at the StartUp Zone to have the game ready for distribution in February.

Three companies are already moving on and setting up shop together in a new shared space. I define that as a tremendous success.

The StartUp Zone is also hosting nine IT Garage participants of the next three months. IT Garage is a post-secondary graduate mentorship program for potential video game and software developers.

The StartUp Zone has also partnered with Propel ICT (an Atlantic Canadian accelerator), Ladies Learning Code, PEI Developers Group, and Culture PEI.

This weekend the space will be hosting the StartUp Weekend. StartUp Weekend is all about learning about entrepreneurship through launching a business. Participants pitch ideas, form teams, and receive wisdom from 20 smart and talented community members on how to build a business. The weekend ends with teams pitching their business to a panel of judges for a chance to win over \$3,000 in prizes.

StartUp Zone is also seeking collaborative opportunities with other incubators including the DMZ at Ryerson University in Toronto.

This new space is providing startup companies with an incredible opportunity to get their business off the ground. The StartUp Zone is an excellent addition to our existing entrepreneurial supports and I'm pleased to say it has been a tremendous success so far. It continues to help some very bright Islanders turn big dreams into

reality, and serves as a testament to the future of entrepreneurs among us that anything is possible on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's really great to hear that the StartUp Zone in Charlottetown is so successful and it does provide services that are essential for startup companies when they're getting running, especially in that six-month period at the beginning when they're starting up.

One thing I do notice is that the StartUp Zone is in Charlottetown, and like many of these programs they're focused around the urban areas. I would suggest and I would implore the minister to consider expanding some of these startup zones into other rural areas of the province. I know that there are quite a few people in District 18 Rustico-Emerald that are involved in these very sort of startup ventures and many of them, of course, are commuting to Charlottetown to use spaces like the StartUp Zone.

There's lots, whether it be Hunter River or New Glasgow or North Rustico, or even Wheatley River on the eastern side. You can go to Stanley Bridge or New London. All these places could benefit from the StartUp Zone like that. I'm just talking about my district, but across the Island I'm sure there are similar places.

I would encourage you to think of the Island as a whole and not be focused on the urban areas all the time. Although this is a great program – don't get me wrong – I was wondering if I could ask a question of clarification? That is: Will this StartUp Zone be expanded to other areas outside of the urban areas?

You're allowed to ask clarification on minister's statements.

Speaker: I will allow the minister to clarify.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: Basically, yes. At the time of the development the centre core was chosen because of the unknown circumstances of developing something like this. You wanted to be close to the post-secondary institutions because we realize that many of them are students that also go to school. You could drive by the zone at any time of day, it could be 2:00 a.m., and there are people in there working and that's for a reason, because some of them work at jobs and they also go to school and they're trying to live out their dream.

But also, there is an incubator in Montague and I believe Summerside, so we have shared the resource and we'll continue to do so. With the success so far, I feel that, yes, there is potential to grow in different parts of the province.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I mean, this is a great initiative. I've spent some time in the StartUp Zone and also the spot, and there's a real kind of buzz and vigor about the place, it's absolutely lovely.

But in my notes here as to how I was going to respond to this I have rural equivalent written down, and we already have a sort of semi-answer to that. But I think it's important that, again, this needs to be a coherent integrated approach. The kinds of people who are creating these new businesses have creative minds, they're critical thinkers. We don't have an education system that promotes that sort of learning.

I think if we want to produce more entrepreneurs here on Prince Edward Island who are given the freedom and the individual care that it requires to be the creative types of thinkers that create this, we need to massage our education system a bit as well.

On a final thought about creating these centres, perhaps in more rural districts, of course, if we're talking about high-tech centres then we're going to have to have

adequate rural broadband Internet connectivity, and that's something that I'm afraid is sorely lacking. Were you to try and install the Startup Zone, for example, in many parts of my district it just wouldn't work at all.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Buy Local-Successful Initiatives

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

Here's a statement that we can all agree on: Prince Edward Island is home to some of the most delicious, high-quality food and drink products in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: That's why it's so very important that every one of us plays our part to support our local producers by purchasing and consuming local products.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries leads several support local initiatives throughout the year. In 2016 we were blown away by their growth and success.

During this year's Burger Love promotion there were more than 160,000 burgers sold, which translates into almost 72,000 lbs. of Island beef. The estimated minimum economic impact of Burger Love to all of Prince Edward Island from tip to tip was over \$3.5 million.

In June, there was the Love our Lobster campaign. There were more than \$120,000 in lobster sales during the campaign with 20 retailers participating right across the province.

The Best of Sea campaign featured our entire seafood industry. The response this year was incredible. The response from Island restaurants was up 166% over last

year, with nearly 5,000 Island seafood-based dishes sold.

Then came Porktoberfest that just wrapped up last month. It has inspired more than 15,000 pounds of Island pork to be consumed in creative dishes by Island chefs during this campaign since 2012.

A new buy-local initiative my department worked on this year in partnership with the Liquor Control Commission was That's Island Style. The campaign encouraged Islanders to think about Island products and how they could be incorporated into their home meals while they're grocery shopping. Several recipes were created that feature Island products – everything from blueberries to potatoes to beef to mussels to strawberries. As a result, we served more than 14,000 samples of Island food and drink at 35 stores across the Island.

In addition to these great campaigns, we also have program-based support for buying local. Our Agri-food Promotion Program and our Agri-food Market Development Program centre on 52 projects that support local industry growth.

I think these statistics show that Islanders take great pride in our products, and I encourage all Islanders to continue showing this pride by supporting local industries.

One of our hallmarks as Islanders is that we work hard and we support each other. By buying local and from our Island producers all Islanders win.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is great news and it is a local initiative. Anytime we can keep our own product on Prince Edward Island and get Prince Edward Islanders to eat our own products, it's great for Prince Edward Island.

I know it started off with Burger Love and from Burger Love it has just grown, and it's just growing and growing. It's great for our

industries here on Prince Edward Island, especially our two main industries, fishing and farming. I grew up in a fishing family, so I know exactly what it means to make sure Prince Edward Island supports our industries.

Kudos to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for supporting these initiatives right here on Prince Edward Island. It's very important for Prince Edward Island and I know it will continue next election when we're on that side of the House. We will continue to the initiatives on it also.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As you might imagine, I am in full support of this statement, minister.

In my member's statement this morning I talked about the 'Cafeteria Man' and the impact that he has had on his community down in the States. He estimates that if we were to incorporate institutional buying here, and if only 20% of the procurement for our school lunch program was taken from local buyers, it could have an impact of \$30 million on our local economy here.

This is not small stuff, this is big, and I absolutely support this and I thank the minister for the statement.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the annual operating expenses for the Office of the Premier 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that

the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the documents – a letter from myself to Minister Marc Garneau, November 4th, 2015, guest opinion from myself on the ferry disruption, long-term planning article from the *Guardian* about meeting with the MLA from Nova Scotia about the ferry service, a letter to Minister Biggar of July 27th, 2016 when we heard from government, a letter to Marc Garneau on July 27th, 2016, and an article from CBC news dated September 30th, 2016 – and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table written questions to the Minister of Health and Wellness and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, 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

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, opposition would like to call Motion No. 69 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Motion No. 69.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, the following motion:

WHEREAS the ferry service between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia suffered through its worst season in years owing to the absence of the MV Holiday Island and a reduced sailing schedule;

AND WHEREAS the ferry service provides a vital link in the regional transportation network, enabling economic development for many important industries, including agriculture, fisheries, tourism and construction providing approximately \$27 million annually to the Island economy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the province of Prince Edward Island work collaboratively with local stakeholders and the federal government to set up a taskforce to examine long-term sustainable solutions for the Wood Island-Caribou ferry service.

Speaker: Now I will call upon the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to an urgent matter of the future, the future service at the Wood Islands ferry terminal.

Our motion is calling for establishment of a task force to develop long-term sustainable solutions for the Wood Islands-Caribou ferry service.

We are proposing a task force because we believe that the uncertainty that surrounds the operation and sustainability of the service needs to disappear. We need to put a halt to the annual guessing game of funding contract, no funding contract, reduced funding, no funding. This constant instability is unacceptable.

We need the resources to ensure that Northumberland Ferries has the ability to provide two ferries that are in good repair, operate each day, and in a timely fashion.

I think all of us will agree that the service is vital not only to the residents of eastern PEI,

but to the economy of our province. I think we can all agree that it's time there was a long-term funding agreement, service arrangement, and a sustainable future.

Annually, over 400,000 people cross the Strait on one of our ferries. In addition, each year 160,000 vehicles and 18,000 commercial trucks carry goods to eastern Canadian markets. This service generates \$27 million annually to the economy of this province.

The ferry operation actually generates revenue that provides jobs for Islanders. It also meets the needs of our commercial trucking industry and the farmers, fishers, retailers, and shippers who utilize this service to get their goods to market. It helps cut down their costs and ensures that businesses and primary industries can be competitive with other areas of the region.

It is time that this becomes a priority for this government and for our federal government.

The simple fact is that we cannot afford to let this service disappear. Ottawa needs to hear, loud and clear, from this province that this service is imperative to this province or they will do nothing. If our provincial government doesn't see this as a priority, then why should they?

Our province should also be enlisting the help of the minister from Nova Scotia as well as the Premier of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia garners \$12 million annually through the operation of the service from Caribou.

We are talking about the livelihood of individuals who work on this ferry. We are talking about hundreds of businesses that benefit from the passage that travels through our towns and communities. We are also talking about a commercial trucking industry that uses this service as a shortcut to eastern Canadian and US markets for their goods, and it saves them money and hours on the road, not to mention the carbon footprint that is involved here.

Take away the ferry service and many of these businesses will fold. Workers will be out of jobs and the economy of our province will lose that \$27 million. The statistic show the number of jobs in our province have been in the decline for some time – 4,300

over the last year – and frankly, we cannot afford to lose any more jobs in our province or in eastern PEI.

I think Kevin Stewart of the Wood Islands Development Corporation made an important point during the shutdown of the services this summer. He said: I'll tell you, in the afternoons I'll drive around, and that's the same thing that I feel is going to start happening to the ferry service, and eventually there will be no ferry service if that continues on.

That's why we absolutely need the second ferry. If not a brand new one, then a more useful second ferry. Maybe not new, maybe a used ferry. This ferry service is invaluable to all parts of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Not just the gateways, but the surrounding communities. We must ensure that this service is restored to its full capacity as soon as possible, not only for tourism but for our commercial trade too – and trucks and anything that is being carried back and forth on the ferries. As Mr. Stewart said, driving around on the Confederation Bridge is not an option.

If we lose our ferry service, it will impede the future economic development of eastern Prince Edward Island and the livelihoods of a large segment of our population.

There's no doubt that the experience of summer was a nightmare. There were long lineups of traffic, hours of time wasted waiting to board a ferry that was not in operation. There was confusion, frustration, and anger.

I want to take a moment to commend Northumberland Ferries' workers who faced the complaints, the anger, and the frustration. Not only were their jobs impacted by the travesty of the breakdowns of the ferries, but they were the ones who also had to bear the brunt of their customers who were not happy. It was not an easy summer for them, and as I stated during the summer, these workers are unsung heroes.

Through it all they had to deal with the indifference of two levels of government. This problem came to light in May, and the Premier failed to say a single thing in public on this issue until the end of July. Two months without a word to eastern PEI or all

Islanders. The federal minister of transportation came to the Charlottetown airport and this government did not raise the ferry issue or did not take him to Wood Islands. The Prime Minister made a pre-statement off-Island about the ferry and refused to take questions when he actually arrived on the Island by plane. Coming from New Glasgow he came by plane, didn't take the ferry.

That is a slap in the face to all of us. It was hard to take for me, and I know that many in my area felt abandoned by this government, their Premier, and their Prime Minister.

Our opposition certainly tried to get in the ears of the Premier and the federal government through letters, press releases, town halls, and petitions, but there was no doubt that when the going got tough the workers and the businesses of eastern Kings and eastern PEI were left floundering.

I'm not going to dwell on the past. It's gone. We hope our area will never have to experience this loss of service again. Surely if our governments decide that the ferry service is a priority the dollars can be found and the work can begin to ensure that we have a very viable ferry service, and maybe that includes replacement of ferries. After all, the federal and provincial government had no problem partnering for \$65 million out of the blue for a six-mile highway in Cornwall. I would like to see them jump as quickly to action on the ferry.

I'm asking this House to come together in a collaborative effort to support our motion and to have all the stakeholders involved form a ferry taskforce that will ensure our service is secure for all concerned.

I will close now and look forward to debate on this topic from all my colleagues in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do think this is a very important issue, not just for rural Prince Edward Island, not just for Kings County, but for all of Prince Edward Island. That's why during debate the other day, when the Leader of the Green Party said that the plebiscite was the most important issue for Islanders, I show you the people in the gallery who quite possibly might disagree with you because the ferry is a very important link for Kings County. He would know that if he was in touch with Kings County. That and many other issues that are affecting the lives of Islanders in my riding, but we'll get to that when we get to that debate.

Like the Member from Belfast-Murray River, I don't feel like the Premier did nearly enough on this if anything at all. It's disappointing. I know from talking to people in my area, in the Cardigan-Georgetown, kind of the greater Montague area, they were really disappointed in government's inaction. You waited a long time, there's no question about it, to make any noise about it.

The people of eastern Prince Edward Island were lucky to have the voice that they had in the Member from Belfast-Murray River, and I think she did a wonderful job representing not only her constituents, but the people of Kings County and the people of Prince Edward Island on this issue.

Maybe that's why, over the years, Islanders have always chosen a government that was opposite of the government in Ottawa because they didn't feel like governments of the same stripe would fight nearly hard enough. I think, perhaps, we're seeing it here through this government when it comes to Ottawa.

There's not a question in my mind that Justin Trudeau is not a strong leader for Canada, and I would have hoped that we would have strong leadership here in Prince Edward Island when fighting this issue, but I, too, was disappointed when the only announcement, the only time we've ever heard from the Prime Minister of Canada about this vital linkage for eastern Prince Edward Island, he did it from Nova Scotia, and not from Pictou. From way down in the valley he made that announcement. He wasn't anywhere near the ferry. He was at least a two-hour drive from the ferry when

he did it and then jumped in his plan and flew here.

Mr. Aylward: Would have made a great selfie (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: Yeah, it would have made a great selfie, especially on a nice sunny day. Sunny days, sunny ways, right?

The minister of transportation did promise back in the summer money. We haven't seen that money. I'm not sure what it was that she was talking about, but she did promise money, I read it in the paper.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: Islanders are waiting – I believe the *Guardian*, even though some of you may question it.

I think that it's important that government makes their move. They never were clear on what they were going to do. I do sit on the committee that held the hearings and it was wonderful to do it right in Wood Islands. It was wonderful to see all of the people who came out, the people with local interests, business people, community leaders in that area, to come out and present to the committee and speak their minds and tell us why it was so important.

At that meeting one of the Liberal members of the committee promised a new ferry. The Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point promised the people in the audience a new ferry –

An Hon. Member: Good God.

Mr. Myers: She did it. It was in Hansard. I read it. I actually have the audio clip on my computer. You can come over and listen to it afterwards. She promised a new ferry.

I think this is what, when we talk about governments of the day, and why are people upset, it's because it's all too easy just to say stuff and promise stuff. People are quite cynical to the actual operation of government because we hear so much and see so little.

Action is something that was always needed on this ferry file. Action was being called for by the Member from Belfast-Murray

River immediately when it happened way back at the start of the season, way back before summer came in, way back before the Premier knew about it, way back before the Premier decided to do anything about it, way back before the Premier realized that Kings County was as important as the rest of Prince Edward Island.

Sixty-five million dollars this Premier was able to come up with to build a highway to make the drive from Borden to Charlottetown three minutes quicker. Sixty-five million dollars for the drive to Charlottetown to be three minutes quicker without coming to this Legislature, without telling us about in last fall's Capital Budget. Without ever making any single announcement in this House he spent \$65 million to make the drive to Charlottetown three minutes quicker. On the ferry file – crickets. Complete crickets, until he finally got called out by the Member from Belfast-Murray River on the file and had no choice but to respond.

While I'm on the topic of quicker drives to Charlottetown, I know at a public meeting in the Premier's own riding about a bridge that his staff had decided didn't need a temporary passing while they built a new one. The government employee who was out there selling the idea to the local residents informed them that the drive around would only make it three minutes longer to get to Charlottetown. That's what they're concerned about, like, everybody wants to go to Charlottetown.

This is the mentality that you guys have. This is the mentality that you're spreading across Prince Edward Island that everybody wants to get to Charlottetown quicker, like we don't have other places we need to go. Or that truckers don't need to go to sell, to take goods across to Nova Scotia or back. We're not trying to get to Charlottetown, we're trying to get our goods to market.

I need you to understand that. The local business person Scott Annear presented at the committee and I asked him: How much would be tacked onto your average load? He gave us figures. It was around \$200 to \$250 if you were going to Halifax. It depends on where he went. It was all very fair and he knew it well. I asked him: Does he just eat those costs? Like, how do those costs – and

he said: No, of course I don't. I knew he didn't because why would he? He's trying to make money.

What the Premier needs to understand, and I hope before the day's over he does, is that additional cost got turned over to somebody here on Prince Edward Island. Somebody had trucked something either off-Island and paid the extra money, or somebody had trucked something back here and a local farmer may have paid the extra for it. A local construction company may have paid the extra for it. A small family who was trying to put a little bit of gravel in their yard paid for it. Somebody who was putting a swing set up for their kids might have paid for it. That's who paid for this. That's who paid for this mistake that you guys made by not fighting for the ferry – Islanders.

While it was frustrating for everyone, there was a cost associated to it. I know, I talked to one of the local companies down my way – and I won't name who they are – but they stopped using the ferry altogether and just drove around because they couldn't rely on it. They didn't know if they could get down there what would happen. They'd have to wait in line forever. They just started driving around adding hours and hours onto the day. One time they were able to make two to three trips a day. They were making one.

Ms. Compton: If they were lucky.

Mr. Myers: If they were lucky. Now they're going all the time, driving all the days and all the nights just to try to do what they were able to do three times a day. Doing it once now.

It's a really big issue and I want to hear from everybody. I think the people who came here today want to hear from members just to hear their thoughts.

I am definitely in favour of this motion. I'm definitely in favour of the ferry. It is a very vital link for eastern Prince Edward Island. It's a very vital link for me, for the people who live and work around me. For the businesses that operate in my area it is a very vital link.

I'll leave you with one last story. I know anybody who follows farming there is a grain elevator in Brudenell and it was full.

In order to get the profits out of that, that has to go to market. It goes by truck and it's containered in Halifax. Tell me who made money this year off of that. Tell me who took the loss? Was it the grain elevator corporation? Was it the truckers? Was it the farmers? You can rest assured, when you get it to Halifax, they're not saying: I feel bad for you, it cost you extra money to get it here, we'll cover that, we'll help you out. That's not the way the world works. If only it was so easy just to tack that extra money onto your product so you could still make profit. Somebody didn't make profit on that. Somebody lost money. That's only one instance of that happening. There are all kinds of products from here on Prince Edward Island, in the summertime, that's so important that we're able to get it off the Island.

We can't let this happen again. We need to be much more proactive than we were last summer, though we were, but the government over there wouldn't listen to us and Ottawa ignored the issue entirely.

This is on the radar. It's important that it stays on the radar. It's important that it doesn't happen again. It's important that we all come together to make sure that the voice of Islanders is heard, not only to this government and to this Premier, but to Ottawa.

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 strongly support this motion. When I first came to the Island back in 1990 I had to deal with the ferries on a daily basis. I saw and heard how important the ferries were to the Province of Prince Edward Island during that period of 1990 until I retired from policing in 2005.

I don't think you took this matter serious enough. You are the Premier and minister of transportation and you should have stuck up for Kings County and you didn't do it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: I also said I don't think the hon. Lawrence MacAulay stuck up strong enough on this issue. Over the years we have heard the hon. federal minister criticize other governments on non-action with that ferry system.

I think that this government has failed to realize the important economic impact that this ferry provides to Kings County and also the Province of Prince Edward Island. You might sit there and you might say that it's a federal issue. It's more than a federal issue. It affects the lives of people in rural PEI and possibly the lives of every person in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Case in point: If today, or sometime during the summer, the Confederation Bridge would have went out of commission for some reason, what would have happened to moving our goods across the Province of Prince Edward Island? If we would have had some kind of disaster on the bridge or the bridge was shut down for an extended period of time, what would we have done?

I know for a fact – and actually my numbers were off because I asked the question to the standing committee – what is the shelf life of products on Prince Edward Island if we have no link? Back years ago I was led to believe it was four days. That was fine when DeBlois Food Distributors was in play and there was warehousing in food in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We do not have that luxury anymore.

People in the standing committee alluded to us that there might be two days of shelf life of produce or food on the shelves of Prince Edward Island. That's if the population stays current. Does not take into account what the population is during the summer tourist season. We have an influx in tourists and the bridge goes down, what would we do?

We need to look at – and this government should be pushing for it – you can sit over there and you can shake your head and think it's not serious, but it's serious. We should be looking at a year-round ice breaking capability ferry for this province to have working in Kings County year-round. I think everybody in this House should support that and this motion, and make sure we have the

capability to support Kings County and the rest of the province year-round.

What happened this summer, it might not have affected Charlottetown too much, but it disrupted the lives of ordinary hard-working people in Kings County. It affected small businesses that depend on tourism for their summers, it affected businesses that have to get their goods off the Island and get back. The hon. member mentioned that somebody paid for it. It affected somebody. As far as I'm concerned, we let the people of Kings County down. This caucus over here, they stood very strongly, and the hon. member should be congratulated for her stand on it. We need to see the government do the exact same thing. We cannot let this continue. I'm asking you to support this motion and I'm asking that we push the federal government for a year-round ferry in Kings County that also has ice-breaking capability that can offer year-round service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I want to welcome those who are in the gallery with us that are employees and residents of Kings County and Northumberland Ferries and those who may still be watching in the J. Angus MacLean Building.

I would also like to thank the Member from Belfast-Murray River and also the members opposite for introducing this motion.

This is a very important service, not just in Kings County and eastern Queens County, but for the Province of Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island has a definite interest in our ferry boat link to the mainland. Islanders and Island business depend on a ferry service being reliable, dependable, and predictable. We have a right to expect the highest level of highest quality service.

I don't think anyone that knows of this event this past summer would say that we had quality service that Islanders deserve. At the

11th hour we all found out that the service levels were going to be impacted by a ferry being out of commission. That kind of last-minute cancellation is unacceptable. People rely upon this service not just for holidays but to get to school, to conduct business, and to get to medical appointments in Nova Scotia. Islanders deserve and expect, and should expect, better.

I know this was frustrating for travellers, businesses, and of course the hard-working employees, and also very stressful for those employees of the Northumberland Ferries. I do see you here today and recognize your presence and thank you for your important service that you provide to PEI. I hope the federal government and the operators of Northumberland Ferries Limited also recognize that the level of service we saw this last summer should not be accepted.

Let me tell this House, though, our government made it very clear to Ottawa that we wanted the ferry service addressed. We made that message clear to our federal partners within 24 hours of finding out the *Holiday Island* would not be in service and we repeated that message at every level.

Those interventions include – and let me make it clear. A call was made between myself to Minister MacAulay and also between myself and the minister of transportation for federal, Minister Garneau. Minister MacDonald called Minister MacAulay. Minister MacAulay and the Premier met on a number of occasions. The Premier's office was in contact with Transport Canada. The Premier's office was in contact with Minister MacAulay. The Premier's office was in contact with Minister MacAulay about the use of *Captain Earl W. Winsor*, formerly known as *Prince Edward*, which was in Fogo Island.

The minister did have a meeting with Minister Garneau and representatives from our government when he was at Charlottetown airport, and there were calls to Newfoundland to secure a second boat. A meeting was also had with our Premier and Premier Ball of Newfoundland, and officials. The Premier, minister and Minister MacAulay also met with the Prime Minister. I do believe Ottawa is with us in principle. The federal government has been a good

partner in supporting transportation infrastructure investments.

Minister MacAulay has championed the support for the ferry during his 29 years as an MP for that area and now, as a minister, he continues to be at the table looking for that continued support. Our province has particular success in supporting and securing support from Ottawa this year in other areas.

But I would like to also note that in the federal 2016 budget – and I want to make this clear, it's the federal budget – there was \$51.9 million announced for three ferries for Atlantic Canada. I as transportation minister, and we as a government, insist that the service between PEI and Nova Scotia be given equal share of those dollars to ensure there is adequate ferry service to Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: We were able to persuade the federal government to increase its support for our inter-provincial power cable project, taking their share of cost to 69 million compared to \$50 million available under the previous government.

Similarly, when we look at road funding, our province has had terrific success in getting Ottawa to see things from the Island's point of view. It was PEI that led the province in getting federal infrastructure program to change its criteria so that rural connector roads would be eligible for cost-sharing.

We took the lead in these talks, even though rural parts of other provinces benefitted from this change. Prince Edward Island took the lead because rural transportation infrastructure is vital to our provincial economy and we believe the Government of Canada must meet its commitments to support that transportation. Now we need to tell them that we want continued support for full ferry service.

Perhaps the best indicator of that was in August 2016. During Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to Nova Scotia he expressed his support for maintaining the service between PEI and Nova Scotia.

We want to be clear that the bridge has not replaced the need of a reliable ferry connection to the Mainland. The ferry is an important part of the contingency plan for the bridge to New Brunswick. The Government of Canada has an obligation under the Constitution to maintain a link between Prince Edward Island and the Mainland.

In the event that something happens to interrupt the bridge services, the ferries would be our only point of wheeled-access on and off the Island. Our exports and imports of goods, our ability to visit other provinces, to seek education opportunities off-Island, and even our ability to get critical health services all depend on Islanders being able to drive conveniently and reliably from our province to the Mainland.

I want to assure everyone I have spoken personally with my federal counterparts asking for a stable funding arrangement for the ferry service and asking that they consider long-term commitments that would allow the service to invest in important infrastructure including, possibly, new boats to provide this service. Short-term service agreements between the federal government and the ferry operator, Northumberland Ferries Ltd., leave local business and tourism operators uncertain about their future.

We have made our position known to our federal partners, expressing our disappointment, and ensuring our commitment to the need for two ferries, and we also want answers from Northumberland Ferries Ltd. as to why issues weren't addressed earlier and how this will be prevented in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: We would like to see a long-term agreement signed, and we will lobby for that. That would see the service remain viable and ensure stability and reliability. Last summer's ferry problems came when our province was experiencing a record tourism year. We can only imagine how much better that year would have been with both ferries operating to their potential.

I think it still is important, again to reiterate, that the ferry service is not a shared

responsibility cost-wise of Ottawa and the provinces. The federal government has a duty to provide a reliable ferry service to our province. They spelled it out in the terms of the province's entry into Canada and it remains there and true today.

Some of the talk around this issue suggests that people would like to see Prince Edward Island begin to commit financial support to this service in other ways. I do disagree with that position. The taxpayers of Prince Edward Island should not be asked to take on a responsibility for this service, not when it is the duty of the federal government and not when we have so many others of our own provincial responsibilities that need and deserve investment.

While it may be tempting to ask the provincial government to take responsibility for this service, the fact is that this is a national responsibility. We are a partner in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Access from Prince Edward Island to the Mainland was a condition of our province joining Confederation and that remains non-negotiable even today. Canada as a whole has a responsibility for maintaining this level of connection.

We will, though, advocate for strong ferry links just as we advocated for a strong bridge link when that was built. We will not allow that responsibility to be shifted to the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island. For that reason – and I must say, I do support this motion, but I would like to make a friendly amendment to it before it goes for further discussion.

I do have copies for everyone. Just to add another whereas, and I will move that, seconded by the Premier. What I would like to add, just to make it clear in the motion – which I do think is a good motion and I know the rest of my colleagues here will support it –

Mr. LaVie: How come you amend it if it's a good motion? You're amending it.

Ms. Biggar: It's a friendly amendment that says:

And whereas the ferry service is a constitutional responsibility of the federal government as an interprovincial undertaking and the service, including the infrastructure, has been fully funded since its inception by the federal government.

Mr. LaVie: It's your responsibility (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: The rest of it will remain untouched.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and support the main motion, and I would have comments to make on that and will retain my place in the speaking order.

On the amendment, I think it's very important that all of us on all sides of this House, as advocates and as advocates from the community, that recognizes the importance, the economic importance, the importance to all of Prince Edward Island, the environmental importance.

Let me say – it is a point that hasn't been raised yet – but when you think of the greenhouse gases that are involved in having to travel around as opposed to have the benefit of the service between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, we should all advocate with all of the force we can indeed, and work through this task force that is proposed.

But I must say that I heard both the mover and the seconder speak in terms that cause me some concern that they don't actually appreciate the way in which this burden can be shifted to the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.

If you're talking about a \$100 million ferry and start talking about the Building Canada Program, that's \$50 million out of Prince Edward Island taxpayers' dollars that is going to be pretty hard to find when you're looking at other priorities that we've talked

about even today in this House in the eastern part of the province. From the time this service commenced going back decades it has been a financial responsibility of the federal government. It is part of the Constitution of Canada as an interprovincial undertaking and I think it's really important that we all understand that.

The federal government, through the department of transport, is not all that crazy about being in the ferry business and there are lots of ways in which provinces or local areas are finding that they're being left with responsibility and fiscal responsibility for ferries.

But this one is different. It runs between two provinces, between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and that responsibility and the funding responsibility, including for the on-land infrastructure for that ferry service, has never been questioned.

What's always in question is the advocacy and the timeliness and the quality of the service, and the investment in new infrastructure. It's with that in view and with the clear expression through a further recital in this motion that we are very concerned that all sides of the House and everybody who's speaking on behalf of urging the federal government to step up on this service, that everybody who's speaking on that behalf not start volunteering the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island to take half of the costs or perhaps all of the costs.

That's why I'm seconding this amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Do we have anybody else who would like to speak to the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, signify by saying "aye."

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: All those voting against the amendment, signify by saying "nay."

The amendment is carried.

Now we are speaking to the motion as amended.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Hon. member, you are now speaking to the motion as amended.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: As an amendment?

Speaker: No, the amended motion.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, as amended, yes. So I'm speaking – thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the amendment to the motion, which I think if the minister thought it was a great motion why would she have to amend it? Can I get the podium, please?

It is a very important ferry service. I understand that because I have an own ferry service in my own district, and there's 80,000 vehicles go through my district. Those 80,000 vehicles got to get through PEI to get back to Quebec. So I understand how important not only the eastern PEI, but all of PEI, this ferry service is very vital to the tourism industry of eastern PEI.

CTMA runs the ferry service in Souris to the Magdalen and it's all year round, so the Leader of the Opposition is right. We can have an all-year service from PEI to Nova Scotia. It doesn't have to shut down. If we can do it from the Magdalen to Souris, we can do it from PEI to Nova Scotia. It can be done and it should be looked at. That should be in the plan. That should be one of your plans.

Again, they're right. The minister of transportation said Lawrence MacAulay fought for this ferry for 30 years. He did fight for the ferry service for 30 years. I listened to him in the fall, I listened to him in the spring, and I listened to you fellows back him up when you fellows were in power. I listened to you when he was up there in power.

But, when the ferry service was down and out, where was Lawrence MacAulay? Where was he? Never heard of him.

Took a plane to get to PEI, he wouldn't even come across it, he was so embarrassed. He wouldn't even come across the ferry service. Lawrence MacAulay stood in a protest down in Souris. Where was Lawrence MacAulay when the mackerel fishery was shut down? Where was he? Never heard of him.

He sat there in a protest against the herring fishers, but when - you were there, and I know what you did down there, too. So where was Lawrence Macaulay when the mackerel seiners cut the mackerel? Didn't want to be seen.

No, because he's a minister up there now. It was all right when he was in opposition. It was great when he was in opposition. Now he's in power and you fellows are in the bed together. Never heard from any of you on the ferry issue. It's not right.

The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is right. You found \$65 million, not even in the capital budget, for a three-minute - yes, you did - for a three-minute trip into Charlottetown and you couldn't find a ferry. You found a train, but you couldn't find the ferry. There's no plan.

Chapman Brothers Construction, one of the biggest road builders on PEI - not one of the biggest, they are the biggest road builder on Prince Edward Island. You don't admit that, you ignore them, but they are. They're the biggest users of this ferry. You know what it costs them travel around, the extra cost? Somebody's got to pay that extra cost when this ferry is not there.

It might be bad time to ask for a ferry from Souris to Port Hood, would it? Bad timing?

That's how important this ferry is, and I expect this government to speak up for Islanders against their government. I'll tell you what this government has done and then I'll sit down.

On November 10th, 2016, Minister Lawrence MacAulay announced \$350 million for the Canadian dairy industry. Great. Perfect, isn't it? Two hundred and fifty million dollars for the producers and

\$100 million for the processors. Great news, all great news. Reason? To offset the impact of CETA, and the possibility of TPP trade agreement. Sounds great.

But little do they know, in October 2015 Gail Shea, Conservative (Indistinct), approved \$3.4 billion for the hard-working farmers and the Liberals canned this when they came into office.

But, you don't tell people that. Trudeau gave you \$350 million, \$250 million, that's great, but you didn't tell the people again that Gail Shea went and got them \$3.4 billion. And you fellows never fought for your farmers. You never went and fought for them. You fellows knew there was \$4.3 billion there and you were offering them millions, so you took it. It's great, farmers, look what you got. You don't fight for your farmers, you don't fight for your fishermen.

All they want is a voice. All Islanders want is a voice in Ottawa. You used to have a great voice. I listened to you stand up against the federal government when you were in opposition down here, you know?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lavie: I listened to it for five years, but now you're two governments, it's great. It's all great in Ottawa. It's (Indistinct).

Stand up for Islanders! Just because it's a Liberal government up there, stand up there!

Mr. Myers: Just like you used to.

Mr. LaVie: If it takes to go get a selfie, that's what it takes is a selfie.

Listen, I've been here for five years and you fellows - I'm in opposition, and see what I got. I got a new bridge, I got a new school. That's the stuff you got to go and get, and I'm in opposition. You guys are in government. I got new roads, I got a new beach.

All you have to do is go and fight for Islanders. That's all Islanders want is a voice in Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, for that invigorating address.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton to speak to the motion as amended.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I will be as lively as the last speaker to this motion, but I'll try and make it interesting nonetheless.

Many members have heard me speak in relation to the Wood Islands ferry previously, and I might try here.

As this House might recall, I guess it'd be my great-great grandfather – anyway, my father's father was a captain on the Wood Islands ferries, and their homestead property is in fact the first property coming off of the ferries in Wood Islands. That was a place that was near and dear to my heart growing up.

Just to give a very brief explanation of the kind of benefit that that part of the province sees by having the ferry down there, my father would fondly tell stories of having put himself through university at UPEI and then law school at Dalhousie running a canteen and a newspaper service right down just before you hit the beach in Wood Islands. The ferries would be in and the lines would be backed up. You'd go with a cart down into the lineup which might be 10 lines wide selling newspapers to people that were there waiting to get on the ferry.

Of course, that was before the link and things changed fairly drastically when the link came in the mid-1990s, but there still was fairly good traffic through Wood Islands after that. That would have meant a lot to the economy of not only Wood Islands but of the eastern part of Prince Edward Island, and really of the whole Island.

We see, even now, the radio commercials for the ferry basically key on the act that you can go sit on the ferry and relax and enjoy some Maritime culture as you go to and from Prince Edward Island via that route through eastern Prince Edward Island. I think it's something that tourists to Prince Edward Island certainly welcome, and it certainly is an opportunity for us as Islanders to take advantage of a captive audience and ensure that they have an

opportunity to understand what it is to be on Prince Edward Island, and the different opportunities that might arise as they set forward to travel around Prince Edward Island, and particularly the eastern part.

The reality is if you're coming from anywhere kind of as far away as Halifax the ferry, even if you're heading to Charlottetown, is about the same travelling time to travel via the ferry as it is the link. You get about an hour and 15 minutes to sit there and either enjoy a Cows ice cream, if you're so lucky as to be on the *Confederation*, or perhaps a fries and gravy if you're on the *Holiday Island*, which is something that's tough to do if you're behind the wheel of a car heading through the Cobequid Pass at the best of times.

That's, all being said, without even giving consideration to the truck traffic that goes across. It's very obvious, and we certainly on the Education and Economic Development committee, when we were down in Wood Islands, heard a lot in terms of the impact that that has had on truck traffic and on Islanders in the eastern part of Prince Edward Island who effectively have to bear the burden of that decrease in truck traffic, or the cost of the drive around.

It certainly is an important service to Prince Edward Islanders. It's one that I think we all would like to see continue. It's one, frankly, that we fought for 147 or whatever it is now years ago when we joined Confederation. As the Premier has indicated, it is one that we definitely should not be at all quick to give up. There wouldn't be too many other provinces in Canada that would be quick to give up the rights that they fought for when they were entering Confederation and that have been enshrined in our Constitution since that time.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and I look forward to this motion going through.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's tremendous to see the support on all sides of the House today for this motion. The amendment to the motion, I think, is really important going forward.

As tourism minister we have an industry that is very cohesive from one end of the Island to the other, work closely together, work hard under the tourism industry association and all of the RTAs from one region to the next.

This is an extremely integral part of our industry. Our industry over the past two years, actually three years, has had successive record-breaking seasons from one end of the Island to the other. To be able to capitalize on even more of that with an additional ferry down there with a succession plan from Northumberland Ferries and the federal government, to look at our industry as to be industry-led and consumer driven, and to move forward with another growth year next year, is so important to not only our tourism industry but everybody on Prince Edward Island.

There are eight different industries, or eight different sectors of the tourism industry, on Prince Edward Island. There is not one business on Prince Edward Island that would not be affected, somehow, somehow, by the tourism industry. It has over \$405 million in revenue this year to date. It's 6.5% of our GDP growth. It had a 10% increase in visitation this year, year over year. It's an extremely important industry to the Province of Prince Edward Island.

These are the people who buy our seafood, buy our agriculture, work, and create employment. There are 7,500 positions on Prince Edward Island that are directly or indirectly related to the tourism industry and it's industry-led and consumer driven.

Having said that, on the other side of my portfolio I have exports and trade and that's just significantly as important as tourism is. We've led the country in export growth last year. We're on target to do very well this year.

A part of that export growth is our transportation mode. Our transportation mode is directly related and linked to the ferry service. Just in saying that, also I heard

the hon. member across talk about transportation modes.

The Cornwall bypass is just as important to get those goods to market as the ferry is and we can't lose sight on that. What we lose sight of is to ensure that the ferry service is maintained to maintain both levels of those transportation to keep increasing our market evaluations of our exports.

I was really disappointed this summer, especially in the beginning, that when this happened there was no succession plan. It was very unfortunate. Our phones were ringing off the walls. We were sending staff out and there are some people maybe sitting in and around the galleries today who were contacted.

We were concerned, we were extremely concerned. As a minister I was very concerned. As a person who came from the tourism industry previous to government I was very concerned.

We are working hard. In fact, as of last week Marc Garneau's office has received another contact from my office. We will continue to fight for the ferry. We will side with the opposition and hopefully the Leader of the Third Party to enhance and create this committee.

In doing that, we have to look at the province as a whole. We can't put partisan politics in something as important as the ferry. We don't want to be grandstanding in the media as far as this goes. We want to be working together and creating that bond that when we do go to Ottawa it's one voice, not three splintered voices.

Trying to be complete in the recognition of Prince Edward Islanders and not solely keeping it in Kings County or West Prince or what have you, but as an Island. It's their Constitution. It's our constitutional right to have two ferries.

I think it's so important that we continue to fight the battle, but we fight it as one unit, and I will be supporting this motion without doubt, and I'm sure everybody in this House and on PEI would support a motion such as this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise and speak to the motion as amended. Let me start with a recognition that everyone in this House, not surprisingly, acknowledges the importance of the ferry services pertaining to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Indeed, I suspect 27 million is on the low side of the number that you could produce for the total economic value that it is related to and that is realized because of this service as a transportation link and as a way of building and maintaining a vibrant economic and cultural community in the eastern part of our province.

Let me recognize the different ways in which the eastern Kings, eastern Prince Edward Island, southern Queens and Kings are doing well, are growing. Keir White is here. What has been done at the campground and Belfast greens is a great example to the kind of community-based initiative. Took over a provincial park, expanded the camping facilities, has great traffic there. I was there at the Highland Games. I know Keir has reported that overall stays were down this year. There weren't many vacancies that weekend and people were proud and having a good time.

I want to go back to the point I made about talking about this in more than dollar terms. What you see when you go to the Belfast games, or what you see when you go to the Point Prim chowder place and what's being created there and the amount of traffic they had this summer, and how that puts Prince Edward Island on the map and brings visitors to the lighthouse itself.

In fact, I think one of the beneficiaries, and I don't say it lightly, of the very poor service this summer was the heritage – the museum at the Wood Islands Lighthouse, which is, in fact, the most visited of the lighthouses in the province all years. It's a very fine facility and one that's supported by the community.

I had a chance to visit with Doug and Linda Nobles at Belfast Mini Mills. They had, this summer, 8,000 visitors and those people come from all over the world. Many of them come to Prince Edward Island because of the connection through those mini mills.

I was out to Boughton Island with Perry Gotell and Tranquility Cove Adventures, taking people out there to dig bar clams and enjoy the experiential tourism and a very sophisticated service that's being offered, and a good bite, too. I know from talking to Perry that he had customers that had places booked on Northumberland Ferries, but when they showed up for their booking it was somehow not able to be satisfied, I think because they were able to squeeze in a couple of more smaller vehicles rather than an RV. We heard those complaints more than once.

Let me talk about another time I was in Wood Islands this summer. It's been said opposite that I made one phone call. I was there on the 21st of June which is National Aboriginal Day when we unveiled the sign, together with the leaders of the Mi'kmaq community, that says "Welcome to Mi'kma'ki," which is a very important day culturally and in many other ways for our province.

What was sweet about that day, along with the pride that the Mi'kmaq community obviously felt in what that represented, was that at 5:00 a.m., whatever, 5:20 a.m., along with a lot of mosquitoes, both a group of the Buddhist Monks and the new families who have arrived in the Amish community came to join in that. It's a way of recognizing that we're building throughout our province, and not least of all in eastern Prince Edward Island, sort of on both sides of the County Line, a very prosperous, proud, dynamic community that absolutely relies on a regular ferry service and a reliable ferry service.

Let me take it a step further. A community that has some of the technical expertise and capacity to produce a ferry that could be a show piece. Take this beyond thinking about what we can do to kind of keep a boat in the water or to at least find out, in a proper time of the year or maybe several years sooner, how bad that rust is. To think about how Prince Edward Island could become a

showcase in terms of technology, in terms of environmental, reducing greenhouse gases because of the ferry service between Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Let me come to the point that's been made a number of times about whether I did or didn't issue some lippy press release which most of them were that we saw.

I don't know how others think they make change or how they build cooperation or how they could get ahead in the big strides that we're talking about. We heard it again across the floor today. I don't know how people think that by talking about Lawrence MacAulay the way they did across the floor here today, or talking about the prime minister, or for that matter – I mean they always talked that way about me so that's fine.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not the first one to say that you don't get much accomplished with vinegar.

I'm going to talk about this motion, this task force. This task force proposes that we have involvement from Nova Scotia, yet we complain that the prime minister is in Nova Scotia and speaks about this ferry service. It does go between Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Or we talk about the federal government in terms that are not, to my mind, constructive in terms of what we hope is going to be achieved through this task force.

Let me say a word about what steps I took or what contacts I made. I did speak with Premier McNeil. I did speak with Premier Dwight Ball of Newfoundland to follow up when things did not happen through Transport Canada in terms of that vessel they (Indistinct), the *Captain Earl W. Winsor*. I spoke directly, along with Minister Lawrence MacAulay, with Prime Minister Trudeau.

I don't know what people opposite think the Premier of this province is supposed to do to advocate for an important cause, something that means something to our province and to our very important region of this province. But I would think having an in-person meeting with the prime minister along with

the federal regional minister should be considered to be a reasonable thing to do.

I've since been in Ottawa in the prime minister's office to follow up on that meeting. I've spoken with the hon. Scott Brison, regional minister for Nova Scotia. I know of, indirectly, the conversations that have taken place with the hon. Dominic LeBlanc. If we're going to get what people believe is the outcome we want, to get this ferry service on a more reliable, modern, continuous footing, then we're going to have to have support from a lot of different supporters and that's the way I'm going at it.

I absolutely value the advocacy and the solidarity and the concern of the community, the workers at Northumberland Ferries, the community, and all of eastern PEI. The chamber of commerce is doing very effective work on this, and constructive work. The Wood Islands development group – Audrey Shillibeer and the work that that group does is very important. Frankly, I think it was really positive over the course of this summer to see how, in a united and a constructive and a concerned voice the community came together.

I can assure you, and I don't think it's going to come as news to anyone, that I believe that community knows that I stand with them, that our government stands with them, to achieve what we all want to achieve on the Wood Islands-Nova Scotia service.

There's another part of this that I think we all need to – and I say constructive – I think we also need to be proactive, and I'll say forward thinking in terms of the opportunity that may be presented here. We have to tell a story about prosperity and growth, we have to tell our story about reduced greenhouse gases and making headway on climate change. We should want to tell this story about the work that we could do in this area becoming almost a proof of concept or a prototype for something that we could sell to the world that would draw people, because of the ferry itself, to come to eastern Prince Edward Island.

That's how I'm looking at it and that's how I've been looking at it from the first very frustrating news, which was not acceptable at the time and became less acceptable as the summer went on, that the ferry had been

allowed to deteriorate to the point that it had.

One other point about the need for this to be a two-ferry season. It was proven on at least three, probably many more, occasions in the course of the summer that a one-ferry service is a very fragile situation, and indeed that's especially so when you got one now 25-year-old ferry that's working harder than it would normally do. There's a lot of support from our government, there's commitment, there's dogged efforts, and we want to work together with the people of eastern Prince Edward Island to ensure that we get to the result that we want.

We thank the hon. member for putting forward this motion and we look forward to working to put in place this task force.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, the amended motion, motion as amended.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very happy to rise this week to speak to the amended motion, and I want to thank the Member from Belfast-Murray River for bringing this motion to the floor. This ferry service is one that I'm very familiar with, that I utilize and been involved with pretty much my entire life.

As a quick note, I remember one of my very first trips that I ever took on the ferry. As a very young boy, at a young age, you're very impressionable. One of the very first trips that I took, I got on the ferry, I was on the deck and I took a walk around. There were two guys sitting down on a seat there and I recognized them as Wayne and Shuster. I went over and introduced myself as a young fellow from Souris and I sat down and talked to them about a half an hour and introduced them to eastern PEI. That's just a short memory.

Within literally hours of the announcement that the ferry service was shutting down I was receiving calls from trucking companies, people who were concerned about getting goods across and goods into Prince Edward Island across this service. I

became very concerned. Within the first day I also made a direct phone call to Lawrence MacAulay and I was able to meet with him.

I didn't advertise (Indistinct), but I am an MLA who's from the local area, the same as everybody else in this room. We do what we have to do –

Mr. LaVie: You want credit.

Mr. Roach: Nobody is looking for credit, Mr. Speaker, but we are mandated as elected officials to do what we can.

I hope that all of us as MLAs can work together to bring this to Ottawa as one collective group to try and fix this problem.

I do take a little objection here. The objection I'm going to quote to you is this: Very quickly, people are prepared to jump on Lawrence MacAulay, to jump on the prime minister. These issues that came up on this ferry didn't happen over the last year. There were years and years when we had Gail Shea in Ottawa –

Mr. LaVie: Don't play the blame game.

Mr. Roach: – and we had Prime Minister Harper –

Mr. LaVie: Don't play the blame game.

Mr. Roach: – and many times –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: – Lawrence MacAulay went to Ottawa many times and fought and fought and fought.

An Hon. Member: He did (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: This issue didn't start in the last year. This –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – issue's been going on for years. The best we could get out of that Progressive Conservative –

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Roach: – government in Ottawa was: We'll tell you next year.

If we're going to collectively do something, drop it, just drop this complaining thing and work together to do it –

Mr. LaVie: We had two ferries (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: It's easy to put blame and go on like that.

Leader of the Opposition: We never heard you say anything all summer!

Mr. Roach: Again, we do what we do in districts as MLAs –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: But she let it rust out.

Mr. LaVie: No, sir (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: How do you think it got to that state? They wanted (Indistinct).

Speaker: Members, let's have some order if we're going to continue to get this motion through.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, this ferry service is incredibly important, not only to us who live in the eastern end of the Island, but all across the Island.

Because a lot of the goods that are shipped, a lot of them do eventually end up on the east end of the Island and going across on that ferry. Whether we're talking about potatoes or lobsters or other food products, it's important to our economic development.

Look at our tourism. I talked to many tourism operators and yes, they did have a good year, but I think had we had that ferry service running they could have had a much better year, no question about it in my mind.

I think we all need to collectively work together in this House to fix the problem. A little bit of bickering going back and forth, sure, we do that in the House, but does it work in terms of trying to solve a problem, or work together?

I've heard other speakers here and people have spoken very well on both sides of the House to this matter.

You know what? As finance minister, to take the financial responsibility and say to the federal government: We'll take financial responsibility for that and put that burden on taxpayers – that's not correct.

I will remind everybody in this House that Islanders are paying for that now. We pay federal taxes, everybody on PEI –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, you figured that out (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: – when you get the money from the federal government, where do you think it comes from? It comes from the taxpayer. Every Islander is now paying towards that ferry service –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) where it comes from.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, we do –

Mr. LaVie: Who told you that?

Mr. R. Brown: He's the finance minister, he (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, every Islander is paying out of their pockets now for that ferry service through federal taxation.

Every Islander who pays a toll to go across that piece of water between Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia is paying a toll. They're paying money to Northumberland Ferries for that service. Every one of them are paying, so Islanders are paying their fair share here, let's not forget that.

This is a federal responsibility. Collaboration, working together, I think we can hopefully make a change.

I hope that everyone – I think this is a good motion, there was a good amendment to the motion, and I like the way it sits now.

I want to thank everyone who spoke in favour of this motion so far today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. members, do we wish to continue?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Could I have the podium?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we have all heard this afternoon, the Northumberland ferry is vital to the economy of Prince Edward Island, not only to the eastern end of Prince Edward Island, but to all of Prince Edward Island.

Tourists, truckers, Islanders and business owners, we all know that it is a vital service. I also have my own story. I know people this afternoon have been telling their stories about the Northumberland ferry.

Over the years, and during the fall season especially, I was a weekly user of the ferry service, as both our sons, Ryan and Dean, were students at St. Francis Xavier University. Our eldest son, Ryan, played varsity soccer for St. FX for five years. As parents, Sean and I travelled each weekend to watch university games.

The ferry service allowed us to leave in the morning, watch the game in Antigonish, and return on the last ferry of the night following the game. We did this for five years every fall season.

I also have family in Cape Breton and a trip to visit off the ferry is 3.5 hours, or seven hours by the bridge.

We know the value of the ferry to all people who have children attending St. Francis Xavier University. I have heard from many of those parents, who value the service so they can get to see their children during the fall season.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters stated in his remarks that I promised a new ferry on the night I was down in Wood Islands.

Mr. Myers: You did.

Ms. Casey: I happen to have a copy of my remarks –

An Hon. Member: Good, good.

Ms. Casey: – from Wood Islands that night.

It was a great meeting and I appreciated everybody who came out from the community. I heard all of their stories that night that the ferry service was vital to their community.

I just want to read a little bit of my remarks that night, and I quote:

“I just wanted to say thank you for allowing us to come to your community and to hear your stories. We’ve listened and I’ve written down some – as I was listening to all of the thoughtful presentations, I’ve kind of put a box around some of the key things that” were heard that night: “one-boat operation is not a service; communication is key; thank you to the employees of Northumberland Ferries; the ferry is the major tourist gateway to our area; without tourists there is no tourism; islands and ferries go together; and plan for a new ferry.

“I know sometimes it may be seen that it’s the ‘we’ and the ‘they,’ but I know in this case everybody around this table only wants to work together for the betterment of the ferry for sustainable and long-term ferry service for eastern PEI and all Prince Edward Islanders.

“I know we will all work together to make sure that we have a plan for a new ferry with great communication plans.

“Thank you, again, for allowing us to come into your community. I enjoyed all of the presentations.”

I don’t think anything there was a promise of a new ferry by the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

I, too, would like to thank the hon. Lawrence MacAulay for his continued work, and everybody in this House knows that I have a relationship with the MP for Charlottetown. Tonight I will promise to continue to advocate for a long-term sustainable solution for the Wood Islands-Caribou ferry service with the Member of

Parliament for Charlottetown and all of his colleagues.

I am pleased to support this motion as amended.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Again, I think this is a good motion, amended motion, and I will be supporting it. I want to thank the opposition for bringing it forward and for all those who spoke to the motion as well, because this is a very important service for agriculture, for fisheries, for aquaculture and all. We need to have this service and we need to have it regular and an accountable service to support all of our primary industries in the sectors of agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture.

I want to note right off the bat, though I didn't put out a press release or anything, I did meet with the hon. Lawrence MacAulay, our federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. He has been, without a doubt, the strongest advocate for this service over the last 30 years. Without a doubt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: I have met with him several times since I took this portfolio and met with him several times over the summer with regards to this issue.

I will tell you, there is no one else as frustrated, I believe, over this ferry service as Lawrence was because of all his advocacy – at the last minute to have that ferry shut down just before the service opened for the year.

The farmers in eastern PEI see the Wood Islands ferry as a gateway to important crop inputs and soil amendments such as fertilizer and lime. We need to get our crops out, we need to get fertilizer and lime in, and we need that ferry service to be as regular as possible.

The beef and dairy cattle and other livestock are trucked across the ferry to the auctions in Truro, the fairs and exhibitions in Nova Scotia, and it is very important for the blueberry industry in eastern PEI. Not only are blueberries and equipment moved between the two provinces, but bees are moved, which is vitally important for the pollination as everyone here in the House recognizes.

Fruit and vegetables are imported from Nova Scotia and are stored and processed on PEI which is important for processing jobs here in PEI. In aquaculture, the ferry is a very important link for mussel aquaculture companies that transport product from Nova Scotia to PEI and vice versa. It's also important for oyster fishers who are moving product or have leases in both our provinces.

In marine fishery, lobster buyers use the ferry to move live lobster which is important for supporting this valuable export. Lobster, and fish buyers for herring and tuna, in particular, use the Wood Islands ferry as many of them have businesses in both provinces. For our primary industries as well as for our trucking, as well as for our tourism sector that has been mentioned on both sides of the House here, this is a very vital, important link. I would like to go on to say that it should be free, but that's not what the motion is about. We'll deal with that one a little later on. But anyway, I think it should be.

I want to say to the workers, too, that work there, I've had a long-time link with the ferry service there. I used to go to college through the ferry there to NSAC when I was studying in Truro. It was very handy. It was a quick trip over to Truro and back. We also use it. We have family in Halifax and family down in Annapolis Valley, and we use the ferry in a very regular way of travelling and we really think it's important.

But once again, I want to stress, really, the Wood Islands ferry is a vitally important link for our primary sector. We need this ferry fixed. We need the federal government to come to the floor. I know Lawrence is really working hard on our behalf. He was taken by surprise when this thing happened to break down, especially after his many years of advocacy, and he is working extremely hard. I will tell you, if there is one

frustrated person over this whole issue it's Lawrence MacAulay and we need to give him kudos for the work he is doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: He may not be out front talking about (Indistinct), but he is our direct link to the front lines in Ottawa. If we're going to get a solution to this, we're not going to get it by kicking him in the pants or anything like that and knocking him down. We need to support Lawrence. We need to work with him and we will get this thing fixed and we'll get it back, but we need it regularly, and we need the support of our federal government and our strong federal members, all four of them, to get this service up and running for the next season.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I've got my Snickers bar here.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Keep him from getting cranky.

Mr. R. Brown: First of all, I want to say I support the resolution 100%. It's a great resolution and I want to congratulate the workforce of Northumberland Ferries. Great workforce (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: They are courteous, they work hard, and this is most of the reason that ferry service in that area, the Northumberland Ferries, has been successful, because of its workers. We should support the workers of Northumberland Ferries because they are an integral part of that service that services all of Prince Edward Island.

As my colleague the Minister of Finance said, it was the last federal government that allowed this ship to rust out as they allowed the federal government to rust out. For 10 years the last government never looked at it

and, as was said earlier in this House, there was a concerted effort to shut that ferry service down. The only thing that saved it the last couple of years was the impending federal election –

Ms. Biggar: And Lawrence MacAulay.

Mr. R. Brown: – and Lawrence MacAulay worked extremely hard to keep that ferry open.

But the thing about it, too, is I think the work that was done on the ferry, the welding and the materials that were needed on it, should have been done here in Prince Edward Island. There are capable welding companies here in Prince Edward Island that could have fixed that ferry here right in Prince Edward Island. I think the task force should be fighting to make sure any more repairs on these ferries are to be done on Prince Edward Island.

Also, the task force should be mandated to make sure to look at the maintenance records of this ship and to make sure who is responsible in the maintenance of this. Because we had the company blaming the federal government and the federal government blaming the company. We have to get to the bottom of that so this does not happen anymore. That is a mandate that should be done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: The task force should ensure that a maintenance schedule is put in place. What more important thing is needed than a maintenance schedule to ensure that this does not happen again?

I support the resolution 100% and I will be proudly standing with the workers of the Northumberland Ferries to make sure that this ferry service is improved and will continue. They are getting a free bridge in Quebec. We should get a ferry in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to stand in this Assembly tonight and support this vital service for Prince Edward Island.

What would Prince Edward Island be like without this ferry service? I wanted to compliment the people of eastern Prince Edward Island, but they have long since left the gallery. Maybe the Member from Belfast-Murray River could take my congratulations down to the people that came out that night, as chair of that committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumville: It was a wonderful meeting. They were very complimentary. They knew they had passion, they knew they had a cause, and they articulated it properly that night.

I want to thank all of the members of our committee that came down there that night because they let the residents of eastern Prince Edward Island do the talking. We were there to listen. We weren't there to talk, and both sides, members from both parties, all parties –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. Gallant: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: I'll be quick.

Mr. LaVie: No, you're all right.

Mr. Dumville: I'll be quick, but this is a federal responsibility. We have a great ambassador in Lawrence MacAulay.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumville: We've got a Premier that is connected to the prime minister and Lawrence MacAulay, and we've got a fighter over there in the Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumville: So how can we lose?

Anyway, just quickly saying I believe that our committee showed this Member from

Belfast-Murray River that we were concerned, that we went down there. We listened to her. It was an important cause to her and kudos to her for recommending this task force.

Now, I don't know if I'm disappointed in the fact that our education and economic development committee couldn't have got this job done for her, but –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: – we will bring in the bring guns, okay? I'm not sure that I should take this as a slight to our committee but –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. LaVie: You're doing good (Indistinct) blow your own horn (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Listen, well done. I'm proud of the people down there. I'm proud of the member. I'm proud of our committee. I'm proud of the Premier, and I am so pleased that this Assembly could support this ferry service here unanimously, and I wholly support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: 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: The hon. Government House leader.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move that we revert to Motion 69, Establishing a PEI Ferry Taskforce, continue debate.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to finish Motion 69?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Speaker: The debate was adjourned by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Hon. member, would you like to continue?

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, just to say thank you for that motion.

It was unanimous and I'm so pleased the way it turned out, and thank all the Assembly for that, and the Premier and the member that brought the motion to the floor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Would you like –

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: (Indistinct) speak to the amended motion.

Mr. Trivers: I am pleased to rise today and speak to the amended motion in establishing a PEI ferry taskforce.

We've heard a lot of very passionate pleas today about why the ferry is so important to Islanders, and we've heard that it's important not just in the east, but it's also important to the whole Island. I want to echo those sentiments.

As an MLA from the central portion of the Island, the District of Rustico-Emerald, I wanted to say that when the ferry is shut down or when there's poor ferry service it impacts businesses in the central part of the Island as well.

For example, if there's a person who's planning a vacation, or a family, and they plan to take the ferry onto the Island and then eventually travel across to the centre part and that ferry's not there, then sometimes they alter their vacation plans and may not come at all. Or if they take the ferry and they end up in that cycle where they're waiting for hours because the ferry's broken down, they can't get on, again, it impacts their vacation and their attitude and their length of stay when they do reach maybe their eventual destination in the centre part of the Island.

As well, the tourism locations in the centre part of the Island – and I'm not just talking about Cavendish and New Glasgow and New London and Emerald and North Rustico and South Rustico, but all the way through there right down to Victoria, they often refer people to places in the eastern part of the Island and vice versa because they work together to service Island tourists.

The ferry plays an extremely important role, and I'm focusing on tourism here, but in the tourism industry. When it comes to making sure that the ferry is viable long-term and sustainable long-term – not just having a ferry, but the quality of service – it's extremely important that we make that happen.

One other point, and I think it's one that has been made, but I want to underscore it as well, is it will actually impact how the bridge is used and the people there.

It's very important that we have the two entrance and exit points on the Island in order to utilize all of the Island's full facilities.

I'm not going to speak for a long time, but I did want to say that I do support this motion in establishing a PEI ferry taskforce, and I believe I represent my constituents in the centre part of the Island, in District 18 Rustico-Emerald, when I say they also support a taskforce to make sure that this ferry exists in a sustainable way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I'm very proud to rise this evening and speak on this amended motion. I will indeed be supporting this motion. I was very happy to see it originally come from this side of the floor, and I have to tell the truth, I don't have an issue at all with regards to the friendly amendment that was made to this motion. I welcome the government's side for making that.

But there are some issues that I would like to talk about here for a few minutes. There

was a lot of talk earlier this afternoon with regards to the government's solution in speaking with Ottawa, with regards to trying to put into service the *Captain Earl W. Winsor*, which was originally the MV *Prince Edward*. The ship was built in 1972, 44 years old. Not saying that's overly old, because the ship that was out of service, the *Holiday Island*, was built in 1971. Of course, it was the sister ship to the *Vacationland* that sailed for years across the Northumberland Straits between Borden and Cape Tormentine.

The issue that I have with that solution is two-fold. First of all, the *Holiday Island* has a capacity of approximately 220 vehicles, as compared to the *Captain Earl W. Winsor*, previously known as the MV *Prince Edward*, that has a capacity of approximately 55 vehicles.

Although the government was trying to make an offer to the federal government for a solution to bring an older ship in, it simply wouldn't have been a good fix for that reason, the small capacity that it would have had.

In addition to that, the work that would have had to be done to the docking facilities in both sides of the Strait to put this ship into service would have cost upwards of possibly \$2 million. Because when the *Confederation* was put into service they had to do a lot of work to be able to adjust the ramps and have the capacity to actually load and unload vehicles onto that ship, which also had to match the *Holiday Island*. Again, the *Winsor* coming into service would have been a completely different style because it's a much smaller ship and those ramps certainly wouldn't have accommodated that ship. There's a reason that we are bringing this motion forward for a PEI ferry taskforce. I firmly believe that this link to the mainland, particularly from the eastern end of the Island, Kings County, is essential to not only the eastern end of the Island, but to the entire Island, and it's also obviously a tourism draw.

I've been saying now for years that this seasonal ferry service should actually be a year-round service. So while we are lobbying for a new ship to be built or a refurbished ship to be coming in, what we need to be demanding – not asking for, but

demanding – is a ship with ice-breaking capabilities so that this service can run year-round.

There were many great points brought up this afternoon with regards to what would ever happen if the Confederation Bridge had a failure or a major accident on it and it was out of service for a number of days. Our only other link would be the ferry service. Again, if that happened in the wintertime, we would need a link through the ice.

I think there are many issues to talk about, and I think establishing a taskforce would be a good start, a good measure, to bring all these ideas and many other ideas from experts in the field. I'm not standing here tonight professing to be an expert, but I just wanted to simply bring a few of my thoughts to the table on this and call on all members of this Legislative Assembly to support this motion in establishing a PEI ferry taskforce.

There's another solution that I think could have been sought earlier in the year, and I didn't hear anybody talk about it all, and that was: Why weren't we asking the federal government to demand that the shipyard in Quebec double up their shifts so that the *Holiday Island* could have been put back into service much quicker? There's absolutely no reason why that work couldn't have been done much faster.

With that, I'll close my comments, and as I said from the start, I will be supporting this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to rise in the House this evening. I thank the government for bringing this motion back and giving us time to finish off the debate and have a vote on it.

I support the motion and I thank government and all members here for being able to work together and support this motion. We had good discussion this afternoon and I think everybody is on the same page.

One thing I noticed this afternoon, and the back and forth that I got, there was a lot of blame back and forth that maybe opposition is too negative or not being able to come up with an idea. It bothered me in thinking there is a reason we come across that way, in a way. This issue started in May, so we're talking six months later and still no solution.

One thing we get calls on every day and looking at some of the things that are said and promised, we just saw our manors cancelled, we just saw promises of Internet money coming federally, which we haven't seen any of that happen yet. We saw collector roads that were supposed to help rural PEI that now need 1,000 cars a day to travel on. Sorry for being skeptical, we don't mean to, but this is how it comes across. When we say let's work together and these good things are going to come, it's frustrating when you don't see it.

In saying that, two days ago we cooperated with the Green Party member and shared time for him to debate an issue of his. That's working together. I don't think anybody can say that we're not cooperative and not working for the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, have the pleasure to rise and speak to this motion, this gently amended motion. I still am a member of the Education and Economic Development Committee who went down to Wood Islands and had a meeting and heard the very serious concerns of the residents and the business people in that community. They did have a pretty rough summer.

We need to work, going forward, collaboratively. This is a federal company, Northumberland Ferries, that look after this service and we need to have some dialogue with them. As was said at the meeting, it's unfortunate they didn't have a backup plan. We need to make sure they do in the future and we need to make sure this doesn't happen again. That's only going to happen

by working together in a positive manner and working collaboratively together.

With that, I just would like to lend my support to this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I stand, of course, to support this amended motion. There's been much talk about what a critical component of Kings County this is in terms of the economic and social well-being of that part of our province. There's really nothing I could add to that.

I should say I actually own a piece of property there. The Premier and I were talking about this just the other day. Being so close to the ferry is of particular importance and charm to me.

Speaking of the charm of the ferries, when I first got to know Prince Edward Island it was always that arriving at the ferry terminal and suddenly things slowed down to PEI time. There's just something lovely about that. I think the ferry is still an important part of the tourism draw here. The Premier mentioned in his comments speaking to this motion that I think there is a potential for a ferry of a particular kind to be something very special that would draw people to Prince Edward Island.

One thing is worth mentioning, of course. There was a plebiscite done, of course, on the bridge back in 1988, the second-last plebiscite that we had, and people expected close to 100% turnout because it was a very divisive issue. It's also a very simple issue. Yet the turnout for that plebiscite was 65%, and 59% voted in favour of it.

The interesting thing about this is that in Kings County the people there voted against it, recognizing that it was a threat to the ferry service. Even though only 39% of Islanders gave a qualified 'yes' to the Fixed Link in terms of the number of voters versus the population, the Kings County people

actually voted against that. Yet, of course, the government moved forward with it as they have done with every other plebiscite.

I stand here in support of this motion. I thank the work of the member from the district who has been tireless in her advocacy for this.

Thank you very much, 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 would like to take a very brief moment to stand in support of this amended motion. I'm encouraged by the talk of cooperation and collaboration as I will soon be on the floor of the House with three bills of my very own. I expect to see the same cooperation with, as well, members of the House.

As minister of the environment, as it was alluded to earlier this afternoon by our Premier, I have eyes on this as far as our climate change mitigation purposes go and the greenhouse gases that can be affected by trucks and vehicles having to be diverted to the far end of the Island and not having that ferry service. It's a significant impact if you were to measure it all up. The fuel usage that's eliminated by that 90-minute ferry ride I think plays a very significant impact. Also, as minister of municipalities, if I ask each member to close their eyes and envision that drive from Wood Islands ferry, the communities that would be affected, the small businesses, the small bed-and-breakfasts that are the backbone of these small communities, and we're trying to encourage survival of these communities, how detrimentally affected they could be if this ferry service was not in place. I said to Charlottetown, but envision it to drive to Montague, to drive to Souris. We have numerous amounts of small communities that rely significantly on this tourism and the business parts of the ferry to remain alive and vibrant as we move forward.

Very pleased to stand in support of this motion. I think we see the direction it's going in and I'm proud to be part of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Is there anybody else who would like to speak to the motion as amended?

If not, are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Ms. Biggar: Standing vote.

Speaker: Back to the mover to close debate on the motion.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First I'll stand and I'll say that I am willing to support the amended motion. We, on this side of the floor, and I think everyone that came into the gallery today, and all of eastern PEI, understand now that this is a federal issue. They might not have, and I brought that up a number of times in the summer with Northumberland Ferries, with Lawrence MacAulay, who I did also make a call to immediately and have talked to him a number of times.

I said to every one of those stakeholders this is a federal issue, but a lot of my constituents do not understand it's a federal issue. It is not just a federal issue, it is a provincial issue. I appreciate the cooperation from across the floor with the hon. members. I am glad we're all going to, I hope, support this motion. I think it's very important for rural communities.

I was saddened to see this disintegrate into a blame game this afternoon. It should not be a blame game. As much as the hon. Premier mentioned that they were holding themselves to a higher account and that's not the route they were taking, there were a number of members across the floor who were quite happy to go down that road when he finished his statement about the blame game, and about Harper and about Gail Shea. This is about working together, it's about the Province of Prince Edward Island, and it is about the ferry service and the continued need of ferry service.

I understand it's a constitutional responsibility, I've said that from day one. My concern about – first of all with the hon. Lawrence MacAulay, who I have great respect for and work very well with – is what kind of traction is he getting. If he cannot get traction, who can? That is a concern, and it's another reason I will reach out to the Premier and all government members, including the minister of transportation, to support the four MPs we have. We have government of the same colour provincially and federally, so someone has to take to task the decisions that are being made.

I would encourage, again, the Premier – and it's great to hear the comments that were made here today about how everyone spoke out and made phone calls. I can just tell you how people in eastern PEI felt this summer. They felt they were being abandoned. They never heard from the Premier, they never heard from the minister of transportation until the end of July.

There was a lot of stress. There was a lot of concern. A lot of concerns about jobs, about: Whether I'm going to get my hours on the ferry, am I going to have my EI for the winter? Those were the calls I was getting.

I would just encourage you. I'm thrilled we're going to move this motion forward, but I am going to hold you to this, to account. I would encourage the Premier to, maybe if you have fly to Toronto, meet with our ACOA minister, because that's where he is now, to talk about this and discuss how we move forward with this task force, but it is important that we do move forward.

I put the pressure on government and on the Premier to ensure that we do move forward on this.

I would just like to thank everyone. There were many kind words directed at me today, and I appreciate that. I'm doing my job. I'm an opposition member and I'm representing my district, and my district has a ferry service, so I will continue to do that.

There was talk about climate change and green ferries. At the standing committee meeting I think my husband got up and spoke because he had just come back from Norway. There are six ferries available in

Norway within the year that, from what I hear – and he talked to a couple of captains – meet the specification. They're compressed natural gas. They'd be much greener. They would be much more efficient, much faster. We could have an efficient ferry service, not just a ferry service. A ferry service people want to use.

It was mentioned today about tourism and about how we had a wonderful year. Yes, we did. I will be the first one to admit – and I know a number of the businesses in my community said: I don't want to talk about that because we had a good year, but I'll tell you why we had a good year, we had a captive audience.

What's going to happen next year? They got a bad taste in their mouths. They had to wait here for five, six, seven hours not knowing if they were going to catch a ferry. So, yes, we did have a captive audience. What is going to happen next year?

That is the concern. I had passionate pleas from business owners who had lost thousands of dollars because of the lack of having those ferries. Instead of having three ferries come through on a business day, they had one. It was a huge impact to our community. That's why I felt the urge and the need to bring this forward today.

It's important to the province. I urge the Premier. I'm willing to work, as are all the members in opposition, to ensure that this happens, and that we do keep this issue on the table with the feds and with Ottawa.

That's what I ask. I look forward to the support of everyone. I'll close the debate right now and I thank you very much for your time today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Now, are we ready for the question?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: A recorded division has been requested.

Sergeant-at-Arms, could you ring the bell?

[The bells were rung]

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, opposition is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, government members are ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

All those voting against the motion, please stand.

All those voting in favour of the motion, please stand.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier and Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: The motion is carried and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of

Communities, Land and Environment, that the 3rd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Order No. 3, *An Act to Amend the Municipalities Act*, Bill No. 24 in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will now call on the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale to take the Chair to continue chairing this bill.

Chair (Dumville): Call to order.

The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipalities Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: At this time I'd like to ask permission to bring some staff onto the floor.

Ms. Biggar: Agreed.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you.

Chair: I'll invite the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment to ask for a few opening remarks.

Mr. Mitchell: Just as Samantha is getting set-up there I'd like to take the opportunity to make a couple of comments.

I guess what I'll begin with by saying is although we all have the same intent, to make this piece of legislation the best it can

be and protective of municipalities across Prince Edward Island, and we were working collaboratively on that approach yesterday, I did, however, get myself in some hot water by allowing some amendments that maybe legally were causing some concern.

In light of the two amendments that were made yesterday, and upon a review of those, we decided that we can let those amendments stand. They may not be legally 100% correct but we think it'll be okay. However, as we move forward with any more amendments this evening I will be asking for your indulgence to allow me to bring those forward to be vetted by legal and not tie up that particular section, and we can move on with other sections.

If that's permissible with the members on the floor, I would appreciate that before we begin this evening.

An Hon. Member: Agreed.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you.

See, I knew we'd get cooperation (Indistinct) we got here.

Chair: Are you all ready, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah. Do you want to identify (Indistinct)

Chair: (Indistinct).

Samantha Murphy Manager: Samantha Murphy, Manager of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Mitchell: As you can see, Samantha was not with us yesterday, she was in a planning meeting in Halifax. But we're very pleased to have her back tonight so she's here to answer some questions, technically for me this evening.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: Okay, ready to go, Chair.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

(Indistinct) section 8 (Indistinct).

Chair: We are on section 7, we're on page 3. We have read section 7, but we haven't carried it, just on page 3.

Mr. Trivers: We are carrying with amendments pending legal review?

Mr. Mitchell: Section 7, is that the amended –

Chair: No, I don't think so.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) section.

Mr. Mitchell: I don't think that's the section that we had amended.

Chair: No, no.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) section 5 was the one (Indistinct).

Chair: I just had read. It has been read but it hasn't been carried.

An Hon. Member: Carry the section.

Mr. Mitchell: There's no amendment to section 7 that I have marked.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried?

8. The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 13:

13.1 (1) Notwithstanding sections 9 and 12, two or more councils may apply to the Minister for a restructuring of boundaries that includes a concurrent amalgamation of the municipalities and annexation of previous unincorporated areas.

(2) The Minister may, in the Minister's discretion, propose a restructuring of boundaries as set out in subsection (1) if in the Minister's opinion, the restructuring is appropriate based on the principles, standards, and other criteria set out in the regulations made pursuant to subsection (3).

(3) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, establish principles, standards, and other criteria that shall be considering in respect of a restructuring undertaken pursuant to subsection (1), including but not limited to population and assessment thresholds.

13.2 (1) –

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I do have an amendment to section 13.2, and it will be pending the same legal review, I would imagine, but I would like to introduce it.

Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Mitchell: Go ahead, say it.

Mr. Trivers: I move:

that in section 8, notice requirements 13.2(1) be amended to add a third action (c) as follows – and I do believe that the Clerk does have copies of this amendment if you want to distribute them.

So 13.2 (1) will read the same all the way down past (b), and the new section (c) will be the third action: send an electronic version of the information package to government for publishing on the government website and sharing through government social media channels.

Mr. Mitchell: Was that not an amendment we added in 5?

Mr. Trivers: It's similar, but it's a different information package, I believe. This applies to a different set of information.

Mr. Mitchell: It seems similar to what you had in 5.

Mr. Trivers: It is, it's identical.

Mr. Mitchell: I guess what we'll do, I'll bring it forward for legal (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: Yes, please.

Mr. Mitchell: We don't have to carry that section because of it, but we'll bring it forward. Comfortable with that?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you. I'm fine with that.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: You can still discuss the amendment if you wish at this time. We won't carry the section until legal.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, I'd like to explain my amendment.

Mr. Mitchell: Go ahead.

Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm not the Chair., Go ahead.

Mr. Trivers: I think the whole idea is when it comes to two or more councils proposing a restructuring of boundaries pursuant to section 13.1, I think it's important that not only it is published on at least two occasions in a newspaper, but we should use all the tools at our disposal to communicate those changes to the public.

That's why I wanted to add a section (c), so that the information package as described in section 13.2(1)(b) is actually an electronic version that's sent to the government and published on the government website and shared through social media channels so that people can see it.

The idea is to be open and transparent.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We won't carry that section. We'll continue on reading.

(3) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, establish principles, standards and other criteria that shall be considered in respect of a restructuring undertaken pursuant to subsection (1), including but not limited to population and assessment thresholds.

13.2 (1) Where the Minister or two or more councils propose a restructuring of boundaries pursuant to section 13.1, the Minister or the councils, as the case may be, shall

(a) publish, on at least two occasions in a newspaper circulating in the area, a notice that includes

(i) in general terms, the nature of the proposed restructuring,

(ii) a map illustrating the proposed boundaries and indicating any area to be annexed, and

(iii) the hours and location at which information on the proposed restructuring will be available to the public for inspection; and

(b) prepare an information package for inspection by the public pursuant to subclause (a)(iii) providing the following:

(i) a map illustrating the proposed boundaries and indicating any area to be annexed, identifying the annexed properties by parcel number,

(ii) a statement of the reasons for the restructuring,

(iii) a statement of the municipal services to be provided in the annexed area, and

(iv) a statement of the financial implications with respect to real property tax and rates for municipal services.

(2) In the case of a restructuring proposed by two or more councils under subsection 13.1(1), not less than four weeks following the first notice published under subsection (2), the councils may, by resolution, apply to the Minister for approval of the proposed restructuring.

(3) An application for restructuring shall be made in the form approved by the Minister and shall set out

(a) the geographical boundaries of the proposed municipality;

(b) the reasons in favour of the proposed restructuring;

(c) the services to be provided and the proposed level of municipal taxation to be applied; and

(d) any other information required under subsection (4) by the Minister.

(4) The Minister shall review the application and may request additional information to ensure its completeness.

13.3 (1) On receipt of a completed application, the Minister shall direct the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission to conduct a public hearing in or near the area that is the subject of the proposed

restructuring for the purpose of reviewing the application.

(2) Notice of the public hearing shall be published in the Gazette and on at least two occasions in a newspaper circulating in the area, and shall state –

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I have an amendment to make as well to 13.3(2), that first sentence.

I move:

that in section (8), notice of hearing 13.3(2), the following words will be deleted – which you just read: “Notice of the public hearing shall be published in the Gazette and on at least two occasions in a newspaper circulating in the area, and shall state...” and substitute it with the words: Notice of the public hearing shall be published in the Gazette and on at least two occasions in a newspaper circulating in the area, and published on the government website and shared through government social media channels, and shall state.

We have a copy of that as well to hand out for review.

Chair: While it’s being handed out, do you want to explain, clarify anymore?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

In this section we’re talking about IRAC holding a public hearing in or near the area. Right now legislation says that all they need to do is publish notice of the public hearing in the *Royal Gazette* and at least two occasions in a newspaper circulating in the area.

I’m suggesting we should take advantage of modern technology and also publish the information on the government website and through government and social media channels so as many people as possible know about that public hearing and the government is open and transparent as possible.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I agree with that amendment, the reason being (Indistinct) Maritime Electric hearing that they had on the rate increase back about a year ago. All IRAC did was post it in a very small article in the paper which a lot of people did not have the opportunity to see.

I think that they need to be putting their notifications out more to the public and this would be a good (Indistinct) to that.

Chair: Minister, would you like to comment or keep on (Indistinct)?

Mr. Mitchell: I'll make a couple of really quick brief comments on it.

I can appreciate what you're trying to achieve here, I absolutely do. But I don't mean to indicate to you that I don't know how many more you want to bring forward of the same nature. When you're dealing with third parties like IRAC or communities, it's not typically posted on the government website. It's separate to that and there's a purpose to that. Although I'm taking them forward, I need you to understand that there are reasons why it doesn't exist in the Legislature. It's not legislatively probably 100% – I don't know the proper term I'm looking for – but that's why they're not there at that level now. There's all kind of those opportunities for those entities to use those methods on their own without the government being part of that.

All I'm doing, I'm suggesting to you, I'm taking them forward. I know the intention is completely solid and I understand that and I appreciate that. We continue on and I will take each one of them – I don't know if you have many more of them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate your position. I realize we're amending the current *Municipalities Act* and you have a new act that's coming very soon. Maybe I would ask that you look at the draft of the new act and perhaps change it as required so that we can get some of these notifications and notices out for the various

changes through social media to the broadest audience as possible. I suggest the government social media channels because those are the ones that are commonly used.

But if you could perhaps look into that for the new act as well. I just wanted to mention that so we don't end up going through the same conversation again.

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate that, and you know what? The new act will be coming forward and again, legislatively legally, there may be reasons that are out of my control that will establish that. You can't do that as third-party agreements or entities. I will bring them forward on this one and then we will know by the time the bigger act gets here in several days.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I understand your position, minister, on this. One thing that disturbed me back when I presented for IRAC on the Maritime Electric rate increase, after that I questioned one of their staff members on why they wouldn't have taken great measure to publicly notify the public. I was quite disturbed with his answer. He basically said to me: Because I don't have to. I didn't like that because it showed in those hearings that people weren't well informed. You and I, we inform the public.

Mr. Mitchell: You know what? I support as many ways of informing the public as we possibly can. Each individual Facebook page, as much.

One thing I do know, based on all the public consultations that we've been doing in our department, Islanders are interested in what is going on. They do get the information and they do show up regardless of what the methods have been in the past. They take great interest in what's going on. I mean, I'm not trying to avoid letting people know anything. I may be legislatively legally at a point –

Leader of the Opposition: They are a part of government, are they not?

Mr. Mitchell: Who's that?

Leader of the Opposition: IRAC, a body of the government.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: They're not a true (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: They still report to the minister of education, right?

Mr. Mitchell: IWMC, all of those entities, they're self-sustained and run (Indistinct), they do their own business. They put their own things on their own sites and that's not normal practice to have it on the government site.

Not saying it's not doable, I don't know that for certain. I am where I am because of yesterday, so that's why we're bringing it forward in a very formidable way for the legislative legal people to look at.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: (a) in general terms, the content of the application;

(b) the date, time and place of the hearing, which shall be held not less than fourteen days after the date of publication of the first notice in a newspaper; and

(c) that residents of the municipalities and the area to be annexed and any persons affected by the application are invited to attend and make representations concerning the application.

(3) The Commission shall determine all matters of procedure at the public hearing.

(4) The Commission shall review the representations made at the public hearing and shall make a recommendation to the Minister as to whether the proposed restructuring is justified for municipal purposes, having regard to

(a) the future development of the proposed municipality;

(b) administrative convenience;

(c) any significant loss of productive agricultural land; and

(d) compliance with any principles, standards or other criteria established pursuant to subsection 13.1(3).

9. (1) Subsection 14(1) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "the application" and the substitution of the words "an application under section – and I have to clarify this. It was originally "13 or 13.1", but we said that that would be 12 instead of 13 or 13.1.

Samantha Murphy Manager: It's 2.1 we were making that change in –

Chair: I apologize for that. I put 12 in the wrong place last night. It's still "13 or 13.1".

(2) Subsection 14(2) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

(2) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by order published in the Gazette, approve the application as proposed or with modifications, or reject the application.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Regarding the ability of the minister to make modifications to a proposal brought forward by municipalities, from what I can see there is no restriction on that on the ability of the minister, so really you could kind of unilaterally do anything you like to the proposals brought forward by the municipalities.

Am in right in my interpretation of that, first of all?

Samantha Murphy Manager: It's actually LGIC, Lieutenant Governor in Council, that can make modifications.

The intent with that option – this is in the new sub (2) – the intention with that is through the public hearing process, if there's clear information that comes out through the public dialogue that perhaps certain areas in the proposal don't feel that they're appropriate but others do, rather than having to start over they might be able to look at a modified proposal that leaves one area out without having to undo the work that's

already been done in the rest of the area for proposed annexation.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Again, if I understand you right, that means you would not go back to the councils or the municipalities with suggestions, you could just make those modifications – Lieutenant Governor in Council could make those modifications unilaterally. Is that correct?

Mr. Mitchell: It would be based on the request of those that want to proceed or opt out. It would be the new look. For instance, if you take the 12 communities –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And Three Rivers?

Mr. Mitchell: – or Three Rivers. In seven municipalities, if we get a little further down the road and two said: Oh, changed my mind, I don't want in. Instead of making the other five go back to the beginning it would be the power to say: Continue on if you do so agree to do so and then you can go on from there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But it would be in conversation with municipalities –

Mr. Mitchell: Absolutely. It would be decided at their meetings that this is how this (Indistinct) has to look, but in order to maintain the flow that has been developed that would give the power to allow that to continue on.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Got it, thank you.

Chair: (2.1) Where an application for annexation under section 13 is approved, the order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council may provide that the boundaries of the municipality be extended to annex the area, as proposed or as modified.

(2.2) Where an application for restructuring under section 13.1 is approved, the order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council may

(a) prescribe the new boundaries of the municipality;

(b) provide for the disposition of any assets and liabilities;

(c) establish an interim council to hold office for a single term and provide for the election or appointment of its members; and

(d) do any other thing that the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary to make the order effective.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I was going to suggest – I do have some questions but I know the exact sections they apply to – that perhaps we just move away from reading clause by clause and just go straight to asking questions that members may have. I don't know, other members may object to that, but just to speed up the process.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I have a question on page 7, section 12(2): "The administrator may delegate a function listed in subsection (1) to any person other than a member of council."

I was just curious as to the purpose of that. When would you be delegating a function to a person other than a member of council?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Thank you.

The current setup is that where there is a signature required there is one elected official that is designated to sign, usually the mayor or the chair, and one administrative – usually the CAO and, in many cases, they may have a secondary signatory in the event of absence or something.

What we are doing with this is currently there is no prohibition on the CAO delegating to another elected official. What we're trying to do with the two signatures is have that checks and balance, so both elected and administrative, so we just want to make sure that those two lines are kept separate. It's just a clarification of the current process.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great, thank you. Now I understand

All right, I don't know if anyone else has any questions but I have another question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Moving on to page 8 –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair?

If we're going to do it, can I –

Chair: You want to do page 7?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: If we're going to do it – I have one on page 7 as well.

Chair: Do you mind?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

In section 18, which is subsection 36(2) and (3), this is to do with approval of budgets which used to be approved by communities rather than by councils. I see that this amendment is to remove that and make it possible – and I understand that that streamlines things and makes it easier. But in terms of grassroots democracy and allowing people in communities to get involved, do you think there's a loss there or did you get feedback from councils that they wanted this or why was this changed?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, all of these changes are based upon feedback from municipalities that have been dealing with an act that's not quite effective for them to get their work done. But I'll let Sam talk to the technical change to it from where it was to what it will be with this vote by council.

Samantha Murphy Manager: This is a long-standing request both with the 2005 review of the *Municipalities Act* and the work that was done in the lead-up to the new act.

There's an intent that the councils continue to engage with their residents about their

priorities when they're setting their budgets and their financial expenditure plans.

The challenge where – at the community level, where the council doesn't have final authority over the budget, is that there are liability issues that come up where they are required to make expenditures, but if it's not approved by the residents the liability and the fiduciary responsibility rest with council, but they do not actually have the authority to make those decisions.

We have had cases where expenditures were not approved and then they led to quite significant capital investments that weren't made that led to greater expenditures down the road.

There's a responsibility for the elected officials to be able to make those decisions, still have that process of engagement with the residents, and make sure that they're following the wishes of residents with regards to services, but still, the responsibility ultimately rests with them.

Mr. Mitchell: And this is no way would eliminate any kind of a community meeting or anything like that to (Indistinct).

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure. But are there other checks there in place for residents to hold their councils accountable, especially in a situation where they are acclaimed? Which is very often the case in many councils.

Samantha Murphy Manager: Ultimately elections are said to be the way you're held to account by your residents or your electors.

Mr. Mitchell: You will probably see some more changes in the new act that will answer your question more specifically, probably, and to a better point I would say when we get there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Because we could go through several budget cycles before there's an opportunity for the residents to actually do anything about it. If they're not involved in the budgetary process (Indistinct).

Samantha Murphy Manager: We didn't find any other cases in legislation across the country where residents actually approved municipal budgets. It's not done anymore.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, thank you.

Chair: We will move to page 8 for the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

First, I just wanted to comment on section 37(1), the new text. It used to be the council shall not project a deficit in its estimates or budget for any year in respect of expenditures other than capital expenditures. That section was called deficit budgeting. Now it looks like you're bringing in the rates section and eliminating that deficit budgeting section.

It looks like the process is: "Following the approval of estimates for any year by the council, and after crediting the probable revenue from all sources other than taxes" – in other words, if they find themselves in a deficit position – then "the council shall by resolution levy a rate or rates... to raise the sum required..."

I just wanted to clarify that I'm reading that correctly. You eliminated the deficit budgeting clause and you're just using this clause to say: You have to raise rates so you don't have a deficit and that's all that's needed now.

Mr. Mitchell: I'll let her address that (Indistinct).

Samantha Murphy Manager: The only change with 37(1) is that previously it split out the towns where the councils had authority over the budgets and the community councils where it was the voter residents. By changing it by council instead of by council or by the residents, it's just streamlining that process to reflect the change that was made.

Mr. Trivers: Is that the only change?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you. I thought it was greater than that.

I do have another question, Chair.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: On this page.

Chair: I have the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid waiting.

Mr. Trivers: Sure, no, that's great. Go ahead.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Section 37(2.1), where we talk about the different rates, is that replacing where they didn't have the different rates before?

Samantha Murphy Manager: What we've done is we have split out that section because it wasn't quite – it linked user rates and district rates in the same sentence and I think it led to confusion, so we just wanted to be fully clear on what the authorities were.

It's not removing any authority that they already had, and then just providing a bit of notice that's needed to actually make the systems work for the billing for taxes. It's mostly clarity and efficiency. There's no removal of power.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Would municipalities that would fall under this before, would they have the power to have different tax rates inside? So that's not –

Mr. Mitchell: They do now.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah, I'm just saying, it's the same that way (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, no, nothing changes there.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: But there are – just so that you know, and when we're talking about running over at the end of the year – there are communities that have discussed the fact that two years ago we had a major snowfall all winter long that increased their cost for

snow removal, which put them in a very precarious position at budget time, and they have a good point. I'll give them that, right?

We may have to look at things further down the road, but we're trying to do our best in helping communities meet those needs so we may see something like that. But I just wanted to make that point.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: They have the right to do things with rates, but they also have things that occurred that are out of their control, that they didn't budget for, that we may have to look at addressing (Indistinct) in the future.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Halfway down page 8 it has section 3, subsection 3: Subsection 37(3) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "Minister of Finance" and the substitution of the words "Provincial Tax Commissioner".

Pardon my ignorance, but where does the provincial tax commissioner reside? Is that within the community, lands and environment or is that within –

Mr. Mitchell: Finance.

Mr. Trivers: – finance. It's just, instead of having to report the information directly to the Minister of Finance, it's reported directly to the provincial tax commissioner. Skipping that step, to streamline the process, is that idea here?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, so it's going to the provincial tax commissioner now, as the payment, where it used to be the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: They stay in the department with all of the departmental changes.

Mr. Trivers: I see, okay.

Mr. Mitchell: It's a streamline.

Mr. Trivers: It's a streamlining thing. Okay, thank you, Chair.

One more question at the bottom, or comment. So 24 at the bottom, 24 clause: Clause 60(c) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "seven days" and the substitution of the words "21 days".

I understand this is the amount of time allowed for a municipality to file a bylaw with the minister. I just wanted to compliment you. That sounds like a phenomenal change, to go from seven to 21. It'll be much easier for municipalities.

Mr. Mitchell: Great. Thank you for the comment.

Mr. Trivers: You're welcome.

Chair: You're driving the bus here.

Mr. Trivers: If I could have one more?

This will be my last question, which I'm sure everyone will be relieved.

Page 9, section 28, I just wanted – I won't read through the section here, but my take on this is that it's sort of giving more power to the city because we're talking about the *Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act* here and less to the province when it comes to setting rates.

I was wondering if you could comment on that. Is that a correct interpretation?

Samantha Murphy Manager: This is similar to the one in the *Municipalities Act*. It's just for consistency. It's splitting out the frontage rates and user rates and the district tax rates for clarity. There is no change in authority. This is just for municipal rates. It's not for the provincial property tax rates.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you. That's all for me.

Chair: You're all good?

Mr. Mitchell: I will try to get those amendments dealt with in a (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: I understand (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipalities Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the 4th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Order No. 4, *An Act to Amend the Planning Act*, Bill No. 25, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *An Act to Amend the Planning Act*, Bill No. 25, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I ask the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to come and Chair the bill.

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

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Aylward: Chair, if we could request from the minister an overview first.

Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Aylward: Then maybe we can decide from there if we want it clause by clause.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah. While I'm beginning with my overview, if I could get permission to bring staff onto the floor again?

Mr. Aylward: Almost certainly.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) granted.

Mr. Mitchell: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Aylward: Not that you need them, but –

Mr. Mitchell: Basically, we're here tonight to discuss planning act amendments and there are actually two goals to these amendments.

The subset under the first goal, of course, is to facilitate the implementation of both the Thompson report and the Handrahan report that we've had much discussion on before the Legislature.

It's also to create a more sustainable land and planning system for Prince Edward Island, the adoption of a provincial land use policy which we have discussed on many occasions, and to provide better protection for the environment, residents, and property owners alike all across Prince Edward Island.

The second subset of goals is to clarify the transition of the province and municipalities when official plans and bylaws are adopted for those. As well, to update and clarify standards for municipality planning, to provide modern and stronger planning tools for municipalities, to provide greater

consistency and clarity on the primary planning processes.

As of the previous act that went through there are some changes that were being made in these amendments that will affect some new restructure of municipalities moving forward in the near future that will be influenced by allowing these changes to occur in a positive manner for those new communities.

With that said, I guess my first function will be, again, with any amendments that may come forward tonight under this act as well, we will vet them through a legislative legal before we can agree to them. That's certainly not to say that we can't look at them and even have a debate on them if they're questionable and move to that.

With that, we can begin the clause by clause, but I guess I have to let staff to identify herself first.

Samantha Murphy Manager: Samantha Murphy, Manager of Municipal Affairs.

Chair: Thank you.

Section 1 of the *Planning Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. P-8, is amended

(a) by the repeal of clause (a) and the substitution of the following:

(a) "bylaw" means a bylaw relating to land use, subdivision, zoning, development control, signage or any other matter that is made by a council pursuant to this Act for the purpose of implementing an official plan, and includes an interim planning bylaw made to implement an interim planning policy in accordance with this Act;

(a.1) "Commission" means the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission established under section 2 of the *Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. I-11;

(b) by the addition of the following after clause (h):

(h.1) "planning authority" means the Minister or a council declared by the Minister under section 9 to be a planning

authority for the purposes of the Act, as the context requires;

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you just referred to the Thompson report. Am I right in saying the Thompson report is not legislation, it was a recommendation?

Mr. Mitchell: It's a recommendation. It's a report done by Judge Thompson that looked at the municipalities on the Island, looked at the way they're structured today, are they sustainable, gave us some recommendations on where we should move to.

Mr. MacKay: Right, okay. So is – excuse me, Chair – am I right in saying the department is following the Thompson report's recommendation with the decisions they're making now?

Mr. Mitchell: It's definitely influenced how we're moving forward, Prince Edward Island, in regard to municipalities, how we're looking at and discussing with communities now restructuring, how we're looking at communities having conversations with neighbour communities to positively reflect areas of commonality so that we can move forward.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: My last question here, minister, and I guess you might know where I'm going with this.

This has happened numerous times here over the last few months, but the latest one just as of the other day, a developer down on the eastern end of the province who I believe had subdivision approval back in the 1990s, and now that it's time that he's going to develop his property, even though it's already been approved and grandfathered in, the department is following the Thompson report and saying he needs government

standard roads. I'm wondering: Why does that apply to him?

Mr. Mitchell: Okay. I don't know the specific case that you speak of, but I'll reference some cases that have occurred in the past when they were establishing subdivisions in the 1970s, 1980s or whenever and have got – what would we call? – like, a preliminary approval but not actually signed approvals. They were told it looked good but they didn't go through the whole process. Now that becomes where they've got to follow new language planning that has developed in some of these communities. So I know what you speak of.

The thing of this is – and I'll refer again to the Three Rivers – with those seven communities that are coming together, some of those already have land use planning that they deal with within their municipalities. Some don't. The province handles those. What we're faced with in a case like that is how do we help them transition, especially from the ones that the province is doing the land use planning – in some cases we're responsible for all of it now – and to move that into the bigger area where they have a really good land use plan and planning abilities to do it.

As I mentioned before, we have the screwdriver and they have the toolbox in a lot of cases. We see that as being (Indistinct) but we do need a transitional method over. Some of those will be captured, what you speak of. I don't know the specifics of that particular one, but maybe we could talk about that one later and see if there may be some grey or confusion to it that we could look into for you.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I guess that was just one instance. I've seen numerous here lately now, I guess, over the last year and being elected I've got calls on quite a bit. I'm all about planning and I certainly feel that we need to preserve certain areas, there's no doubt about it, but I do – and we've talked about it before – there's got to be one set of rules Island-

wide. We can't pick and choose winners and losers.

Mr. Mitchell: Right. You're 100% correct. If we establish a baseline and municipalities take that to another level – which in a lot of cases they choose to do because they can do a lot of good work with, like, sustaining commercial areas, sustaining residential area, enhancing areas for commercial use in specific – so that's what they would prefer to do, and we'd like to give them that ability to do that.

I think right now in any areas that we go in, we've talked about this. Ours is very – you've got a good (Indistinct) test, a good line of sight, out you go, right? These are the things that we're trying to address with a new policy and a new land use plan, and I know we've – I would discuss it with you, too, hon. member, and this will improve a lot of communities and how the province does business, but we will establish kind of baseline and they can improve on that.

But we do need transition methods to move over as we have regions that grow and become – some that already exist and some that don't – and we've got to be able to merge those together.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Question for – when you're talking planning and you look out in Spring Valley and that big, huge water containment unit that they put in there, how would that get through planning and be approved?

Mr. Mitchell: There is no regulation on holding ponds. That particular one is engineered by professionals. It's probably the best example of one that we've had, but currently there is no regulation on holding ponds on Prince Edward Island.

Leader of the Opposition: Is that something we should look at, is bringing regulation into (Indistinct) –

Mr. Mitchell: Well, let's put it this way.

Leader of the Opposition: – into play?

Mr. Mitchell: I can't speak to everybody, every municipality's plan they have in place, but I'm sure there would be specific plans under some municipalities that would be involved more in that than. As I said, our screwdriver in our toolbox that the province has. Those are things that we're trying to address and assist with as we –

Mr. Aylward: Chair.

Mr. Mitchell: – move in new directions on PEI. But that particular one, it's engineered to the highest standards you could have. I hope if there was others being built that they would maintain those standards based on what exists today, which is very limited.

Leader of the Opposition: Was there an environmental assessment done on that?

Mr. Mitchell: No.

Leader of the Opposition: There wasn't.

Mr. Mitchell: There was an existing pond there prior to –

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, I remember that.

Mr. Mitchell: – and this – it's not an addition, but it's kind of the same use on the same property.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I know the retaining pond that you're talking about. Personally, myself, I'd much rather see that kind of purpose put in place than us drilling holes in the ground to take water out when we can just take it from what Mother Nature's supplying to us from the air.

Now I know, for example in the community that I reside, there's a lot of swimming pools. I know that that's governed by the municipality itself. You have to put a building permit in, you have to have fencing, protection, and things like that.

I guess my question would be in these other municipalities, that it's not for recreational purposes but for farming purposes, are there certain safety measures put in place to ensure that a young person doesn't wander off and fall into one of these ponds?

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct) particular holding pond?

Mr. Aylward: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: I know that that particular one that you're speaking about, there is the intention for a fence all around it. A project like this looks its worst when it's under construction. We all know that, right? So it's still under construction –

Mr. Aylward: Just like a bill.

Mr. Mitchell: Just like a building.

Mr. Aylward: No, a bill.

Mr. Mitchell: Oh, well, yeah, like a bill, too. But like any building, they put their preventative measures in but there is to be a fence in that one.

There is another one that I know of in another area of the province. I happened to talk to a member of the watershed group from that area last night who just like yourself had accolades for that system because it was going to gather natural rainfall and runoff and, in particular, will be a silt catcher for the watershed in that group. They had high accolades for that, and just like you said, would like to see many more of that type developed across Prince Edward Island.

Now, like I said, we don't have any specific regulation in place on that. If that becomes something that is going to be practiced more and more often, maybe it's certainly something that we should review and we should be reviewing things of this nature continuously.

I don't know if the construction of that, if it was engineered to the perfect standard that you could have, but I'll tell you, the watershed group were pretty pleased about how its effectiveness is as far as runoff and silt collection and in the use of – it's not a

hole in the ground, and they're just naturally using it to (Indistinct) crops.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the bill that we just dealt with, the amendments to the municipal act, that was in order specifically to facilitate what's going on in a –

Mr. Mitchell: Right.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – particular area. Would I be right in thinking that the amendments here to the *Planning Act* are to facilitate the same thing?

Mr. Mitchell: As I mentioned earlier, a lot of this is to allow that to continue on down there.

As I mentioned, some of those existing municipalities have no land use planning, but some do. We have to marry those up and we don't have the ability to do that. This allows for that. It does other things as well. It will enhance some areas. Typically when you have a bill open you do as much as you can to make it effective.

This is a bill that's pretty important. We're trying to act on the two reports that we've had a lot of discussion here on. We've allowed great recommendations brought forward. You will see as we go through this those recommendations be reflected here. But to your point, I would say a lot of it, but some of this has to do with what's going on in the east and will go on in other areas.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: We know that we're getting a comprehensive new *Municipalities Act* probably later this sitting. When could we expect a new *Planning Act*, or is that in the works at all?

Mr. Mitchell: I'll let Sam – we had good discussion on that earlier today.

Samantha Murphy Manager: We've reviewed the *Municipalities Act* twice in 2005, and then with Commissioner

Thompson's review the *Planning Act* has not received the same level of review. It is in the work plan but it's a large project and needs to be done properly so we'll have to take the time to do it.

Mr. Mitchell: We have a lot of large projects in the hopper. To specially answer when we could get that back to the floor, again, it's hard to do. But we think we can accomplish a lot with what we've got presented to you here today.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The point I was trying to make is the amendments that we're making here are likely to be in place for some time –
Mr. Mitchell: For some time.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – not like the ones we just dealt with.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right. That was a short-term measure. These are a little longer term.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Going back to the holding pond there, I want to be on record for this. I'm the one that's been taking the phone calls as it's in my district. Regardless, I guess, at the end of the day there should be permits put in place. You need a permit to build a mini-barn, to put a driveway in, and we're talking a massive piece of infrastructure.

In a sense, they've been working on it for months without any permits and with no consultation at all to the neighbours. There are probably six homes across the road that – regardless of what anybody says, the values of their property have gone down because of it and there were not permits in place. At the end of the day, if this is going to be a thing of the future we need to look at putting permits in place and going through proper procedures to make sure that not only are they done right, but they're in areas that aren't affecting other people.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, as I said earlier, if this is a move to the future and to be considered good by some, if it is indeed good, if we

should encourage it, yes, I believe we should review it a little closer.

As referenced by my assistant here, that would fall under the subdivision regs which we are working on. It's a perfect time to take a good look at that too. Your points are well taken and we'll have a look at that.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking at this act to amend the *Planning Act* and I'm realizing that there are some significant changes here. I think good changes as well that will allow much better land use regulations, as you mentioned, and control.

There are some brand new terms that are introduced in this act, like planning authority which wasn't there before, resource lands, secondary plans. These were things that were not in the act at all before.

I was wondering before we go clause by clause, if you can give an overview. Maybe start with planning authority and why you needed to introduce this new term, planning authority, and how it's going to improve things.

Mr. Mitchell: As I referenced, when you have an act open you try to deal with as much of it as you can. Because that's a little more technical in nature than I'm going to refer that to Sam who will be able to give you that answer just like that.

Samantha Murphy Manager: We've always had a dual system where if a municipality has an official plan and a bylaw, they become responsible for planning. Were they don't the province retains that authority.

We've had some fuzziness on where that authority switches, at what point, is it when the plan's adopted, when the bylaw's adopted, what happens to files that are open at the time of that transition.

What we're to do is just clarify that transfer authority, how files get dealt with that are

already in process, and just be a little clearer for everyone's sake as to when that starts.

Mr. Trivers: You're really putting rules around identifying exactly who the planning authority is so the information doesn't get lost in transition.

Samantha Murphy Manager: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

I wonder if you could do the same thing by explaining what sort of plans you have around resource lands, what sort of regulations. You've introduced that new term and it's pretty clear what is it, but how is that going to improve things? What are your plans with that?

Samantha Murphy Manager: One of the other large projects that's been underway for awhile since the commissioner's Report on the Task Force for Land Use Policy is the need to have land use policies for PEI at the provincial level.

Currently the act allows for them in policy but they should be in regulation in order to be enforceable. When you do that, in the work that's been done, they've identified resource lands as one of the aspects that should be dealt with through the policies, but it's not been defined. This is simply adding the definition so that we can regulate and provide some protection for the environment that way.

For secondary plans it's more of a municipal term. But when the municipalities have a general plan for their area they may want to do more specific plans, local area plans. Charlottetown has done one for East Royalty. I believe Stratford has one for their core area. They've been doing it and it's a fairly standard procedure across the country, but we've never really officially enabled it, so we're just trying to clarify that secondary plans are enabled and these are the conditions under which they be adopted. It's providing more tools to municipalities.

Likewise with the variances, they've been in place, just providing more protection, more of a framework around it.

Mr. Mitchell: Keep in mind as well, municipalities have had input on this just

like the – a lot have presented to the task force that went out and listened to Islanders and municipalities and interested people that have various reasons to do so.

Again, modernizing it to the best standard we can today is the end goal of it. Those municipalities have had some input on that and encourage it to be brought forward.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Mr. Trivers: What section are you carrying?

Chair: We're carrying the clause I just went through, the planning authority. Do you want to do it section by section, not clause by clause?

Mr. Trivers: Are you carrying section 1?

Chair: (c) by the addition of the following after clause (j):

(j.1) "resource lands" means lands that support or have the potential to support uses such as agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, excavation, fishing and energy production.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Just a question on the forestry right now. Are there any plans coming in place to preserve some of the forests now or get it on an ALUS Program, some sort like the farmland? Has there been any discussion to that?

Mr. Mitchell: That will (Indistinct) the land use policy. This will enable us to do exactly what you're suggesting there.

Mr. MacKay: Perfect, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Is there any way we can incorporate in this act or in the future going forward – I've mentioned it many times in the House – about a reforestation plan? I don't think we go far enough in protecting the woodlot, or especially after we (Indistinct) take all the

wood off the land, I don't think we do enough to reforest.

Any insight on –

Mr. Mitchell: I do, actually. I've been able to attend a couple of meetings with our private woodlot owners. For a number of years – and they'll attest to this themselves – they've been fairly stagnant. This is a body, though, that's getting resurrected for various reasons and are now looking at reforestation. As far as the public lands, it's been highlighted as well.

With our biomass we're kind of moving in a new direction on the public lands as well. We're going to get value-added forests as we move forward with the biomass project, which in turn will allow for some new reforestation. But the biggest key – because most of the land is owned by private woodlot owners – is to work collaboratively with them on their needs which, as I said, have been a little stale over a number of years. But that's a group that's really resurrected in the last say, eight months, and are looking to do some good work.

Leader of the Opposition: Is there much of a program there to allow private woodlot owners or private residents to have more trees planted on their property, or how is that working?

Mr. Mitchell: There is, but back when we all know the heavy cuts were going on in the early 1980s, and there was agreements made that were broken. They're a little apprehensive of all of those programs. They're really trying to get a good feel again of what's a good fit for them and so we're in that process now.

There was a lot of animosity back –

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – (Indistinct) years that we're trying to get back on track, but as I said, we've got some good people that have the value of their forests right at their heart. I think it we're going to see some pretty good (Indistinct) here over the next couple of years.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I'm not sure if this is the section, but I've just got a couple of random questions here.

Minister, we've talked before, and by the looks of this planning act there's going to be some more rules and regulations when it comes to development of land and ownership and so forth. We've talked about IRAC before, and basically IRAC approving in some areas for foreign land use and some areas not. Is there going to be a plan in effect that basically everybody's treated on the same scale and every district is treated on the same scale?

Mr. Mitchell: Currently, as you know, if you're looking at purchase of land as a non-resident you do have the ability to do that up to a specific acreage.

However, if in any region of Prince Edward Island that out-of-province ownership is over a certain per cent, the door is closed. Other than that – and you know what? As I said to you before, government, we should review everything periodically.

As I mentioned to the Leader of the Opposition, I would look at a review of IRAC in regard to some of the questions he asked yesterday. IRAC would always be open to taking a look at the parameters they work under to see: Do they meet today's needs? Are they antiquated in any way, shape or form? They're open for those discussions, I believe.

As I spoke to you before, if we move along with this it may give more credence to go and get that started and get working with IRAC maybe in a modern sense that they are not opposed to do.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

I guess at the end of the day my concern is that it continues going down the path it's going now, and I'm all about land

protection. On one hand we're trying to increase the population, but on the other hand we're slowing them up at the door, right?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: What's bothering the public, for the most part, is that the province and IRAC are picking winners and losers so some people don't have a chance to sell their land because they are in a high density of foreign ownership that was approved at one time regardless, right?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: At the end of the day I think there should be a protection plan when it comes to foreign ownership, there is no doubt about it, but I think the rules have got to apply to everyone and not just certain areas.

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate your sentiment, and you and I have discussed that before, and I do know that you do agree with the (Indistinct) planning aspect –

Mr. MacKay: Definitely.

Mr. Mitchell: – and foreign ownership and agriculture land versus subdivision land and all those aspects. But as we are moving forward – because realistically, some of these reports that were done were kind of sat on a shelf for a while. But we're moving forward now, so this is an opportune time to bring those to the other level, and with IRAC too, to say: Are we where we should be with how we do business when we're (Indistinct) our land with agriculture people?

We had quite an influx of agriculture people coming into PEI that have sold their farms in other provinces, have come here to restart. Are we good there? Are we good with people that want to come here and own cottage lots? Are we good there? Have that real conversation. It's the perfect time because we're moving forward now in a new way with these two acts that I have on the floor tonight.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Just last quick – when is the proposed timeline on a final piece of legislation for this?

Mr. Mitchell: For?

Mr. MacKay: For the planning act.

Mr. Mitchell: This is what's presented now. I don't have a timeline on – as we said, we're working on the land use, the other policy piece there. I can't tell you when it will be done. There's a lot of work going on right now.

What we see here before you today will be in place for some time, so they're good moves, and I know you had the opportunity to see them before we put them on the floor last spring there. The other piece we'll get to as quickly as we can, and I guess that's the only commitment I can make to you.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: (j.2) “secondary plan” means a planning strategy that is part of a council's official plan but that applies to a specific area or areas within the municipality;

(d) in clause (1), by the deletion of the period and the substitution of a semicolon; and

(e) by the addition of the following after clause (l):

(m) “variance” means an authorized relaxation from the standards imposed by provincial planning regulations made under subsection 8(1) or section 8.1 or a bylaw made under section 15, within the limits permitted by the planning authority, with respect to lot size or dimensions, setbacks, area or the height or size of a structure.

Shall it carry? Carried.

2. Section 6 of the Act is amended

(a) in clause (b), by the deletion of the word “him” and the substitution of the words “the Minister”;

(b) in clause (g),

(i) by the deletion of the word “he” and the substitution of the words “the Minister”, and

(ii) by the deletion of the word “his” and the substitution of the words “the Minister's”; and

(c) in clause (h), by the deletion of the word “his” and the substitution of the words “the Minister's”.

Shall it carry? Carried.

3. Section 7 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

7. (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) establishing provincial land use policies;

(b) establishing minimum requirements applicable to official plans adopted and bylaws made pursuant to this Act, including but not limited to

(i) minimum requirements respecting the content, development, administration and implementation of interim planning policies and bylaws, official plans and bylaws and secondary plans and reviews of official plans and bylaws,

(ii) minimum procedural requirements, including procedures for public consultation and notice,

(iii) minimum requirements related to the content, development and administration of planning tools, including but not limited to development agreements and variances, and

(iv) standards for educational qualifications, training and certification applicable to persons responsible for the administration or implementation of a document referred to in subclause (i);

(c) establishing minimum development standards, including but not limited to standards respecting

(i) public health and safety,

(ii) protection of the natural environment and resource lands,

(iii) identification, preservation and protection of landscape features, including but not limited to viewscapes, and

(iv) sound planning, engineering and environmental principles;

(d) establishing minimum requirements related to the administration and implementation of regulations made pursuant to subsection 8(1) and section 8.1, including minimum standards for educational qualifications, training and certification applicable to persons responsible for the administration or implementation of the regulations made under subsection 8(1) and section 8.1.

(2) Where regulations have been made pursuant to clause (1)(a) or (b), the council of a municipality with an official plan or bylaws made under this Act shall, within two years of the date of publication of the regulations in the Gazette, or during the next five-year review undertaken pursuant to section 15.1, whichever occurs first, make any amendments that are required to bring the official plan and bylaws into conformity with the regulations.

(3) Where regulations have been made pursuant to clause (1) –

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: We have looked at the questions we have and we think we can revert to instead of going clause by clause, going back to page by page if that's the will of the other members.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Trivers: What page are you on now, sorry?

Chair: We're on page three.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Chair: Shall this page carry? Carried.

Page four? Carried.

Page five? Carried.

Page six? Carried.

Page seven? Carried.

Page eight? Carried.

Page nine? Carried.

Page 10?

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. In fact, all the rest of the questions I have centre around this same subject. I'm going back to communication to the public again.

Because you have reviewed this with the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities, all the details are things they deal with on a daily basis and I'm presuming you got the most correct. I feel one of the things that I need to do here is represent the general public who may be sitting outside the council.

When it comes to things like public hearings, I noticed that if you look at the existing *Planning Act* it does say things like: "The board shall hold at least one public meeting, notice of which is published on at least two occasions in a newspaper circulating in the area..." This is the same sort of phraseology we heard when we were reviewing the amendments to the *Municipalities Act*.

But I noticed that in the amendments it's been changed to: Notice of which is published in accordance with the regulations.

That appears weaker, potentially, depending what those regulations are.

Can you just point to where we find those regulations and maybe describe what they are?

Samantha Murphy Manager: The regulations have not been developed yet. That's one of the reasons the act is subject to proclamation not taking effect immediately.

One of the challenges we have had is the standards are not quite the same with a plan amendment versus a bylaw amendment. The requirements and the notice requirements are not the same. We're trying to standardize

it. Looking at providing clearer requirements through the regs to reflect the changes. We're getting quite strong advice that the ads in the paper, and they're often in the classified section, a couple of lines that are very easy to miss. Trying to find better tools to ensure that communication happens, and by putting them into the regs we can also update them as technology changes so that we can be a little bit more modern as we go.

Mr. Trivers: That sounds fantastic. You could probably could guess my input would be similar to the amendments made, that I think you should use the online channels that have been developed already, like the government website, like the government social media channels that are used by people across the Island, and that would get the widest possible audience.

I'm not sure how I feel about the regulations not being in the *Planning Act* when they were before. They are being removed, the regulations. Is that something municipalities feel is a reasonable thing?

Samantha Murphy Manager: They tend to, in this sort of case, like it partly because the modes of communication change over time. It's harder to get an act opened up to deal with something as simple as how notice is made. It allows us to be a little more flexible to responses and to respond to requests from municipalities or the public in terms of changing standards.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

I look forward to reviewing those regulations as they are developed.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I think, actually, I have a problem with this, and similar to you, Brad, in that in Brookvale recently the issue about the water bottling plant – and I realize that's a land use change and that's not what we're talking about here. I can imagine situations here with bylaws changing that could have similar implications.

The only reason that came to light was the fact that a resident next door to the proposed facility received a letter in the mail. She came to me and said: What's this about?

I think unless there – if this is put to regulation rather than overtly stated in the act, I can foresee situations where neighbours, people immediately impacted by bylaw changes would not necessarily, as you say, put something in the paper and it gets lost in the classifieds –

Mr. Mitchell: I guess, if I may hon. member – and you attended most of our water act consultations, too. These acts are the overarching –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – part of the thing with most of that coming in regulations. I might have neglected to mention that this act will be held until regulations are completed –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – for turn on. You would have an ample opportunity to have a look at how that reads out in that.

I guess I'll let Samantha address your concerns specific of not having something in the act, but we do have to realize that when it's in the act it's a fairly substantial process of changing. Things are changed fairly rapidly, so I'll let Samantha address that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Maybe I can rephrase my question.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Or ask it in a different way, but: Why, in the *Municipalities Act* that we just amended, are those things included in the act and in this case they're shuffled off into the regulations? That may be a better way to put it.

Mr. Mitchell: You mean the amendments that we made to put in to act?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: We had a similar discussion as this with the *Municipalities Act*, the amendments we made there, but the regulations, if you like, were actually embedded in the act itself. Here we don't

know what these regulations are. Is there a reason why that's done that way?

Samantha Murphy Manager: It's a combination of time to – looking at the trends across the country, they do seem to be moving more towards putting those levels of details into the regulations, but we wanted to also spend some time giving good thought to the best way to ensure the public is made aware. Especially on the planning aspects, where these are happening in municipalities, it's happening almost monthly. They're going through rezoning, bylaw amendments –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Samantha Murphy Manager: – so we wanted to make sure we had the time and the flexibility to put forward the best combination possible of different methods of communicating.

In fairness to the municipalities, I'll note that most of them go above and beyond what the act requires in terms of notice. The requirements for letters are not provincially mandated. They are usually an additional standard that municipalities put in place and they put a certain parameter with them depending on the type of change, whether it's a bylaw amendment or a special type of development.

In most cases they're actually more stringent than the province is in terms of how they get that notice out. We do, as part of our review – because those planning amendments come to the minister for approval – we actually look at the notice that they follow in relation to what the act requires, not in relation to what their own processes require.

There is a lot of scrutiny on how that communication happens. It's definitely an important part of the planning process.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair, in the instance that I sited there in Brookvale, it's an unincorporated area. We have no municipality taking care of that. It's entirely in the hands of the province.

Mr. Mitchell: The province sent the letter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The province. Sorry, I have lost my train of thought. Can you come back to me? I'm sorry.

Chair: Sure.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I forget what I was going to say there.

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

Mr. R. Brown: My question (Indistinct) we sent a letter (Indistinct) mandatory that we send a letter to people within 200 metres of any change.

As a matter of fact, we went further and posted a sign on the house or on the property. Is that mandatory here or is it left up to the municipality?

Mr. Mitchell: In the case that the hon. member's speaking of, it was a letter sent to the proximity of the area, which in this case, I think, was four properties or five properties. Five I think. Two of them were the province's own properties. That's the case you get in the larger areas of Prince Edward Island that we maintain. That's what exists today.

Under the municipalities, they can have their own bylaws that say you have to contact everybody within two kilometres. They can establish that on their own based on what they feel is the most important for their areas, in any of the larger ones or smaller ones even.

Mr. R. Brown: So, the policy of the department is that when they receive an application they send a letter to –

Mr. Mitchell: For this case, as he said, it was a change of use application and that's what went out to tell the residents. It's a change of use to the water bottling facility, in that case, which I referenced in standing committee. There was not permitting for the water bottling part of it –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Mitchell: – therefore there was no reference or permitting report of that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to underscore how important I think it is to communicate this information to the public in the name of openness and transparency. Allow people to know what's going on. The Leader of the Third Party gave a great example just now of a recent case where communication wasn't as good as it could have been.

One thing, I noticed, I'm looking at the draft of the municipal governance act, I should say. In there it looks like, in some places at least, you're referencing very specific modes of, means of communication. It looks like we do have some inconsistencies between the *Municipalities Act*, the *Planning Act* and the new municipal government act. I understand your arguments to put them into regulations. I guess my request would be twofold.

One is you highlight how important it is to communicate changes to the public in the act, even if you do put the specifics in the regulations. Number two is make sure that you're consistent across the acts. I would suggest you look at the draft of the municipal governance act and –

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate your comments, and I guess as we move forward with the new municipal government act we're bringing it up to today's standards and today's way of legislatively writing an act –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – but as mentioned by Samantha earlier, most jurisdictions legislatively rule. Put those finer pieces in regulation.

The municipality government act that I brought forward today was an older act brought forward with some changes to accommodate what we need to do. The new municipal government act will have more requirement for regulation, less in the act itself, probably to the point that we just mentioned. That's a bit of a forerunner based on the way you formulate legislation today.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, and I'm looking at it right now. It does reference other means of public notification for the purposes of subsection –

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct) act will be modified so –

Mr. Trivers: This is the new draft of the municipal governance act: includes signs or posters, newsletters and newspaper advertisements. What I'm saying is you might want to take a look at that before it comes to the floor and –

Mr. Mitchell: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: – (Indistinct) try and (Indistinct), that's all.

Mr. Mitchell: We'll do our best but –

Mr. Trivers: I agree with what you're saying about regulations. Just stress in the act the overlying – that public communication is very important, and openness and transparency.

Mr. Mitchell: I couldn't agree more with you. As I said earlier in my remarks, Islanders want to be involved in all aspects of how the Island is changing. They do a great job of informing each other, believe me, based on discussions I've had.

Mr. Trivers: They do. You just have to let one person know.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, and that's great, and that means when we get to go out all across PEI and talk, we know we're going to have full rooms, and that's exactly what we want. In some ways it's being done naturally and organically, and if there's ways to enhance that certainly we're interested in doing that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I know I brought up that particular example, minister, but I'm more concerned in a general sense that Islanders know what's going on in their communities, what changes are coming, and that they have an opportunity to be informed of that and part of the debate.

The regulations in which the methods of communication to Islanders would occur, those regulations, can they be changed without (Indistinct)?

Mr. Mitchell: Regulations can be changed weekly.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: You know what I mean? That's the beauty of putting –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, exactly. As I said, that's where you deal with it and if it's not correct you can change it the following week – in a week, you know what I mean, in the regs? That's why it's so important to have it there, rather than have to open up the big pieces again, right?

But I hear what you're saying, and I believe what you're saying, and I guess I may be asking to trust us a little bit that the regs will reflect what you want to do, and I just spoke to what's our best vehicle to do that. We'll let you know the regs, what they will look like, when we get them ready to put out.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: When regulations are changed, how is that notification made publicly that regulations on a particular act have been changed?

Mr. Mitchell: As soon as they're changed they're gazetted, for one thing. They post it online then.

Samantha Murphy Manager: They'd be posted. They'd be updated on the website.

Mr. Mitchell: They'd be updated on the website where they are, but they would be gazetted. Executive Council puts out the notice that they do, and it's the same with every piece that they change. For any highway regulation, or change in the speed limits or any of those kinds, it's a similar –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – process.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So a certain amount of vigilance is required.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, and you know, media does a great job of picking that stuff up every Friday, whatever goes into the *Royal Gazette*, or every Saturday I guess I should say.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

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

Mr. R. Brown: On a regulations aspect, and it's not only to this (Indistinct), the federal government and a lot of the other provinces post the regulations on a regulation change site that says you can go and there's 45 days' notice or 60 days' notice. The regulations sit for public comment, and then the public comment is taken into consideration before the regulations go on for formalization.

Would you consider doing that (Indistinct)?

Mr. Mitchell: Certainly. Actually, our department is reviewing our regulations as we speak.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: It's hard for me to speak for every Cabinet member including yourself (Indistinct) –

Mr. R. Brown: No, I only have one act.

Mr. Mitchell: You're lucky. You're extremely lucky, then. I don't know the overall number –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – but certainly we're reviewing ours and we will be posting them somewhere that makes good sense –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – as we review them. To look at everybody's –

Mr. R. Brown: No, no.

Mr. Mitchell: – that's a big (Indistinct) for me as the minister of one department, but I'd support if everybody wanted to do that, work together collectively. I think it's a great idea. Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you.

Chair: Okay, so that –

Some Hon. Members: Carry the bill.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Planning Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment that the 5th order of the day be now called.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Order No. 5, *An Act to Amend the Unsightly Property Act*, Bill No. 35, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the said bill be now read a second time.

An Hon. Member: Let's carry the hour.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

An Hon. Member: Let's carry the hour. (Indistinct).

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *An Act to Amend the Unsightly Property Act*, Bill No. 35, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Yes, yes, yes.

I will ask the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot to come and chair this bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the Chair and that the Chair report progress and begs leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Unshightly Property Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until Friday, November 18th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.