

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

Speaker's Ruling

**Speaker:** Hon. members, I am prepared to deliver my findings on the points of privilege raised by the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition on November 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

As hon. members are aware, once the claim of a breach of privilege has been made it is the duty of the Speaker to decide if a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege exists. In so doing, the Speaker must be satisfied that two conditions have been met:

- (1) that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity; and
- (2) that the matter is of such a character, or that privilege appears to be sufficiently involved, to justify giving it priority over all other business before the House.

The Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island are clear; I refer hon. members to Rule 45(3), which states:

The Speaker shall not accept such a motion unless satisfied that there is a *prima facie* case that a breach of privilege has been committed and that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity. The Speaker's decision is not subject to appeal.

Hon. members can also refer to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* (6th edition), citation §115:

A question of privilege must be brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity. Even a gap of a few days may invalidate the claim for precedence in the House.

Armed with these parliamentary authorities, hon. members, I find as follows:

- 1) With respect to the point of privilege raised by the hon. Member for Belfast-Murray River on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the

matter concerns remarks made by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in this House on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016. As such, the matter has not been raised at the earliest opportunity. There was a full month of legislative proceedings after those statements were made in this House last spring. As such, the matter does not satisfy the requirement for being raised at the earliest opportunity and cannot, per the authorities cited, be advanced.

- 2) With respect to the question of privilege raised by the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. I have carefully reviewed the relevant Hansard transcripts, the Report of the Auditor General of Prince Edward Island Special Assignment: Government Involvement with the E-gaming Initiative and Financial Services Platform, and the relevant parliamentary authorities.

On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism was asked by the Member from Stratford-Kinlock the following question:

“The loan, as innovation calls it, had conditions that required audited financial statements of the borrower prepared by a firm of professional accountants. Can the minister confirm: Did the borrower complete this as required by the loan and Innovation PEI?”

The question concerned, specifically, the provision of audited financial statements prepared by professional accountants to support the application of a loan.

The response from the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism was:

“Mr. Speaker, from the onset prior to the election the Premier put notice to the AG that this would be recommended to go to the AG for review. We've gone down this road with our *Financial Administration Act* in exposing loans. We worked cooperatively with the opposition on that. We debated the issues. We came to an agreement. We're working with the AG on this. If recommendations come from the AG we'll be ready to support those recommendations. We're not hiding anything. We're being as transparent as possible. If we go through the same process we just did with the AG on

loan write-offs, then I'm sure everybody, including Islanders, will reveal everything that happened with the e-gaming file."

Hon. members, as stated, I have also reviewed the Auditor General's report into the egaming and financial services platform issues. At section 7.10 (page 41), the Auditor General makes reference to the email accounts of senior government officials, who were key participants in the egaming initiative and/or the establishment of a financial services platform, and which were removed after the individuals left government. The following sections, 7.11 and 7.12 (pages 41 and 42), also relate to the emails and associated records for senior government officials who had left government.

The sections of the Auditor General's report, as quoted by the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, do not, on the face of that presented to the House, relate to the question as posed to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and therefore a finding of *prima facie* case of breach of privilege is not supported in this instance, and,

3) On November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, rising on a Matter of Privilege, asserted that statements made by hon. Premier on the topic of the egaming initiative and the involvement of senior civil servants during Oral Question Period on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016, were contrary to sections 3.45 and 3.46 in the Auditor General's Report, Special Assignment: Government Involvement in the E-Gaming Initiative and Financial Services Platform, and therefore constituted a deliberate breach of privilege in this matter.

*Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th Edition, citation §31(1) states as follows:

A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

Hon. members, in this instance, the subject matter in question is not between two members but involves a report to the Legislative Assembly and statements made by the hon. Premier during oral question period. Without prejudice to either position,

a statement made on the floor of this House that is contrary to a finding in a report submitted to it may well be cause for debate but it does not constitute a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege.

Thank you, hon. members.

The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, greetings to all the colleagues and those watching from home or elsewhere on various platforms, and a particular welcome to everyone who's with us in the gallery today.

I want to make a special notice of the great delegation of 4-H students and leaders who are here from various clubs throughout the province. And to note that Marlee Gregory is here is, who's from my district, as is (Indistinct) Nicholson has grandparents in my district, the Skeffingtons. Of course, welcome to everyone I had a chance to say hello to out in the corridor earlier.

4-H is a great organization, I'm sure we'll hear about that from others today, and terrific contribution to the province.

Yesterday evening I had an opportunity to take part in a session by another great organization, Fusion Charlottetown, which has gotten going over the last one to two years bringing together some very talented and entrepreneurial and creative young and younger people here in – they gather in Charlottetown, but they cover a lot of ground. They are doing great things and they are building up kind of a spirit and an entrepreneurship and a positive outlook for our province that I know will serve us well.

On the recognition of younger people, I want to welcome and recognize William Wright who is with us in the press gallery joining his parents. William is a Queen Charlotte student in French Immersion.

Tomorrow evening I'll have the opportunity to attend the Nichola Goddard Foundation dinner in Cornwall where the guest speaker is Mayor Naheed Nenshi of Calgary. I'm sure all of us in the House would want to welcome Mayor Naheed Nenshi's visit to

the province. He's an admirable political leader on the national scene and someone who's spent time in Prince Edward Island before. I look forward to having some time together with him again during the day on Sunday.

This afternoon I'll have an opportunity to participate in an event at the University of Prince Edward Island where 25 to 30 students will be receiving what are called the MacLauchlan Prizes for Effective Writing. Those have been awarded since 2011. It's something that I've always valued and encouraged. I get a great lift – and I know we all would – to see how those students are doing, how they're building the connection from their writing to their thinking to their contributions to the world. I think we can all look forward to their future contributions to Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Taking great joy in wishing the opposition whip a happy birthday today. I must note that I am older than him but he has more grey hairs than I do.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) might be causing them.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct). I'd like to also mention to the House today that I'm glad to see the new pharmacy in Crapaud is under construction. I noticed when I drove by this morning that all the walls are up and they're working on the roof trusses and stuff like that. It's a great addition to my district and the actual area in a whole, and also to the hon. members' district, too. It's a little bit of a fight of where the line goes there, but it's in there.

I want to recognize the 4-H. You're part of a great organization and I think it's one of the pillars of programs in Canada across the country. We look at the cadet program and

the boy scouts and girl guides, but also the 4-H. One thing I can say is I always enjoyed going to 4-H events and seeing what they're involved in and their ideas and their createability. Be very proud of the organization you're involved because it is a great organization.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I rise today to welcome the delegation from 4-H. Everybody in this House today was encouraged to wear something green in honour of your presence here. I did not have to look terribly far in my closet, of course, to find something. I went big green today, but I thank everybody in this House who joins me, at least if not politically, materially in wearing green today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Henderson:** I, too, want to recognize those in the gallery from 4-H. I added a little green as well to my wardrobe and it actually is the Henderson tartan. That's what I have for green on today.

I also want to recognize the Ellerslie 4-H. I don't think there's anybody here from that group, but they do some services of 4-H in my riding. Jody Williams does an exceptional job in promoting the 4-H and what it does for the promotion of youth and do really good work for your country and our community.

I also want to acknowledge my mom, she's at the Stewart Memorial Manor in Tyne Valley and she has a birthday coming up. I'd like to wish her a happy birthday on her 76<sup>th</sup> birthday which will be November 21.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everybody in the House here a good day.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Everybody is going to be on their toes today for certain. I am very pleased to rise in the House today to welcome everybody to the public gallery. A great group of young individuals from Prince Edward Island all in 4-H'ers. Great to see them in and sharing in today's proceedings, for certain.

Also like to recognize an extremely great friend of mine Wayne MacMillian who is in the gallery today. Wayne spent some time visiting and it's always nice to see you. Welcome in, Wayne.

Also like to take a couple of minutes here to say hello and acknowledge some other fairly important people, I'll call them, on Prince Edward Island, individuals by the name of Roger Sark, Scott Taylor, and Randy Angus. They're involved with the Abegweit Fish Hatchery out in Scotchfort in your district, Mr. Speaker.

These gentlemen, and others from that area, do a tremendous fine job with the hatchery. I got to spend some time over the last several weeks with these fine folks and variations of other people out in streams and rivers all across Prince Edward Island as we were releasing some young fish in some areas and collecting brood stock from some other rivers all across the Island as well. These fine folks are doing a tremendous job of helping us to replace fish numbers all across the province and I want to give them accolades for that.

As well, as I close, I'd just like to say hello to my mom who often watches in the proceedings and I hope she's watching today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise again today and welcome, again, my District 22 residents that are watching from home, and I welcome them to the gallery and the proceedings today.

I'd also like to wish a happy birthday to my much younger colleague, the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road. It is his birthday today and we weren't permitted to sing happy birthday to him.

I'd also like to welcome the 4-H members that are returning to the gallery today. I had the great opportunity to attend the Royal Fair as a member of the Canadian Women Parliamentarians last winter in Toronto. I came away with a whole new appreciation of the wonderful work that the 4-H club does. I want you all to know that, unlike the member of the Third Party, I only had one item in my closet that was green and it was a dress that's 10 years old and about two sizes too small, so I'm really taking one for the team today.

Thank you very much and have a great day.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Also a great privilege to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery.

A special welcome to the 4-H club that are here today. I'd like to say hello to the Evangeline 4-H club who, I understand, are not present today. Thank you for all the wonderful work you do, and it's a great organization.

I'd also like to say hello to everyone watching back in Evangeline-Miscouche and wish them all a good weekend. I'm looking forward to getting together with them all tomorrow night for the annual Richelieu Dinner and Elimination Draw and wish everybody all the best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise today and welcome all the 4-H members here. It's always a treat when you go to the Crapaud Exhibition or Old Home Week and visit the booths that you guys have. But I also want to – I promised my wife I'd give a shout-out to her former leader in her 4-H, Phyllis Smith of Kellys Cross. I want to shout-out to some of your leaders and the job that they do to maintain the 4-H programs on PEI. I was reading a little bit last night because we got into a discussion, my wife and I, on 4-H and how important it is. One of the phrases I came across was from Bill Clinton. He was speaking in the US and he said: If we had more 4-H program in the inner cities we'd have less crime in America.

Keep up the good work.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to rise and welcome all the folks in the public gallery, especially the 4-H people here. It's a great program for sure.

I'd also like to welcome Wayne MacKinnon in the public gallery. I had a chance to spend an afternoon with Wayne there a few weeks ago.

I'd also like to mention young William there in the press gallery that I met yesterday. It looks like he might be following in the footsteps of his folks there in pursuing a journalism career.

I'd also like to wish or say hello to all the good people up in Alberton-Roseville that might be watching at home today, and especially to my daughter Lila. Hi, Lila. I'm sure she's off school today so she's probably watching, her and her mom Karen.

I'd like to also say how heartwarming it was – I attended an event, a benefit, last night up in my district. It was for a gentleman up the district that's having some illness there,

Dougge Gallant, and the benefit raised over \$20,000. I think it's just a statement that shows what a great community we live in in West Prince, and how people come in around you no matter what the cause is, what the issue might be, or if someone's sick. We're always there together as a team.

Thank you, 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 all the 4-H'ers here today. I don't know if you're working shifts on us or not. Our gallery is a little small here, I guess, but it's great to have you with us today. As you can see, we told the other group that we're all wearing green here today in honour of you being with us.

I'd like a special shout out to those from Wheatley River: Marlene Gregory, Hailey Doucette, Linda Doyle, and Brandon MacLean. If they're not in the immediate audience you can pass my wishes onto them.

It's quite appropriate that I have a member's statement today that one of my constituents will be – has been in the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame, so it's kind of fitting that you fellows are here with us today.

I'd also like to give birthday greetings out to the Member from Morell-Mermaid on the third floor, but we also have a birthday boy on the second floor, and that's the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road. We were trying to figure out how old he was, and I heard 59 being batted around. Birthday wishes to you both, and thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, it's great to look out into the audience there today and see the future of Prince Edward Island, and by the looks of things, Prince Edward Island's got a great future ahead of it, sir.

I want to welcome everybody that's listening also.

I just want to make a quick note as Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning and say how thrilled I am with the federal government in seeing the value of our workforce here on Prince Edward Island, especially the workforce at the tax centre in Summerside. Their hard work and dedication convinced Ottawa –

**Mr. Trivers:** Member's statements?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Look who's talking.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. Brown:** It's going to be a hot day.

Mr. Speaker, it convinced Ottawa of the dedication and the hard workers at the tax centre in Prince Edward Island.

That's why they moved 70 jobs here to Prince Edward Island.

Another thing. The Member from Summerside-Wilmot's been only on the job for two weeks, and during the election he promised jobs for Summerside and he's delivering already. Congratulations!

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a privilege to rise in the House, and I'd like to welcome everyone in the gallery again today and all the members of 4-H.

We've had a great gallery all this week, it's been full all this week, and it's great to see that it's continued on until Friday.

But I'd like to make special mention of three people here today: Dawson Jesso, Sheila Walsh, and Trayton Acton from my district that are here with 4-H, so welcome to them here.

I also had the privilege to meet young William last night along with his parents, and I noted at his very young age he's towering above both parents now. If Kerry's

going to have any help, he's going to have to get some platform shoes to keep up with him. It's great to see him here today.

Again, birthday wishes to both the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and Morell-Mermaid, and it's great to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Mermaid arguing about the colour of their hair. I'm jealous of both of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

**Mr. Perry:** It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome to the gallery our 4-H members right across Prince Edward Island, and unfortunately from my club up west they couldn't make it in today. It's a two-hour drive, and it's a little early to get up on a day off.

But I do want to recognize the overall leaders for the Elmsdale club which are Libby Shaw and Monica MacAusland. They do a great job with the youth in our area. I want to recognize Kelly Mullaly who's the administrative director for 4-H PEI, Katie MacCormack who's the 4-H specialist for the eastern part of PEI, Jackie Harlow who's the specialist for the western part of PEI, and Mary Jane McPhee who's the specialist from the central part of PEI. Mary Jane's in here at the present time chaperoning. Also say hello and recognition to Del Henderson who's the leader who's also helping out today. I'll get in a little later on with my statement as to why they're here today.

I want to thank everyone for the birthday wishes. I want to wish the Member from Morell-Mermaid a happy birthday, along with another Island politician, my MP, Bobby Morrissey, who has a birthday today.

Again, thank you for all the birthday wishes. It makes turning 40 much easier.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I said jokingly earlier this morning TGIF, but it's quite obvious that everybody's in great spirits here today, being it's a Friday.

I'd like to start off my comments today by extending my condolences to the Clarkin and the Callaghan families from Stratford and Kinlock. The matriarch of their family Olive Clarkin, just recently passed away. They're great people, hard-working individuals, and I know that Olive had instilled that sense of pride in all of her children.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't remind everyone in Stratford and area that this coming Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, will be the 26<sup>th</sup> annual food drive. The volunteers will be going out to collect food from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. The apartments will be done just a slight bit earlier because it takes about four hours to collect from those 55-plus buildings.

The generosity and outpouring last year resulted in 16 pallets of food being collected in the Stratford area, and we're certainly looking to break that record this year. I implore all residents of Member Stratford-Kinlock to look through the sales brochures that just came out, get down to No Frills or Sobeys over in Stratford, get those items, and the volunteers will be around to pick them up.

I'd also like to congratulate a couple of my constituents, Amy and Forbes MacPherson, front page news today. These two great individuals have bought an Island institution. They have taken over Fisherman's Wharf out in Rustico, and I know that they'll do a terrific job with that great Island tradition, a real staple of the tourism industry here.

Just in closing, I'd like to also welcome the 4-H members here today and congratulate you on being part of such a wonderful organization. I'd like to thank the leaders and volunteers as well for your dedication that make this possible for youth here on Prince Edward Island.

Actually, if you went back just a couple of years ago and looked at the transcripts from

the Legislative Assembly, you would see the remarks that were spoken about this organization by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road. He spoke at length about his passion for this great organization.

**An Hon. Member:** Two hours.

**Mr. Aylward:** Yes, I believe it was two hours. Thank you very much, sir.

This gentleman, this birthday boy, also is a very proud alumni from the organization, and I believe he has a very significant trophy that he was awarded on his mantle piece back home, and I'll leave it at that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to welcome all the young people we have here in the gallery. Great organization, 4-H. I commend every one of you for being involved. It shows that you're going to be great leaders in your community in the future, taking this interest.

I'd also like to send a shout-out to my district, District 4, everyone watching at home.

Couple of, I guess, public service announcements. The first Christmas craft fair in our community, Christmas in Wood Islands, happens tomorrow, so I guess, officially, the season's being kicked off in my district anyway. It's at Plough the Waves, the Wood Islands Welcome Centre, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. I encourage everyone to come out.

Also, tomorrow night is the elimination draw for the Belfast Lions Club, and I'm guessing the tickers are all sold already. A great community organization, they're wonderful to help seniors and anyone who has to travel off-Island, and really anyone in the community who needs help. They're also very involved with our Deuce is Loose. I want to commend the Belfast Lions Club.

I would like to wish the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road happy birthday, my seat mate and the opposition whip, happy birthday. We talked about gray hair today. It's a conversation that happens regularly in caucus, and I keep telling the gentlemen there is a solution to that.

Everyone have a great day and enjoy your weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald. I know it's Christmas craft fair season and there are a lot of volunteers who put in a lot of effort to make those happen. There are a lot of happy shoppers, as well, out there.

Of course, I wanted to welcome everyone here in the gallery. I noticed a number of people from (Indistinct) District 18 Rustico-Emerald. I'm not going to try to name everyone's name because I think it's four, five, or six of them. Some of them that I go to church with and taught Sunday school and involved with gymnastics and people who coach or referee hockey. It's great to see young folks out. You're a well-rounded group.

I, too, was a 4-H'er and got to represent Ontario at the provincial and national level, so keep at it. The opportunities are incredible. I commend you for being here.

I'm not wearing any green. I don't know if I missed the email. I'll just say maybe I am, but you just can't see it.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Trivers:** On that food note, I also wanted to welcome Pauline Howard here today. She does a lot of great work with food, especially with PEI Food Exchange.

I just wanted to make sure I give enough time here in my greetings for the Minister of

Workforce and Advanced Learning to get the full effect.

**Mr. Aylward:** He's talking about his shoes.

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to –

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) can only hope.

**Mr. Trivers:** – say that really, we're getting a lot of good work done here in the House, and I'm looking forward to having another great day here.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to welcome everybody to the gallery today and all of the 4-H members that we have the privilege of joining us today.

A big shout-out to District 20, to everybody watching on t.v. or Internet today.

I'd also like to wish a happy birthday to my colleagues from Morell-Mermaid and Tignish-Palmer Road.

I'd especially like to take a shout-out to my mom and my eight-year-old daughter, Kennedy, who are home watching today. This will be Kennedy's first time watching. She's a kid who is full of questions and I'm sure she's going to have a whole lot more questions when I get home today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to, as well, welcome everybody here in the gallery today and particularly, William, who is a constituent of mine. I can

see Tyler Murnaghan, just came in there, a great community-minded person.

Particularly to the 4-H'ers, and while I'm at it, I'd like to also give a shout-out to a few of the 4-H leaders that I know and that I know to have done great work. In particular, Judge Nancy Orr, chief provincial court judge, who for years has been involved in 4-H. Usually around this time of the year I get an email from Judge Orr that basically provides me with a reminder that I need to stock up on honey, cheese, and preserves for the Christmas season. If any of the hon. members in here have not gotten that email, or anybody else, the 4-H Club does raise a lot of the money they use to operate through that sale. I'd certainly encourage people to seek them out and purchase the great Island products that they have for sale.

I'd like to, as well, recognize Libby Shaw, who is a member of the law firm that I work with and does great work with 4-H. And, of course, my wife, who was a 4-H'er and a 4-H leader in the Dunstaffnage club for a number of years and had a great time at it, and learned a lot from it.

Also, to wish a happy birthday to the two hon. members who have received mention previously. I'm not sure about just what you do to change the hair colour, but I do know that as the hon. member in front me beard gets longer, the shoe polish supply in Tignish-Palmer Road seems to be getting shorter and shorter. I'm not sure that there's a connection there, but we'll leave everybody to wonder.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid and birthday boy.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome all the 4-H people here today. It's great, it's fantastic to see so many here.

My green is my MacEwen tartan tie. It's fairly non-partisan. There is blue, red,

yellow, green, so that's what I have on today.

**Mr. R. Brown:** No red.

**Mr. MacEwen:** There's red on there, don't worry. A little bit –

**Ms. Compton:** A little bit.

**Mr. MacEwen:** – a little bit.

**Ms. Compton:** Plenty.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I'd also like to thank you for the birthday wishes. I'd like to wish a happy birthday to the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

There's also another big birthday in Morell. No relation, but Billy MacEwen, from MacEwen Construction Ltd. has a big birthday today. There's three good Tories celebrating birthdays today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEwen:** I, too, have three children that are most likely watching the proceedings today. They're at Nanny (Indistinct) today. I'd like to say hi to Rylan and Mason and Mara.

Finally, a big announcement. As many of you would know in Morell, the Chase the Ace has hit grand heights, \$110,000 this weekend. Twelve cards left, five to eight on tonight and tomorrow night at the Holy Cow restaurant in Morell. Please come out and get tickets and support our community rink initiative.

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 here on a Friday, and I do want to welcome everybody to the gallery here today, especially the folks from 4-H.

I do have a tie that has some green and blue in it and I tried to blend it over a blue shirt. If you don't think it matches, I was in a rush

this morning. If you think it matches, I meant to do it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Myers:** I also want to wish happy birthday to both members in the House here today. I know the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, it was mentioned about his beard and the boot polish, I just want you to give him a little bit of room. He's planning to go as that guy from *Rin Tin Tin* for Hallowe'en next year.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Myers:** Also want to wish a happy birthday to the Member from Morell-Mermaid here who, over 18 months, his hair has grayed probably at five times the rate that mine has grayed in five years. He's going – quit calling him so much, or whatever's going on, you're making him go gray really fast.

Also, I want to give a shout-out. There's another birthday, and many of you on the government side, ministers, would know, it's Butch Dowling's birthday. Butch has worked in the maintenance for government forever. He is an unfortunate Leafs' man. I feel bad for him, he has stuck with the Leafs for a number of years, even through all of the terrible years, but Butch is old enough to remember the time when they hoisted the cup. I guess there's still hope for him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to rise this morning. First of all, I want to welcome some of the visitors who are in the gallery, and especially recognize that Robert Larsen is with us, the former Page from the Bedeque area. It's great to see him back here, but on the other side of the rail today.

Also, to welcome all of our 4-H'ers who are here in the gallery and, I believe, watching across the street. Your travel in from different parts of PEI is certainly much

appreciated. I want to congratulate all of the members from the Ellerslie 4-H Club, especially the Lot 16 4-H Club. Ellerslie is a newly formed club, but the Lot 16 one goes back about 63 years, at least.

I want to recognize that Madison Wood and Maddie Wright are here today, as well. Also, recognize that Eddie Clark, our former Speaker, was one of the founders of the 4-H Club in Lot 16.

I think it was mentioned earlier there are fundraisers going on this time of year for 4-H'ers right across PEI with a lot of the Island products, so I encourage everybody to support those.

I'm always impressed when I go to the Lot 16 events, July 1<sup>st</sup>, especially, and Remembrance Day. The 4-H club leads those particular two events and organizes them and leads the way. This particular summer I attended the fair up in Alberton and Jack Gamble from Lot 16 4-H club had the prize-winning turkey. It was great to see the work that goes on there. I also want to mention that Tyne Valley rink is having an elimination draw tomorrow night.

Just to wrap up, to say hello to my mom, Pauline Dymont, who lives in the Tyne Valley Stewart Memorial Manor.

For all of those that are referencing grey hair today, I'll just say that for those of you who follow fashion trends, the grey is the new black and we're all in vogue, those of us that are supporting grey hair, so wear it proudly.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise to acknowledge the guests in the gallery. I want to acknowledge Tyler Murnaghan who is with us today who is a great youth leader in our community and doing good things.

I want to acknowledge all of the students and youth from 4H. I have an interest in 4H. You would wonder why an MLA from Charlottetown-Parkdale who grew up on

Confederation Street all of my life – but I had access to a farm every day, and I was five minutes away from the experimental farm growing up, and we spent a lot of time on the farm. There was a hay loft, there were cattle, pigs, and chickens. The Currie boys had a lot of fun on the farm. I remember that there used to be a family, and I think their last name was Brown, and the Brown family used to come up and try to hang out on the farm so we had to chase the Browns away from the farm. So I wanted to clarify my passion and commitment for the work that they do.

I also want to give a big shout-out to William Wright who is a grade 9 student who is the son of Kerry and Teresa, who we all know very well, and we had a good Q&A and the Q&A was around education. He is a grade 9 student at Queen Charlotte who is a member of the Colonel Grey family. He reminded me that the importance of better learning for all, and that even though the discussion yesterday was focused on certain areas in the province, he reminded me as the minister that we have to be thinking of all learning, even in the city, for children in the Province of Prince Edward Island, so I thank him for that.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

It is an awesome day when we can have so many 4-H'ers here. I know Katelyn and Ruth Visser are here, and I know there are other members from (Indistinct) and Millview and Vernon River here. This is such a super day when we get to see our future leaders come into the House. Hopefully we'll be on our best behaviour for them when the Question Period and the other issues start.

I also want to put a big shout-out to Robert Larson. He's a former Page and now he's flying the flag for the 4-H and that's absolutely terrific. This organization does develop leaders, and I want to put a big cheer out to the leaders at the club level, the

national level, and provincial level here for sure, because they are the ones that lead these people on.

When I was in the education portfolio we put through 4-H'ers for external credentialing, so when you finish your project – and that's one of the big things in the 4-H is choose a project, finish it to the end, and show your work at the fairs, exhibition, field day, whatever it be. When you're a senior member and you can complete your project it will count as a credit towards your high school and that's absolutely fantastic.

It's great throughout the year when we go to the different exhibitions to see the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Green Party – we may not meet that often after the House is out, but we do bump into each other there, and I know some of the other hon. members are there as well, just checking out to see what is coming down the pipe from our future leaders. It's absolutely fantastic and I want to congratulate each and every one who is involved in this organization.

I do want to put a little notice out again today. The PEI Potato Board is having their annual meeting today. We're hoping for a big turnout and I will be leaving the House a little early to go attend that, but it is such an important industry for our province. I know the Vissers are involved in that industry as well, so I want to wish each and every potato producer across the province all the best in the coming year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Well, members, that's a pretty full slate. I think pretty well – is there anybody that I missed?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

#### Statements by Members

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

**Eddy Dykerman**

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to recognize a valuable member of my District of West Royalty-Springvale. Eddy Dykerman was recently inducted into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame. He was nominated by the PEI Federation of Agriculture for his exceptional service to his fellow producers and his commitment to environmental stewardship.

Eddy was born into a farming family and, at the age of 22, he joined his brother and father in establishing Brookfield Gardens. This 40-acre farm has now flourished into 300 acres and produces mostly carrots that you can find on supermarket shelves locally as well as destinations overseas.

His farming knowledge and sharing can be felt as far away as Kenya through his work with Farmers Helping Farmers. He is also involved in many other agricultural organizations such as the Board of the PEI Federation of Agriculture and the PEI Horticultural Association.

Outside of agriculture, he supports community soccer clubs, his church, and the Wheatley River Improvement Group.

His wife Janet, children Craig, Matthew, Katie, and Jennifer, and grandson Oscar, are all important parts of Eddy's life.

Eddy has proven his commitment to being environmentally conscious. Brookfield farms has been a long-standing participant in the implementing of the Environmental Farm Plan Program for which they received the 2012 Gilbert R. Clements Award for Excellence in Environmental Farm Planning. Congratulations, Eddy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

#### 4-H

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank everyone in here today for welcoming the 4-H members from the 20 clubs across PEI. They are here in Charlottetown to take part in an annual 4-H executive training workshop that is

happening all day today at the Murphy's Centre.

This program is just another example of how the organization provides positive youth development opportunities for our members. Every year the provincial 4-H office organizes this workshop for 4-H members Island-wide who have been elected to their clubs' executive for the upcoming year. Positions held are president, vice-president, treasurer, and club reporter.

Highlights of the workshop today will include: club executive responsibilities, parliamentary procedure, effective meeting strategies, team building, and leadership skills.

These members will be learning how to run meetings and how to pass motions along with many other skills required to help support their work on the executive boards of their respective clubs.

This year we are very excited to host the 40 members for a tour and a presentation at the Coles Building, and the opportunity to observe the House in session. The night will culminate in a bonding experience over neon glow bowling at the Murphy bowling lanes.

I am sure we will agree that this is just another good example of how 4H is enhancing the experiences of our youth and inspiring them to demonstrate community leadership in a variety of ways.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Kier White**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to rise today and recognize an individual from the community of Belfast, Kier White. He was here in the gallery yesterday supporting the ferry motion. He is an advocate for rural communities and although he lives just outside of Belfast, he is from the area and he is certainly passionate about our community. He is a vocal supporter of rural PEI and

always looks for the best for our community. In all of his endeavors, he ensures the interest of the community and the people are put first.

He is the manager of the Belfast Highland Greens Golf Course, the Lord Selkirk Campground, and the manager of the Belfast Recreation Centre.

But his dedication does not end there. He is also the president of the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce, director with Quality Tourism Services, and director with the PEI Golf Association. He also was a speaker at the YDay event that was held just lately.

He is a very passionate individual, a smart young man, and I can speak personally, from being on the board for both the development corporation and the Belfast Recreation Centre, that when you ask Kier to do something it's going to be completed.

Family plays an important role in Kier's life and his passion to build a stronger community for him and for others to raise their families in is very important to him. He knows rural PEI is the backbone of our province and works every day to strengthen it.

I know Kier does not look for the spotlight, and he says he does not need recognition for his hard work and dedication, but I believe we owe him the recognition.

In his own words: I enjoy what I do for the community and being part of it. Things are not always perfect, but I try to do the best for the betterment of everyone in the community and rural PEI.

I thank Kier for the commitment he has to rural PEI, for our community, and for all the work that he does, and that it does not go unnoticed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Hon. members, before I call for Questions by Members I just want to remind everybody, all members, that, as I had stated before, I've set a limit of 40 seconds for questions and answers.

Some of the preamble has gone somewhat beyond 40 seconds. Some of the answers have gone somewhat beyond 40 seconds. I will be watching closely to see that we are well within our limits –

**Ms. Compton:** (Indistinct) stopwatch.

**Speaker:** Anyway, we'll just ask you, just a friendly reminder, to try and co-operate with me on this. Okay?

#### Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

#### **New school zone maps (further)**

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

I am responding today to questions from the Leader of the Opposition around his raising of maps, and I have some clarification on that.

But I want to acknowledge the good, healthy discussion on the importance of the school change policy.

This morning when I woke up on CBC I heard the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters refer to the process as a sham. As a former educator, one of my favourite subjects that I taught was spelling. What I'm going to do is I'm going to add an 'e' to sham for shame on the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for disrespecting all learning for all children in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

#### **Infrastructure summit**

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

Last fall our PC caucus suggested that the government should hold an infrastructure

summit with Island communities and industrial stakeholders from across the Island to develop a common plan for the infrastructure priorities in this province. This government rejected the idea.

Question to the Premier: Are you still opposed to the idea of an infrastructure summit that develops a common plan for our infrastructure priorities across this province?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, within the next short while we'll be presenting a Capital Budget and it will be an opportunity for all sides of this House to consider our infrastructure priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

With that, we've seen the result of rejecting an infrastructure summit. Manor replacements in both Tyne Valley and Montague again have been postponed. Projects like the \$65 million Cornwall bypass have been fast-tracked out of the blue.

### **Cornwall bypass public consultation**

Question to the Premier: Why did you fast-track a \$65 million Cornwall bypass without any public consultation first?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, our infrastructure plans emerged in response to the federal Building Canada program that was unveiled in the mid to late spring of 2015.

Indeed, one of the things that we were able to achieve there was the collector roads program which enabled us to get going on the first phase of the Cornwall bypass, and the further phases will be here for consideration as part of our Capital Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's great to keep things in secret from Islanders. I guess that Island Coastal, they don't build manors.

We know that the government used a non-binding municipal plebiscite held by the town of Cornwall back in 2003, on a different route, as the reason for this rushed project.

Question to the Premier: With everything going on with the electoral reform front, does the Premier see the irony in rushing a \$65 million unbudgeted project loosely based on a 13-year old non-binding municipal plebiscite?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition should have gone back further in history.

There's a 1979 study that recommended this bypass. There was a government with the former minister, Mike Currie, that announced that the project was going ahead in the last 1990s at a cost probably double of what's going to be involved in this project.

This has been well known, it's been on the agenda, it's been a priority for the people in Cornwall, and it's an opportunity for this province and for the Cornwall area to grow, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### **TIE minister and IE committee**

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

The Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy tried for months to get a briefing on this project before shovels went in the ground and bulldozers started moving. The transportation minister ordered her staff to stall the committee. She finally appeared at

committee with her staff weeks after construction was underway.

Question to the transport minister: What was so sensitive about the Cornwall bypass project that you felt it necessary to stonewall an all-party committee of MLAs for months?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did have the pleasure to appear before the standing committee for 3.5 hours and explain the project.

We were requested to go earlier in the process, but when we made the announcement in June to the people of Cornwall that this was going forward one of the commitments we made is that before we did anything we would consult with them.

I had no intention of going before the standing committee at that time before we discussed the proposals and had meetings with those residents. That's why, at the time I went into standing committee, that that is where we were.

Keeping my answer as short as I can, I'll have further things to say on that.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Minister, you could have given this House the courtesy of some type of briefing on it and you failed to do that.

MLAs on the standing committee had questions about the concerns of the \$65 million Cornwall bypass, about the public consultations, about the traffic plans, and other details of this project. Many of those concerns became apparent as this project moved forward, which caused major traffic issues.

**Cornwall bypass traffic**

Question to the transport minister: Did rushing this project lead to some of the traffic chaos motorists have experienced over the last two months and we have seen?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The impact of this particular project goes well beyond the roads themselves and the construction. This is about building sustained prosperity and economic growth for the community of Cornwall, and especially within the province.

Cornwall has experienced tremendous growth over the last several decades. It has a lot of residential development, business development, and Cornwall services 11 surrounding communities.

The growth in Cornwall has surpassed the national growth rate –

**Mr. Aylward:** Time.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and it has increased by 10% -

**An Hon. Member:** Time.

**Ms. Biggar:** – since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I'll respect your timing and if you tell me to sit down, I certainly will sit down.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Cornwall bypass economic impact study**

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

I'm glad, minister, you opened the door. The minister has said economic growth was the reasoning for rushing this project.

Question to the minister: Did your government do an economical impact study on the Cornwall bypass project before you started construction?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of an economic impact that we are doing, what I can tell you is that we do have the growth numbers for assessments that have occurred in Cornwall compared to what's occurred in Stratford. We're making those comparisons, have made those comparisons.

Speaking with the Cornwall council, they indicated to us that they were restricted from doing any more growth in their community.

We did not rush this project. We did not get word, though, until later in June that the funding under the new agreements were going to be made available to us and that is when we decided to proceed for the best interest of future growth for Cornwall.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Minister, we have emails that show the province wouldn't show the town the proposed route until they agreed to the plan. We have them.

The minister has said economical growth was the reason for rushing the project. If you're going to spend \$65 million you should do an economical study to find out what the actual impact's going to be. You haven't done that.

Question to the minister. You fast-tracked the project of \$65 million, you failed to do an economic impact on what is going to happen with this project. Why did you not do an economical impact prior to ever starting the project?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, we have commissioned an economic assessment study on this particular project, probably the first time there ever has been one done, and MRSB

are in the process of completing that for us, and when it is done I will bring it to this House.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### **Paving of Island roads**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, as previous business owner I would do a business study and an economical plan before I ever put a shovel in the ground. Why do you feel, minister, that spending \$65 million for a few kilometres of new highway is a better long-term investment in growth than spending that \$65 million to pave 1,000 kilometres of existing Island roads that need it?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This project is not just about paving roads. This project is about development in our province in regard to imports and exports and the best way that we can most efficiently move our traffic and our exports to market. When we talk about this particular project it also has economic impact for Islanders who will be working on this project, construction companies that will be able to –

**Mr. Myers:** The Premier's relatives.

**Ms. Biggar:** – plan over the next four years on what projects they're going to be able to bid on. This is a four-year project. It will show growth right across Prince Edward Island.

There is reference to that 1,000 other roads. Under the criteria of the national highways, this particular money that's being invested in the economy, in the transportation sector, in Islanders, is not eligible for any other types of construction.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, we went from feast to famine.

We went and paved 200 kilometers for a soapbox derby and then we spent \$65 million for Cornwall or for that bypass. But you forgot about everything else in rural PEI, the other thousands of kilometres across this Island that need work.

**Ms. Biggar:** You better start looking at your own (Indistinct).

### **Cornwall bypass business case**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Minister, if you did no economic impact study, what was the business case for fast-tracking this project other than spending \$65 million to pave a former minister's farm?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that we've been able to do as a government since Justin Trudeau came into office is to renegotiate the eligibility of collector roads in Prince Edward Island.

Prior to Justin Trudeau being in government and working collectively with our government, you had to have 10,000 cars a day on a road to be eligible for any kind of funding from the federal government. We now have that down to 1,000 kilometres.

You can look at Georgetown, you can look at Malpeque, you can look at Seven Mile Road down there, you can look at Kinkora, you can look at Tignish, you can look, yes, at Tyne Valley, and right across Prince Edward Island there are roads being paved because of the new agreement that the federal government and our government were able to negotiate!

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Aylward:** Do you have any of those bars left?

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Premier on water issues**

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Water is arguably our Island's most precious resource. It's essential to life itself, and the quality of quantity of our water is critical to our future as an Island and as a province.

Question for the Premier. Mr. Premier, do you consider the Island's water to be a commodity for profit or a resource essential for public well-being and, indeed, survival?

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

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

It is a pleasure for me to stand and speak about a process that's been going on in Prince Edward Island over the past number of months, a process that has been well received by Islanders. It's been referred to me as one of the best processes that have gone on on Prince Edward Island for many years, and indeed has been endorsed by members and politicians from all of the political parties in Prince Edward Island.

The protection of our water is paramount in the view of this government. That's why we've developed this water act process that is ongoing. We're getting ready to begin this second round of consultations on the water act and deal with all the issues that will protect the quality and quantity of our water for many years to come, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question. This one is, again, for the Premier: Do you support the idea of commercially exporting Island water for profit, Mr. Premier?

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

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

Over the past several weeks there has been an item that has come to light in regards to water usage on Prince Edward Island, one that wasn't fully discussed in the first round of the water act.

I believe that there is a perfect opportunity as we move forward over the next coming months to have a wide range of discussion on water usage, how we should use it, what levels of extraction should be permitted, and what levels of commercial use of water should be developed on Prince Edward Island.

There's ample opportunity for Islanders to bring forward their ideas and discussion on that, and I know many have indicated to me that they plan on being at the next round of consultations to bring those forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, it's refreshing to hear the minister clearly state thresholds prior to proceeding with public consultation.

### **Watershed water quality data**

This is a question to the environment minister. Now, the minister and I, I believe, agree that the valuable work done by watershed groups across the province, advocated for by the PEI Watershed Alliance, is extremely important and that government needs to better support watershed groups in managing our water.

The question for the minister is: Does the government have comprehensive data on the water quality of all Island watersheds?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department does a tremendous job of assisting watersheds from one end of the Island of Prince Edward Island to the other. We develop new programs every year to work with them.

Of course a collection of data on all waterways on Prince Edward Island is not in place at the present time, but we're working towards that. We have data that we can collect on many of our waterways and streams and rivers in Prince Edward Island, and the hope is that we can get to every one,

but that is a process. We're working on that process, and staff work diligently with these watershed groups in order to achieve this data.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Water quantity metrics**

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, does your government comprehensively track water quantity metrics in all Island watersheds?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we all know, there is a significant amount of watershed groups in Prince Edward Island and streams and rivers. To have a comprehensive approach is one we're working towards, there's no question about that. We've heard in the first round of discussion on the water act that, water on Prince Edward Island, both groundwater and surface water, is something that we have to be very diligent at to protect and preserve quantities of both of those.

We are working as a province, as a government, as a department, to try and develop as much data, collect as much resource as we can, because that's only going to help and enhance how we deal with this issue moving forward.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Collection and sharing of water quality and water quantity data**

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We need to make sure we have movement on this as soon as possible because knowledge of our water quality and water quantity is extremely important. They're extremely important benchmarks that must be known to properly manage our water.

They are key parts needed to prepare what has been referred to as a water budget.

Another question for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment:  
**Minister:** Will you commit to having your department collect comprehensive information on water quality and water quantity for all Island watersheds and share that information with the public through an open data interface?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. member knows, it's for reasons as he's bringing forward today that we are in fact looking at developing this new water act. We have been served in the past rather effectively by pieces of policy and other directions to help us aid our water. But when we're working on this new act there will be much discussion – and it's going to be modernized so that we do have control over numbers that tell us quite firmly our extraction levels that we can use in our research to say how much water we have, where there may be issues, where we may know issues will occur in many years.

It's for those very reasons that this new water act is being formulated and that things of that nature will be a part of how we move forward to determine those levels.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

#### **PAC witnesses**

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

As MLAs of this House we deal on a daily basis with a high level of cynicism that many Islanders feel about government and their politicians. Trust and faith in governments is in decline, and I feel that it is the duty of those of us privileged enough to sit in this House to work hard to turn that around.

Question to the Premier. You came into office promising to do things differently and to restore Islanders' faith in politics and politicians. Can you explain to this House

how having members of your caucus vote in a block to prevent witnesses from being called before the Public Accounts Committee is helping to restore Islanders faith in politics?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Public Accounts Committee operate as MLAs to hold the government to account.

The Chair is a member of the official opposition, the vice-chair is a member of the Liberal caucus. The members of that committee determine what is relevant and what is to be discussed at the committee as issues arise.

I always appreciate the work of the Public Accounts Committee. I think the members – and you're a member of the committee – are there to deliberate and determine what's the most important thing to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I appreciate the work that we do on Public Accounts and all standing committees also, as long as we're allowed to do so.

I think everybody who follows politics is aware that, to a certain degree, Question Period can be theatrical. This is theatre rather than substantive debate. But we are always told – as the Premier just said – that the real work of politics happens in committees.

As I mentioned, the Premier's caucus has recently been whipped in order to block witnesses from appearing before the committee, preventing that committee from doing its work.

Can the Premier explain how he expects committees to do their work with this kind of obstructionism?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I respect the work of the committees, as does everyone in this House, and the committee members make their own decisions as to who they'll call, what they need to know, and how they intend to pursue things.

I know I've gotten inquiries myself from Public Accounts asking for information that I've gladly provided exactly in that spirit. I look forward to the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Some questionable rationale has been offered when it comes to preventing currently serving public servants from being called, but none has been offered for refusing to allow former elected officials now out of office from attending.

A question to the Premier: What is the rationale for Liberal members of the Public Accounts Committee voting against Wes Sheridan and Robert Ghiz from being called as witnesses?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, I don't have the rationale because the members make their own decisions.

But I'll say that when a member opposite appears in the public media and accuses other members of cowardice or accuses other members of filibustering when they're offering an honest and decent opinion, that's when you start bringing this House into disrepute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

### **Summerside Regional Development Corporation replacement**

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A government-commissioned review of the Summerside Regional Development Corporation has led the province to announce it will take steps to assume total control of the organization.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism please provide some clarity as to what will be replacing the existing corporation?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member.

We see this as an opportunity to take a look at the existing mandates of SRDC, and CADC in Charlottetown. We're starting to see some changes relevant to population growth, we're starting to see some changes relevant to innovation and manufacturing. We feel that the mandate that existed since the inception of these organizations, especially CADC in 1974, we feel that it's not necessarily fitting with the economic growth that we want to see from one end of the Island to the other as opposed to only the urban centres.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your first supplementary question.

### **Delivery of economic development**

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister address how the function of economic development will be delivered to help grow the economy?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** We have to realize, Mr. Speaker, that the geography right now – when I mentioned population, I meant basically there's growth outside the urban centres and we have to pay attention to that.

We have to be focused on rural development as well as urban development, and we're not

necessarily in a position, by looking at the mandate of the existing CADC and SRDC, that that's actually happening. We feel that they require a new mandate.

But we will work with the community organizations, we will work with a central development – as one, Souris Harbour Authority – to talk to them and see what their initiatives and what their expertise could play in this whole format going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

### **Lobster carapace size and LFA 25**

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. Minister, I've heard a lot of concerns this past spring from fishers in my area about the federal government's announcement in LFA 25 to increase the lobster carapace size, and it would be increasing by 5 millimetres over the next three years.

What has your department done to represent the fishers in LFA 25 in this matter?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

It's an important question. The discussion on carapace size in LFA 25 – which is an area on the strait between Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI, running from Victoria about to the north point – in that area we have, I think, 17 fishers from Nova Scotia, 218 from PEI, and I think it's 481 from New Brunswick.

This discussion has been going on for over six years. When the discussion came up again – because the Maritime Fishermen's Union in New Brunswick has been pushing to change the carapace size from 72 millimetres to 76. We met with Minister Tootoo when he was in the fisheries chair on three different occasions. The Premier and I met with him at the Boston Seafood Show to

discuss with him – as was the position of the PEI Fishermen's Association as well – that the decision should be made on science-based. We pushed that forward, met with him. We also met with Minister LeBlanc.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary question.

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister and his department for all they've done to advocate on behalf of the LFA 25 fishers.

They have a very valid concern. They believe that the two millimetre increase in 2017, and then again the two millimetre increase in 2018, is too aggressive and being done too quickly.

My question to the minister is: Will he continue to advocate for our fishers and ask the federal minister to reconsider?

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Again, that's the position that the PEIFA has and we support them on that. We're hoping that it may be stretched out to one millimetre a year for five years, which would be better.

But we told the minister, if he's going to continue with the one, two, and two, that we will be monitoring it. We watched it this year and told our fishermen that we would. Turned out this year was – I mean, the stocks proved to be very successful in that area. We were up about a million pounds in LFA 25 and about \$14 million in increased profits, which is great.

But going forward, the two and the two, we will definitely be monitoring and meeting again with Minister LeBlanc who has that portfolio at the present, supporting our fishers and the PEIFA as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Ban on water exports, deep-water wells, and fracking**

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment in the water act white paper in July 2015 said, and I quote: “Groundwater on Prince Edward Island supplies Islanders with their drinking water, making this a precious resource. Because of this, it is essential that we protect our water resources to their fullest.”

The minister has said today we’re going to consider all these things in the next water act consultations, but we also know this government’s track record when it comes to listening to what Islanders tell them.

My question for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment is: Are you prepared to legislate a ban on all commercial water exports, deep-water wells, and fracking on PEI as recommended by a standing committee of this Legislature?

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

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

Obviously he’s turned to a bit of drama, for certain. The hon. member is fully aware that we are in the process of a new act. We have been in the process of discussing with Islanders how they think a new water act should look.

We’ve talked to over 400 Islanders that came and had face-to-face meetings –

**Mr. Trivers:** But will you listen? That’s the question.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – online submissions, and even by fax on some occasions.

We’re formulating that. We are bringing back a draft act, currently. It is a draft form to say to Islanders: Does this reflect your wishes? We’re going to do that in a very open, transparent process that has received many accolades thus far.

For the hon. member to say: Are you firm and fast on anything?, we have certainly indicated that we are listening. We are bringing it back and we are trying to meet the wishes of Islanders on Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

### **HST increase**

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many Islanders are struggling to shoulder the burden of the HST increase, especially with the winter fast approaching.

Question to the energy minister: Are you at all concerned that your government’s HST increase will make it harder for Island families to get by this winter?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we brought the legislation in and we talked about the 1% increase in HST, we also brought in measures that spoke directly to low-income earners to ensure that we took the burden off them throughout the tax, not only for the upcoming season with oil, but in circumstances of all reasons.

But we focused directly to low-income earners to make sure that they were – things in that that prevented them from suffering under this legislation and under this 1% increase.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

### **Energy strategy protections**

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We’re told the government will be tabling their energy strategy during this sitting. Some of the biggest causes of greenhouse gases on the Island are transportation and home heating.

Question to the energy minister: What protections will your energy strategy have

for Islanders struggling with the high taxes and cost of home energy?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we will soon be tabling our new energy strategy which we've been working on and consulting with Islanders across Prince Edward Island. But what we have been doing also is helping Islanders through efficiency PEI.

Since 2008, over \$7 million in grants have been given out to 8,000 residential clients to assist them, and we just recently actually announced also our new energy home audit program to assist people in planning for efficiency in their home. They can have their study done. We cover the cost of that half of that cost.

But when we table our new energy strategy we'll see that we are taking low-income Islanders into account as well.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

### **Energy strategy tax initiative re: hybrid and electric vehicles**

**Mr. MacKay:** A former PC government brought in a tax rebate for the purchase of hybrid and electric vehicles to lower greenhouse emissions. Your government killed that incentive when you brought the HST in.

Question to the energy minister: Will your new energy strategy restore this tax initiative for Islanders who purchased hybrid and electric vehicles?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of great technologies, including electric cars.

We do have to have infrastructure across Prince Edward Island to support those kinds of initiatives. But we will be very happy to table our energy strategy in the near future, and you will see that there are a lot of great

initiatives that are going to be in there to help Islanders.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

### **HST rebate on energy efficient home heating**

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development has looked closely into the issues around your government's HST increases. One idea came that came up: extending the HST exemption on home heating to include energy efficient sources.

Question to the energy minister: Will your new strategy include an extension of the HST rebate for home heating to energy efficient forms of home heating?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have looked at a lot of different initiatives, talking to people across PEI a part of our consultation, and Dunsky Consulting have put together – I think there are over 70 recommendations that you'll see have been put together. We will be compiling and revealing a lot of those recommendations that we think are going to make a difference going forward in regard to reducing our emissions on Prince Edward Island, and also helping Islanders to deal with more efficiency ways to save money.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

### **HST rebate removal on home heating fuel**

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Early drafts and media reports on your energy strategy suggested that you plan to remove the HST rebate on home heating altogether, adding another 15% to the cost of furnace oil.

Question to the energy minister: Is this still your plan?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, thank you.

As I said, we did have Dunsky Consulting do the plan for us, the initial consultations across Prince Edward Island. That's one of the recommendations Dunsky put forward.

You will see when we do our tabling of our new energy strategy just what is in there. It would be premature, certainly, to be talking now about a strategy that hasn't been tabled in this House. We'll have a great discussion on that when it is tabled.

Thank you for the question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** As the MLA for Sour-Elmira would say: No plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In its report tabled this spring, the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development recommended extending the HST rebate for home heating to energy efficient forms of home heating.

Question to the energy minister: Why would your energy strategy go in the opposite direction of recommendations made by an all-party committee?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Part of our strategy is to look at mitigations that we can provide to help Islanders save in efficiency in their energy, to save when they are doing renovations.

I'm not going to talk now specifically what is in the energy strategy. We will have ample time to have those discussions.

I appreciate the work that the standing committee has done. I do know they do great work. I appreciate the recommendations that they also have put forward. All of those kinds of things have

been taken into consideration in part of our strategy.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know the minister won't listen to voters, but now she won't even listen to an all-party committee of MLAs.

Question to the energy minister: Why do you think raising taxes on all forms of home heating energy is a better idea than offering tax initiatives to chose more energy efficient homes and heating sources?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have looked at a number of different ways as part of our strategy that we can put forward suggestions within the strategy for Islanders to save more money on energy.

We will continue to work with Islanders going forward as we roll out the strategy. There will opportunities there for Islanders in many different levels that they can take advantage of from our new strategy.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, final question.

### **Energy strategy environmentally friendly tax initiatives**

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the energy minister: Will you commit today that your new energy plan will offer tax initiatives for environmentally friendly measures like energy efficient home heating sources and vehicles?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, we already offer support for Islanders to have alternative sources of heat in their homes.

The highest and most used grant of all that

we give out to Islanders – 85% of all the grants that we give out to Islanders – are for air-sourced heating programs. That helps them covert away from oil. We encourage that kind of a conversion program.

We'll continue to support those kinds of programs within our new strategy. You will see that we do have other things that we will offer Islanders.

Thank you.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**Mr. Currie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **National Child Day**

I rise today to encourage members to celebrate National Child Day. National Child Day parades will be held on Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, in Charlottetown and Summerside. There will also be marches in communities across Prince Edward Island.

I was honoured to be asked to marshal the Charlottetown parade. My colleague, MLA Chris Palmer, will be the Summerside parade marshal.

The purpose of National Child Day is to celebrate the rights of children. Children have the right to be taken seriously, and Islanders take children's rights very seriously. Whether they are the right to good health, the right to a good education, the right to be protected from harm, the right to be included, whatever their abilities, and the right to be proud of their heritage and beliefs.

Government is proud to join the Early Childhood Development Association and other partners on Monday to celebrate the rights of children and the excellent work being done in our province for children.

Our province is viewed as a leader in early childhood policy and program development. We recognize the excellent work of our early childhood educators who provide high-quality learning and care each and every day in communities across Prince Edward Island.

Early childhood remains a top priority of our government. As minister, I'm proud to say that each of our 45 early years' centres have the very best early childhood educators creating safe and supportive environments for our children.

Their excellent work is key to developing the next generation of leaders and contributing citizens of our province. These are the people who will help our province prosper in the future so they deserve the very best we can give them.

I encourage all members of this House to participate in National Child Day activities across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I support this initiative, National Child Day. I know that those of you who have been kicking around here as long as I have and longer, I've spoken at length, different times, about the needs of children and how much we need to be investing in our future through our children, how important children are right across the world, and how much effort we should be putting in here on Prince Edward Island.

There are always a great number of people who do put children first. It's evident through some of the great government programs and the wonderful people who work to administer them. Some of the great volunteers out there who make sure that there are organizations that put children first. There are tons of great sports organizations that do the same type of idea.

I think it's something on Prince Edward Island. We've always been a very good and caring community when it comes to children. It's something that we need to continue, and we certainly need government's support to continue and even to expand to ensure that we can give our children the best possible start, the best possible childhood, and bring them into

adulthood as great, productive members of society.

As you guys all know, you can't see your faces from here, but I know you're aging and there's going to be some younger faces need to come in and replace those seats over there, at some point, and we need to foster that the best we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Of course, I support this initiative. The way that children's rights are traditionally protected in government is through a child advocate.

Last evening many members of this House attended an engineer's function just along the road here where we heard PEI is the only province without a statute of limitations on engineer's work. PEI is the only province without a building code. You hear that sentence a lot. We're the only province without an ombudsperson and we're the only province without a child advocate.

I think if we're serious about celebrating National Child Day and protecting the rights of children we have to get in line with the other provinces and get ourselves a child advocate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### **Youth Futures and YDAY**

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

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize our newly appointed Youth Future's Council and to highlight our successful YDAY event that was held last month.

Two of the youth council members are here with us today in the public gallery. I would like to recognize Emma Heustis and Tyler Murnaghan. Thank you for being here with us today and for your interest in youth initiatives on PEI. We also have Sarah Bulman. Sarah is our co-chair and the department's youth coordinator. She works closely with our youth files and I want to recognize her today, also.

I met with the members of the new youth council last weekend during their orientation day. The council will play – and I must say it was a great day. We have a lot of enthusiasm there, a lot of energy there in that council. The council will play an important role in youth engagement on Prince Edward Island and will work closely with representatives from the departments within government.

Together the two groups will advocate for the outcome of YDAY as it relates to government programs and services.

YDAY was a very successful event. We saw more than 100 young minds come together to discuss important topics of youth. YDAY topics and outcomes will help to steer Youth Futures Council's mandate, scope, and focus from here on out.

Topics at the YDAY included employment and job opportunities, learning pathways, including traditional and non-traditional education, and ensuring access to high-speed Internet all across Prince Edward Island.

Even individuals who weren't there participated online through social media and, in particular, Twitter, where we were trending at the number four and number one spots in Canada throughout the day. That's a pretty impressive showing for a place so small. I'll bet we'll surprise a few people of our mighty Island.

I'm looking forward to carrying on the work of the YDAY and the Youth Futures Council. The priorities outlined at YDAY will be advocated by the council. To support this work the YDAY steering committee is in the midst of putting together a report that outlines youth goals and recommendations which stemmed from YDAY.

The province has a great desire to support this truly collaborative approach. It will enhance the voice, engagement, and leadership opportunities for all Island youth. Even more, it will show our young people that Prince Edward Island is one of the best places in the world to live, to learn, to work hard, and to dream big.

Together we can achieve great results. I'm looking forward to working with the YDAY committee and the youth council. This is not the only YDAY we're going to have. We'll have one each and every year to keep updating and to keep the pressure on to perform and to do the things that the young people of Prince Edward Island want done.

The young people of Prince Edward Island are the future of Prince Edward Island. From what I saw at YDAY and what I saw at the orientation day, Prince Edward Island's future is in great hands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I absolutely support the minister and this initiative. It's a fantastic idea. I think my invitation must have gotten lost in the mail, to go to it. I just barely missed the age category, but it was really exciting to follow along online that day.

I know they had a few power outages and they powered through that. They did amazing work. Thank you, Emma and Tyler and Sarah, for being here today. Thank you to the whole group that was there.

I know, remembering back, I believe high-speed Internet, proportional representation, re-energizing high school youth, were some of the things I was seeing coming out with the hashtags and everything. I look forward to the report that will be produced to see all of the priorities.

I encourage the government to absolutely pay attention, to listen and to act on some of these things because it's important going forward.

I appreciate all of the hard work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### **Climate Change Mitigation Strategy**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Prince Edward Island is committed to taking action around climate change.

This commitment was outlined in my department's mandate letter that stated: Proactive action to prepare for and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change was a very high priority.

Prince Edward Island is working on three climate change related strategies. These include an energy strategy, a climate change adaptation strategy, and a climate change mitigation strategy.

I would like to update this Assembly and Islanders on the climate change mitigation strategy today.

Initial consulting with stakeholders began in the spring, led by Dunsky Energy Consulting firm. Following that round of consultations a recommendations document was prepared for government and we did receive that in October.

This document was posted online and public feedback was invited via website, email, phone or mail.

Another round of consultations was held earlier this month, this time inviting all Islanders to participate in face-to-face meetings. At the four sessions in Montague, Charlottetown, Wellington, and Summerside, a presentation on the draft recommendation was given and discussion was thoroughly encouraged. The public offered feedback at these sessions and via the department's website.

I want to thank all Islanders, who took the time to participate in this consulting process. Feedback is now being summarized and incorporated into our report to government.

We anticipate receiving final recommendations by the end of this month.

Our next step, as a department, will be to use this information to develop a mitigation strategy. This work is being led by the newly created Climate Change Secretariat within my department.

The secretariat is tasked to take proactive action around climate change and lead Prince Edward Island's effort to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Having said that, this initiative will certainly require collaboration and coordination across all levels and departments of government in order to be effective.

Prince Edward Island is a leader in lowering greenhouse gas emissions. This strategy will support us in our effort to further this reduction.

We owe it to future generations of Islanders to be successful in this effort.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for that statement regarding climate change strategy of the province. It's great to hear there is a Climate Change Secretariat that has been formed. Of course, global warming is a problem that has been internationally recognized as one of the biggest issues that's facing the world today. Greenhouse gases are what are contributing most to it and that's why we're focused on that. That's why they're one of the main topics of the climate change strategy.

It's interesting that it was broken down into energy adaptation and mitigation. I found that attending some of these consultations one of the big things that people always kept coming back to was the energy portion. It was really hard to silo climate change adaptation to mitigation from energy.

One thing that was particularly concerning to me was where the climate change strategy

for the greenhouse gas is produced when our electricity is generated will not be addressed by the PEI strategy because that electricity is generated in another province. It makes it really hard to come up with a cohesive and comprehensive plan when you silo things like that.

As has been mentioned many times at these consultations, we need a strategy for the region as a whole and for Prince Edward Island to have its own without cooperating with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and the other Maritime Provinces. It's going to be hard to come up with a solution that really is the best.

I would encourage you to expand the scope and really work closely with those other provinces to come with a comprehensive strategy. Of course, the key thing is that you are coming up with a strategy.

The other controversial part of this of course is the carbon pricing part. We know that the federal government is forcing carbon pricing on all the provinces and you need to decide – and this province needs to decide – which type of carbon pricing you're going to implement, whether that's going to be carbon tax or a cap-and-trade type of system.

I think that Prince Edward Island, if you look at it in the context of Canada, whether that's on a per capita basis or whether it's on a provincial basis, is doing more than its fair share to reduce greenhouse gases. I know we're comparing Prince Edward Island to itself based on past levels of greenhouse gas emissions, but I'm not sure that's fair. We produce a huge amount of energy here through renewable energy sources and we need to get credit for that on PEI. I don't think it's fair that Islanders pay higher taxes to try and reduce more than other provinces that have been at a higher level historically.

Please fight for Prince Edward Island to get credit for the work that Islanders have already done so we don't end up paying taxes because of the poor policies and work that's been done in other provinces.

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.

It's widely agreed that climate change is without doubt the greatest threat facing humanity just now. We, on Prince Edward Island, are particularly vulnerable because we are an Island jurisdiction and we have a very erodeable geology.

We cannot, by ourselves, do anything to protect ourselves from this thing, except we can inspire others. There are many small island states – Tuvalu, the Azores, Sri Lanka – who have emerged as world leaders in inspiring others to really be bold on climate change initiatives, and Prince Edward Island needs to join them.

We are already a leader, as the minister absolutely points out, but we can and we should do more. We need to be a place in this world that inspires others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

#### Government Motions

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that Motion No. 80 be now called.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

#### Point of Order

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order.

Citing Marleau and Montpetit, chapter 12:

Depending on the type of motion and who is moving it, the notice period can vary from one hour to two weeks. It is also possible to have more than one notice on the same subject with the exception of private members business.

But once one of those motions is moved and the House makes a decision on it, any discussion or decision on the others is precluded. The point is, once the motion is moved and the House has made a decision to discuss that motion, no other motion on the same topic can be discussed.

We currently have two motions on the order paper relating to government's response to the 2016 plebiscite on democratic renewal, my own Motion No. 54 and the one that has just been brought to the floor by the government leader, government's Motion No. 80.

I would ask the Speaker to make a ruling to clarify whether in fact Motion 54 is currently under discussion by this House and, therefore, precludes discussion on Motion No. 80.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

#### Speaker's Ruling

**Speaker:** Hon. members, having thought about this, I am prepared to come up with a solution to this or an answer to this because I have been asked to provide a ruling by the hon. Leader of the Third Party as to whether Motion No. 80, Democratic Renewal: A Clear Question and a Binding Vote, may be called for debate in that reference to the same subject, the recent plebiscite on democratic renewal and subsequent actions which might result are contained in Motion 54, Plebiscite on electoral reform, debate on which was started on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Hon. members, I have consulted the relevant parliamentary authorities on this matter:

Beauchesne, citation §514 (1): "There is nothing in the rules and no precedent to prevent the setting down of more than one bill or motion dealing with the same subject."

Erskine May, pages 379-381, states:

“A question which has not been definitely decided may be raised again.

“A motion must not anticipate a matter already appointed for consideration by the House, whether it be a bill or an adjourned debate upon a motion. Stated generally, the rule against anticipation is that a matter must not be anticipated if it is contained in a more effective form of proceeding than the preceding by which it is sought to be anticipated, but it may be anticipated if it is contained in an equally or less effective form.”

Hon. members, I find that as Motion No. 54 is still available for debate – the House has not yet come to a decision – it is in order to begin debate on Motion No. 80. Once the House has come to its determination on either one of those motions, that decision will stand for the remainder of this session.

Thank you.

Proceed.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 80.

The hon. Premier moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, the following motion:

**WHEREAS** Islanders voted in a plebiscite on democratic renewal in November of 2016;

**AND WHEREAS** the plebiscite was the continuation of the process that began with the release of the White Paper on Democratic Renewal in July of 2015;

**AND WHEREAS** following the release of the White Paper an all-party committee held multiple public hearings across Prince Edward Island;

**AND WHEREAS** there is an understanding that many Islanders desire renewal in the way we choose representatives to the Legislative Assembly;

**AND WHEREAS** the Mixed Member Proportional Representation model achieved the highest level of support;

**AND WHEREAS** participation in the plebiscite was proportionately low, in

comparison to the Island’s traditional high voter turnouts during general elections;

**AND WHEREAS** there is an understanding that tying a vote on electoral reform to a general election will undoubtedly raise turnout;

**AND WHEREAS** the November 2016 vote was under the terms of the Plebiscite Act;

**AND WHEREAS** plebiscites are non-binding;

**AND WHEREAS** a clear question in a binding referendum on democratic renewal will give all Islanders the confidence of knowing that there is broad-based support for a new electoral system;

**AND WHEREAS** a binding referendum will underline the importance of the decision facing Islanders - and provide an opportunity for respectful and informed debate;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this Assembly consider a specific Referendum on Democratic Renewal Act that will bind government to its results;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this legislation will honour the plebiscite results by including the Mixed Member Proportional Representation option that was voted upon in 2016 as one of two choices in a clear and binding referendum;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Members of the Legislative Assembly debate and determine the alternative to Mixed Member Proportional Representation - so that the Referendum on Democratic Renewal Act will include a clear and precise choice as part of its statutory authority;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this Referendum on Democratic Renewal Act be passed into law prior to the next general election;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the proposed referendum on a clear question be held in conjunction with the next provincial election.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise as the mover of the motion, Democratic Renewal: A Clear Question and a Binding Vote. I thank my seconder, the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, and I thank my colleagues in government caucus for an extensive and discerning dialogue that has led to the development of this motion.

As we take up consideration of this motion, I invite all members of this House to view ourselves as stewards of democracy, a healthy and vibrant democracy. We are stewards of the historical path that our province has followed since Prince Edward Island achieved responsible government in 1851. Over the course of more than a century and a half we have worked for and surpassed continuing milestones of democratic renewal.

It was not until 1966 that Prince Edward Island could be said to achieve universal suffrage. It was in that election that we moved beyond votes tied to property ownership, and that was the first election in which Aboriginal people had the right to vote.

By the 1970 election the voting age was lowered, permitting Islanders aged 18 to 21 to vote the first time. Prince Edward Island women first had the franchise in 1922 following years of advocacy and struggle.

By the 1996 election our province moved to single-member constituencies, responding to a challenge that found our province did not meet constitutional standards of representation-by-population. That election also ended the last vestiges of religious denomination as a factor in the selection of candidates.

Each of the numerous breakthroughs that have been achieved in our province's democratic evolution has been made effective through action by this Legislative Assembly in our role as lawmakers and as stewards of democratic renewal in our province.

In July of 2015 I tabled in this Assembly a White Paper on Democratic Renewal, the foreword of which included the following paragraph:

“With two decades having passed since the electoral reforms of 1994 and with a legal requirement that electoral boundaries be redrawn before the next provincial election, it is timely for Prince Edward Islanders to engage in a further and historic renewal of our democratic institutions.” It went on to say: “The White Paper invites all Islanders to work together as we build on our traditions and context to put Prince Edward Island on the map for our democratic processes and rates of participation.”

On the same day that the white paper was tabled, this Assembly named a Special Committee on Democratic Renewal with representatives from all three parties. The special committee met, consulted widely, and deliberated during the fall of 2015 and the winter of 2016, tabling two reports that were unanimously adopted by this Assembly. That work and the recommendations of the special committee led to the conducting of our recent plebiscite.

The results of the plebiscite, including the details provided in the interim report of the Chief Electoral Officer, set the stage for our return for the fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday of this week. As we consider the historical path that brings us to debate today's motion, I invite colleagues to reflect on the longer historical path, the one that extends into the future. We are not here to deal with a single event or a single point in time. We are not here to put something behind us.

Our province has reached this point in our democratic evolution through struggle, discernment, and foresight. Breakthroughs or new milestones in democratic renewal don't happen all at once, and they tend to be long-lasting. Our responsibilities today follow a path that reaches back to 1851 and they extend into the future.

We want future generations of Prince Edward Islanders to look back on this moment in our history, at this point in our democratic evolution, and say: We understand why they did that. We want future generations to feel that what we do today contributes to the strength of the democracy that they enjoy, and the confidence that they have in how we've done our part when given the chance.

On Tuesday of this week we came back to the Legislative Assembly in anticipation that we would respond to our ongoing process of democratic renewal, including the plebiscite results. As a first order of business by government business, I made a ministerial statement indicating that government would introduce a motion responsive to the plebiscite. In that statement, I said:

“We will, as a government, be tabling a motion to initiate debate. In this, we are taking careful consideration of how Islanders have spoken during the plebiscite and how we can make our representative democracy on Prince Edward Island even stronger.”

The question of how Prince Edward Islanders choose the members of this Assembly will always be in front of us. This is not a single decision. What we do in response to this motion belongs to future generations and to the future standards and health of our democracy. Prince Edward Islanders understand the value of a vote. They value their vote. What’s more, Prince Edward Islanders like to vote. We view voting with enthusiasm. In cultural terms, voting and politics rank right up there with the weather as topics of popular interest.

This brings me to the question of how we as legislators are called to deal with the fact that the recent plebiscite on democratic renewal attracted a voter turnout of 36.45%. This is a serious question and it calls for a more sophisticated and honest consideration than to simply accuse those who would ask it of trying to count non-votes, as the Leader of the Third Party asserted in his brief remarks on Tuesday evening.

The Special Committee on Democratic Renewal, while declining to recommend a specific threshold for voter participation, expressed its belief that: “the outcome of a plebiscite must be considered in concert with voter turnout.” I trust that this is a position still adhered to by the members of the special committee and indeed by all of us in this House who unanimously adopted the committee’s report.

The special committee was clearly focused on the question of voter turnout. Indeed, with a view to encouraging and facilitating the highest possible voter turnout, the

committee recommended that the plebiscite be conducted over a 10-day period, using on-line and telephone voting for the first time in PEI history, together with two days of in-person voting.

Thus, when we as legislators called this plebiscite voter, turnout was a central preoccupation, I might even say a paramount consideration. We wanted, in the words of the special committee’s April 2016 report: “A clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island.”

Do we have a clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island? In answering that question I do not believe we are talking about a simple mathematical or numerical calculation. We are talking about a clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island in relation to a fundamental aspect of our democracy.

This is about something that Prince Edward Islanders generally like to do, with enthusiasm, and that they care deeply about: casting their vote, choosing their legislators.

With respect, it is off the mark to draw comparisons to levels of voter participation in a provincial by-election, or a municipal election, or an Ontario general election. The results of a by-election can be reversed the next time the voters go to the polls. When we make a fundamental change to our democracy, we are making a change for the long-term. Neither is it especially helpful to reach back 90 years for comparisons to a plebiscite on temperance or prohibition.

This province had eight plebiscites on prohibition between 1878 and 1948. However intoxicating or sobering those plebiscites may have been in their day, it does not advance our consideration of a fundamental change to our democratic system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to reach back to the 1920s for a mathematical solution or a political argument.

The question of voter turnout in the plebiscite cannot be looked at in isolation.

We must acknowledge that, notwithstanding the fine work of the special committee, the considerable efforts of Elections PEI, and the ardent advocacy of many, including the

Coalition for Proportional Representation, there were many Prince Edward Islanders who were left with unanswered questions, notably: Why are we doing this? How does this or that option, among the five presented on the ballot, actually work? How does a ranked ballot work? What's going to happen with the results of the plebiscite?

If there is a member who can stand in this assembly and say that these were not questions on the minds of a good number of Prince Edward Islanders, some who may have voted and some who opted not to vote, then we are not talking to our constituents.

In saying this, I am not faulting the plebiscite or the many good people who contributed to this exercise in democracy. I was a prime contributor myself, as the author of the White Paper on Democratic Renewal that got this process started.

Neither am I dismissing or failing to honour the results of the plebiscite. But I believe that any reasonable and well-informed person would agree that we have an imperfect result. To say that is not an admission of failure. It's a recognition that we can do better.

How can we do better? First, we can turn away from a ranked or preferential ballot to a simple A or B choice. This is the first time we used a preferential ballot on this scale on Prince Edward Island. An A or B choice is something that Prince Edward Islanders understand. Second, we can combine the vote with the next general election, thereby guaranteeing a higher level of voter turnout and participation. Third, we can mandate that this will be a binding referendum, thereby clearing up the question: What does this mean? Fourth, we can give ourselves and the people time to become further engaged and informed on the choices, two choices, and on the implications.

Let's admit it. This morning we probably have a higher level of engagement on democratic renewal on PEI, notably regarding democratic renewal, than was the case at any time during the plebiscite or the lead-up to it.

Let's also admit that we still have a ways to go in terms of engagement, clarification, and education, before we will be able to say with

confidence that we have a clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island.

That is going to take time and attention. It is going to require a healthy, constructive, and respectful exercise of reflection, discernment, education and dialogue. Those are high goals, but we know they are achievable, and that is precisely what this motion proposes to do.

Whatever the particular outcome, our sense of community and our commitment to democratic renewal will come out stronger.

Let me come to the question of what this means to the 36.45% of the people who did participate in the plebiscite, and to the 19,418 people who voted in favour of mixed member proportional representation. Further, what does it mean in terms of the value of the plebiscite as an historic event in our democratic evolution on Prince Edward Island?

First and foremost, mixed member proportional representation will be on the referendum ballot, thereby confirming the value of coming out ahead on the plebiscite's preferential ballot format. Second, and this is not insignificant, the referendum will be conducted in a new climate. Prince Edward Islanders will no longer be asking: Why are we doing this? Or: Does this really matter? Or: How does this work? Neither will they be asking whether there's an appetite for change.

Very simply, the plebiscite has been a necessary and constructive step toward definitively determining our future electoral system and achieving a clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island through a referendum that calls for a binding choice between A or B. We could not have reached this point without the plebiscite.

If the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal had come to this House in April with a recommendation for Prince Edward Island to hold a binding referendum with an A or B choice, and with one of those choices to be mixed member proportional representation, I think there'd be many members of this House who would have been surprised by that advice. Prince

Edward Islanders would have said: Where did this come from? Frankly, I very much doubt that such a proposal would have been accepted, or accepted unanimously.

But here we are today considering a motion put forward by the government that would see our province committed to hold a binding referendum with mixed member proportional representation on the ballot, something that would have been far from our imagination only six months ago. That is honouring the plebiscite. Prince Edward Island has passed a new milestone on our historical path of democratic renewal. We are a changed province. We won't be going back. History doesn't work that way.

As we consider this motion and envisage going through to a binding referendum on democratic renewal, let me go back to something I said earlier. For a referendum on democratic renewal to achieve its greatest possible contribution to Prince Edward Island's continuing democratic evolution, this is going to take time and attention. It is going to require a healthy, constructive and respectful exercise of reflection, discernment, education, and dialogue.

For this to be achieved, the example will need to be set by those of us who have the honour to serve as members of this Legislative Assembly. We will need to show leadership.

It falls a long way short of that standard of decorum and respect – or that call for leadership – for a member of this Assembly to accuse others who are expressing honest views on a question of fundamental importance of filibustering or to label a motion honestly put and yet to be debated on the floor of the Legislature as cowardice. By the standard of any right-thinking or sensible Prince Edward Islander, such language is intemperate and bad-mannered. Moreover, those accusations were made through the public media, and were obviously aimed at discouraging proper and fulsome debate in this Assembly.

I trust that all members of this Assembly and all Prince Edward Islanders will embrace the referendum on democratic renewal proposed by this motion as a moment to call on our better natures, and that we will embrace this as a moment in our lives from which we

intend to emerge as better people, and as a democratically-renewed people.

As we move through the referendum, it is very important that we draw all of the lessons that we can from the paths that we've travelled since July of last year, to recognize that in getting to the point where we've got that A or B choice on the referendum we also have other issues that have yet to be incorporated or clarified or maybe brought forward and addressed in other ways, such as inclusion and representativeness in our democratic process. In particular, this goes back to the white paper and the work of the special committee, a greater role for women in participation, including in this House, for Aboriginal people, for youth, for campaign financing, which will be brought forward in further detail later in this session.

By the time we get to the referendum and to the election we will have a chance to address democratic renewal in its fullest sense, and to do so with confidence.

Our immediate objective for the referendum on democratic renewal should be, as has been said by the special committee and mentioned numerous times in my comments this morning, to achieve a clear expression of the will of the population of Prince Edward Island. Our longer-term objective, our historical objective, must be for Prince Edward Island to continue to lead our country as an exemplar of electoral engagement and democratic renewal.

These are high goals. They would be impossible to achieve almost anywhere but Prince Edward Island. In our province, we are blessed with a rich sense of community. We have rich traditions of political engagement. Those of us who have the honour to serve in the Legislature are unbelievably blessed as legislators to have an historic opportunity to add to that sense of community, and to build on those traditions of political engagement.

With that, I conclude my comments as the mover of this motion. I thank colleagues for their attention and I look forward to the contributions by all members of this House as we continue with consideration of this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

**Mr. Murphy:** Actually, this is the first time I have ever used the podium in this House, nine years in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think I have an easy task here following a Yale scholar, but I'm going to give things from my rural Alberton-Roseville perspective.

It's a great honour to second this motion, and I was very pleased and quickly accepted when I was offered the opportunity to do so, and I believe it is very important. This is an important issue and I believe our debate here in the House should be frank and respectful.

As many of you know, my district of Alberton-Roseville fully supported our current electoral system on the first ballot. There was no question. As an MLA, I believe it is important to reflect the views of my constituency. However, I also believe it is important to debate issues, especially an issue of this importance. However, by moving toward a binding referendum and a clear question I believe that Islanders will have the opportunity for a full debate on this matter.

We have had our current system for more than 150 years now. It has worked well. It guarantees our local voices, which I'm having a hard time to manoeuvre there right now. But it represents our local communities and our local issues. I think that is very important. I believe every member in this House works very hard to represent their communities. Although we have different viewpoints and different issues – it's different being a city MLA than a rural MLA – we both have different issues and different viewpoints, but we still have a job to do, and every member on both sides of the House I think works as hard as they possibly can to represent the views of their constituents.

I do worry that if we go with proportional representation that the rural communities

across Prince Edward Island will see less influence in government. I worry that instead political parties would choose candidates from outside of their ridings, outside of the rural ridings, and give more influence to Charlottetown and Summerside. I know it has been said that they won't pick parties, they won't pick a candidate, but I think we saw a candidate that was just chosen without a nomination in the last election that we had, the by-election in Summerside. I would also offer that just by the word 'proportion' – I think just that word itself, proportional, would suggest – well, I mean, where is the proportional of the population at? It's in Summerside and Charlottetown, not the rural parts of the province.

I don't think that's a good thing. I don't think my constituents would agree with that either, and I worry about the idea of party lists. Giving more power to the parties – any of you that may know me here might know that my views don't always align with the party's views. I think if there's a candidate or a representative that is put there by the party that is chosen off of a list, I think you would have to be pretty loyal to the party to be on that list in the first place, that you're there to tow the party line. You're not there to put the views of your constituents forward. So I think that's a real big factor in this whole mixed member proportional.

I mean, let's be real. If there's a list of candidates what are the chances for the people outside of Charlottetown and Summerside? Are they increased? Or will their chances drop? Frankly, I will worry about the influence dropping and that will be not good for rural Prince Edward Island.

I might tell you a little story. I'll tell the story a little later on, but anyway, I will talk about the local issues. I mean really, since I have been elected, one of the big issues in my district has been the Western Hospital, and it is ongoing. It's been a big part of my political career and I always have to fight to try to save the services there.

We have another big issue on the forefront coming here now with the schools. There's probably going to be lots of discussion and lots of division over that depending on what the recommendations are. I don't know, is somebody that's representing the Alberton-

Roseville district from Charlottetown or Summerside – are they going to really care much whether the Western Hospital is open or closed? I don't think so.

As far as the plebiscite goes, there is concern about the turnout for sure: 36% is very low, and remember, there were five options on the ballot so you would think that would give people the interest and get them out. But many people were confused by this and I think that hurts the process.

I will just tell you now, I'll tell you my little story. I had a phone call the other morning from a lady in my district. She is a well-educated lady and comes from a well-educated family and anyways she called me to tell me that she wanted me to honour the vote. I said I respect the vote, but I said in my opinion it wasn't enough to change the way we vote. I told her what my preference was, was to have that clear question put on the ballot, and I explained to her about how proportional representation, you might wind up with somebody that's not from the district representing the district. If there was a decision made on the hospital or a decision made on our schools, what impact that was going to have by not having a local person that's passionate about it there representing them. By the time the end of the conversation was over she agreed with me.

I guess there wasn't much of an effort put on the side that one side of the issue was heavily promoted and on the other side of the issue there was no promotion at all, status quo. But if we have a binding referendum with a clear question during the provincial election there will be a much higher turnout. As we all know, we get 80-some percentage of people turn out in our general elections here. I mean, Islanders love to vote. They love to have their opinions heard and I think we all know that's true.

I'll tell you, a lot of people in my community, they contacted me – and I run the Irving there in Alberton, and I get to talk to a lot of people in the run of a day, and people were telling me: Pat, do I have to bother go voting, or, I'm happy with the way things are, do I have to vote or do I only have to vote if I want change? Of course, I told them you've got to get out and vote. It is a plebiscite. In my opinion, Islanders are a

group that will get out and vote for change. If they want change, they will get out and vote for change.

There was a heavy effort put forward by the proportional representation side. There were t.v. ads, radio ads, newspaper ads, paid organizations, from what I understand, and possibly some union money, I don't know, but that's what I heard, and still there's only a 36% turnout. I mean, how much more prompting do Islanders need to get out and vote?

What I worry about is that a lot of people didn't vote because they're okay with the way things are. Maybe some didn't vote because a plebiscite is not a binding vote. I'm not sure. You don't know what people are thinking, but I know they didn't get out and vote.

Some people really thought that if they didn't vote things would remain the same. I think that the change with a binding referendum with a clear question –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Murphy:** Does somebody find it amusing over on that side or what?

Then people will vote, they'll let their voices be heard. They will have time to think about what is at stake here.

This is a very serious thing. We need to be careful what we do here. I certainly don't want the representation that rural PEI enjoys today to be diminished just because someone wants to ram this through the House. There's no reason for the people in this House not to think carefully about what's going on here. I mean, let's think about it, folks, what we're doing here.

The Leader of the Third Party talks about past plebiscites, but he forgot to mention one important element about those plebiscites; they weren't on a ranked ballot. They all used first-past-the-post, which, I think, it's fair to say, that if the plebiscite that we had recently was on a first-past-the-post instead of ranked ballot – which I have a little bit to say about that, too – I think it would have been soundly defeated, 16-11. If that ballot would have been used that would have been the results.

It wasn't. We used the preferential ballot, which I don't have any problem with. The Legislature said that's what we're going to do, and that's what we did. I supported it at the time.

But most places when they use a preferential ballot, you're compelled to rank all the choices. In this case, because preferential ballot, if you don't rank all the choices, it lends itself to be strategically voted or manipulated, or whatever, whether you want to put a positive spin to it or a negative spin.

I think the proportional representation side of this issue was openly telling their supporters: just vote the first two proportional choices. I think that's what happened. I think you can see it clearly in the results. You can go through the report, you can see it was mostly first-past-the-post, I think, in 16 districts, down to the third ballot when there were no votes there for the first-past-the-post. It was dropped off the ballot, then, at that point.

As I said, my district rejected proportional representation. All of West Prince region, actually, rejected it. Not all on the first ballot, but I know that two of the districts rejected it. I know some might question, well, Tyne Valley is West Prince. I think it's West Prince, but I mean the extreme West Prince, let's put it that way, Alberton, Tignish and O'Leary, we all rejected it soundly. That is something that has to be taken into consideration when you have a whole region of the province that has rejected it. That has to be taken into account.

I believe that is because of PR hurting rural PEI. I also wanted to hear exactly what Islanders think. I believe a clear, binding question on the ballot is the way to do this.

I have a responsibility to my constituents, who, like I said earlier, overwhelmingly rejected mixed member and have a responsibility to our region of the province. Most important, I have a responsibility to find out exactly what Islanders want with a clear question and a full debate. I don't see how anybody in the Legislature could question that or could not support this motion.

I believe this motion honours the plebiscite and this entire process. We need a clear

choice with a binding mandate. As I stated earlier, the current system has served us for 150 years. We need to take our time and get this right.

I'm supporting this motion because I believe it will give Islanders the chance to think this through and give them a chance to decide on the future of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, my fellow colleagues in the Legislature, fellow MLAs, my constituents, and all people of Prince Edward Island, it is a great honour to be able to stand in this Legislature and debate this democratic reform process.

Many people have fought for what we can do today. They laid down their lives for what we can do today. We saw at the cenotaph on November 11<sup>th</sup>. There was a little thing, the cenotaph, a hundred million people died in the last three wars. A hundred million fighting for what we have today in this Legislature. We have to honour them. We have to honour their fight. We have to honour their sacrifice. We have to remember what they fought for. We have to remember them because if we don't we have no democracy.

When our forefathers met in Charlottetown in 1864 to discuss a new government, a new Canada, the foundation of one of the best countries in the world – look at our country. We have vast resources from ocean to ocean to ocean. We have so much to be grateful for. We should be grateful and we should share it with the world.

That's why when we opened our doors last year to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees it was the right thing to do, to welcome others into our democracy. They were fleeing a non-democracy. They risked their lives to come to our democracy. They saw what we had and they wanted to be a part of it. They risked life. Some even lost their lives trying to get here. We have to honour that, too.

In 1864, around that time, our forefathers, Canadians, sat around a table and discussed their new country and to discuss democratic reform. Our friends to the south were engaged in a hateful, divisive war among themselves to define their country. We sat at a table and discussed ours. They fought on a battlefield and tried to annihilate each other. That's what we have here in this Legislature. That's what we must protect at all costs.

I believe this motion respects the privileges and the seriousness of long-lasting implications of this important issue. It is an important issue. It is how Islanders are going to choose their government.

There are many history books about how Prince Edward Island came to where it is today. In 1864, as I mentioned earlier, a group was meeting here in Charlottetown to talk about Maritime Union. A group of people came from Upper Canada down to our discussions here to take part in them. We had a great set of discussions. They moved on to Quebec to finalize the creation of our country in 1864.

In 1867 Canada was formed. We will be celebrating the formation of Canada next year, 150 years. A young democracy, but a vibrant democracy. Islanders being the cautious type they are, and being the thankful type they are – if that's a word –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** No it isn't, thank you. The last guy that sat here made up a lot of words too.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't join Confederation right off the bat because we wanted to think about it more.

We wanted to make sure the decision we were making was in the best interest of Islanders. We wanted, we debated, we discussed for the next couple of years. In 1873 we decided it was time for Canada to join Prince Edward Island. We'll be celebrating that. We celebrated in 2014.

It's an important day for all of us in this Legislature. It will be an important few days. This sitting of the Legislature will be one of the most important sittings, I think,

I've sat in in my time in here because it is talking about our democratic process.

The plebiscite, we have to take a look at it. What was going on when Islanders were thinking about the plebiscite which centered around democratic reform, which centered around how the executive branch of government and the legislative branch of government would be formed and elected? What did Islanders see during those discussions? Every night they'd turn on their television and they'd watch our southern cousins discussing their democracy and discussing how their government is going to work. But did they discuss policies? Did they discuss issues? No. They called each other crooks, they called each other criminals, they called each other a multitude of names. That's what people were watching each and every night. That's what they saw on the television each and every night.

As some people in this Legislature would like to extrapolate what was going on in the US to what is going on here in Prince Edward Island in our democracy is disingenuous, because by no way what goes on in Prince Edward Island is a reflection of what goes on with our southern cousins in that election. We're totally different. They have a republic system and we have a parliamentary system.

To be seeing that on the news each and every night, I, as many Canadians I'd say, and as many Americans, were totally disgusted by it. When we start calling each other names or question each other, that's good for democracy and we must be doing that and we do this in this House each and every day. I know the opposition – I've sat in the opposition – how hard a job it is to prepare your questions each day and to come to the floor of the Legislature and to ask the tough questions of the executive branch of government. It's a tough job. I know when Ronny and Carolyn and Robert and I sat in this House in that role, you had to do a lot of hard work, a lot of digging, and you'd come and you'd ask the real tough questions.

People see Question Period and that's what they're looking at. Question Period, 45 minutes. It's a shame that that is what most people think government is. It is a shame that we see 45 minutes of Question Period

and we extrapolate that into how a government works. But it is our system, it is our parliamentary system, and I think it works extremely well for the people of Prince Edward Island and the people of Canada, and all the other countries that practice the parliamentary system.

I understand the importance of this debate and the topics. We owe all Islanders – all Islanders, I underscore that – as legislators to have the debate, have a conversation, and look at all the implications of changing our democracy.

I remember when I first got elected a person came up to me and said: Take your voters list, see who voted, and when you get a call check the list and see if they voted or not. You shouldn't waste your time on the people that didn't vote. You shouldn't waste their time on them because they don't count. That was the general premise, the discussion. Don't worry about them, they didn't vote, they don't deserve the attention from government.

Well, this Legislature represents all, whether they voted or not. The day of an election, the day of the election, government and this place represents all people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. Brown:** We are not going to look at a list to see if you voted or not because some other countries may do that, some other places may do that. That's not the way I do it and I know my colleagues don't do it, and I know all members of this House don't.

I receive calls from all over the province as anyone else, and I receive calls that people have called the opposition or the third party and those calls were answered, no matter what their political stripes are. A great thing about our democracy. We can fight it out every four years or three years over a 27-day period of what each other thinks, of what each other's policies are, what we're going to do for the betterment of all PEI.

We know. We walk into the polling stations and we see who is working for the other side (Indistinct). We leave that polling station and the day the election is over we forget about the 27-day fight, if we won or lost.

We move on, we won government, we take government seriously.

I only saw it once when a list was used after an election, in 1996. A list was created, a list was formed, a process was started to purge people from the civil service who did not vote for the government of the day. A purge of people, a purge of families. That was a list. Each and every day the list would be sent out, who would lose their job that day, who would be sent home that day. That's the kind of list we should never have again. It's the kind of thing we shouldn't do. A list of how you voted, or if you voted, or you didn't vote.

Supreme Court rulings, I think there were three of them that came down on a human rights case. Was it listened to the first time or second time? No.

When someone says non-voters are non-significant, they had their opportunity, and if they didn't vote they have no say, I just don't see how someone could say that. What about the person that looked at that ballot when they got the brochure at home, what about the person that couldn't read or write? That was a complicated ballot.

I know some individuals in this House are extremely smart, extremely well-educated, extremely able to interpret a ballot. But think of many Islanders that couldn't, that the intimidation that they saw when they looked at that ballot.

I consider myself half-smart, and it was a pretty tough ballot myself. My interpretation of the ballot, the mixed member proportional representation, was different than a lot of people I talked to. Some people thought that you have your 18 seats – and I've got to commend the member from Alberton. Going to veer off here a little, take a little sidetrack. But I've got to commend you, you did a phenomenal job, and your people should be proud.

He talked about rural PEI, talked about how important rural PEI is. Being a downtown boy with my fellow member – uptown boy, Parkdale boy – we know the importance of rural PEI.

A great friend of mine, a great mentor of mine, Spy Ready, great individual, great

person. We had our differences while we sat in the city hall, but he had a motto and it was a great motto. His motto was: If rural PEI is not doing good, Charlottetown will not do good.

I commend the member for standing up for rural PEI, and I will stand up for rural PEI. His efforts and his explanation of describing what losses could occur. Do I as a member from Charlottetown want the power concentrated in Charlottetown? No, that's not the kind of Island Prince Edward Island wants to be.

But the discourse of the debate over the last few days is disturbing. I would be considered growing up in a rough end of town, but it really wasn't rough when you were doing there. I think our bite was bigger than our bark a lot of the time.

Did I say that backwards?

**Mr. Roach:** Yeah.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Roach:** I think so. But we know you.

**Mr. Aylward:** It's okay, we're used to it (Indistinct).

**Mr. R. Brown:** I did a lot of bite, and got a lot of bites.

But I found out one thing: the people who accuse other people of being cowards are usually cowards themselves. They want to hide behind their biases by accusing other people of wrongdoing and wrong things. That's the way they can win. Never mind putting your best foot forward, but to put your meanness forward.

Islanders know the difference. That's the way the American election was run. Name calling, put down the other. Never mind talking about the policies and the issues.

Now, I've been contacted quite a bit over the last few days, and I know how my district voted. I know that the resolution we have in front of us today is the best option because it narrows the vote and it narrows the arguments. I think there's a clear question on what Islanders want during the

next election, or when the next election comes, and there will be lots of debate.

As the Leader of the Third Party talked about the plebiscite – and the Premier stole my thunder, but that's – is that we rushed into the plebiscite of 1893 to set up prohibition on Prince Edward Island, and it took 50 years and a number of other plebiscites to get that reversed.

But there's also one here, the automobile plebiscite. It was not to have vehicles. There's claims the vote was not released, but it was claimed that 90% of the people on Prince Edward Island didn't want cars. So I guess we would have been walking to the Legislature here today, taking our horse maybe.

**Mr. Aylward:** One still does.

**Mr. R. Brown:** There was a plebiscite that I'm most proud of, and that's the plebiscite of 1997. It wasn't a provincial plebiscite, it was a city plebiscite. That's getting video-lotteries out of the corner stores. Proud to stand to say I was a member of city council that pushed that plebiscite.

There was a lot of debate back then. Should we have it outside of our general election? We were advised that the best time to have a plebiscite or a binding is during an election when the debates of all issues are discussed and open. We were told it has to be a clear question.

Twenty-one thousand people voted. Pretty well everybody that voted in the city election voted in the plebiscite, and 10,900 voted to remove the VLTs from the corner stores.

That's why I think, or believe, that this is a journey we're on with changing our electoral system. This is an important system. This is how people elect their government. This is how people elect the people that are going to determine a lot of their lives. These are the people that are going to elect – people that are being elected build hospitals, schools, where they are, where they're not.

This is important. This affects each and every Islander when it really comes right

down to it, and it has to be a process of slow but continuous movement.

**Ms. Casey:** Call the hour.

**Speaker:** The hour has been called.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend, everybody.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 2:00 p.m.