

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature met at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, welcome everyone here in the Assembly. To you, Mr. Speaker, and our staff, and all members of the Legislature, I wish a great weekend.

In the gallery today I want to welcome everyone who has joined us and who is viewing on the Internet or from home.

We have a group of students who are in the English as an Additional Language program from Study Abroad. They comprise a group from Egypt, China, and Vietnam. I know we all want to welcome you and, of course, to recognize your teacher, Paul Steele.

Among others in the gallery I see Robert Larsen who was sitting at this place last Friday and Saturday as premier in the rotary parliament. Keep an eye on us, Robert. This seat is going to be available.

I also see Ben MacDonald from Little Pond. Welcome to the gallery, Ben.

After today's session I will be taking part in a meeting with Billy Bridges of Summerside who is one of the great contributors to Team Canada's sledge hockey team. The 2016 World Sledge Hockey Challenge will be on Prince Edward Island for the third time starting on Sunday at the MacLauchlan Arena. The teams will be from Canada, Korea, Norway, and the United States. For anyone who is watching who hasn't had the privilege to watch a sledge hockey game, I'd highly recommend it. You can see the play. You can see the strategy. You can see the skills and talents of the players in a very elegant game.

Tomorrow morning there will be a pancake breakfast sponsored by my district at the Malcolm Darrach centre in East Royalty from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., with proceeds and contributions or donations going to the Toys for Tots campaign.

There will also be a breakfast by the Knights of Columbus at the North Shore Community Centre. For those who choose to, or might be interested to take in, the two breakfasts, they'll be able to get back and forth between them more expeditiously because at 4:00 p.m. today the York Bridge is going to open.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm very happy about that. I want to thank the people in the district who worked together to put in place that plan and, of course, the crews who worked so well on that project.

Yesterday afternoon I had the opportunity to take part in the celebration for the completion of the provincial public service component of the provincial United Way campaign. I'm pleased to announce to the House that the provincial public service collectively contributed \$174,600, just under \$175,000, to that campaign, or 103% of the target. That's a great achievement.

Finally, of course, recognize the Maritime Electric crews and others – communities, warming centres – who are working on dealing with the power outage that started last Sunday. They're now down to 500 homes without power. It gives an appreciation of the amount of work that's involved in this to recognize that in order to restore the power to those 500 homes that would involve 150-175 hook-ups or stops. This is painstaking work and a lot of patience and a lot of support by those communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to rise this Friday morning in the House.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery, especially the students from Study Abroad, and also teacher Paul Steele.

Everybody watching home in District 20 Kensington-Malpeque, I wish you all a good

day today, and hope to see you at the town of Kensington Christmas Parade this Sunday, December 4th, at 5:00 p.m. There will be entertainment to follow at the train station gazebo. I hope to see a good group show up on Sunday.

I also want to take this time to thank all the Pages for everything they've done this week. Another great week. I just wanted to thank you for all the great work you're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's a pleasure to rise this morning. I welcome everybody to the gallery, especially the students and their teacher, Paul Steele.

I want to make special welcome to Robert Larsen and his mom also. Not only was Robert the Premier in last weekend's Rotary Youth Parliament, he was also the recipient of the best speaker, and I understand from his fellow Rotarians that that was a very well deserved honour. So congratulations, Robert.

It would be remiss of me if I did not make mention of the report which was released yesterday by the electoral reform committee in Ottawa, who – the 14th report on electoral reform, and the 14th time that proportional representation has been recommended as the system we should move to. Of course, it was greeted by the federal Liberals with the same sort of breathless enthusiasm as the plebiscite result was by my friends across the room.

But I retain hope that in both cases decency will prevail and that ultimately Islanders and all Canadians will end up with a fairer system which will produce a more inclusive and diverse Parliament.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery, and I would like to join in others' congratulation of Robert Larsen, our youth premier, who received the Frank Zakem Young Parliamentarian of the Year Award. Congratulations, Robert, and welcome to the gallery. Also Chelsea Perry, our Page, can't get enough of us and is back this morning in the gallery.

Tomorrow, December 3rd, is the feast of St. Francis Xavier, and I'd like to send out my congratulations to all those new X Ring wearers tomorrow. There'll be a lot of students and especially those Islanders who will be receiving their X Ring tomorrow. It's a grand occasion for all who wear the X Ring, and I just wanted to say hail and health to all my fellow Xaverians.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to say welcome to all those in the public gallery as well as all the good people across the province, but especially in Alberton-Roseville.

I'd like to also say, believe it or not, from one of the members across the Legislature, I do have a kid that's in school, but she's not in school today. She's home with her mom. It's parent-teacher day or something, or advanced training day for the teachers, and she's home there. But I must say she was really excited that shelf on the elf returned yesterday and she was awake several times during the night wondering where *The Elf on the Shelf* was going to be at this morning.

I'd like to say hi to Lila, and hi to all those that are home watching on EastLink and on the computer.

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 students here today and good kudos to our Premier last week for rotary. I hear you did a great job.

I'd like to wish everybody a great weekend, and especially those in West Royalty-Springvale, and I'd also like to thank everybody that supported our pancake breakfast last week to raise money for our school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning to everyone, and to our visitors from Study Abroad Canada that are with us.

As the Premier mentioned earlier we have good news in regard to construction projects that have been wrapping up, with the York Bridge opening today at 4:00 p.m. There will be still a little bit of slower traffic. We have still some flaggers out there to take away the breeze, so I just caution people to watch for flaggers over the next week or so.

Also, Monday the Cascumpec Bridge will be completed and opened for traffic at 4:00 p.m. so I appreciate –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Appreciate all the work that's been happening to make that happen.

In my District of Tyne Valley-Linkletter, though, I want to say hello to everyone, and we're going to have a busy weekend. Tomorrow from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Linkletter Community Centre is a craft fair. As well, in Lennox Island from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. there's a craft fair. And Sunday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. the Lot 16 house tours will be taking place. Also, at 7:00 p.m. at Tyne Valley Presbyterian

Church will be the Christmas cantata with the Tyne Valley and area choir.

Have a very busy weekend. I hope everyone has a great weekend and a safe weekend.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to welcome all our guests in the gallery. I see Paul Steele. Big shout-out to Paul, a retired educator who did some amazing things in school sport, which is a key part of healthy school cultures all across the province (Indistinct), so Paul was a real champion and leader in that area.

I want to acknowledge Robert Larsen, but not from his role in the Legislature, but his role as a district advisory council member. He's a student rep with the Three Oaks school and doing some great things with some wonderful conversations.

I also want to give a big shout-out to my constituents, but also a big shout-out to my twin brother David who's at the Paul Coffey invitation tournament in downtown Toronto with his son. He's tuned in between games and will be providing feedback on the performance of the House, so I wish him well, and I wish his son Carter all the best in the tournament over the next few days.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I want to say hello to everyone in the gallery as well, and Ben MacDonald and Robert, who I did get to see in action a little bit on the weekend there when he was filling in as premier, and did a fantastic job. Everyone did, really. Very sharp, to the point with their comments and questions. Didn't drag it

out like some people in the Legislature here over the last few days, but they're right to the point, which is great.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you.

Mr. McIsaac: I also want – I wasn't going to name names, but anyway –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) premier too.

Mr. McIsaac: I also want to point out another big transportation project was finished, pretty well finished, out in Pownal Village Green Road which is great. That was one of the most dangerous intersections in my riding and it's been a long time coming, but great to have it finished up, so thanks to the minister there.

I also want to put out a big shout-out to the people in my district, and especially those who gathered together at St. Joachim's hall at the warming centre there for those who were without power.

Last night I had the opportunity to go to the opening of the memorial tournament down in Pownal which they have – this is the 20th year for that, where they recognize and remember the coaches, the players, and those who we've lost over the last few years. It's kind of a sad thing, but it's really nice that they do put that together. A lot of the parents came out and just be recognized for the input that they put into the minor hockey system in Pownal. Great tournament. If you want to see some fantastic hockey, there's 70 teams playing in that tournament over the weekend.

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'm quite happy to be back in the House today and looking out to all the visitors we have in the gallery, very welcome from all of us to you.

A busy weekend in District 4. First of all, I just want to reach out to all the volunteers in our district who have helped with food and

warming centres and charging cell phones and come to my house for a shower and get a hot meal, and all of those, I guess, extensions of volunteerism that happened in District 4 and are still happening. We still have people who are on day number 6 of no power. We have a number of people in the district who got the power back for 12 hours and had long enough to cook a hot meal and fill the bathtub with water, so again power is out

But Christmas season is here. In the district we've got, I think, five or six craft fairs happening. We have Christmas in the Villages down in Murray River and Murray Harbour happening this evening, and then tomorrow, and we also have Christmas in Belfast at the Belfast rec centre. I encourage everyone to come out and enjoy and do some Christmas shopping.

Also, last but certainly not least, I'd like to wish Sybil Compton a very happy 90th birthday. Cybil's a lovely lady and used to live in our district, a relative of my husband's, and now she's in Stratford. A very healthy and positive lady. I just want to reach out and give a congratulations and wish her a happy birthday.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning. It's a pleasure to welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald today, and of course everyone in the gallery.

I feel like the Christmas spirit is really welling up, and I know there's lots of events across District 18. Excited to go to the Watermark Theatre tonight where my band, Party Mix, is playing, but also my daughter is singing with the Gulf Shore choir there, so we're both on the bill tonight so it should be great.

I did want to welcome the folks from the Study Abroad program. I understand that the former MLA from District 18 Rustico-Emerald is quite involved in that program as

well, Carolyn Bertram, so say hello to her from me if you see her there.

Also, I wanted to recognize Chelsea Perry. I guess she got caught in the storm last night so she's using her free time to come to the Legislative Assembly. I know Chelsea's father, Bruce Perry. We worked together at the Summerside tax centre when I was a contractor there and played a little hockey and he is a great fellow, so please say hello to Bruce for me as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The past week has been a rough week in District 16 as we lost two young fathers, husbands: Joe Carpenter who passed away with a battle of cancer, and Justin Simmonds in a tragic car accident. I just wanted to send our deepest sympathies from the Legislative Assembly to the families and their friends and relatives.

Also, last night I had the opportunity, along with other members of the Legislature, to go to the construction association Christmas reception. Talking to many of them, it's a tough time of year for these people to be out working in the cold and so on, but with our residential building permits up 20% it's in good shape, so they are looking forward to 2017 also.

Also, as immigration minister I want to welcome everyone in the gallery today, and the diversity and what you give back to PEI as new constituents of somebody's in here, we certainly appreciate it, and we welcome you with open arms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It is a pleasure to rise to welcome everybody to the gallery, and those viewing today from all across the Island, but in particular from my district of the Sherwood area. It's always great that there are many that view every day, and I do appreciate that and I do appreciate when we have opportunities to talk and they provide some good feedback.

I would like to begin by welcoming the students from Study Abroad today. It's always great to have them in the House. I hope you find today's proceedings quite interesting. Of course, my good friend Wayne MacMillan who is usually here every Friday morning is back with us. It's great to have Wayne in. Ben MacDonald, who is an avid political follower on Prince Edward Island, keeps (Indistinct) of everything that is going on. It's always a pleasure when Ben gets an opportunity to come into the House as well.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize and commend my former co-workers at Maritime Electric who have had a very busy week. This is a group that rally together when storms like this happen on Prince Edward Island. It's not only the linemen who get out day after day, fairly tired, fairly hungry, get the job done, but it's the office staff that all pull together and those other workers that – it's all hands on deck. Everybody focuses on restoring the power to Prince Edward Island. A dedicated, loyal group of employees that it's the customer first and above all else. To all of those great workers, I hope they do get some time to spend quality time with their families this weekend. I think it's looking pretty good now. No doubt they will be enjoying some Christmas festivities with their families this weekend. Hopefully everything goes well for them.

Thank you.

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 as well and welcome all those in the gallery and those viewing at home, especially those

residents in District 22 Summerside-St. Eleanors.

I also wanted to say hello to Robert Larsen who was indeed our rotary youth premier last week and has received much praise this morning for his political acumen. What you all might not know is he is also a very talented and passionate and knowledgeable farmer as well, so regardless of what career path he does choose the province will be blessed by whatever he does decide to choose.

I would also like to give a shout-out to Helen Kristmanson who is here in the gallery as well this morning, and to thank her personally for her allowing me to get in touch with my inner Indiana Jones this summer. She headed up a public archaeology dig at Orwell Corner which I did attend, and it was the first time actually getting on my hands and knees and digging in the dirt. I did end up finding a few objects of interest so thank you for that, Helen.

I hope we all have a wonderful day here in the Legislature and you all have a wonderful weekend relaxing with family and friends.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to welcome everyone into the gallery and especially those that are watching from District 1 –

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. Brown: Just getting you on track after two years.

Mr. LaVie: Exactly what I said was going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

Ben MacDonald is in the gallery. Ben usually shows up a couple of times a year. Ben is a fellow firefighter and he is on with

the Central Kings Fire Department. I do get to work occasionally with Ben on the fire department as they are a part of our mutual aid.

A note for tomorrow, it's the town of Souris Santa Claus Parade, and start time is at 2:00 p.m. It's a new time this year. I know the Member from Morell-Mermaid always shows up with his wife and children, and the smiles that are on the children's faces, that's what it is all about. So I encourage all members with children, grandchildren or in some cases great-grandchildren here, I encourage you to take all of your children to the Santa Claus parade in Souris.

The Premier and the transportation minister did stress that the bridge is open in York, but the bridge in North Lake the minister says is not going to be replaced and it is the tuna capital of the world, so if you can replace the Premier's bridge you will be replacing the tuna capital of the world's bridge.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Joseph Georges Arsenault

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

Aujourd'hui, j'ai une déclaration concernant M. Joseph Georges Arsenault, qui est un de mes commettants.

Today, I have a statement regarding Mr. Joseph Georges Arsenault, who is one of my constituents.

It is with great pleasure that I rise and acknowledge Joseph Georges Arsenault who has been named to the Order of Canada. This prestigious citation was presented to him for his contributions to the research, conservation and promotion of Prince Edward Island's Acadian history, culture and traditions.

Mr. Arsenault was born in Abrams Village, PEI. He studied and got a degree in political science at the University of Moncton and a

master of arts degree in folklore from Laval University.

From 1977 to 1982 Georges worked as a cultural officer for the St. Thomas Aquinas Society of Prince Edward Island. He was also a visiting Professor in Acadian Studies at UPEI. From 1986 to 2003 he could be heard hosting Radio-Canada's morning show.

Mr. Arsenault has written a number of books and is a well published author on the history of the Acadian people in PEI. Some of his works include: *The Island Acadians, 1720-1980* and *Acadian Legends, Folktales, and Songs from Prince Edward Island*.

Mr. Joseph Georges Arsenault was inducted into the Order of PEI in 2003 and now I congratulate him on receiving the Order of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Brian & Debbie Myers

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to acknowledge the recent 2016 Award of Distinction that was awarded to Brian and Debbie Myers of Myers Welding in Tignish. This award was presented to them at the recent CBDC West Prince Ventures Limited and Rural Action Center Breakfast mixer.

Myers Welding has been supporting the needs of the farming, fishing and aquaculture sectors of PEI. They specialize in aluminum welding and lathe work for projects large and small. They also provide the latest plasma cutting technologies that can deliver faster cuts with higher quality. In addition to plasma, they have the latest in equipment that is able to cut many different types of metal, including painted, rusted or dirty metal.

Myers Welding has provided quality welding and fabrication to PEI aquaculture, oyster, and agriculture industries.

I would like to congratulate Brian and Debbie Myers on receiving this award and thank them for all of the services they have provided for their community and PEI industry as a whole. Their contribution to the business community is well deserving of this Award of Distinction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Souris Memorial Monument

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and recognize the Souris Legion work on construction of the 28 stone panel memorial for our veterans.

This memorial pays tribute to all veterans and RCMP officers from the Souris area. It is a way to show our appreciation and respect for their sacrifices.

On the 28 panels engraved are 1,800 names, with room left to add more in the future. Some of these names date back as far as the 1700s.

The monument, which is located on Main Street, will be a place to go and remember their loved ones or perhaps a friend who sacrificed so much for our communities and our country. It is something we should never forget.

The monument was 10 years in the making. The Legion raised about \$100,000 for the project and received a grant from Veterans Affairs.

A bench at the entrance offers a place to reflect. Soon QR codes will be added to the site for people with Smartphones so more detailed information can be given about the veterans.

As David Perry, the Legion president said: It is an honour to be standing here in front of this monument because it's a long time in the making.

I want to congratulate the Souris Legion on their completed project. It will serve the community and ensure that we never forget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Souris walk-in clinics (further)

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question taken as notice by the Member from Souris-Elmira yesterday, I wish to table the following answer regarding walk-in clinics in Souris.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Questions by Members

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

Provincial risk assessment exercise

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Throughout this week we've talked about emergency response in a number of occasions regarding the power issues that have happened throughout eastern PEI.

Question to the Premier who is also the minister responsible for emergency preparedness: When was the last time that a provincial risk assessment exercise was held?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I should ask the hon. member to clarify, does she mean province-wide, or in particular areas?

Speaker: Could you clarify that?

Ms. Compton: Province.

Speaker: Province-wide, hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our emergency measures team is in active mode and regularly in touch with communities.

There was a whole I'll call it tabletop exercise carried out last year with police

forces, with communities, and with federal and provincial people as well, who came together to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Risk of power outage

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In a presentation to a committee we learned that 2011 was the last time a provincial risk assessment exercise was held. Not surprisingly, the highest risk identified was a long-term closure of Confederation Bridge.

Question to the Premier: Would it surprise you to learn that an extended power outage was identified as the second-largest threat?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, with the changing climate and the more extreme weather that we've experienced and that we see on a more frequent basis, no, it does not surprise me, and this is something that has been uppermost in the minds of emergency measures people at the provincial level and at communities.

Indeed, the invitation and working together with communities to put in place gathering points – which is, in effect, what we're seen with the warming centres and with the generators to back up if necessary that had been in place this week – this has been very much on the minds of emergency measures people at all levels in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Review of emergency measures legislation

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We hear across eastern PEI especially the number of warming centres and the number of volunteers that have been involved, but really, we're looking for some leadership from government about this, too.

Legislation that governs EMO is out of date. We know that. The last amendment was in

2000. A lot has changed. You've talked about climate change, 9/11 has happened, cyber threats, all concerns for the province. Question to the Premier: Will you commit to review an update of the province's emergency measures legislation to address the new and emerging potential threats like extreme weather from climate change?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as members of the Assembly are aware, the province has for a number of months been involved in preparing a climate change strategy indeed to complement the energy strategy that has also been under development.

The question of emergency measures and, on a go-forward basis, ensuring that the legislation, as well as the resources and the collaborations are in place to address the emergencies that can be foreseen with the changing climate, is very much on the minds of the people who are working on that strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

FOIPP and Internet contract

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I've read the FOIPP act in detail and have yet to come across where the act prohibited government from publicly releasing information that it wants to release.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism tell us where he found his latest excuse on withholding the Internet contract inside the FOIPP act?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's third party contingences in there as far as legal binding matters and as far as the FOIPP act.

But more than that, I mean, as minister responsible for economic development, I'm looking forward, I'm looking out – part of

this issue is about trying to get the best service for PEI from one end of the Island to the other. Looking forward, that's what we have to do as a government. We have to look after the issues of the day, trying to make sure that everybody has at least five megabits per second service from one end of the Island to the other. That's what we're going to focus on. We're focusing on our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

FOIPP and Internet contract legal opinion

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, who provided this legal opinion to you?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My staff were in contact with legal advice and I'd have to take that back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, will you confirm this is the same lawyer who provided your legal opinion that said the loan write-off disclosures bill couldn't be retroactive?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As minister responsible for economic development our loan portfolio is very successful. I commend the opposition MLA for allowing me to expand a little bit on the success of our loan portfolio and what it does to the communities in rural PEI when over 60% of our loans are provided in rural PEI, from farmers to fishers. We're not

talking large corporations. We're talking small businesspeople that survive.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party talked about small businesses in his community, and that's what this government's all about, Mr. Speaker, is moving the province forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Internet contract (further)

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, another example of where this government has attempted to withhold information, but in that case public pressure forced their hand.

Can the minister explain why after seven years of asking, in the last seven days he promised to release the secret Internet contract, and then went back on his word and has thrown up another suspicious roadblock and he will not release it?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've discussed this several times in the House and I think everybody, even in the public, know my position on releasing the unredacted contract, and I have no issue with that personally. But there is a process that we have to follow through FOIPP.

But our path forward includes access to funding to government to consider investment in short-term initiatives, like Cavendish and Maximeville, and we're opening that to all ISPs, putting out RFPs. I think it went out two weeks ago and we have received one back already on Maximeville.

So this is our government. We're taking an initial forward step here. We're trying to accomplish full Internet service from one end of the Island to the other. We're doing it in an open and transparent manner. We're working with communities that are involved in this issue and will continue to build on it.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

FOIPP and PEI Westside Funding (further)

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this minister's actions are certainly calling his word into question.

Last week I also asked the minister about Testori and Weibel and that secret deal. The minister refused our FOIPP request stating it was used in prosecution of the company involved. This week, the minister did another 180 and decided the secret PEI Westside Funding deal wasn't used for prosecuting: Oops, it must have been a mistake.

Minister: Why the sudden change of heart?

Mr. Trivers: Rusty, he's rusty.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not rusty, thank you, but –

Mr. LaVie: No, but you're grey.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, it's ongoing, this situation.

We're, as a government, taking an initiative here to move this project forward as relevant with Internet connections and service providers, and there are issues out there and we're working our way through them. We've even offered access to land and/or infrastructure by the ISP companies to give them a better opportunity to provide that service. We want to do future unsolicited proposals for federal-provincial support through ACOA and ISED.

There's all kinds of things that we're doing to make high-speed Internet a real force and furthermore, as the Premier said before, within a year I think we'll be likely a leader in Canada as far as Internet connections.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That question wasn't about Internet service. A six-month FOIPP ordeal suddenly becomes an error two days after I raise questions and government actions on our request come to light. Minister, this certainly doesn't pass the smell test.

What are you trying to cover up by changing your story on the PEI Westside Funding secret deal prosecution?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, as I stated last week, we have been challenged in the courts by the company he's speaking of. It would be very unethical for me to start talking about what's being challenged in the courts to give anybody an upper hand. Legal counsel has advised us, due to the court process, we should not release any of these documents until –

Mr. Trivers: Open and transparent (Indistinct) said.

Mr. MacDonald: – we come to a conclusion on the court case. I think anybody in the general public looks at that and says: Why would they release something that's before the courts and give a company that is no longer here the upper hand against our province and our taxpayers?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, given the minister's track record, I'll believe him on the PEI Westside Funding secret deal when I have a fully unredacted copy in my hand.

FOIPP and Homburg

This government has a long documented habit of throwing up as many roadblocks as possible around FOIPP requests so Islanders cannot get all the information they are looking for, and certainly not in a timely manner.

Minister: Why have you forced us to appeal to the information commissioner to get the detailed loan financials from a \$40 million Homburg account?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting. We keep going back six, seven, eight years. As a progressive government and being aggressive and we've got some good news announcements next week, and we'll have one maybe even the week after that, and we're creating economic prosperity from one end of the Island to the other.

But just in relevance, I was looking into this not too long ago, but when you talk about the Holman Grand Hotel and the 40-some employees that are there, and you talk about the investment that that company has made in the city centre, and you talk about the Confederation Court Mall and you look at all those stores there, I'd tell the opposition maybe to take a look and see who owns all those stores that are keeping that mall open.

When you talk about the Kitchen Store, the shoe store – there's all kinds of stuff in there. The new spa that's there and the hotel that's there. Only for them that mall would likely not be open at this time so if you take 120 employees or 130 employees –

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, in a battle stretching back to the spring we have fought to ensure the public interest is served by – and release the entire Homburg loan financials.

Yes or no, minister. We don't want a long-winded answer, yes or no. Minister: Will you commit today and release in full the entire Homburg loan financials?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very interesting that the hon. member doesn't want to hear of the good news stories that are happening in Prince Edward Island. I even mentioned in my opening remarks today about the construction association. Retail sales are up, car sales are up, new builds are up.

We continuously drive this economy, but the opposition doom and gloom to go back eight years, to go back six years, to go back five years. We touched on three files today that – you talk about \$93 million was in wages for one of those companies they're talking about. We extended that company by two years by selling their shares to a third-party for \$5 million. We extended those wages of those people for two years.

That, Mr. Speaker, is how this government operates.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Written questions

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can easily understand why this government does not want to look back over the last seven or eight years. It's not hard to see why at all.

Unfortunately, I also have to talk about a number of roadblocks that the opposition is finding. Our opposition tries to hold this government to account as effectively as we can. One of these ways is through written questions. We use them to help us prepare for the Legislature and to help answer our constituents' questions.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) or what?

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, what was that?

Mr. J. Brown: Is there a written question coming here or what?

Mr. LaVie: It's Question Period.

Mr. MacEwen: We'll soon find out.

Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier: Why are all the departments in your government delaying our written question requests?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe it's the case that we're as slow in getting back as the hon. member's question implies.

There are departments that are responding and responding diligently. There are many written questions that had been submitted. We're committed to getting response to those, and public servants in our departments are working very hard to provide those responses on a timely basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Do you know what? We have over 1,000 written questions in just from this spring alone. We've got, actually, questions dating back to August of 2015 that aren't answered.

Our former premier, Robert Ghiz, there's a lot of people that didn't like some of the things that he did, but do you know one thing he did? He respected the opposition. He was in opposition. He respected us.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Mr. MacEwen: Why are the departments delaying our requests? Over 1,000 just from the spring.

Speaker: I believe, hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, you better repeat the question because I couldn't hear a thing.

Mr. MacEwen: It's frustrating. I understand that, Mr. Speaker, we're very frustrated.

Premier: Why are the departments delaying the requests, some that go back as far as August 2015?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member indicated, there are more than 1,000 written questions.

I think we'll find that there have been many responses provided. There are public servants in departments throughout government that are working, in addition to their other work, to provide answers to these questions. It's also my understanding that this question has been raised with the rules committee and that the rules committee will also address that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is correct. I did refer this to the rules committee because we have great concerns. I'm going to give you a real good example.

There's a good constituent of mine that contacted me. He moved here from Ontario. He said: Member, would you put this idea forward? He said: In Ontario, if your taxes are up to date you get a free water test every year. He thought that was a good thing for himself here. He thought his water was okay, but he didn't really like paying it.

What I did, I submitted a number of questions to find out what the water tests cost, the total number of water tests in a year to see what that might cost government. He asked me this back in May or June. I submitted those right away. Guess when I got the answer? This guy came back (Indistinct). Guess when I got the answer? Middle of November. Simple questions so that we could try to find a good idea for government.

Premier: Do you think that's an acceptable timeline?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Appreciate questions from all members of the opposition and deal with them in a timely fashion.

All Islanders are usually up to date with their taxation and are concerned with their water quality. On a daily basis people contact our department in regards to their water qualities. We certainly are open to have those discussions.

I would urge any member of the opposition that has those questions, just direct them to phone our staff and we will deal happily with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to highlight another example. Last spring we had a good debate here during Budget estimates. You guys all know that, good, honest debate. In good faith, the opposition agreed to pass certain sections of the budget given that our request for further information would be provided.

In fact, I even looked straight at the Premier on one of the last days of the House session and he nodded, yeah, they would follow through that, that they would bring back all those requests.

Guess what? Nothing.

Premier: Why don't we have those things that you guys guaranteed you'd bring us back in Budget estimates from last spring?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

The member's talking about questions asked. There were 67 questions submitted to the department of transportation, infrastructure. All of those questions have been answered except for questions no. 409-476, and those are being worked upon now as those are information they want leading back to 2007. But every other question that was submitted, 67 of them have been returned from my department.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm referring to Budget estimate requests. Do you know what? Here, this is Hansard from last spring. Myself:

"I know I have the ear of the Premier and some of the other ministers, there's been a number of requests to bring back information from a number of the ministers. I'm just wondering if we could have a commitment to bring that stuff back even if the Legislature happens to be closed in the near future."

The Minister of Finance responded: "Yes. We note each one that comes through and we note it for response."

I'll give you a couple of examples here. I know I have to hurry. Details and specifics on controls and locks in place for WiFi; programs for boat and marine shops; wharf dredging; consult for PEI input and output models; breakdowns of reports for senior housing; the grant cut to the Alzheimer Society.

These are questions that our members asked the ministers in good faith that we would get answers to. Do you know what? No answers.

Premier: When can we start expecting to be respected over here and get answers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate the question and I recall the Hansard.

But when I look over the last six months and I look at the regular work that our public servants do on a daily basis, year after year, during that same time frame, within that six months since last spring when we were sitting here, they submitted over 1,000 questions.

Our public servants are extremely busy. During that time the Auditor General also did a review and our public servants also had to respond to that. Over tens of thousands of documents and interviews.

Mr. Trivers: Release all the documents. Open and transparent.

Mr. Roach: Our public servants are doing everything they can to try and keep up, but this has been a particularly busy year, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mental health strategy and Native Council

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

Mental health and addiction issues are seen in all corners of our society. The new Mental Health and Addictions Strategy addresses some of the needs of many Islanders and it certainly identifies gaps within our current system. It fails, however, to address the needs and concerns of Indigenous people living off-reserve.

The Native Council of Prince Edward Island represents status, non-status, Inuit, and Métis people living off-reserve.

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Did government consult the Native Council specifically for input on the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, obviously, we take mental health very seriously in this province and we have implemented or are in the process of implementing this recent strategy on mental health and addiction in this province.

We have consulted many different organizations and organizations out there, including the Canadian Mental Health Association. I do believe we did speak with some of the Aboriginal organizations, but I can clarify that with the minister and get back to him on that.

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

Indigenous Islanders living off-reserve

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I look forward to that prompt reply, minister.

As far as I am aware you did not consult with the Native Council for this strategy, and to me that's an unacceptable oversight.

A question to the minister: What does government plan to do to address the needs and concerns of Indigenous Islanders living off-reserve?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, once again, Aboriginals, on-reserve or off-reserve, are welcome to attend any of our particular facilities in this province, whether it's our emergency rooms, whether it's accessing Canadian Mental Health services, of which we provide significant funding to that organization to provide and deliver mental health services to Islanders.

We will continue to have all of the services that are out there accessible by anybody that's an Islander on Prince Edward Island.

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

Indigenous Islanders alcohol and drug abuse program

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

Two years ago federal funding cuts caused the native alcohol and drug abuse program to be cancelled. Since that time the Native Council has met with government, our provincial government, on several occasions inquiring what will be done to address this issue. The Premier assured them that funding would indeed be available, but their recent application for funding was denied.

Would this government be prepared to fund a specific program for off-reserve indigenous people even without a federal partner so that Indigenous Islanders can get the help that they need and deserve?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I have met on four occasions, and our officials have met on additional occasions, with the leadership representatives of the Native Council, and on this very question of the program for mental health and addictions or drug abuse.

We encouraged the Native Council to put in a submission to the program where the previous funding had, in fact, been discontinued. That was not successful.

I met a week ago Thursday with the leadership of the Native Council, and followed up with a letter on Monday to indicate and to offer that the senior public servants responsible for mental health and addictions would work with them and offer to help in the preparation of a submission to that program.

In August of this year we provided a modest amount of funding for work in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

National Housing Strategy

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

My question is for the Minister of Family and Human Services. Minister, housing is one of the most prominent issues facing my constituents. Last week the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development released a report entitled: What We Heard: Shaping Canada's National Housing Strategy.

Could you update the House on your department's discussions in relation to the National Housing Strategy with the federal government?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The provinces and territories are key to the federal government's delivery of housing across Canada.

My department has been very engaged and very vocal with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues in the discussion around the National Housing Strategy ever since the consultations began back in June 2016.

Some of the work to date has been the development of broad strategy outcomes, a vision, and key themes. All of those were publicly promoted during the consultation phase so that all Canadians could have input.

The summary of that report is the report you were talking about that was released on National Housing Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

Minister, housing, as I indicated, is a pressing need in our province just as it is across Canada. Has the federal government given any indication as to when its housing strategy will be finalized?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The National Housing Strategy, we're hoping that it'll be made public sometime later 2017. However, part of the discussions that we have been having is the flexibility that each jurisdiction should have and would have. For example, Islanders' needs are much different from somebody in Ontario, for example.

So the work to date, as I said, is developing the framework, and we're hoping to have some results out to the public in the latter part of 2017.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your second supplementary question.

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

It's good to hear, minister, that there will be some flexibility within the different provinces.

Has the federal government given any indication as to when housing program dollars will start to flow into this province?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question, and that is a question that each and every provincial and territorial colleague had at the table when we met in Ottawa in October. Unfortunately, we don't have a timeline as of yet because there's still the development of the framework that needs to take place.

We're still giving our input into the consultation as well, and there's a lot of highlighting that we're still doing. But one of the things that we have highlighted is that much of our long-term funding with the federal government will be running out, so we will, in addition to new funding and stable funding, we are going to need to be needing to renew those long-term commitments as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Job growth measurement

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Research and statistics can provide clarity on where we stand at the present time and where we are planning to go in the future in the area of job creation and job opportunity.

Can the minister inform the House of any work that government is doing to measure job growth in different parts of the province?

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

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

That's a great question from the member. My department works very closely with EDT and the department of agriculture, consulting various companies across the province, and working with the federal government to get statistics.

The department's goal is to work with education facilities and to make people available for work and to make them skilled ready. That's one of the reasons for the Summerside area – we moved the Holland College centre from Slemmon Park to downtown to a bigger space, and a more open space, in order to encourage as many students as possible looking for skills upgrades to acquire those skills upgrades, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Job growth measurement in Summerside

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, will your department be able to provide a breakdown of job growth specifically in the Summerside area?

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

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

The federal government does a number of surveys across this country, including Prince Edward Island. It's called the Labour Force Survey. They interview 1,400 people across Prince Edward Island and they come out with a statistical review each month.

Matter of fact, one was released this morning and our unemployment rate is down, I'm proud to announce.

We've asked the federal government if we could get a full data set of that survey in order to break it down into particular areas, excluding the names and other privacy information. The federal government is open to that discussion and we will move forward with that, I think.

But I'd like to say that the minister of EDT or economic development has a great

announcement for Summerside coming up Tuesday that will be creating many jobs in the area, so by working together the departments are working together to make sure that Islanders have as many opportunities as possible to find work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: And if we didn't rusty questions from the other side, Mr. Speaker, I think we'd get a lot better.

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

Billing of government

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders are wondering why this government and this Premier keep wiggling and dodging over the egaming email scandals, and people are wondering what is in these emails that would cause this government to want to keep them a secret. A running theme through this whole egaming scandal is the cover-up and the great lengths that this government is taking.

Question to the Premier: If companies were billing government for work done by someone else, would the Premier be concerned about that?

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

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

As the minister responsible for the oversight and the legislation of the provincial *Archives and Records Act* I take these questions and this conversation we're having over the past few days very seriously.

I would like to challenge the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that if he has any evidence, proof of any illegal activity, I would be very supportive for him to take it outside the rail and take it to the appropriate authorities.

I know that every member of this Assembly would support that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 2012 Auditor General's report did just that and you guys did nothing about it and you sat right through it, so I challenge you the same thing because you've known about it since 2012. You know a lot more than I do and you're hiding it.

Mr. Currie: Take it outside the rail.

Mr. Myers: You're hiding it. Every single day you're hiding it.

Mr. Currie: Take it outside.

Mr. Myers: She said that there was \$50,000 handed out in contracts to an IT company and no terms and conditions were ever made for the work, and that the contract wasn't even signed until the work was completed.

Question to the Premier: Does that sound underhanded to you, paying somebody \$50,000 for work done by somebody else?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have the Auditor General's report and her review of that matter.

It's something that we invited the Auditor General to do within less than two weeks of assuming government. That report has been with us and has been considered by Public Accounts, and the Auditor General made 15 recommendations. Over and above our specific responses and implementation to those 15 recommendations, we have committed to, across government, be acting in the best interests of taxpayers and Prince Edward Islanders and giving the best possible government we can on a go-forward basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have copies of the actual invoices and I will table them here later. These invoices are two invoices for \$50,000. Each invoice was for \$25,000, and the description of the work says: PEI VIP Loyalty Project, 50% of the fee agreed with Melissa MacEachern. The invoices are to InternetWorks from Simplex.

Question to the Premier: Why would the then-deputy of innovation be directing contract payment methods with another government department?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I was not Premier at the time, I don't have the particulars of that situation, but I look forward to those documents being tabled and we'll take a look at it.

But let me be very clear about one thing. What the hon. member is referring to now is what he's often confusing with, perhaps deliberately, the review of the egaming initiative that was carried forward by the Mi'kmaq Confederacy and the –

Mr. Trivers: The loyalty program's all part of that report. Read the report.

Premier MacLauchlan: If you read the Auditor General's report, you'll find there are four different matters into which she ultimately inquired and gave her views and gave recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, after having the work of the Auditor General, I'd invite the opposition to read her report and stop the confusion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This Premier doesn't want to talk about deleted emails. The education minister doesn't want to talk about deleted emails. I want to talk about deleted emails and Islanders want to talk about deleted emails. I'm going to start tabling deleted emails today for you on this topic.

Some of these emails talk about a government official wanting this contract to be funneled through a third party.

Question to the Premier: When you went on CBC and you said to Bruce Rainnie being ethical to you isn't pulling off all the scabs, is this what you were talking about?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'd like to see the transcript of that interview, Mr. Speaker.

I don't believe I said that. I said that we have a way of doing business going forward and we are following directly the advice and the insights offered by the Auditor General and we are working to implement them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There was a senior director of the tourism department that described how they wanted the government billed to a third party and then they'd be paid through the third party. We know that the Premier from his time at the university had some dodgy contracts over there, too. One, actually, from the tourism research centre that ended in charges.

Question to the Premier and Attorney General: Are these activities not getting dangerously close to fraud?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me first say that it sounds like a lot of the information that's being offered from across the floor is coming – sifting through the entrails of a lawsuit that was tossed for being vexatious and of no merit, so I think the opposition has to consider the source.

As for anything that the hon. member thinks might constitute fraud, as the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture said, maybe it's time for him to take it outside the rail.

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

Billing of government and RCMP

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

I'll meet you outside the rail as soon as this is over and we can talk about it and we'll see who's scared to say what outside the rail. You're not going to threaten me with that, you're not going to threaten Islanders with that, and you're not going to silence me with your threats of outside this rail. These are emails, I have them, they say what they say.

Question to the Premier: Yes or no, will you refer this matter to the RCMP?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, my point about taking it outside the rail is that the hon. member himself is quite welcome to lay a complaint with the RCMP, or to approach the RCMP if he's got the evidence, or if he thinks it should go elsewhere he can go elsewhere.

But this matter has been considered by the Auditor General and there was nothing in the Auditor General's report where she was recommending that this go to a prosecution or that there be any pursuit along those lines.

We have been looking into this matter and we are acting on the considered advice of the Auditor General. If the opposition wants to go back and reargue that lawsuit that was tossed out as being frivolous, then they're welcome to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

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

New Teachers and EAs

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, we are always pleased to welcome new families to our schools and communities.

As we strive to grow the diversity and size of our population, immigration plays a key role and so do our schools. For example, the

number of EAL students in our public education system rose from 367 in 2007 to approximately 1,500 this year.

During 2015-2016, we had 435 newcomer students enter our public school system. Over the summer another 231 new immigrant students enrolled. Based on IIDI data, 288 more children aged 6 to 18 could arrive this school year.

As our population increases, the expectations on teachers to help newcomer students become successful learners continues to rise.

The large increase in new students this year resulted in the need for more; classroom teachers to address class size and class composition challenges, and itinerant teachers to go in to schools where newcomer students are.

This year we are very pleased to receive funding of 1.4 million for 31.5 new positions to further support newcomer and special needs students.

These include additional positions: eight itinerant teachers to provide language, literacy and transition supports to newcomer students; five EA positions to support newcomer students; two additional kindergarten teachers to help to maintain kindergarten class sizes and targets; 14.5 EA positions to provide students with ADHD, autism, complex medical conditions, high risk behaviours, and others; and two youth service worker positions.

We continue to see more students with special needs entering the system than leaving. Our staff are extremely pleased to have this additional funding so these students can safely attend school and so classroom teachers can focus on teaching the entire classroom.

We are very grateful for this \$1.4 million investment in our students and in our education system.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While I'm always glad to see resources added to the education system, because it's something that we fight for over there through every budget cycle, I'm a little surprised at the timing of it, how the minister didn't know that this was an issue when the enrollments came in at the start of the year, and why you waited so long to make this announcement.

We know that there's a long wait for speech pathologists. We know there's a long wait for many of your psychologists' evaluations in the system, up to three years. It's totally not acceptable. It's shameful that you have a child who was in grade 3 that possibly needed help or implements in place to help them learn. That they're in grade 6 by the time they actually get to see someone, and it could be grade 7 or 8 before they get straightened around to be on track.

It's shameful that you would do that to a child. It's shameful that a child in our system has to suffer at your hands. It's shameful that you guys can't see fit to reduce that wait time to weeks. It should be weeks. No one should be happy that a child has to wait three years for evaluations. This government should be ashamed of themselves because that number grows and grows under this government.

Over here, we won't rest until that number is zero.

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 welcome the announcement. I welcome the fact that we have more diversity in our schools and more diversity our community.

With that comes some challenges, and there are hundreds of passionate Islanders who work as teachers in our system and they are exhausted. They are exhausted physically. They are exhausted emotionally. They are exhausted mentally.

They are not only there teaching now, they are there as counsellors, they are there as law enforcement officials, they are there as cafeteria, they are there as bank machines, they are there essentially as surrogate parents, and they are exhausted.

While I welcome the fact that we will have more teachers in the classroom, we have to recognize that the whole educational system is broken.

Here on Prince Edward Island we have an opportunity to fix it. We are small. We are nimble. We could resurrect small schools. We could bring in charter schools. We could do all sorts of innovative things here on Prince Edward Island and restore the joy of teaching for teachers and the ability for children to learn in their own individual ways.

While I welcome this announcement, minister, I think it's time that Prince Edward Island reimaged our education system entirely.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With your indulgence I would also like to recognize some of our community partners who are in the House today to hear this minister's statement.

We have: Andrea MacNeill from the PEI Association for Community Living; Frank Costa from Community Connections; Bronwyn Rodd from the PEI Citizen Advocacy Inc.; Joel Dennis from Tremploy Inc.; Nicole Ward from Camp Gencheff; and Nancy Anderson from Inclusions East Inc.

I'd like to welcome them all here today as I rise to recognize December 3rd as International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

This is a day to raise awareness and understanding of persons with disabilities and to celebrate their contributions. It allows us to reflect on the ways we can make our communities and our province more inclusive for all Islanders.

Our government is pleased to work with our community partners – many, as I have mentioned, who are in the House today – to improve programs and services that promote the well-being and respect for Islanders with disabilities. We need to continue to work together to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to fully participate as active members in our Island community.

I would like to thank all of our community partners for their continuous efforts to improve the lives of Islanders living with disabilities. The work you do makes a real difference and it helps create more caring communities for everyone.

We must also continue to remove physical barriers at the workplace, on public transit, in the community, and at home. We are making progress in recognizing the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

This week, for example, the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy introduced legislation promoted by Hannah MacLellan, a young advocate for disabled Islanders, which modernizes some of our language around accessible parking spaces and increases the penalties for unauthorized use of parking spaces set aside for persons with mobility challenges.

This is a great advancement, and I commend Hannah MacLellan, her MLA the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the department for getting these changes put in place.

On International Day of Persons with Disabilities and every day I urge members of this Assembly, and all Islanders, to learn more about the challenges that persons with disabilities face. I encourage everyone to recognize the significant contributions that they make to our province. Every barrier we break down will help move us forward to a more fully inclusive society.

Since Islanders have always been good at working together to accomplish great things,

we must apply our collaborative nature to collectively creating a more inclusive, diverse, and caring Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's also my pleasure to rise today to recognize International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Welcome the community partners who are joining us here in the gallery, and commend them on the hard work that they do to support all persons with disabilities.

I agree with the minister that we need more fairness and need to remove the physical barriers. I encourage this government to work with all those community partners more closely to ensure we are there for persons with disabilities.

I also commend Hannah MacLellan for her moving of a bill, helping us with that bill this week. We all really want to endorse a more inclusive society for all Islanders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It is an honour to rise and also to recognize International Day of Persons with Disabilities. We have all referenced *Hannah's Bill* that went through the House here the other day. What a lovely moment of collective joy that was for all of us. I look forward to more of them in this House.

I also think that my series of questions this morning were on mental health. People with disabilities, some of those are very readily apparent to us, it's quite clear that people have challenges. But when it comes to mental health that's not always so readily obvious.

On reading through the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy that was recently released, there's virtually no mention of suicide or of suicide prevention in that strategy which, of course, is the most awful, unfortunate outcome of people with mental health challenges and disabilities.

While it's important that we recognize people with physical disabilities, of course, and we have to become blind to those differences – or at least we have to embrace and be welcoming of people who are different from us – I think it's equally important that we recognize in our midst those who have mental health challenges who may not be quite so readily obvious to us.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today as minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs to congratulate fourth-year doctor of veterinary medicine student, Elizabeth Moses, as this year's recipient of the John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat established this scholarship at the University of Prince Edward Island in 2009. The award is named after distinguished Mi'kmaq Islander John James Sark who earned a post-secondary education at St. Dunstan's University and was our province's first Mi'kmaq teacher.

In its 2015 report, one of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was for the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education. While the perception may be that tuition is free for all Aboriginal students, the reality is actually quite different.

With large numbers of Aboriginal youth seeking higher education across our country, and here on Prince Edward Island,

Aboriginal communities are unable to financially support all those who request funding. For those who do have tuition provided there are still expenses for daily living such as rent, transportation, and food.

In her application for the scholarship, Elizabeth details the significant barriers she has overcome as an Aboriginal woman and the importance of a middle school teacher who believed in her potential and predicted that she would do something great with her life.

Elizabeth's application not only highlights the challenges that Aboriginal learners encounter, but also the importance of teachers and mentors who can instill confidence and perseverance in students to achieve better outcomes for themselves through higher education.

Elizabeth is here at the Legislature today, Mr. Speaker.

Please join me in congratulating here on receiving the John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What an honour to be able to stand up and congratulate Elizabeth. I know Abegweit First Nation is a large part of your community in your district and also in mine with – in District 7 as well.

It's wonderful to hear about you winning the John Joe Sark award. Keptin Sark is also a community leader in District 7 as well, and it's just fantastic.

I know our First Nations population, it was one of the fastest-growing student populations in Canada and most likely in PEI, too. The wonderful work that they're doing in Scotchfort and through the schools that they're attending is just fantastic to hear. I think we're seeing the results of that with the success of people like Elizabeth, so congratulations for sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, am honoured to stand and congratulate you, Elizabeth, on this award. You're a wonderful example of the resilience of the human spirit. When I think of how our native peoples, both individually and collectively, have been abused here in Canada, and the recent Truth and Reconciliation committee report who heard from over 6,000 native people of Canada with just horrific stories that you can't imagine would ever happen in a modern country, a supposedly caring country like Canada.

I think it's wonderful, Elizabeth, what you have attained individually, and I also salute the Indigenous People across Prince Edward Island and Canada for their resilience and that kernel, that seed, of real pride which has been retained despite all of the abuses that they have endured.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Response to Power Outages

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise once again to extend my appreciation to community volunteers, first responders, and transportation and utility workers who continue to serve Islanders affected by this week's power outages.

Maritime Electric worked overnight and were successful at restoring power to many customers. Currently they are reporting 500 customers without power.

This has been a challenging week for Islanders affected by these power outages and those working to restore power, clear our roads, and ensure public safety.

But, we hear the stories of Islanders pitching in to help each other. It is in our nature to

reach out to neighbours, to provide a warm meal, a warm place to stay, and additional offers of assistance.

Today there's a warming centre at the Cardigan fire hall. Islanders are also welcome to drop in and get warm in the following municipal spaces which are open during normal business hours: Dr. Roddie Community Centre in St. Peter's and St. Peter's fire hall; Eastern Kings Sportsplex or the town hall in Souris; Lower Montague warming shelter at the community centre will be open on community request. Those have been opened and closed as the need has warranted.

During this week there were also warming shelters open in Murray Harbour, Montague, Vernon River, Georgetown, Belfast, and other communities.

Our government recognizes that this storm has led to some unexpected hardships. It is at the community level that the impact of this storm can be most appreciated. In response to the initiatives that have been taken by communities and the hardships that we recognize, we will be providing \$5,000 for each community that had a warming shelter during this storm and in responding to its aftermath.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, these communities can use this assistance to put toward any unexpected out-of-pocket costs that the community has incurred, or alternatively they can distribute it directly to residents in their area who they recognize as being the most in need.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you. That's all we ask for is a little bit of help.

Premier MacLauchlan: These centres welcomed Islanders affected by power outages, and they were friendly places to stop by, warm up, charge devices, and spend some time with neighbours.

I know Islanders were appreciative of these efforts and the many hours volunteers gave to assist their neighbours. Hours, food, welcoming them to their own homes, as members on all sides of this House have recognized.

We thank, once again, all the community volunteers who gave their time to keep warming shelters open this week, to cook for their neighbours, and to help and to build through this process their communities.

Maritime Electric is working diligently to restore power to all parts of the province, and I thank them for their efforts.

The PEI Emergency Measures Organization continues to monitor the situation across the Island.

Thank you, once again, to all Islanders for their service to each other.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the community centres and the community people down in eastern Prince Edward Island who chipped in and jumped in.

The Cardigan fire department has been open all week, not just today, so this isn't an announcement by any means, as have all the other places because the people down home didn't ignore this until Friday. It was a reality when they woke up Monday morning. It was a reality when they woke up Tuesday morning. It was a reality when they woke up Wednesday morning. It's been a reality for them all week.

It was Wednesday morning when I got my power back and that was early compared to a lot of people, and I've had calls from people today who are still out. This is six days.

It's great that the government is going to give \$5,000 to these warming centres. There's probably about five of them that he named, so that's \$25,000, while yesterday the MLAs got a raise that's going to amount to about \$50,000 by comparison. According to the Premier, we're \$25,000 more important than the people out in rural Prince Edward Island.

He's turned his backs on Islanders. We had to shame him into taking it this far. I've heard from people who've lost their Christmas turkey, who've lost everything that was in their freezers. These are people who can't afford to fill their freezers again.

This Premier doesn't understand. He doesn't live like that. He's very fortunate. He doesn't understand how the unfortunate have to live, how hard it is when you lose your Christmas turkey, how hard it is when you lose the meat that you put in in the fall that you saved hard or that you harvested from the shores, because people do that. They lost it all this week, and this Premier's response is too late and it's too little because it's not completely directed where it belongs.

I agree that the warming shelters deserve to have money given to them for expenses incurred, and I think that's great, but there's all kinds of people who had losses this week that they won't be able to recover from. If you go through insurance there's a \$500 deductible, and if you lost \$500 worth of meat you get nothing. These are people who don't have \$500. And it's Christmastime, they have children. This is reality.

It's shameful that we can't get a Premier that grew up like that, that we can't get a Premier in this Legislature who understands that, who lived like that, who understands what these people are going through, who understands the hardships that are going on out there.

It amounts to about \$2 a person, this announcement here today. The Premier needs to step up to the plate. Fifty thousand dollars in raises to MLAs and \$25,000 to help communities. It does not add up on this side.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I think at a moment like this we should really just be offering thanks. I want to thank the community volunteers who did so much to keep Islanders safe and warm. I

want to thank the Maritime Electric linespeople who worked incredibly long hours under horrible conditions. I want to thank this government for this announcement. I want to thank the hon. members of this House for showing concern for their constituents who were inconvenienced and placed in perhaps danger by the events of this last week. I think we should be offering thanks at this moment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the letter dated November 29th, 2016, from the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Stratford-Kinlock, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the written question to Minister of Communities, Land and Environment on a question that he and I have been dealing with and I would just like to get an update on that and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I beg leave

to introduce the report of the said committee and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the report of the Committee be now adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: This report is an account of committee activities since last reporting to this Assembly.

The committee has completed its review of the 2015 Report of the Auditor General and has begun its review of the 2016 Report of the Auditor General, the Auditor General's report entitled: Special Assignment: Government Involvement with the E-Gaming Initiative and Financial Services Platform, and the Joint Audit of Atlantic Lottery Corporation.

This work will continue and the Legislative Assembly will be updated in a future report, but I also wanted to highlight just one small section of this lengthy report, and if I could have your indulgence?

Your committee strongly encourages all departments, agencies and Crown corporations to carefully consider the recommendations of the Auditor General and asks that the implementation of such recommendations be reviewed and their status be presented in the Auditor General's next report to the Legislative Assembly.

Finally, your committee is disappointed that some of its requests for departmental action plans in response to recommendations of the Auditor General remain unfulfilled. Your committee requested a detailed action plan more than a year ago from the Department of Health and Wellness, as well as Health PEI, and the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and it has yet to receive them.

Your committee expects cooperation in these matters and urges the above-mentioned departments to provide action

plans in response to the Auditor General's 2015 report without further delay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The report that was given, I think it's, I guess, a testament to what we're going through in committee as far as trying to get to the bottom of what's happening and what has happened in the province. We can't just look forward. We need to look back. I think the committee's work is still very paramount to the happenings in the province, and it's unfortunate that we do get blocked with a number of requests that we put forward to try and get to the bottom of what the AG was looking into and to kind of help her with her report.

I think we have lots of work yet to do. I look forward to that and I look forward to cooperation from the rest of the committee to ensure that that happens.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On a few occasions I do pop in and sit in on this committee, while I'm not a member, to ask questions because in this particular egaming file I was on Public Accounts when it first started and I was a member of this House when it first started. I have a lot of unanswered questions of my own that I would like to ask on this file.

It has the appearance of it's going to take a lot of pushing to get anywhere. The committee, it appears, has been continually blocked. When I started to ask questions or ask for things back, motions started coming to the floor about whether or not this would be dealt with at the end or questioning my eligibility to even ask questions and those types of things.

That's not the way we should be operating as legislative committees. It's an important

committee and it's an important report, and while government feels it necessary to hide it, if you really look at what public accounts committees, how they operate – and I know Sean Murphy had done a presentation at one time when I was on Public Accounts Committee, too, was talking about how they should work and how they should be non-partisan and how everybody should be working to get the answers.

They are an oversight committee and the purpose of being an oversight committee is that they are going to find things. The purpose is to help government be better and to help ensure that these things don't happen again. I'm not sure if the Premier gives marching orders on a day that public accounts meets or why that would happen, that they're making all of those moves to block. I'm starting to find that even in the Legislature here on the identical topic there are a lot of non-answers and blocking. It's a little different atmosphere in here where I can just continually get up and ask the question, but for those of you, which would apply to all non-Cabinet ministers in here, you would sit on committees so you would understand that it's not really the way a committee works. I just can't ask the same question 50 times, so sometimes I do, and it's frustrating as an opposition MLA.

I know there are days when we had pretty near a whole caucus show up because we believe that this is an important issue. I think that's a good thing. I think it's great for Islanders that you have such an engagement from the opposition. It bodes well for those districts that are represented by MLAs who care enough to get to the bottom of the issues in Prince Edward Island that they would show up to ask questions about such an important report. I'm going to continue to make them when I'm available and I'm going to continue to try to get to the bottom of this because I do think it's important.

I hope that the Premier can see fit to let the committee do its work without interference or interruption. We feel on any legislative committee that the work is important, and I know in the committees that I sit on as a regular member, we take the work really seriously and it seldom is partisan, it seldom has any bickering. I don't know why, when it comes to something like this egaming where government is trying to hide things,

that it has to turn into a partisan bickering match. The questions that I'm asking are the questions that I hear at the coffee shop, and probably all of you hear at the coffee shop, or hear when you're getting gas or you hear at the grocery store or hear on the street. People want to know, and I don't know what would give the 27 members of this House any thought or idea that they don't deserve that.

We represent over 150,000 people, the 27 of us. The 27 of us should never have the ability to say: No, that's not for public consumption, no, Islanders don't deserve to know that. Anything that gets asked should be answered. We don't have the obligation to protect anyone, in my opinion, and when it comes to the egaming file I have been committed and I have told people I'm committed to not protecting anyone in this file. As it goes along and as I ask questions either in this House or in committee, keep in mind that the questions that I'm asking are wide open. If you've gotten yourself in a situation that you're going to be in trouble, you're going to be in trouble. Everyone has that choice to make, whether or not they want to get involved with a shady deal. If you're involved with it, I'm sorry, this is the way it works. We have no obligation to protect anyone, and I certainly won't be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I really wanted to rise today and speak to this report because I'm not a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. However, I have attended many sessions. When you have a government that is not open and transparent, it's really when you come down to the Auditor General's report, that's the only way where you can find out whether the government is indeed following the rules.

Based on the recommendations in the Auditor General's report, especially the special report on egaming, it is very clear that this government was not following the rules, and that's what the vast majority of

her recommendations centre around. I think it's important that the recommendations – in fact, the Auditor General has given – don't require new legislation, they don't require new rules. Most of them, the vast majority of them, would say: the rules were in place, the regulations existed, they were simply not followed.

This is why we need an open and transparent government so that in opposition we can do our job and we can hold the government to account. When I say in opposition, I mean all MLAs, all members of this Legislature that sit outside of Cabinet.

One thing I did notice was that – for all across all standing committees but particularly on Public Accounts – there are quite often a number of members that are not members of the committee that attend those meetings. I think that's a sign that we do have a strong opposition here and we are wanting to get work done on behalf of Islanders, whether we belong to a standing committee or not, because we want to see things happen, we want to move forward, and we want to make this province the best that it can be.

When it comes to public accounts following the rules is so important, and the Auditor General right now is the only way we can find that out because this government is not completely open and transparent.

One other thing I wanted to comment on at Public Accounts – and this was really disappointing to me – was when we had a motion. I was actually sitting in as a member replacing one of the hon. members on the committee one meeting, and I was actually able to put forward a motion to bring forward three witnesses that I believed – and I believe most of the committee also believed – had information that was very valuable to considering the Auditor General's report. It was information that the Auditor General said she was not able to provide. This is information that the witnesses could provide that she could not.

The motion was made to bring these witnesses forward. The motion was passed, and then at the next meeting a motion was made to reverse the motion and essentially nullify it. That has got to be one of the most disheartening things I've experienced so far

as a member of this Legislative Assembly, to see the good work that this opposition has done reversed in what was clearly a partisan move.

I just want to look across here and around at all the members of this Legislative Assembly and realize that open and transparency means bringing all information to light. It's not about partisanship, it's about working for the best of all Islanders.

Let's work together to find out all the information we can about all the different business of this province, but especially when working with the Auditor General in all her reports. Please, members, join me in working together to let Islanders know what is happening with their taxpayer dollars.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the work of the Public Accounts Committee and the report. I want to just get up and say a few words.

I was able to attend a few of the Public Account meetings as well. I used to work in the opposition office from about 2007 to about 2010, and I used to sit in the gallery and watch some of the meetings. It was frustrating as a person that was politically involved, but not one that was out in front. It was frustrating to watch some of the MLAs play politics, blocking tactics, and completely – as I know you guys would say right back just as quick, there's politics played on both sides. There's no doubt about that.

What I think would help that is that if it was more of an open – the first thought of every member was: How do we get more information out? And not that: The opposition is going to embarrass us. They're just doing this for politics. If members would say: Yes, we should bring that person in or: I don't really agree with it, but if that member wants to do it, you know what? If he or she is a member of this committee they should be allowed to do it.

Now that I am able to go there and ask questions and almost request some stuff, I see those blocking tactics again and I don't like it. I think it creates cynicism. We all hear it at the door every time I go to the election. I know the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning knows this all too well from his time in opposition. It's frustrating for both sides.

To be quite honest, some of the things that have gone on at Public Accounts are absolutely a reason that I took a serious look at some sort of proportional representation in this past plebiscite and as work on the committee. Those type of blocking antics wouldn't happen, most likely, if we had proportional representation on that.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: I don't think it could get worse.

Mr. MacEwen: You say "worse," okay. I thought about this. It wouldn't be worse if government members – I'm not saying just you, it happened before with a number of other issues, with Polar Foods also, I know – but if government members, the backbench members, were more willing to look at the progress or to say: Do you know what? That member, I don't agree with what they're requesting, but do you know what? They're on this committee and they have a right to request that and we'll bring that person forward.

If there wasn't such a mentality to go to block them or to protect government, I don't think the politics would bubble up as much. I don't think you would see opposition playing politics with it or the government playing politics if it was just open and we got them in there.

Mr. J., Brown: Just like (Indistinct) now, eh?

Mr. MacEwen: Pardon?

Mr. J. Brown: Just like you're not right now, eh?

Mr. MacEwen: I was there, I used to watch it. I think it's silly. I think it was silly back when the last government was there, I think it was silly now.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. members!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) to rise above it.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm trying to rise above it. That's (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

You speak through me; you don't carry on a conversation with somebody else in the middle of the floor.

Mr. MacEwen: My apologies, Mr. Speaker, I was distracted here by the member.

What I'm trying to say is that I do think that if we could have a more – I know politics, it's there. But if we just had a bit of a more open – yes, okay, sometimes maybe there's a block of people that don't want to invite people in or something like that, but the Member from Rustico-Emerald brought up a perfect example of something that's, like, that's obvious, that's blatant kind of thing, right?

I think that if we can move towards members of the committee being more open to the suggestions that we can get away from some of the politics. I know it'll be there, but I think that we can do it – and it's on both sides. I think the opposition would play less politics and the government members would play less politics if we would just be more open to do that.

I just wanted to bring that to the attention of the committee, that I've watched it from sitting in the gallery and now seeing it firsthand. I would like to encourage the committee to keep up the good work and I thank them for allowing me to attend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As one of the new members on the Public Accounts Committee I, too, am frustrated.

I'm frustrated with the moving away from the agreed-upon work plan.

To go through the report with the Auditor General, and then find out if there's any gaps and try to fill those gaps. Now, I know that probably doesn't make headlines every day whenever members want to try to call other folks in as witnesses, which really doesn't make sense at this point. Let's get through the report, which we have talked about many times at the meetings.

I, too, am frustrated with just being at a few meetings and the same things go on. It seems to me it's more about headlines than getting the important work done. I think we do need to get the important work done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I do respect the work of the Public Accounts Committee, and I know how hard it is because I was one of the members of the committee for eight years, I think.

One of the primary things when we were in opposition under Robert Ghiz, our policies were that ministerial responsibility – it was the ministers that were responsible for the department, and the ministers answered questions on behalf of the department.

One of our policies was that we would not hang or not breach the public service because the public service is there to provide information and that, and advice to the ministers. That public service should be able to give free advice, meaning free of prosecution, to the minister for the advice of government activities.

One of the things we charged upon was that we would not be bringing – the Auditor General, at that time, also, a number of reports, would not name names. It's just a rule of good auditing procedures, I think. One of our processes was we would never breach the auditor's withholding the names in reports because I think that's – we're here – the Public Accounts Committee is to

investigate something, how government works, to make suggestions how government can be better.

We must realize the Public Accounts Committee is not a court. If there's any wrongdoing going on, the Auditor General has every authority to forward those onto the particular agencies.

I know it's a hard job, but there's a set of rules there or a set of principles, I'm not saying rules. A set of principles that I think should be followed. Ministerial responsibility. It's not a court, and the Public Accounts Committee is there to review and to make suggestions.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to speak on this report of the Public Accounts Committee as being a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

For the last 10 years I've served on a lot of committees. In fact, I've probably chaired four committees for a number of years. I'm down to chairing one committee now. I take chairing a committee very seriously, as most Chairs do. I believe it's important for the Chair to give both sides, differing views of opinions, an honest voice.

What I find lately is that committees, they seem to be taking on an awful lot of meetings, and we're calling an awful lot –

Mr. Trivers: We're trying to (Indistinct) do some decent work done here.

Mr. Dumville: Yeah, yeah.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumville: You're bogging down the committees, is what you're doing –

Mr. Trivers: You've got eight people in opposition now.

Mr. Dumville: You're bogging down the committee –

Mr. Trivers: Deal with it.

Mr. Dumville: You're bogging down the committee –

Mr. Trivers: We're not bogging down (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: These committees used to function really well –

Mr. Trivers: We didn't have any meetings all summer (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: – really well –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: We're working for Islanders.

Mr. Dumville: I believe – Mr. Speaker, do I have the floor?

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I got lecture here about how the public committee – by a member, I wished he was here now, he's kind of left, I was hoping he'd stay –

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, Mr. Speaker (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: I think I got a lecture of somebody that used to be on this committee – correct me if I'm wrong – and he's taken himself off most of the committees. Wants to show up when he's got something to say, but he said, and correct me –

Mr. Trivers: He can't take himself off committees.

Mr. Dumville: No, correct me if I'm wrong – oh, here he is, come on in here –

Mr. Myers: Did you just break the rules of the Legislature?

Mr. Dumville: No, I don't think so.

Ms. Biggar: He didn't mention any names.

Mr. Dumville: I don't think so.

Mr. Myers: I think you did.

Mr. Dumville: I didn't name you.

Mr. R. Brown: He didn't name you.

Mr. Dumville: I didn't name you.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) identify the person (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: You know, took himself off of most of the committees and said: There's no votes for me serving on a Charlottetown area committee.

Mr. Myers: Prove that.

Mr. Dumville: Did you say it? Mr. Speaker, I ask him if he said it.

Mr. Trivers: Not Question Period.

Speaker: No, this is not Question Period (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) do you want me to sit on every committee (Indistinct)?

Mr. Dumville: I guess I don't have the right to be in Question Period –

Mr. Trivers: He doesn't get to decide what committees (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) ask the question inside the (Indistinct).

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) complaining about the work load of committees (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: There's a fine line. The Auditor General issued a report.

Mr. MacKay: Maybe age is catching up with you.

An Hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Murphy: Low blow.

Mr. Dumville: She did the work and questioning – okay, say sure, go into the shadow areas, but it's getting awful close of trying to shame public servants.

I appreciate the hon. minister of workforce and learning –

Mr. Trivers: The (Indistinct) members are doing the same job as the public servants (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: He's always defending public servants, and I congratulate him for that. When a whole bunch of people, they call it –

Mr. Myers: It's working for (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Sometimes there are five or six extra members on the committee. As a committee member, I like to be able to do my work. We get a whole lot of people coming in and taking our time for us asking questions. All I am saying –

Mr. Myers: You sat there on your hands, you didn't ask a question.

Mr. Trivers: I'd like to see Liberal members ask a few questions at committee.

Mr. Dumville: Well, you fellows –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) keep asking the same questions (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: – seem to want to ask all the questions –

Mr. Trivers: I've got (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: I'd like to meet for the whole day, not for two hours.

An Hon. Member: Absolutely.

Mr. Trivers: Bring in all the witnesses.

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Trivers: I want to work.

Speaker: Hon. members, let the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale continue.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's respect the process.

Mr. Aylward: Exactly.

Mr. Dumville: We had an Auditor General come to talk to us, to brief us. We spent an hour and 10 minutes discussing procedure.

Mr. Trivers: And who started that?

Mr. Dumville: It didn't look very well –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) started that –

Mr. Dumville: You guys started it.

Mr. Myers: You started that.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) Georgetown-St. Peters, as I recall (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Three or four times – ask the media –

Mr. Myers: I asked a question.

Mr. Dumville: – three or four times I've asked the committee: Please, let's stop talking policy or procedure –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) let's (Indistinct) talking policy (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Mr. Dumville: – and let's listen to the –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) rules (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: – Auditor General. She's there, and she's sitting there looking at us.

A lot of us could do a lot better –

Mr. Trivers: Just want to (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Hey, yeah, yes, you could.

Mr. Dumville: On both sides.

An Hon. Member: Backtracking. You always like to do that.

Mr. Dumville: We see how you operate.

Mr. Trivers: You just want to rubberstamp the report and get on –

Mr. Dumville: The public's watching –

Mr. Trivers: – (Indistinct) it, that's what you want.

Mr. Dumville: – out there.

An Hon. Member: Exactly.

Mr. Dumville: You want to try and shame public servants, I don't think that's necessary. The Auditor General has it in the report, who did what –

Mr. Myers: You voted to bring them in.

Mr. MacEwen: You voted to bring them in.

Mr. Dumville: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: The Chair didn't even notify the committee that he wasn't going to show up that day.

Mr. MacEwen: Were you going to shame them when you voted for (Indistinct)?

Mr. Aylward: I'd like to respond to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dumville: The Chair didn't even show up.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to that.

Mr. Dumville: I know what he was going to say. He was at a funeral. That's great. No, he shouldn't show up. He should go to a funeral. But he should notify the committee. If I'm a Chair I'm darn well going to make sure I have a replacement, and they're going to know in enough time so they can deal with it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Talk about playing political games, you don't have to tell me about how you play political games. I've watched you play political games. That's fine.

Our committees, and I took great pride in them for the last 10 years, they're an extension of your authority. We should be respecting them more. I, for one, want to respect them more, but it's getting very difficult –

Mr. Trivers: So whose emails were deleted? Tell me that.

Mr. Dumville: Tell who?

Mr. Trivers: What? That's why we need witnesses.

An Hon. Member: Witch hunt.

Mr. Dumville: I don't know whose emails were deleted –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable –

Mr. Trivers: It is unbelievable (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: It is unbelievable.

Mr. Trivers: Shameful.

Mr. Dumville: You know, that committees – and the hon. member said that proportional representation would help. It's not helping. Not over there it isn't –

An Hon. Member: How do you know that (Indistinct)?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: You don't even know what it is.

Mr. Dumville: Not over there it isn't. Anyway –

Mr. Trivers: Tell us about dual-member proportional. Tell us a little bit about that.

Mr. Dumville: Pardon?

Mr. Trivers: Tell us a little bit about dual-member proportional.

Speaker: Okay, come on.

Member, let's have some order here. Like, this is getting ridiculous. It's getting ridiculous.

The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, continue.

Mr. Dumville: I think I've said enough, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think all members inside of this rail respect committees. Everyone respects committee. The members have been here for 10 years. I have been here for five years and I respect the committee meetings. There is a lot of work done at the committees. There are a lot of people who come in and talk to the committees, representatives, and we respect every one of them. I sat in on health committee meetings and I heard sad stories right across Prince Edward Island so when we talk committees, everyone inside this rail takes those committees serious.

Ms. Biggar: You're right.

Mr. LaVie: Unless you're on opposition's side you wouldn't understand how hard it is to be in opposition to hold government accountable. Because when we walk into these committees our hands are tied. We go in there expecting an honest vote from all members around the committee table. Well, there are four members on government side and two members sit on opposition's side. So you pretty well know – three members on opposition's side, sorry, Leader of the Third Party – so we're still outvoted. We still get outvoted.

Why is that? Because members are told how to vote in these committees and they shouldn't be. People come in to speak to us. People come in with an honest opinion and they talk to the committees and that's who we should be listening to. When I hear about committees under you, these are honest committees and there are some members saying there are too many committee meetings. No, you can never have too many committee meetings.

That's where we get our work done. That's when it's the chance for people from right across Prince Edward Island to come in and speak to these committees. That's how they get their voices heard.

Public service – everybody respects public service. Every one of us sitting in here today, in your own district, has people that work in the public service. Every one of us. They're our neighbours. They're our families. They're our friends. We respect public servants. Don't think we don't. That's not a fair statement that we don't. We do. I've got them living around me, beside me, family, friends, and I respect them and I respect what they do. Those people work hard for Prince Edward Island.

As opposition, it's our job to hold government accountable, and unless you sit in opposition you wouldn't understand that. A lot of you haven't sat in opposition. You don't know what it's like, how it works in opposition. It's not easy holding government accountable. It's not an easy task when they won't answer your questions. It does get frustrating. It does get very frustrating. We seen it here not only today, we've seen it here now for the last five years, government not answering the people's questions.

When we ask questions we don't wake up in the morning and snap our fingers and say: This is what I'm going to do. These questions come from the people right across Prince Edward Island. That's who we ask questions for. Any of us that are in here, the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, he knows. He has been here and you can tell you has been here for a while. Look at the colour of his hair, Mr. Speaker, and yourself. Like, you fellows know how opposition works and it's not easy. It gets very frustrating when you don't get the answers for the people of Prince Edward Island.

Committees are a great spot to get work done. Great recommendations come out of these committees. Everybody respects the Chair at these meetings. What's so great about the committees, what I get out of it the most, is when people come in to speak to committee and to hear from people right across Prince Edward Island, and you hear the concerns. We make those recommendations for the people of Prince

Edward Island. That's what counts at these committees.

There is frustration that comes out of these committees. Sometime there is frustration. We don't always agree, but when these recommendations are put forward from the committee we hope that these recommendations are seriously thought out. I love the committees, I love working with the committees, and I don't think there are enough committee meetings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I have to tell the House I had no intention at all of speaking to this committee report whatsoever. I was hoping we would get on with the business of the day and allow the Minister of Finance to go through the capital estimates.

Perhaps at the risk of coming across as being sanctimonious, I think it's my duty to point out that the thousands of Islanders who have been distressed and dismayed by the conduct of elected officials have just – the last hour of what has passed for debate in this House is exactly what they're talking about.

Again, I had no intention of talking this morning at all, but when we use serious issues here in the House as political fodder it really upsets me.

There was mention made earlier by one of the members of proportional representation and how we can see it's not helping, and that's just patently ludicrous. I have no idea whether proportional representation would eradicate some of the problems we have. I don't know that, but it would be nice to try and find out. I can't image it being anymore toxic than things are right now.

For those who think that the voting system is nothing more than how we choose to elect the members who sit inside this rail here, it's important that we note that the manner in

which we elect our representatives and the House, the makeup of the House which results from that, impacts everything.

There's been much talk this morning – of course, we're talking about a report from the Public Accounts Committee – where there was obviously, as a result of a majority government here in the House, certain behaviours that went on. If the Islanders out there – if you're one of those Islanders out there who is concerned, for example, about the lack of a child advocate here on Prince Edward Island, no matter how many times I or a member of the official opposition brings that up as an issue with government, they can and they do block that because they have the power and the ability to do that.

If you're one of those Islanders who's concerned about the continued obstruction of witnesses at standing accounts, then no matter how many times I or a member of the official opposition brings that up as an issue, government can and will block that.

If you're one of those people who's concerned about the allocation of public funds for a project like the Cornwall bypass, no matter how many times I or a member of the official opposition brings that up as an issue to government, they can and they will block that.

So the manner in which we elect our representatives here in the House is of critical importance to every single issue that we deal with here, and it distresses me to hear government members describe or denigrate proportional representation because we've just never tried it here.

Again, this was not a planned speech this morning, but I just could not sit here and not comment on what I have seen because I think I'm expressing the frustration and the concern and the dismay of thousands of Islanders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I should say, too, that I was definitely not contemplating getting up to speak to this. In fact, as vice-chair I wasn't even aware that the report was going to be tabled today, which is a bit odd in and of itself.

That said, I do have an issue, sitting here listening to allegations of inappropriate behaviour and all the rest of it, particularly when, at best, half of the story is being told, and I think, at worst, there are some that are being a little bit holier-than-thou standing up here saying that others are acting in ways that they're not, and they quite clearly are doing that.

I take particular issue with the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid indicating that there's a lack of respect in this committee. I'm going to tell a little bit of a story about one of the particular meetings where I felt, certainly, I was disrespected at the committee, and I'm going to say that if it's a lack of respect, then it's a two-way lack of respect, and he did say that. I will give him credit for that.

But the gamesmanship could not have been more true in this particular effort that was participated in by both opposition parties in this House. That was at one particular meeting – it's been referred to here already – where the Chair of the committee was not able to attend. I understand he did have a funeral, which is a valid reason not to be able to attend. He was, however, able to alert the committee clerk that he did have a funeral to attend the day previous, but did not see fit to alert myself as the vice-chair that would normally step into his position as Chair.

As all the members on the committee know, there are a few issues dealing with that committee that I have conflicts of interest in respect of. I alerted the committee of that right from the outset and indicated that if there are any such matters that are coming up, please advise me before you start into lines of questioning relating to that and I will happily step out of the meeting, which I did in this particular case.

I must say that on one of those instances in particular – and I should say to the House that I only caught the very first end of it as I was on my way out the door – but what I did see is that the hon. Member from Rustico-

Emerald advised the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was asked to take the chair and he got up and walked towards the chair: No, sit down, you don't want to take the chair, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald said to him. And he said: Oh no, you're right, I won't do that, I can't do that, I'm just a new member, I don't know the rules, I'm not comfortable taking the chair.

Then the next ask went to this hon. member, and then the next ask after that went to the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland. All of them refused to take the chair, citing being new MLAs and refusing to participate, and it became very obvious why they didn't want to take the chair. It was because it was a numbers game.

Mr. Trivers: Very obvious. Because we (Indistinct)!

Mr. J. Brown: That's fine, but if you're going to veil that in a lack of respect –

Mr. Trivers: Why don't you (Indistinct)?

Mr. J. Brown: – and say: If an hon. member has a request for a witness to come, well, let it come. Don't use a numbers game. By the same token, you can't use the numbers game when it's convenient to you the opposite way.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)!

Mr. J. Brown: And I'm just going to say, if we're going to call a spade a spade, and have it go both ways and stop playing games at the committees! Let the questions come out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: And we get all the information out, we'll look at a work plan there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: Order, please!

Are there any other members that want to speak to this?

Mr. MacKay: I might as well speak to it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: I wasn't going to speak to it, but after hearing some of the members speak here I thought I'd oblige to get up and do so myself.

As a new member, and committees all being new to me, what I've witnessed over the last 18 months – we've seen numerous times that the four Liberal members continuously vote down absolutely everything, so the committees are outnumbered.

As opposition, we're there – and I shouldn't say – I'll back up. There's certainly some good come out of committees. It's not all bad. We work together and get some great stuff down.

But, a few things that have happened, and I'll bring two to light right now: one, with the Bell Aliant contract. We've seen what happened there. We've seen where we're at now. I've asked questions on it back in Question Period again. We've made no headway on that at all. That was voted down by four Liberals when the official opposition and the third party have both agreed to see that as well, but that was turned down.

Secondly, let's talk about games. The best game I've seen played in committee yet was a vote that was in favour of bringing witnesses in. The following week in committee another vote is redacted to bring them – which the chair does not even show up and he's substituted with someone else. A motion to bring a vote back and it was overruled. You went from agreeing for witnesses to now: No, the witnesses aren't coming.

There's nothing wrong with calling witnesses. If nobody does nothing wrong, there will be nothing to be worried about. The only time anybody should be worried of anything is if they've done something wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any members who want to speak to the report?

Shall the report of the committee be adopted? Carried.

Shall it carry? I'm sorry. Carried.

Thank you.

Point of Order

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

During the debate on this, again, the member from Victoria Park there, Brighton, questioned the conduct and the word of a member of this Legislative Assembly, and I ask that he both withdraw and apologize.

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, if I could, I had about a five-minute speech there.

I'm not sure what you're referring to, hon. member, if you want to direct me back to the specific wording.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There would be multiple cases where he inferred that the member from Kellys Cross and the member from Rustico, that they wouldn't take the floor, that their actions were dishonourable, that they were trying to play a game, that they were trying to do – if he has any proof of that, then go ahead with the proof. Otherwise, withdraw and apologize.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: I don't think, Mr. Speaker that I did indicate there was any dishonour.

What I had indicated was the Member from Morell-Mermaid said there was a question of respect, and that respect was something that was not happening amongst the government members and the committee, and that's what I was playing to.

If there was any aspersion of dishonour that I cast in saying that, then my apologies for that, it's not my intention to do so. However, I do think if that's where we're going with an indication of the level of respect, then I do have an issue with it only being a one-way thing.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, that's –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Repeal the Store Hours Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Repeal the Store Hours Act*, Bill No. 55, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Premier, could you give us a brief explanation as to this bill?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me say this is not to permit shopping on Christmas Day.

The repeal of the *Store Hours Act* will avoid potential conflict with the rules under the current *Retail Business Holidays Act* which came into force in 1992. In the process of developing the new *Municipal Government Act* we became aware of a potential conflict of these two acts, and it's for that reason that the *Store Hours Act* will be repealed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Consideration of the Capital Estimates, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of capital supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the Deputy Speaker to please come and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

We were on page 9 when we left the discussion the last time, under Bus Replacement.

Minister, would you like to bring somebody on the floor?

Mr. Roach: Yes, I would request to bring a stranger on the floor.

Chair: Permission granted?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Welcome. Please just state your name and your position for the record.

Jim Miles Secretary: Jim Miles, executive director of fiscal management.

Chair: Welcome, Mr. Miles.

Members, page 9, Bus Replacement. I've read that and the discussion was under that section.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) question last time about how many buses were going to be ordered. I know the minister of education is not here, and that even though this is his budget, through our Atlantic agreement we put out a joint tender for buses. Normally,

over the past few years we've been replacing the fleet on a regular basis of about 20 per year. We're getting to the point now where we are able to replace those on a timely basis now, reflecting the amount of kilometres that is on each bus these days. That is reflected in the fact that this coming year there will be 12 buses added to the fleet.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

We talked actually in the culture before that, I had numerous questions on records management and the government people all said that they were bringing it back. I'm just looking for that information today.

Chair: Does anybody know the answer for that?

We'll make sure that that gets back to you, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: For the Minister of Finance, then: Where can we find the money in this Capital Budget for the fit-up of the building in Slemon Park for the records?

Mr. Roach: That would not be in the Capital Budget. That would be in the operational budget as it will be a lease. It's leased, it's not anything we're building or purchasing.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you. There's no fit up then. If there was a fit up, would it be capital?

Mr. Roach: The fit up would be up to Slemon Park and then we would simply pay a rental fee.

Mr. Myers: Okay, so none of that appears in here.

Just another quick one.

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

Mr. Myers: Out of this 150,000, this is where we got stuck that day the last time we talked about it, we talked about any of the records management stuff. So none of that will appear in capital at all, then?

Mr. Roach: No.

Mr. Myers: He won't actually have anything to bring back to me?

Mr. Roach: I didn't have the opportunity to answer that the other day.

Mr. Myers: I wish you had.

Mr. Roach: Sorry. Then the hour was called.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Just a reminder, members, we're at the bus replacement section.

Thank you.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, over the last couple of years we've see on the school buses there's been a lot more close calls, I guess, with people passing school buses. With these new buses on order, is there any cameras being installed on these new buses?

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

Ms. Biggar: The cameras are purchased, hon. member, through the department of education. From my knowledge there's nothing in this Capital Budget for cameras.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Over the last few months we've seen numerous incidents of cars passing buses,

and I believe it was this time last year we had mentioned cameras before. I'm just wondering when we can see cameras being installed in buses before there's a fatality on Prince Edward Island.

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

Ms. Biggar: I do know that some of the buses do have cameras on them, hon. member, already. It's not something that the department of education has put forward.

The only thing we did previous years in regard to my department was assist them in finding where those cameras could be purchased, all of that in under the direction of education. But I do know there are indeed cameras on buses already and they need upgrade to their computer software. I believe that is something that the school board has been looking into.

Chair: The Minister of Finance has an intervention.

Mr. Roach: One of the things that you will see different on the buses, and it's a pilot project, the buses that are coming this year, we all recognize that when the bus stops there's an arm comes out at the front of the bus and says stop. There's going to be an additional arm come out at the rear of the bus the same as the one that's going to say stop as well. You'll have two arms coming out, one at the front and one at the back. That's being done this year as a pilot project on the buses that are coming forward this year.

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

Ms. Biggar: Just from a safety perspective for myself, as minister of transportation, I've been exploring similar things that I have seen on the buses in Nova Scotia. There are strobe lights on the top of the buses in Nova Scotia. If you're looking at installing a strobe light, you have to look at whether they're amber coloured or bright, because there is some evidence that strobe lights on top of buses that are bright can trigger seizures in those that have a tendency towards seizures.

It is something that we're looking at as to how we can increase and add more safety features to our school buses to protect our children and to alert drivers who should be paying attention. It's hard to miss a yellow school bus with flashing lights.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

With the cameras installed in the buses now, how many cameras are there in service right now?

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

Ms. Biggar: I'm sure the minister of education can find that and we'll make sure he gets that message and brings it back.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Chair, also, could we also get what it would cost to put a camera on a new bus?

Ms. Biggar: Again, I'm sure his request can be directed to the department of education. None of that comes out of my department. The only thing we do is actually order the buses and repair them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Chair, so going with the additional arms, are all buses on Prince Edward Island going to be installed with additional arms?

Mr. Roach: No, just the ones that we're getting now. It's going to be done as a pilot to see how it works.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

What is the total number of school buses in service on the Island right now?

Mr. Roach: We have 286 regular buses and 58 spare buses.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: What is the purpose of a spare bus?

Mr. Roach: As we know, buses do break down. We hear about it every morning, pretty much, on the radio: a bus is going to be delayed, or this or that. It's for various reasons.

Also, buses are used for other activities within the school system, transporting children from different events and that sort of thing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Are the buses, in general, would you say, fully utilized? Are they full of kids to and from?

Ms. Biggar: I have something to add after.

Mr. Roach: We do have buses of different sizes. If there is a smaller requirement, then you take one of the smaller buses that's available.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: What's your policy on the number of children allowed to sit in a seat on a school bus?

Chair: Hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, we'll make sure that we record that and get that message to the minister of education.

Mr. Trivers: I think it's extremely important with respect to the Capital Budget because we don't have the exact number of buses that you're thinking of replacing. I don't believe we got that –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Twelve.

Mr. Trivers: It was 12, sorry. I thought you were saying you were doing 20 a year, and I was a little confused by your response, minister of transportation –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) normally we do 20 a year.

Mr. Trivers: There's 12. I've just heard there's a lot of overcrowding on some buses, where you have three kids to a seat, people standing in the aisles. Honestly, this is a complaint that came to me recently from one of my constituents.

I'm just questioning whether we might need more buses or work on the bus routes. On the flip side of that, I also hear from my constituents on a regular basis that they see some buses that seem to be going, quote unquote, half empty.

Mr. Roach: On your first question, if you have constituents who have concerns about children standing when there's no seat for them, I would sincerely request that you identify with the constituent the bus so we could look at that directly. I don't think that's a situation that anybody would like to see.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great.

Mr. Roach: On your second question, I see buses, at one point in time, where there are very few kids on it, and I'll see it 15 minutes later and it's three-quarters full. I guess it depends where on the route you're looking at it.

Mr. Trivers: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm glad to hear you will fix that problem, when we identify exactly which bus is the problem bus.

I'm just wondering, are the buses undercoated every year to prevent rusting? As I understand, that's one of the main reasons we're replacing them.

Mr. R. Brown: Into the rust.

Mr. Myers: A lot of rust over there.

Mr. Trivers: A lot of rust.

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

Ms. Biggar: Back in 2007, hon. member, we did have to replace a lot of buses because of rust. They were not deemed fit to be on the road. We have had a regular, as I said, about 20 buses a year replaced since then, but we do regular maintenance on those buses, and anything that's required. We actually have a couple of fibreglass buses as well which we look at as a pilot.

While I have the floor, just an update, as well, further information about the cameras on the buses. Those cameras are transferable from bus to bus. For instance, if a bus driver has identified issues in a particular area where there's traffic perhaps not observing rules of the road, or if there are issues on the bus itself, the bus driver can request a camera be transferred from one to the other. They are transferable, as well.

Chair: The Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

We have heard a lot about cameras on buses. We asked about in Question Period last year, and we received some responses.

I know along Route 2 in my district is one of the areas where we have seen cars passing school buses with their lights flashing and arms out the most. We've had a number of cases of that this year and last year reported in the media.

My reports from parents, who are putting their children on the bus in that area, are that it's still happening. There's a crackdown, and then it goes right back to it.

I'm wondering: If these cameras are there, and they can be transferred from bus to bus, how come they're not being used?

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

Ms. Biggar: Certainly –

Mr. Roach: I don't think we know that they're not being used.

Ms. Biggar: – we don't know they aren't being used, hon. member. I just would like to make a point, though. At any time there is an issue that a bus driver is concerned about –

Mr. Trivers: What about a parent?

Ms. Biggar: – or a parent, to contact directly with the school board, transportation – transportation and infrastructure does not do the transportation routes on those buses. We certainly have been involved with the RCMP in regard to highway safety division in monitoring the high traffic areas where there has been, in particular in that area, and we know ultimately that we do monitor those.

We have worked with the school board to ensure through highway safety that trouble spots are being addressed and the bus drivers are diligent in what they do. They're working in concert with their own transportation department to report those incidences.

If there is a licence plate recorded, you don't have to prove who is in the car, you can still fine them for going through.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

This is an important issue, and thank you for clarifying that. I believe my constituent is actually reporting these through to the department and including the licence plate number as they have them. It's good to clarify that issue.

My next question, really, is: So, we have 286 buses on the road and 58 in spare. That's an awful lot of buses, and they are needed because we have a lot of kids, of course, that we have to take to school. If filled to capacity, I'm thinking that would be somewhere between 8,000-10,000 people that these buses could hold, give or take.

One of the issues that we're facing, especially with reducing carbon emissions, is trying to get people to travel in their

vehicles less. This is something that came up at some of the climate change consultations: How come we're not combining school buses and public transportation together? It just seems like a no-brainer, really.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: I think when the school buses are purchased they're purchased specifically for the school children for the school system. I don't know anywhere where they would combine the two to be – I'm just not aware of it. But I think it's something, when we're going forward with our energy strategy moving forward, that could be looked at for sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair. I guess that's exactly my point. When you're purchasing buses here in the Capital Budget, what I'd like to see is really looking at a long-term plan for what's going to be best across the Island, the best use of government money, and what's best for the environment as well, and achieving the long-term goals that have been set out for us by the federal government.

I know there are a number of jurisdictions around the world that use public transit for school buses. The children ride with the adults and there are no issues at all. I would strongly encourage you to look into that. I think we could, as I say, not only save a lot of money, Island taxpayers' dollars, but I think we could provide better service for those who don't have vehicles, and we could see a drastic reduction in transportation as well as the carbon emissions that are related to that.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to go back to the reason why we're buying less buses this year. Could you just restate, hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, what the reasons are why we're only buying half as many buses this year.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: I think if we look at what we would normally purchase this year, we're only required to purchase five buses this year based on replacement that's there.

Ms. Biggar: Twelve.

Mr. Roach: No. We're only required to purchase five buses this year under replacement. However, in order to bring it to scale and to ensure that some year we're not purchasing, like we did in 2007 or 2008 – I think we purchased 60 buses. To avoid that kind of a big spike in spending, if we start to level it out so that every year we're purchasing 10 or 12 buses, then it's a much better way to finance them and to spread that money across a longer period of time, and it also keeps the fleet very regular as well.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

But if we look at the figures, if you look back, we spent \$2 million in the last two years in buses, and if you look forward, every year going forward, apart from this year, we're spending \$2 million. Why on this occasion and this year are we only spending \$1 million on buses?

Mr. Roach: That's a good question and you're absolutely correct on that. It's because with the spends that we have made in the past we have gained ground on our buses, so this year we don't need to do that. It required that we only purchase five buses, but rather than only purchasing five we would be about a half, we would be at about \$500,000. We wanted to keep it and now from this point forward, we'll have a level spend of \$2 million with the replacement going forward.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So this is not a trend, then, that buses are becoming more durable or it's just a blip that this year, for whatever reason, we don't need to buy the 20-plus whatever (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: Yes. It's because, over the past eight or nine years, we have had to purchase so many to bring the fleet up to a better

standard. We're at the point now where it's in pretty good shape, so although we only need to purchase five we thought we would purchase more and then from there on it's a steady program.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you. Wouldn't it be nice if we did have buses that were more durable and we didn't have to trash them after 10 years of service, which is about the average life of a bus from what I understand.

If we could expand the lifespan of the buses, for example, buying buses with composite body panels rather than steel body panels that would not rust, then I think we would look at long-term savings. It wouldn't happen immediately, of course, but 10 years from now rather than having to buy 20 new buses then maybe we would only have to buy five that year. But the thing is that every year after that we would only have to buy five rather than it being a blip.

Is there any plan within the department to buy buses where you take into account and – I spoke about this last year – where you take into account the full lifespan operating cost of the bus rather than the purchase price?

Mr. Roach: Great question from the hon. Leader of the Third Party, and in fact we are doing that. We have some composite buses that we're testing right now in the system.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's great. I'm delighted to hear that. I also remember the minister –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair.

The minister last year made a statement about purchasing electric buses or the potential of that. Can you update the House on where we are with that?

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

Ms. Biggar: Sure. We have been doing some investigation and research on – it's Lion electric school buses, actually, and they are located in St. Jerome, Quebec.

Typically, they use four hours, four batteries, and we have – most of our – in their range is 120 kilometres and those batteries require a little bit over five hours of recharging so that the range has now increased to 160 kilometres. On average, 50% of our bus routes, two-way travel, are 120 kilometres on PEI so we have done some research on that.

Bus charging, they require 80 amp, 40 volt electrical supply, and if you're talking about cost here as well it is something to look at, but if you compare costs right now, which is – we have talked about: Do we do this sort of as a pilot project? The average electric bus is \$197,000 more than one – so you're talking – right now the average bus that we see (Indistinct) bus is \$103,000.

Mr. Roach: About triple the cost.

Ms. Biggar: About triple the cost.

Chair: The Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. Biggar: But it is something we're doing research on, have the department doing research on that. Whether or not that's something – we will keep exploring that to see what the possibilities are.

Chair: The Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm really surprised to learn that 50% of our bus routes are 120 kilometres or more. Is that what you said?

Ms. Biggar: Return.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Return, right. So, 60, still seems like a long – I'm just surprised.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) rural PEI here.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, sure.

Ms. Biggar: You go from Tyne Valley, you go from Arlington which a lot of our buses in my area start and go to Westisle, you are talking 60 kilometres at least which happens every day in my area for people travelling to Westisle on buses.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But those buses would not necessarily head back to where they came from, or follow the same route.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) the route length itself is what I was (Indistinct). It's not a surprise to me that a one-way route is at least 60 kilometres, depending on where you live.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'd just like to make a comment on, yes indeed, these electric buses are three times the price of – the sticker price is. But do we know how much the savings are that we don't have to, for 10 years, fill that bus up with diesel fuel, that we just plug it in and –

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: It costs roughly 5,200 a year to put diesel fuel in a bus. The estimated cost in electricity is 3,000 per year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So not a huge saving.

Mr. Roach: Not huge, but I expect with – we've seen what's happened with electric vehicles in general over the last 15 years. I think as the industry catches up we'll start to see those numbers come down. We've seen it already.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Right now the payback, it would take about 40 years to pay back the cost of one bus. But it's there and looking at it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much.

Chair: You're very welcome.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Question: How much was spent on the new fibreglass school buses?

Mr. Roach: We don't have that right here with us.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Do we know who the supplier of these buses was?

Mr. Roach: Lion Bus in Quebec.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I understand that it wasn't a tender process for these buses, is that accurate?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: It's not correct?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: That's what I'm clarifying. I was told it wasn't tendered and I just wanted to confirm that.

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

Ms. Biggar: I want to make sure this is on record. We are a part of the Atlantic Procurement Agreement and those buses always go out to tender.

Mr. MacKay: Fibreglass buses (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: Everything went out to tender.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Just on the buses. It's a question that's been brought up to me a few times in my district about the rules behind where the buses are at night, where they're left. Anyone here can comment on that. Whether they're at the school or in the bus driver's yard or at the depot and what the rules are. I think it concerns the carbon footprint and also the wear and tear on buses.

Chair: Do you have a question?

Ms. Compton: What are the rules around –

Mr. Roach: I don't have that answer.

Ms. Compton: You don't have that, okay.

Chair: He'll bring that answer back to you.

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

My question on the school buses is somewhat similar to what the Leader of the Third Party was asking earlier, just trying to get away from the fossil fuels. I know there was a test back a number of years ago with regards to hydrogen. Whatever happened with that experiment?

Mr. Roach: That is something I wouldn't have information on here with me. How many years ago?

Ms. Biggar: That would be the energy (Indistinct) project.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

That particular pilot project was through the PEI Energy Corporation. We can get you some information on that, but it wasn't a successful project in regard to hydrogen storage.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: I guess I'm just wondering why it wasn't a successful pilot project. Was that because we didn't have the volume of vehicles that we're testing it on, or just what the criteria was?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so –

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, if you don't identify (Indistinct) the Chair, your microphone doesn't get turned on. Thanks.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, no, that's okay, Madam Chair.

I will go back to the PEI Energy Corporation and ask them if they have some information as to if they evaluated why it was not a successful project.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I guess I'd like to know how quickly I could expect to receive that information back. It's something I'd really like to take a look at.

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

Ms. Biggar: Again, I'll get in touch as soon as I can, by the first of the week, with the corp and see what they do have on that project and what they have available to be able to get that answered, hon. member.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Mr. Myers: Question.

Chair: Oh, sorry. I didn't have you on my list.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Just back to the cameras. I know a number of years ago when the cameras first came on there was a big announcement on how they were going to be in buses and stuff. We're quite a few years past that, and it comes up every capital budget when we get the buses that they're going to be added. But no one ever knows how many are on the buses or where they are.

When can we expect to have them on every bus?

Ms. Biggar: Not my department, I don't (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: I will forward that question to the minister responsible and we'll try to find out how many cameras are on buses now and what's left outstanding.

Mr. Myers: Okay, question.

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

Mr. Myers: What's the cost of a camera on a bus?

Mr. Roach: I think we've already agreed we'd get that and bring it back.

Chair: Yeah, it was already asked.

Mr. Myers: Okay, question.

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

Mr. Myers: I know and see all kinds of people that have GoPro cameras and there's all kinds of people around now that have their own dash cams in their rigs. They are absolutely not expensive. You could get a dash cam at The Source this afternoon and put a 16 gig memory card in it and you could record an awful pile of video, longer than anybody's bus ride would be.

Maybe we could get to the bottom of some of these issues we have of people passing school buses and whatever other activity may be going on that's putting our students at risk.

I don't know if it has to be a bus cam branded camera in order to put a camera on the bus. Lots and lots of people have them right now, and it's something that I've even thought of because I, like all the other MLAs here, am on the road so much you never know when you're going to see something that you may not be able to exactly recall the details of, but it's always nice to have that backup of what actually transpired.

While it doesn't initially protect the children, the fact that it's on every bus and people start getting caught and charged, it's definitely going to be a major deterrent.

Can the government look at a quick fix to getting cameras on every buses sooner rather

than later to try to take some of the – because obviously it's not working because people are still passing school buses –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

I'm very sorry.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) go upstairs and (Indistinct).

Chair: There's Morell-Mermaid, still.

Mr. Roach: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration the grant of capital supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, December 6th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, December 6th, at 2:00 p.m.