

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Thursday, 16 November 2017

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The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Greetings to all here in the Chamber, especially those joining us in the gallery – I didn't take the opportunity yesterday to welcome Eddie Lund back as our MLA from outside the rail in great attendance; Wilf Richard, former colleague; Gerry Hopkirk; it's great to see Mona O'Shea and a group here from the nurses of Prince Edward Island, and of course, to recognize that this is a big week for nurse practitioners as well in the province.

Last night, I had an opportunity to take part in the Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce Excellence Awards and I want to in particular recognize the achievement of Jamie Hill and his being celebrated for achievement over time as an entrepreneur and business leader, and his family, their involvement in it. Of course, all the others who were nominated, finalists, and who received awards, and it's noteworthy of course, that when the chambers of commerce celebrate business achievement, they also celebrate community and leadership in the non-profit sector, and that's a noteworthy part of what we achieve as a province.

Last week, I had an opportunity to pay a visit to Geneva Villa, and there it was great to arrive and see so many friendly faces: Leith Watts, one of your former neighbours; and Gertie, right there inside the door, in fact came and let me in; and across the hall from them was Louise Hessian; and Grace Swan was there, another connection; and Norma Morrison; a lot of people from out our way. Dorothy Doyle was there and so on; Betty MacEachern was there. There were a lot of people there, that they're doing well and they were having a great time and they're taking a great interest in the affairs of the province.

On Saturday, and in fact in your district, there will be a 90th birthday gathering for

Marinus VanBysterveldt and I wish him, and of course his family, well on that great occasion.

In my district today and again tomorrow, at the L.M. Montgomery School there will be a book sale and a great opportunity for people to do some Christmas shopping if they haven't got that all done, like if you have some still to do. Of course coming up tomorrow will be the parent-teacher interview day in our schools across the province, and we'll be happy to know that the parents and the teachers will be getting together to make all the good efforts we can and to celebrate the achievements of our students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise here this afternoon, too, and acknowledge the incredible health care workers that we have here in the gallery this afternoon, and I applaud you for your dedication to the tremendous issue that we have here on Prince Edward Island with regards to health care and providing the services that you do.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't point out a couple of very significant events that are happening this weekend. On Sunday, the 19th, in Stratford, is our annual food drive that has been taking place now for quite a few years. I, again, would like to remind all those individuals in Stratford and surrounding areas to please stock up and set a little bit aside, because the throngs of volunteers will be out and about from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon collecting food. I believe last year we were at about 14 pallets. We're really hoping to hit about 15 pallets this year.

Again, just in closing on that, I would like to thank the constituents of Stratford for their tremendous generosity.

I'd also like to remind individuals that also taking place this weekend, on Saturday at

the Charlottetown Curling Club, is the annual Curl for Cancer. Lisa Jackson has been taking on this significant event now for quite a few years. I believe this is the 34th annual year. Lisa hasn't been taking care of it for all 34 years, but she certainly has in the last number of years, so I'd like to thank her and her group of volunteers for their dedication for such a worthy cause. And if you're out and about, you don't have to be a curler; you can simply drop in. There's a bake sale, there's a silent auction, and there's a lot of fun. There's also an opportunity just to even get out on the ice and try curling if you never have. Mr. Speaker, I invite one and all to come in and support a great cause.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to welcome the nurse practitioners in the gallery today and Gerry Hopkirk, one of the Island's great visionaries and educators.

I also would like to mention that this week is National Addictions Awareness Week. That's an event led by the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse and Addiction. This is an issue, of course, which we know all too well here on Prince Edward Island that afflicts too many people, too many families, too many communities. It's important that we stop and become more aware of that and also provide the supports that those people need.

I also want to thank, personally, the Member from Borden-Kinkora, and all of the residents of the South Shore area who were present at a large community meeting yesterday, last evening, in Crapaud, where there was a great community spirit and a coming-together in order to strengthen that area and make sure that we maintain medical services in the South Shore area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had another duty to attend to yesterday so this is my first time in the House. I'd like to welcome everybody here today. I'd like to welcome our visitors, all our colleagues, the media, the police and the Legislative staff, also, the Pages that make our jobs much easier around here today.

On behalf of the residents of West Royalty-Springvale and myself, it's good to be here today and I'm looking forward to this session, your good supervision, Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to rise and welcome all the folks to the public gallery here today as well as all the good people at home that may be watching from the Alberton-Roseville district.

I'd like to say a special welcome to our Pages here today. We have one Page that's actually a family friend and not only that, but she's a world class champion. Olivia Batten who is part of the Grade 4 College of Piping band out of Summerside won the championship at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland this summer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: We are very pleased to have her among us here today.

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.

Certainly, it is a privilege to rise and welcome everybody into the Legislature today, great crowd's going to watch the proceedings today.

I'd like to begin by welcoming my good friend, Wilf Richard is back to watch proceedings. It's always great to have Wilf in the House and hope to have a few minutes to talk to him afterwards, perhaps.

Another really good friend of mine, Mona O'Shea, is with us today. It's good to see Mona in; does a lot of great work with nurses on PEI and continue to do that. Mona and I have known each other for a long time and it's always great when she's in the House.

A couple of other folks that are in today; Harvey Collicutt, all the way down from the west; good to have you in, Harvey. Phil MacDonald is with us today. Phil and I spent a lot of time together back in 2003. I was knocking on doors in Sherwood, Phil was knocking on doors in Souris. He became a great family friend of ours since that time, so it's great to have you in, Phil.

Also, I'd like to say a very special thank you to a crowd that I normally have an (Indistinct) to do that and that's the Tim Hortons coffee advisory crowd that are now watching and giving me some good advice again, so I thank them for that.

As well, I'd like to say hello to a faithful watcher. A gentleman that's pretty interested in politics on Prince Edward Island, Jimmy Dunn, who is watching from Fort Augustus today. Jimmy is commonly referred to and affectionately referred to as the mayor of Fort Augustus. Hopefully, he's enjoying his day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just in case I don't get on my feet much today, I thought I wanted to get up and acknowledge some of the people of O'Leary-Inverness and welcome them to the

proceedings here today. Hopefully, they'll be cheering me on to get through another day.

I want to acknowledge a constituent of mine that's here, all the way from Springfield West, Harvey Collicutt. Harvey is a dedicated watcher to the House proceedings here. He's always good to text me a little comment or two, and get my tie up good and things of that nature. I really appreciate that.

Mona O'Shea, president of the PEI Nurses Union – was a great opportunity to have a presentation for the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions at our federal-provincial meetings in Edmonton, Alberta recently. Mona does great work on behalf of her profession and I would say we have a great working relationship and I very much appreciate the hard work that our nurses do in providing services to our citizens.

Also, while I'm on my feet I want to acknowledge the passing of a constituent of mine and a neighbor of Harvey Collicutt – Allan MacMillan passed away just the other day and I certainly want to send out condolences to his family. He was a wonderful fellow, a great constituent, and an individual who lived on the Navoo Road for a long time and we wish his family all our deepest sympathies, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone in the gallery and, of course, everyone who's watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, especially Shirley Dickieson. I also wanted to say hello to Nancy Stevenson who is watching from out in the eastern part of the province – a former constituent of mine.

I wanted to wish all of the actors in the shop around the corner best of the luck at The Guild. My constituent and friend Marti Hopson is also performing, along with the media presence of Teresa Wright there.

I also just wanted to recognize the farmers, fishers, and tourist operators in District 18

and across the province. They had a fantastic season by all accounts I have heard. Although this government likes to take credit for the great season they had, I think Mother Nature has a lot more to do with it and the hard work that they put in – our fantastic Island entrepreneurs – so kudos to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery today and everyone watching at home in Summerside-Wilmot.

Last week I was lucky enough to attend the Summerside Chamber of Commerce small business award dinner. It was a great opportunity to celebrate the business owners, entrepreneurs, and risk takers in our community. I'd like to congratulate all the nominees and all of the award winners.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to put a big shout-out to all those that are watching on Eastlink in District 1 Souris-Elmira and especially to the nurse practitioners that are in the gallery with us today. What they do is they go above and beyond of what they do.

A couple of shout-outs to Philip MacDonald, a resident of Souris, is in the gallery with us today. As the environment minister says: a good family friend. Philip is a good family friend as he grew up with my young fellow – they're the same age.

Another shout-out to all our Pages, but to one especially is – Logan Rose is from Souris Regional High School is with us as a Page this year. Logan, on Remembrance Day – we have Remembrance Day

ceremonies and following that evening, the legion has a meal for the public. It's a well-attended meal. It's a sold-out meal and Logan Rose was the guest speaker at that meal. He spoke on his trip to Vimy Ridge – the anniversary of Vimy Ridge – and that young fellow put on an excellent presentation. What a great speaker that Logan Rose is turning out to be and I'd say if Logan keeps it up, pays attention in the House here in this sitting, he'll be sitting in the Premier's seat someday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

I want to welcome everybody to the gallery, especially the students from Holland College. Just look to your side there – three great reporters there if you need any extra advice. Three great reporters back there.

I also want to recognize Maitland MacIsaac. Maitland MacIsaac is a great educator and administrator. They used to be called principals, but they're now called administrators. He was a great principal and he's a great advisor to me. So, anyone that's thinking when I get all these great ideas in my head and can talk for hours upon hours about great things the Liberal government's doing; Maitland MacIsaac is one of those people.

Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: We thought it was Bruce all along.

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

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

I was out to the International Studies Society's event last night at UPEI called Canadian Youth for Sustainable Development Goals and I'm happy to report that as much to say that the committee that put that on; two of the Pages from last year

are two of the founding members of that committee: Chelsea Perry and John Ployer. It was an excellent event. They planned on having a crowd of, I think, 50 or so and I'd say there was over 100 there. It was a very worthwhile event to attend.

I would also like to recognize Mait McIsaac here today, and I see Audrey Fraser sitting next to him. Mait was my principal at Glen Stewart in elementary school and Audrey's husband was the vice-principal back at that time, so I hope they won't get into telling any stories here today. But, I'd certainly like to recognize them and Phil MacDonald as well. There was reference made to the 2003 election. As I recall, I was on the Liberal advance team at that time running around the countryside and we were very excited to be doing our part to support the minister and Phil in that election time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I get to a few district items, I'd like to recognize a few people in the gallery as well: Wilf Richard is here, Mona O'Shea, Audrey Fraser – the rest of the healthcare professionals that are here today. I would also like to say hello to Brooklyn Vail, who is behind me here. He is a young chef from Morell who does a great job at his job, but also takes a great interest in politics here in PEI as well, so I'd like to welcome him here.

I'd like to thank all the teachers who are putting in a lot of extra hours the last couple of weeks with report cards, and of course interviews, that happen all throughout the week, but mostly tonight and tomorrow.

I'd like to say hello to Billy MacEwen who is home on a little rest these days. He can't travel too far, just for a little bit, but he's still giving me lots of good advice in here. I'd also like to say a big thank you to the members of the North Side Communities Initiative, and these are the volunteers in the Morell and surrounding areas that have been working so hard on the renovations to the

Morell rink this past year, so thank you. The rink is up and running and we really appreciate all their time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise here today as well and to welcome everyone to the gallery, and those viewing at home in District 22 Summerside-St. Eleanors.

I'd also like to give a little bit of a shout-out to Mait McIsaac, sitting across the room as well there. As well as being an educator and an administrator, Mait is also a tireless advocate for older adults on Prince Edward Island and I value his advice, and I value his wisdom and Mait has taught me that there are always two sides to aging. There is the health and wellness side, which will add years to our lives, but there is also the social side, which the responsibility lies in my department and that's to add life to those years.

So, thank you for those wise words, Mait, and continue to do your advocacy work.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to everyone who is here today. It's great to see the gallery full.

Last night when we adjourned here, myself and the minister of health had the pleasure of attending the open house in O'Leary for the West Prince chapter of MADD Canada, and I want to thank all of them for all the hard work that they do to raise awareness about the issue of impaired driving on Prince Edward Island, and especially in the community. My department has been very pleased to partner with them on a sign campaign in West Prince, but also to partner

with our enforcement officers right across Prince Edward Island. I want to commend them, because they are the ones that are on the frontlines at a tragic accident like that, and our first responders, and the sad part that they have to do is attend to a home to report that someone has been killed because of drunk driving.

I'm very pleased, as minister, to partner with them, but also, to recognize the great work that MADD Canada and all our chapters on Prince Edward Island do.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. It's a pleasure to see you all. I'd like to say hello to everyone back in Evangeline-Miscouche that may be watching today.

Also, last evening I had the pleasure with the Premier and the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to attend the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce's President's Award of Excellence.

There were about over 500 business people in the room and the buzz in the room was just incredible. It's clear that the Island economy is growing. That business people are optimistic and experiencing great success.

I'd also like to congratulate all the nominees and the winners last evening and it was a wonderful evening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

Jamie Hill – Entrepreneur of the Year

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last night at the President's Excellence Awards hosted by the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, Jamie Hill from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, was named entrepreneur of the year.

This award recognizes an individual who truly exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit in our community. Jamie Hill is known a technology entrepreneur. He has been involved in groundbreaking information technologies on Prince Edward Island.

His career started with the founding of On Line Support in 1985. He was the first provider of Internet services, data communications and network management services when he cofounded PEINet with Island Tel in 1993.

Next came Cycor Communications, a national Internet service provider who were the first company to provide local Internet service to every province in Canada.

Jamie was also the CEO and president of iWave Information Systems, and now dedicates his time to investing in IT start-up companies.

Jamie has certainly made his mark in the IT field. This award validates his success as an entrepreneur. He is a proud graduate of Holland College and gives credit to his family for being his biggest supporters.

Many organizations like Special Olympics, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation, Children's Wish and the IWK have all benefitted from his generous heart. Recently, Jamie and his wife Tracy donated \$100,000 to Holland College so that the bursary can be given each year to a deserving single parent attending the school.

I'd ask the House to join me in congratulating Jamie Hill on being named the Great Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneur of the Year.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Dylan Allen

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm honoured to stand in the Legislature today to commend Dylan Allen, a 27-year-old man in my community who has shown courage by turning an unsettling situation into one which others can learn.

In the spring of this year, Dylan was working at his job delivering bills. He does this as part of the Community Connections outreach program that provides various supports, including employment, to people in the Prince County area with intellectual challenges.

While on the job, he walked by a group of teenagers, who verbally attacked him based on his job and his challenges. He felt discouraged by the bullies, but he didn't let this get him down. Instead, he spoke out by sharing his bullying experience with the *Journal-Pioneer* in May.

He has continued to campaign against bullying, and has recently spoken out by writing a poem that captures the raw emotions associated with feeling different. He hopes that the poem will send a message to bullies everywhere and discourage, and inspire them to become part of the solution, rather than the problem.

Dylan has received an apology from one of the young men who took part in this bullying experience. He has also received a lot of community support for his anti-bullying campaign.

Dylan's ability to turn this situation around and use it to demonstrate the negative implications of bullying to the greater community has made a significant impact.

When people are given firm examples of how their words and actions affect others, it makes them reflect on how they treat the people around them.

Thank you, Dylan, for sharing your story and your poem and for working to make our community a more welcoming and friendly place. You are an extraordinary young man.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

PEI's Rugby Community

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise to acknowledge the recent accomplishments of our rugby community here on Prince Edward Island.

This past Saturday, the UPEI men's rugby team won the Maritime university championships, 17-10 over St. FX. The team travelled last night through the night to Guelph to compete for the first time in the history of the national university championships.

Round-robin play starts this afternoon at 3:00 p.m. when they take on Guelph university.

The UPEI women's team also had a strong showing this season. They battled through a tough season and made it to the semifinals where they lost to Acadia.

In addition, the Charlottetown Mudmen made an appearance at the Caledonia Cup this year. With several lead changes throughout the match, the Mudmen lost by only two points to the Fredericton Loyalists.

The Charlottetown Rugby Football Club women's team also had an undefeated season, capturing the division one Nova Scotia championships. The Halifax Rugby Football Club was no match for the women's team. They won 43-15 and showcased a great deal of strength and determination for our province. Congratulations to all of the athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteers for a successful season, and thank you for your commitment to building this great sport in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Nurse Practitioner's Week

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

This week marks the first ever nurse practitioners week in Canada. The role of nurse practitioners is often misunderstood, they themselves underappreciated, and their scope of practice unnecessarily restricted. The number of nurse practitioners on PEI has grown quickly from less than 10 just a few years ago to over 20 now actively practicing on our Island.

All around the world, the way that health services are being delivered is being reviewed, and the model which appears to be emerging as the most effective and efficient with long term benefits to individuals and communities is the primary care, collaborative model. Nurse practitioners fit perfectly into this sort of system where an emphasis is placed on community-based, individualized care, prevention, and proactive wellness initiatives.

Gone are the days when the doctor was seen as the sole repository of health wisdom, and fundamental rethinking is required in order to meet tomorrow's health care needs within shrinking government budgets.

Nurse practitioners diagnose, promote wellness, treat illness, order tests, and prescribe medications; in addition, they teach individuals and their families about healthy living, preventing disease, and managing illness.

As we celebrate and give thanks to nurse practitioners, I hope that government grasps the opportunity to create better value for money within our health system and actively promote a more collaborative primary care delivery model all across Prince Edward Island with nurse practitioners front and centre of that effort.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Need for long-term care beds

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

As we all know, nearly 30,000 Islanders are aged 65 or older; a number that will only increase as the baby boomer generation ages, and many will eventually require long-term care.

A question to the Premier: How does your government plan to deal with this growing demographic challenge?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government, and I'm sure is the case for all members in the House and people throughout Prince Edward Island, recognize that indeed we have a growing senior population, one that brings a great deal of promise and makes a great contribution to our communities and indeed that eventually will lead to a need by some seniors for long-term care. I can say that over the past decade the operating budget for senior care in public and private residences – public and private premises – has increased by 75%, and this year the operating budget for those properties is \$93 million, between 7 and 7% of our operating budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As the manor replacement program limps into its second decade, many Islanders have noted – and I've heard it on the doorsteps, I've heard it on the phone – that the manor replacement program that's currently in place is simply replacing new beds with old beds.

Again, question to the Premier: Where is your forward-looking vision in replacing manors with the same number of beds when

the demand for long-term care is simply growing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are, in terms of public manor beds, almost 1,150 in Prince Edward Island. That would be very close to the very top of the rank among provinces on a per capita basis and reflecting the responsiveness to the need in our province. Indeed, that does represent an increase of 15% in terms of the number of manor beds over the past decade.

We recognize that there are further plans to be made and further strategies and collaborations to be worked out, but we are, indeed, responding to, and attentive to and mindful of that need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Bed number replacement for Riverview Manor

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

After eight years of delays work has finally begun to replace the Riverview Manor, but only after federal government agreed to put the majority of the money forward.

Question to the Premier: Did you, or do you have designs made for a manor with more beds in case that you did get these federal dollars, or are you simply going to replace it with the same amount of beds as you've done in the past?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposition is raising a valid question regarding our demands and plans for long-term care.

I'll tell you, what we are doing is we have assimilated a group of individuals that are putting together a long-term care strategy for Islanders as we move forward and that's led by Dr. Michael Corman. I have mentioned it many times at Legislative hearings, and I'm looking forward to the outcome of that.

We're engaging Islanders to make sure that they're putting the needs of Islanders first when it comes to long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The driving consideration behind the delays was to pinch pennies, not meet the demand. Again, we could only assume that this is because there is no forward-looking leadership from this government.

Licenses for long-term care beds

Again, question to the Premier: How many licenses have been granted for private long-term care beds since you became Premier?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: What kind of action (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have, at the moment, 1,141 long-term care bed licenses that are – individual bed out there within the system. In fact, we've added 145 beds since 2007. I think I'd challenge the other side to say: how many did they –

An Hon. Member: None.

Mr. Henderson: – put together in the –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: None.

Mr. Henderson: – years previous to that –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) 1996.

Mr. Henderson: – don't think too many.

We are meeting the needs of Islanders –

Mr. Myers: How far (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – we've seen our numbers decline and those that are awaiting long-term care. We are also putting some significant investments into home care and with our nurse practitioners and all those primary service providers out there to meet those needs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I thought my last question was fairly straightforward and I'm sorry that the Premier didn't see fit to stand up and answer it. It was simply asking him: Since he became Premier, how many licenses has he granted through his government for private long-term care beds?

We actually know that no private bed licenses were issued under this Premier's leadership. There is interest in the private sector, but your government is stopped on a study treadmill.

Question to the Premier: Why do you keep commissioning studies when the private sector is willing to invest their own money in long-term care beds?

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) great question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as was noted earlier, there were 145 new beds added in the public system –

Mr. Trivers: Since 2007.

Premier MacLauchlan: – over the past decade. Indeed, to correct the Leader of the Opposition, we have recently granted six private licenses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd ask the members in the House that just finished clapping their desks for the announcement that the Premier just made, that since he became Premier, he's added six long-term care beds. When, in fact, we know that any given day there are well over 100 seniors occupying acute care beds in our hospitals that are waiting for long-term care beds.

Mr. Myers: Shameful.

Leader of the Opposition: So, if you want to applaud for that, go ahead.

Ms. Biggar: Is there a question?

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: Are you the Speaker?

Leader of the Opposition: – at this rate, we will have kids that are in school today that will need long-term care beds before this Premier hops off his study treadmill.

Addition of new long-term care beds to private sector

Again, question to the Premier: Islanders need action on long-term care, will you commit today to having a competitive process to assign new long-term care beds to the private sector?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to note here that the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned there

was over 100 people awaiting long-term care that are in our acute care beds. That's not accurate. The number is actually 74.

Once again, I think it's very important that when we're dealing with a continuum of care, it's very important to note that there is all levels of providing services to seniors. Whether that's independent living supports, whether that's community care, whether that's long-term care and whether it's home care; and the delivery of home care and the supports that they require.

We are looking at the right investments for the right time for situations that are coming forward to us. I'm looking forward to the outcome of the review that the long-term care strategy is going to recommend.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This Premier and his government do not believe in action. The Premier is a thinker, not a doer.

Critical situation of seniors' care in province

How does the health minister justify the inaction and the critical situation that has been caused for seniors' care in this province?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Myers: Think about it.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have. We've been putting together a manor replacement program. We've got the Montague manor and Riverview Manor in Montague, and the Stewart Memorial Manor in Tyne Valley well under construction. I've had the opportunity to tour those facilities.

We're looking forward to those beds being open in 2019, probably by summer, mid-summer in that range.

Mr. Trivers: No progress.

Mr. Henderson: – that's an investment–

Mr. Trivers: Zero progress.

Mr. Henderson: – of \$23.4 million in those replacements.

Then, when it comes to designating more long-term care beds, there are a lot of valid questions that have to be asked here. There has to be the investments in home care. How that interacts with the long-term care.

Islanders, we know, want to be their homes as long as they possibly can. We need to make sure we're providing those supports before we're automatically institutionalizing Islanders before they're ready to go there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to talk about replacing two manors with the same number of beds that are already there. We know the need is growing; 30,000 Island seniors and this number will continue to grow.

The minister's director told the standing committee on health three weeks ago: I think we have a long way to go yet, in terms of catching up the demographic surge that's coming.

Minister: Why has no action been taken to address the critical situation in long-term care on PEI?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have been taking action. That's why we have added more long-term care beds into the

system. That's why we have increased our investments into home care.

We've increased staff at home care to provide services to Islanders. It's a myriad of services. It can be residential supports. It can be respite care. We've also added respite care beds to our long-term care facilities to meet the demands of Islanders.

Once again, we've already implemented a plan. We're engaging Islanders through our continuum of care committee and they're going to be looking at those key questions on; if we were to add more long-term care beds, where would they be at? How many would you –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – add? We have to make sure that we're also –

Mr. Trivers: Less talk more action.

Mr. Henderson: – making sure our spending in long-term – or in community care and in home care are up to the standards that we would expect too, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is not a doer and the minister is refusing to acknowledge reality. On a daily basis his staff gets the count of Island seniors who are parked in hospital beds, medically discharged, and awaiting a long-term care bed.

Minister: Why are you parking our Island seniors in hospital beds across PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, as we look at – we're seeing those numbers of those awaiting long-term care is declining and it's because of those investments in providing home care supports, to make sure

that we're meeting the needs of Islanders. As well as, even issues around our advanced care paramedics that are investing in dealing with palliative care in the home, that's another investment that we placed to do that.

Once again, as we continue to look at where the needs of Islanders are going to be, we'll be well prepared to make the proper investments at the proper time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The QEH, the PCH, Kings County Memorial, the Western Hospital, Community Hospital, Souris Hospital and even the Hillsborough Hospital; every single facility has seniors parked in acute beds because there are no long-term care beds available.

Minister: Are you not able to see that this bottlenecks increasing wait times, not only for seniors, but also for Islanders waiting for in-care in a hospital?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have seen those numbers of those awaiting long-term care in our acute-care facilities has been declining. It's been declining for the last couple of years. We now are down to a situation of approximately 70 people awaiting long-term care.

I must commend the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River; I was down to tour the Gillis Lodge, a wonderful facility. There's an individual that has made some significant investments, providing great care. In fact, we are adding six more long-term care beds to that facility to provide and continue with that care.

Once again, we'll see where we look at future investments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Cost of hospital beds versus long-term care beds

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud of the facility we have in our community. It provides a need, but there's a need across the Island. Over 100 seniors – you can say 74, that's 74 families that are in desperate need of placing their family member somewhere other than a hospital. Because we know the care in a hospital is not the care you get in a senior's facility or a long-term care facility.

This minister is spending up to \$1,200 per person per day for a hospital bed when we could move those seniors to a more appropriate care, improving their situation and reducing health care wait times for everyone.

Minister: Why are you prolonging and worsening the critical situation for Island seniors in our health care system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we certainly acknowledge the fact that we have some people that are awaiting long-term care in our acute care facilities, but we are also providing interventions and supports there to help their situations as well.

We've got some day programming that we allow people to go over to a – I know in the Western Hospital as an example, they go over to Maplewood Manor and get some services there and recreation and promotional health and wellbeing concepts and the things of that nature. We'll continue to look at those types of investments so we reduce that number – which we've been continuing to reduce for the last couple of years. Once we get the feedback from that long-term care strategy that will be developed, we'll then know more accurately where we'll spend our monies and invest in Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not only is this critical situation worse for those seniors needing long-term care, it is an inefficient use of health care resources and it is misplacing costs in our system.

Minister: Is it more cost-effective for our health care system to have Islanders needing long-term care to be parked in a hospital bed that costs \$1,200 a day, or a dedicated long-term care bed which is about a sixth the cost?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: I think the reality here is, Mr. Speaker, it is about trying to provide the appropriate level of care for the appropriate situation in the appropriate location. Yes, we have some people that aren't in the spot that we would like to see them in, but once again, the wait times have been reducing for those locations and we'll continue to work on making sure that we're providing Islanders with the best level of service and to make them as comfortable and to make the experiences successful as they possibly can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Having hospital beds used by Islanders needing inpatient hospital care: seems like common sense especially when there are always people waiting. However, this is what the directors of Health PEI told the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness: We have looked at this as well. The only way we save that is if the bed is empty. If we could move that long-term care resident out, for example, but the way then you would save the money is if you actually close the bed because there is always somebody waiting for that bed.

So, we're saving money by housing or warehousing seniors in hospitals when people across the Island are waiting for in-care services in a hospital.

Minister: Have you deliberately created the bottleneck and critical situation of long-term care simply for a budgetary strategy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: The reality in this is, once again, is that we have made some significant investments in our long-term care. In fact, we've increased our staff – it has increased by 25% in our long-term care facilities. We've seen the addition of 154 new long-term care positions to help deal with the situation. Once again, we don't look at this from a budgetary perspective. We wanted to make sure we're providing the right level of care for the right situation for the appropriate condition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Parking long-term care residents in hospital beds, closing other hospital beds – like the psychiatric ones in Unit 9 – all this as government dumps millions and millions more into the system, yet the shortages continue, the gaps continue, and the bed closures continue.

Minister: Your director called it a long-term care problem, and then a systemic problem, and then a hospital-based problem. Why have you failed to identify this critical situation and how bad does it have to get before this government will act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, in fact, things have been getting better in the respect that the wait time for people awaiting long-term care has declined. We've seen the

amount of people awaiting long-term care that are in our acute-care facilities – that number has declined. We've put some significant investments in increased staffing; we've increased the budget for long-term care across the province – whether that's with our private deliverers of service or whether it's our long-term care within our own public system. We have 1,141 long-term care beds. We'll do a review of that and we'll determine where and how many beds should be required and where they would be placed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're waiting on strategies. We're waiting on studies. The Premier is not a doer, but Islanders need action and our PC team have a simple solution.

Minister: How can Island seniors and families trust your government given your hand in creating alarming critical situations in our health care system and the inaction and lack of understanding from you and the Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

As far as understanding of the particular subject, I'm well aware of the situation. Actually I tour long-term care facilities pretty well weekly. I have a mother that's in a long-term care facility – at Stewart Memorial Manor. I understand the challenges that those types of aging issues can have on a family and that's why we're doing the investments that we're doing. That's why we need to get the right plan, the right place, and we will be doing that in the near future.

We've got a committee in place. We've got some great experts that are looking at good evidence-based information. It's not about just announcing where you're going to put long-term care beds, you're going to put this

number out or that number; you need some evidence and fact bases to make those types of decisions – evidence-based decisions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

This government has talked enthusiastically about promoting rural development on PEI and last year they even created a new ministry of rural and regional development – specifically to support this goal.

Last evening in Crapaud, well over 100 people gathered to discuss the imminent loss of their doctor. For rural areas such as the South Shore, maintenance of critical services such as schools, recreational facilities, restaurants, retail outlets, and local access to medical care are crucial to a community's well-being.

Loss of doctor in Crapaud

A question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: What will his department do to support the South Shore area in maintaining the pillar of this region's prosperity – which is local access to health care?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: I thought I was getting a break there for a second.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it's a very good question and I had the opportunity to meet with the hon. member and the hon. MLA for Borden-Kinkora area, as well as councillors just the other day and we discussed the issues and challenges that are faced by the community of Crapaud. We've provided them with numerous options that may be possible to help alleviate the situation there. It's really about the community coming together and approaching different health care providers out there to see what possible business arrangements could be made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed the community did come together last evening, Minister, and one of the things that was talked about was setting up a task force to actively – proactively go and look for a doctor themselves.

A question to the minister: If the community is indeed successful in locating and recruiting a suitably qualified and accredited physician, will his department consider issuing a new billing number for the area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when we had that discussion the other day we talked about those options, and there is a process that we have to go through when we're talking about adding new members to the complement or new billing numbers, and that there's a clear process to doing that, so if there once again, if there is a physician that that's where they want to particularly practice and there happens to be no vacancies in the billing number in that particular area, we would certainly work with that community to try to go through that process to help add another billing number.

We also discussed a lot about the concept of a nurse practitioner working with another physician in another part of the Island under a fee-for-service model that may work very well too, so there's certainly lots of options and we're certainly willing to commit and work with that community or any other community when it comes to providing primary care to meet their needs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Primary health services in rural areas

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

The way that primary care delivery health care is being delivered is undergoing profound changes, as I mentioned in my member's statement at the beginning.

The more collaborative approach, known as primary health care, is about creating the conditions that help people to become and stay healthy and well. This model involved more extensive use of nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, and other complementary providers.

Health practitioners in the south shore region developed an innovative proposal that was based on this model a couple of years ago, but government would not support it.

Will the minister reconsider his government's position and work with the local community on this innovative development that would ensure access to rural primary health services?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: That's a good question, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to the issues around nurse practitioners, especially with many nurse practitioners that are in here, we have seen our complement of nurse practitioners increase in this province. I think there are approximately 20 nurse practitioners practicing all over the Island.

We continue to look at possible models and opportunities for nurse practitioners too, but we also have to work with the medical society and that. We have to make sure that we're providing them the right services and supports, and when they're working to provide primary care to Islanders and like I said before, whether it's Crapaud or any other community, if a nurse practitioner model could work, we certainly would look at that, and we've seen cases, I think even in Cornwall, where we've teamed up a nurse practitioner with a doctor to, once again, meet the panel sizes that the previous position would have carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Police checkpoint at Upton Road

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. The portion of the Trans-Canada Highway realignment between the Malpeque Road and the Upton Road roundabout is a frequent police checkpoint.

Minister, would you consider making this checkpoint more permanent, not unlike weight scale infrastructure we see in neighbouring provinces, for the safety of the travelling public and our law enforcement officers?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, any time that our law enforcements are doing checks along the highway, it's always important that our officers are safe and able to pull off the road safely to do those kinds of checks, or anyone else that needs to pull off the road. That particular section of highway already has a two-metre paved edge on it, plus an additional 1.5 clay edge in addition to that.

So, we have looked at those areas, and we feel that it is ample room for any person to pull off on the edge of the road.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Being a former officer that did a lot of checkpoints, I believe that traffic separation and lighting at a checkpoint, especially in a frequently used location with additional lighting, would be advantageous.

Would the minister consider traffic separation and additional lighting in that portion of the highway?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, in fact, have taken part in a roadside police check with RCMP officers, and I do know the amount of traffic that they encounter in regard to that. Unless it's an emergency type of road check, they don't normally do those in the dark. But, having participated in it, I know that it's important that everyone has a safe area.

When we look at putting streetlights in, we go by the Canadian standards of installing those. What we have done in that particular area and right across Prince Edward Island is install the reflective markers in the central line, and those do show up, so we'll continue to make sure that that's a safe area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Construction of on-ramp onto TCH near Lower Malpeque Road

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My constituents would like access to the Trans-Canada Highway from the Lower Malpeque Road.

Minister: Would your department examine the possibility of constructing an on-ramp onto the Trans-Canada Highway realignment from the Lower Malpeque Road?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very familiar with that section of the highway, as I travel that on my way into Charlottetown every day, pretty well.

The member and I have had this discussion previously, and I have had the department look at that particular area, and our review has indicated that there is not ample land in that particular area to be able to construct a ramp on –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) just take it –

An Hon. Member: Just expropriate it.

Ms. Biggar: – so we're not able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding to Tignish cooperative health centre

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now that the health minister had a few minutes for a breather, I'm going to get him back up on his feet.

An Hon. Member: It never stops.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Tignish cooperative health centre has been operating for close to 45 years now, and since its conception it has been financially funded by volunteers within the community, and they have been fundraising, whether it's selling fudge or used clothing or what have you.

But, as time goes by they find it increasingly difficult to meet the demands. So, to alleviate some of this pressure on the volunteers, the government in 2012 – our government – has given them a yearly operational funding, and I was wondering if this funding will be available again for the 2017 year.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, now that I've got my second wind, we're ready to roll.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to rural health centres, the Tignish Health Centre is at an unbelievably fantastic model. Many volunteers have a very professional concept, and they do a really good collaborative care model when it comes to physicians, physiotherapists, public health nurses, and the list goes on – pharmacies – and the list goes on.

We have received a request from the Tignish Health Centre for funding again this year, and we're putting together the Treasury

Board memo to make that happen as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly do appreciate the support that has come from your department in the past, and we look forward to receiving that again. You did mention that in the near future it will be here, but I'm going to put you on the spot a little bit more here, because in order for them to budget, they need to have a timely response to this.

So, do you know specifically when they may be able to receive this funding?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, as the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road has been an extremely ardent advocate for the Tignish Health Centre, and he's been contacting me quite frequently about wondering about the possibilities about the funding, and like I said before, we will put together a Treasury Board memo. We would be hopeful that – to do that through that process will see the funding be granted, and hopefully that funding will be commenced at least by year-end, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

New policies and regulations re: irrigation ponds

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, thanks to my colleague from Kensington-Malpeque, we learned that there are no rules in place around the construction of large industrial irrigation ponds.

Now, the environment minister has the power to put policy in place at any time. When the Minister of Communities, Land

and Environment introduces legislation, he always ensures he has the ultimate power to have the final say, with the trend of relying on the regulations to exert important controls.

A question to the environment minister: Minister, when you saw this trend of many large irrigation ponds being dug, did it ever occur to you that you might need to introduce new policy and regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

As I stated yesterday, the holding ponds that are across Prince Edward Island are being run by farmers in a very effective manner. There is no permitting. There are no regulations, currently. But, the new Water Act, which will hopefully be laid in the very near future will allow the process of permitting for those wells that will be used to supply holding ponds. The purpose of the holding ponds, of course, is to catch natural runoff, natural snow melt – that is the primary purpose of those and occasionally, farmers need to top them up by some water supply, which they have in place, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question to the environment minister: Minister, do you think it's a coincidence that these ponds started springing up when the Water Act was being delayed?

Mr. Myers: Oh, good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the line of questioning today is similar to yesterday's questions and: No, I believe the farming industry – they're not criminals. They're not trying to skirt legislation. They're not trying to find loopholes. The farming industry was well present at all consultation meetings that we held in regards to the Water Act. They are good stewards of the land. They want to do the right things when it comes to the farming practices, and they are fully aware that permitting will be required on those low-capacity wells moving into the future, which some of them are currently feeding those holding ponds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister knows that Islanders care passionately about their water. It's a very high priority for them. It's our job to hold you to account. We want to make sure that you have the regulations and policies in place to protect the water, and you have that power. Perhaps the only bill that has been delayed more times than the Water Act is the lobbyist act.

New Water Act

Question to the environment minister: Do you think that's a coincidence as well?

Mr. Myers: Oh, good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The opportunity to talk to the upcoming Water Act is a very valuable one. The upfront investments that we made, and spending time and effort to go out and consult with public, will make this the very best act that we've ever probably laid on the floor of the Legislature here. It will reflect full public input in regards to all things regarding our water quality; our water quantity; where it's used; when it's used; what it's used for; and that will be fully

reflected so that it's a very transparent and open process online for all Islanders to see.

This is as a direct result of going out and talking to Islanders to hear their concerns of how this should be protected. I think it will be very well reflected in the act and I think people will see it very positive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Large scale irrigation ponds (further)

Mr. Trivers: Question for the environment minister: How many times have you been personally lobbied, as minister, on the issue of irrigation ponds by corporations such as Cavendish Farms or their subsidiaries like Indian River Farms?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said yesterday, our department is fully aware of these ponds that are being developed across the Island. We are working with the department of agriculture to come up with a recommendation of how these ponds should be built so that they are as efficient as they can for those in the agriculture sector. Farmers are fully aware of what the process will be moving forward once the new Water Act comes into place.

Mr. Myers: Have you been lobbied?

Mr. Mitchell: They are very interested in being good stewards of the land and –

Mr. Myers: Seems strange you wouldn't answer that.

Mr. Mitchell: – we will continue to work with them on that –

Mr. Myers: If the answer was no (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – and I have never met with any farm on a holding pond, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: We all know the answer is ‘yes’.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister may not appreciate these questions, and perhaps that’s why he’s failing to give an answer. But in the absence of a Water Act or a lobbyist act, they do need to be asked. So, this is what we have found out on this side of the House: The environment minister has no rules in place and really no plans to put any policy or regulations in place, and we also found out that the agriculture minister has had staff providing technical support on the development of these irrigation ponds.

Question to the agriculture minister: Can you confirm that officials from your department have been coaching these companies on how to exploit any existing or future legal loopholes?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Very glad to get the question, and to refer back to the questions yesterday from Member from Kensington-Malpeque, as well as the hon. member today: First and foremost let’s look at what our farmers are doing. In our department is working with CLE, we have a stewardship program that’s looking at keeping –

Mr. Myers: Oh, so another yes –

Mr. McIsaac: – our soil in place that’s –

Mr. Myers: – disguised as a soliloquy.

Mr. McIsaac: – what the idea is behind.

Our departments worked on 165 projects of keeping our soil (Indistinct) because when we get a deluge of water or even an easy rain we want it to go down through a grass waterway; held off from washing soil out –

Mr. Myers: If it was a no, he’d say no.

Mr. McIsaac: – by a berm or whatever that may be. There is a lot of water that comes off the land. If can go into a pond, that’s terrific; we can recycle that back up. This is very, very important to do that. We need to work with the farmers. They are the number one industry in the province. We need to keep that going.

We do that in a very, very important way that we put the policies in place and we’ll continue to do that. Water is precious and land is very precious. Our farmers are certainly very precious.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: As long as you ask (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, your final question.

Agriculture coaching farmers re: irrigation ponds

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Here in the official opposition we talk to farmers. We believe in farmers.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) trustworthy.

Mr. Trivers: We know that there are at least 30 wells that are being used to fill these holding ponds. It’s not run-off that’s happening. It’s not about grass waterways.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: This is about holding ponds that are being filled with no policy and no regulation being put in place. The job of the government is to make sure that the interests of Islanders are looked after. We are here to hold you to account and we want to make sure that happens.

Question to the agriculture minister: Will you admit that your own deputy minister has been directly involved and, indeed, has been coaching these companies on how to exploit both current and future legal loopholes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I would love to take you out to the Kensington north –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. McIsaac: – watershed group and see what –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) your loophole (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – the Kensington north watershed group is doing. It's right in your own home territory –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – the things they're doing working with our farmers to make sure we maintain our soil. The dollars that are –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) but watersheds (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – being put into stewardship of our land –

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

Mr. McIsaac: – it is absolutely crucial. We are working with them. We have a whole department there with regards to the stewardship, but a lot of dollars into that. I think we need to stand in this House and give credit to our farmers, who are working to very, very, properly look after the land that is so crucial to our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Bring in the House doctor.

Mr. MacKay: Where do you think the calls are coming from? They're coming from the farmers.

Mr. R. Brown: Keep going. This is great.

Ms. Biggar: He's got farmers (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Where do you think the questions are coming from? The concerned farmers.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, he just called (Indistinct)

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Ms. Biggar: There you go.

Community Food Security and Food Education Program

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

Another good news story here: the food security and food education, it is a top priority of our government.

Earlier this year, we're pleased to announce the creation of the Community Food Security and Food Education Program. The main objective of the program is to increase the amount of fresh and local food on menus in schools, early child care centre and communities.

Our objectives are to promote healthy food choices; to build community; to link farmers to consumers; to enhance the pride and joy of growing, preparing and eating food, to create change through education and empowerment and create partnerships and networks that work toward community food security.

I'm pleased to share today that 17 projects were selected for this program. Our department has invested over \$100,000 into

these projects. I would like take this opportunity to share some of them with you.

The first one: East Wiltshire School. The goal is to increase fresh, local food on the menu.

PEI Certified Organic Producers Co-operation; to increase fresh food on the menu at the Queen Elizabeth Elementary School; The Adventure Group PEI, in Morell, supports students in learning how to grow food and maintain a garden on school property; Charlottetown Rural High School, to provide community-based food learning experiences for students; the Tignish Elementary School, to increase fresh, local food on their menu; the Native Council of Prince Edward Island, a series of educational sessions for Indigenous youth to combat food insecurity; Morell Consolidated School with UPEI, to promote good nutrition and healthy food choices by building community connections; The Adventure Group PEI with Westisle: supports students in learning how to grow food and maintain a garden on their school property; The Mount Community Council: to increase the amount of fresh local food on the menu for the students of The Mount Academy and Playtime Daycare Centre by installing vertical indoor gardens; Lennox Island: promote good nutrition and healthy food choices; Spring Park Elementary: connecting students and their families to local farmers in PEI; Morell High School: to increase the availability of fresh local food on the school menu; Merry Pop-Ins Childcare Centre: to increase the availability of fresh local food on the menu; Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre: to provide opportunities for vulnerable or marginalized communities on PEI by offering a variety of food education programs; Canada's Smartest Kitchen: designing and building a virtual information hub of resources for projects and programs; Veg PEI: increase the availability of fresh local food on menus in schools; and Kings Playhouse: a collaborative cooking experiences, both in a school and community format.

Thank you to all applicants for your innovative, creative and invaluable projects. We appreciate and applaud you for your leadership and contribution to improving food security and education in our province.

I look forward to sharing with Islanders the outcomes and impacts these projects will have on community food security here in PEI.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all I'd like to thank our farmers and our fishers for supplying, not only Prince Edward Island, but the whole world with food. Every time you have a meal, thank our farmers and thank our fishers here on Prince Edward Island. They're good stewards of the lands, as the minister stated, and the fishers and the farmers are very, very hard workers and keep our economy going here on Prince Edward Island.

It's great to see this happening in our schools. It educates our students, our children of where the food comes from, what is safe to eat and what is not safe to eat. It's a good education program that shows them how to grow food that they eat and they understand where their food comes from.

I know the Sleepy Hollow Correctional Centre used to grow gardens out there. I'm not sure if they still do, but they used to grow gardens out there at the correctional centre and it was good for the inmates. They worked in the garden and they ate the food that they picked and grew. I think it's great that if students have a garden – and I'd like to take it a step farther – I'd like to see an aquarium put in the school where they can grow their lobsters – see their lobsters grow and how a lobster grows and matures and their crab or trout. I'd like to see it go a step farther and take in more food, not just gardens.

These kids – today's society – we tend to eat fast food more and I think the reason for that is the busy lives we are living. Both parents are working and there are not enough hours in the days for the parents. We do it ourselves and there are only two of us in the house. We eat on the run a lot.

I think, for health reasons down the road, eat healthier and it's good for our health there. Our population is aging and with the bad eating habits comes health care problems. It's putting tremendous pressure on our health care system.

I think it's great that if we can grow gardens – show the kids where their food comes from, get them eating healthy foods in their cafeterias, I think the outcome down the road will be good for our health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Thank you for this nice announcement, Minister. It's certainly a long and impressive list of organizations all working in their own small way to improve food security here on Prince Edward Island. Despite that long list of impressive organizations, we still have unacceptable levels of food insecurity on Canada's Food Island. The irony of that does not escape, either myself, or many other people who live in our communities.

The wellbeing of each and every one of us is founded on a number of really solid principles and basis, one of them is indeed food security. One of the many components – there are many components to food security: there's poverty, there is sufficient social programs, agricultural choices that we make here in our local production choices. In each of those areas, Prince Edward Island could do better. We could do better in supporting everybody, but particularly our youth. The levels of food insecurity among young Islanders is quite shocking and, of course, that has effects on their ability to learn; on their ability to thrive; on their ability to be the best, most productive citizens that they can be in our communities. There's really no excuse for that. We debated and passed unanimously a motion on universal basic income that would have made a significant contribution to eradicating poverty here and we have seen no action on that.

We could have an increased emphasis on local, diversified, healthy food rather than trying to compete globally in the commodity marketplace where we have failed repeatedly. There are many things that we could do. When government fails to do the things that it should be doing, then that robust safety net, which we must have in our community, tends to be created by community groups.

I want to make special mention today – when we're talking about food insecurity – of a particular Island individual, Pauline Howard, who has done extraordinary work with the PEI Food Exchange – gleaned food from Islanders farms in exchange for work and passing that on to needy Islanders.

I'm happy that these organizations are getting the funding they are, Minister, but clearly there's so much more that needs to be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Artist Grants, Cultural Strategy

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

Artistic and creative expression has always flourished on Prince Edward Island. Whether it's art, music, literature, or performance, Island-based artists are recognized around the world for their creative successes. Government is committed to the advancement of, artists, culture and the creative industries in our province.

For the first time ever, there will be a long-term plan with action and funding for culture in our province. I am pleased to inform the House that the plan will be released early next week. With my department, Economic Development and Tourism will play a leadership role in the implementation of the new plan.

In particular, a new Creative Industry Market Development Program will work with artists, enterprises and industry development groups to help grow creative

businesses and better access new markets. Direct investment in artists is a feature of our new five-year action plan. This week a jury of six PEI artists met to peer assess applications for the latest round of artist grants. These grants go directly to artists to support the creation and dissemination of their work, and help them grow as artists. Of the 66 applications received, 17 were successful and a total of \$50,000 was awarded.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: This developing investment in the arts and creative industries is important to Islanders. Since announcing the first of these artist grants in 2016, government has awarded \$200,000 in direct investments in artist projects. Now, more than ever before, this funding is going directly to artists. Our new plan will build on these investments and continue to put Prince Edward Island on the map.

Creative industries contribute to our GDP, our economic growth, and the strength of our communities. These projects amplify the work of our creative industries and advance the capacity of local artists to share their work in our own communities, across Canada, and around the world.

Among the 17 recipients of the latest grants, are:

Megan Stewart: she's been awarded \$5,000 for the River Clyde Pageant which engages volunteers of all ages to create and perform a pageant – based on the majesty of the River Clyde – and the human and natural ecosystem that surrounds it;

Catherine MacLellan: a Juno award-winning artist from PEI, has received \$5,000 to contribute to the writing and producing of her next album. For this project, Catherine heads back to the studio, taking inspiration from the surrounding PEI landscape and turning it to song;

Millefiore Clarkes: is being supported with a grant of \$1,775 to learn new technical skills in filmmaking on a one-on-one mentorship.

Our investment in artist grants is a significant increase in provincial support for our PEI arts community.

This investment signals to the world our creativity, our richness of artistic expression and our ability to contribute to a body of global contemporary arts. Our plan will continue to further advance this work.

Today is an opportunity to celebrate the success of our rich cultural community and to underline the many Islanders who are contributing so generously to the development of cultural activities and creative industry in our province. I look forward to releasing the plan in the coming days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it was a lot of words to announce that he's going to announce a plan later, but that's the way this guy rolls.

The arts community on Prince Edward Island is very important, and I've watched it grow over the years, certainly that I've been an adult, and if you spend any time in around this area of Charlottetown, there's a great conglomeration of arts projects and opportunities and galleries and facilities like The Guild and the Confederation Centre; many of those, right across Prince Edward Island, small halls that would offer a place for artists to perform. There's lots of small art shops across Prince Edward Island. In my own community, I know we have Richard N Stacy Toms, the Maroon Pig Art Gallery and Sweet Shop, who have some – all different kinds of art installations in their property, as well, many that are for sale. Peter Llewellyn, who's right across the street, who makes jewelry, he does a wonderful business there.

We have people like Lenny and Heather down at Birdmouse, and they just opened their own gallery down there, and I know they take art from other artists, and it's currently hanging in their gallery, so I encourage people to come out and see what they're doing. St. Georges is one of the more rural places that you can find on Prince

Edward Island. To see a couple kind of putting together an opportunity for artists right in a small area is simply amazing. And when you look at what it's done for other areas like Charlottetown, like it has done for Georgetown, we certainly hope that we're able to grow other areas where artists want to take up the challenge to create opportunity for themselves in that area.

So, there's 66 applications in this current round, and there's 17 approvals, which to me says government has to put a lot more money in the arts. If they're serious about contributing to the arts here on Prince Edward Island, which I believe that they should, there should be a lot more money than \$200,000 and 17 approvals out of 66 applications.

More money has to go into this. It simply has to. The arts community has contributed wonderfully to Prince Edward Island. It a draw for tourists when they come here, and it's certainly a draw in my area, the people that are operating those types of businesses.

There are all kinds of money to throw around to the likes of Kevin Murphy to make beer here on Prince Edward Island, or if Tim Banks wanted money, there's millions of dollars to give away to guys like Tim Banks, but you have \$200,000 to split up amongst the whole arts community here on Prince Edward Island, it's pretty embarrassing.

I congratulate the artists who are taking part in this opportunity, who are making the best of the limited amount of money that government is putting forward for them. It is fantastic that you're looking to grow this industry on Prince Edward Island; that you're looking to grow yourselves on Prince Edward Island, to create new opportunities for yourselves. I think that is simply fantastic.

Government has to do more to support the arts community here on Prince Edward Island. They simply do – I don't think that it's too much – the government can – you know, they come up with money out of thin air all the time to contribute to things like, there's always a new announcement, like yesterday, when they suddenly found money for teachers. There's all kinds of money, apparently, at their disposal, or certainly

they'd have you believe by the way that they can make snap announcements on anything else. Why can't they put more money into the arts community? Why can't they make it, so instead of 17 out of 66, that we can have 66 out of 66, so there are all kinds of opportunities created here on Prince Edward Island for the arts community?

All Islanders should be proud of the arts community that we've created here. For our very small jurisdiction that Prince Edward Island is, we have a very vibrant arts community, and it's something that we should be proud of.

Government, too, should be proud of it. Government should worry more about creating that type of industry here on Prince Edward Island and growing that, rather than giving money to their friends in the millions, the likes of the Murphy's and the likes of Tim Banks, when you could be helping a young artist create a career for themselves right here at home on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you so much.

Of course, I welcome any time government puts money into the arts and culture sector. I welcome it.

But, I have to agree with the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters –

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – that we have – yes, a rare a day.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Myers: I'm going home.

Ms. Biggar: Quit while you're ahead.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That with an announcement of \$50,000 split between 17 recipients, I mean, that's less than \$3,000, and clearly some of them are receiving more than 3,000, as we heard Millefiore Clarke's

and Megan Stewart and Catherine MacLellan all getting more than three, which means that many of these people are getting less than \$3,000.

That's not an awful lot of money, and as my friend mentioned, government seems to have no problem coming up with large sums of money for certain sectors in this Island, and I think it's a real shame that we don't make more effort and make a higher priority of putting money into the arts, because we're blessed here with an incredible artistic community. Whenever I have friends who visit me who are artists – whether they be musicians, whether they be in theatre, or visual artists – they are consistently astonished at the depth and breadth of the talent that we have here on Prince Edward Island.

But it's very hard to make your living as an artist, as a musician. I think the definition of a musician is one who loads \$5,000 worth of equipment into a \$500 car to drive 100 miles for a \$50 gig. I think I read that somewhere.

It's a tough way to make a living. I know; two of my children are artists. And it would be lovely if all 66, as my friend said, of these applicants – the worthy ones, anyway – received some money, because the multiplier effect of arts and culture on this Island and our communities, both culturally and economically, is stupendous.

So, we need to support arts more than we do. Our culture tells us the stories of who we are and who we can be, and we need to support that in every way we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nurse Practitioners Week

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nurse practitioners play an increasingly important role within our health care system, allowing physicians to concentrate on cases that demand their training and expertise.

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have the capability to assess, diagnose,

and treat common acute and chronic health conditions. They can order tests, prescribe treatments, medications, and refer cases to other health care professionals.

In 2015, this government committed to increase the number of nurse practitioners working in our health care system to 20.

I am pleased to rise in the house today and confirm that we have surpassed this commitment, and we currently have 22 nurse practitioners working in Health PEI –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: – and in total, there are 27 nurse practitioners practicing on Prince Edward Island.

Our nurse practitioners provide care within a variety of health care settings across the province, including primary care, oncology, long-term care, diabetes programming, geriatric care, and renal care.

Nurse practitioners provide compassionate, high quality health care for individuals and families, and people of all ages in every region of PEI are benefiting from nurse practitioners.

This is National Nurse Practitioners Week, and in the gallery today I'd like to recognize some of our nurse practitioners and leaders in nursing who are here today with us:

From ARNPEI, Executive Director, Betty Gosbee and Audrey Fraser; nurse practitioner, Shanna Gallant, Melanie McCarthy and Laurie Brehaut, and none other than our President of the PEI Nurses Union, Mona O'Shea.

These individuals –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: These individuals provide care and guidance to Islanders each and every day and I want to publicly thank them for the important work that they do.

As we continue to build a stronger and more sustainable health care system that delivers Islanders the right care by the right provider at the right place we know that nurse

practitioners are imperative members of our health care team.

Our department will continue to work with Health PEI to identify opportunities to integrate more nurse practitioners across our health care settings and programs, as well as more physicians to work in consultation with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the minister for the statement, and thank you to the nursing leadership team that is here with us in the gallery today. I appreciate your hard work and thank you for your leadership.

The nurse practitioners work in a variety of health care settings, including community care, nursing care in hospitals. They do see a wide variety of patients. It's an important part of our functioning collaborative health care system.

I do want to encourage the minister, though, to ensure that all new and current legislation and regulations are congruent with the nurse practitioners' practice on PEI. I think that's important.

I know there are a number of nurse practitioner students graduating next year, and I'll push the minister and this government to ensure that there are positions available for them.

Given our aging population and the critical situation that has developed in seniors care, I hope the minister keeps an open mind as to how, we as a province, employ nurse practitioners and how we can leverage their skills and utilize this segment going forward.

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 had an opportunity earlier today to make a member's statement and I think I said everything I wanted to say then. I won't reiterate that, except to say thank you for all the tremendous work you do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I deliver my committee report, I beg your indulgence for a recognition.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. Casey: Thank you.

I am pleased to welcome to the gallery today, Tim Garrity; his mom Maureen Garrity; his wife Lorienda; and daughter Jade and son-in-law Coady Loughheed who have joined us to the gallery.

Everybody welcome them to the gallery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that a report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management recommending the appointment of a Chief Electoral Officer received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Third Party, that the report of the committee be adopted.

Hon. members, Mr. Gary MacLeod of Charlottetown resigned as Chief Electoral Officer, effective June 1st, 2017. On behalf

of the committee, I'd like to thank Mr. MacLeod for his service and wish him well in his future endeavours.

I would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Ms. Marian Johnston of Charlottetown, former clerk assistant of this House for assuming the role of acting Chief Electoral Officer since June until such time as the House was in session to allow for the appointment of a new chief electoral officer.

Pursuant to the *Election Act* section 2, "The Chief Electoral Officer shall be appointed by the Legislative Assembly (a) on the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management; and (b) following a resolution of the Legislative Assembly supported by at least two-thirds of the members."

A public competition was held to fill the vacant Chief Electoral Officer position. Interviews were conducted earlier this month. As a result of this process, I am pleased to submit on your behalf, the committee's unanimous report, in which it recommended that Mr. Tim Garrity of Cornwall be appointed the Chief Electoral Officer of Prince Edward Island.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Garrity on his success in the competition and thank him for allowing his name to stand for this important position.

There is, as noted above, a statutory requirement for a resolution supported by two-thirds members in order to have effect.

It is my intention to move this motion if it is the unanimous wish of the House, after the adoption of this report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to this motion at this time?

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the committee for their work and offer congratulations to Tim Garrity as the nominee to be the Chief Electoral Officer

and look forward to his service in that role, and happy, on behalf of government, to support the motion that's to come forward.

Speaker: Shall it –

Ms. Biggar: May I?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to offer my congratulations, as well, as a, I think, it would be a former employee of the department of transportation and the work that he did with Access PEI with the employees there. I want to thank him for that and wish him all the best in his new role with Elections PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think this is fantastic; a great candidate who will do a fantastic job. It's an extremely important role in our democracy. I mean, in the last election there were allegations of shenanigans, and so it's a very important role. I'm glad to see someone taking it who can clamp down and make sure that our elections are as fair as they can possibly be, and make sure that true democracy is had.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm proud to stand today and acknowledge that I've known Mr. Garrity for many years now and I feel very comfortable in this appointment. I know that Tim will certainly put everything into his new position.

I congratulate you. I congratulate your family as well. I thank you for being here today to support your husband, your son, your father. I think we're in very capable hands moving forward with this very important position to elevate the level of democracy here on Prince Edward Island.

I'm not going to speak much longer, Mr. Speaker, because I know we do have to have unanimous consent on this, and Mr. Garrity does have to get to work because we have a very important by-election forthcoming. Henceforth, get to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Do I have unanimous consent of the House, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: (Indistinct)

Ms. Casey: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, with unanimous consent of the House, I wish to move the following motion of appointment.

Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that pursuant to section 2 of the *Election Act* RSPEI 1988; Cap. E 1.1, that Mr. Tim Garrity of Cornwall be appointed Chief Electoral Officer of Prince Edward Island, effective immediately.

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

If not, then I will take the opportunity myself to congratulate you, Tim, on your new appointment and I feel very confident that you are more than able to fill this position in a very constructive and admirable manner. Good on you.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Yes, and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would like to call Motion 5 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Motion No. 5, the hon. Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the following Motion:

WHEREAS on any given day there are upwards of 100 patients or more in hospital beds across P.E.I. who should be in long-term care facilities;

AND WHEREAS the utilization of much needed hospital beds, for long term care is impeding the ability to meet the need for beds for hospitalization of sick and injured patients in our Island hospitals;

AND WHEREAS the costs per day for hospital care is significantly higher than the cost for long term care in manors;

AND WHEREAS the quality of life for Islanders in long term care in hospitals lacks the physical and recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for these individuals;

AND WHEREAS there are a number of long-term care beds in private facilities that remain unlicensed that could immediately meet the needs of these individuals;

AND WHEREAS the government has indicated that it will not be taking action to provide more long term beds in this province until their strategy is completed;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this government immediately grant licenses to those private long term care facilities and open up these much needed long term care beds to provide improved quality of life for our long term care patients and to improve the utilization of hospital beds for the needs

of patients requiring hospitalization in our province.

Speaker: Thank you.

I will now call on the mover of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, to speak to the motion. And we will provide you with the –

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

I am pleased to rise today to address our opposition motion that calls for government to finally and immediately take action to address the shortage of long-term care beds here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

As stated in our motion, on any given day there are upwards of 100-plus long-term care patients who are occupying much-needed hospital beds.

These individuals should be in long-term care facilities. The question is why they are not in long-term care facilities.

Why, when we have many private facilities who have already constructed long-term care beds in response to this need, why are these beds not being utilized?

It was this government that told this House over and over again during the past few years that all the new long-term care requirements would be met by the private sector.

The private sector has done their part. They've stepped up. They've added additional long-term care beds, but they cannot get licenses.

Government continues to stall, to make excuses. And in the meantime these beds are vacant, while those who require long-term care beds remain in hospital, in beds that are needed for patient care.

Government's excuse this year is that they are waiting on a seniors study, or perhaps it is a housing strategy – it really doesn't matter because it doesn't change the fact that individuals are being forced to live their limited days in a hospital bed.

It amazes me that this government can go on for years, so unconcerned that families are trekking to hospitals to see their loved ones. We just have to look back last year where we had an example of the spouse of a senior gentleman that had to go to the extent of having a petition signed by thousands of Islanders because her husband, who was requiring long-term care, was being kept in a hospital bed, an acute care bed, for well over a year.

We all know that, especially with a senior, when you have a degree of dementia or other conditions, when you're being housed in a hospital in an acute care bed facility, it's actually detrimental to your health, and I've experienced that myself with my own mother just two years ago. I'm fortunate that we didn't have to wait to the extent of time that this lady from western PEI did, but still I did see the health of my mother decline. I'm not saying that the care provided by the health care providers in the hospital wasn't second-to-none, but it's just the fact that it's the atmosphere, it's the stimulation, it's the bells, it's the activity that's happening around you that actually is detrimental.

It is breaking their hearts to know that while the physical needs of their parents or friends are being met, but the quality of life is not.

This issue certainly is not new. As an opposition we have raised this concern year, after year, after year, but nothing gets done – except for studies.

The litany of excuses is tiresome for us, let alone those individuals who are laying in the hospital beds, hoping to be the next in line for a place to live in a long-term care facility.

This government has told Islanders over and over again, by the previous health minister, that they are going to provide greater supports for home care so Islanders could stay in their homes longer.

Our legislative committee on long-term care heard from the CAO of long-term care and hospital services that the trend across the country when it comes to caring for aging populations is moving more towards primary care and home-based care.

This government has been touting this message for years, but again there is little being done.

Now, we just only have to look at the throne speech where we have a wonderful announcement that what one of the strategies is going to be is we're going to provide a little bit of housekeeping and snow clearing for seniors. Well, a little bit of housekeeping and a little bit of snow clearing of sidewalks and driveways is not going to help an individual that is at the point in their life where they need long-term care.

We all know that most seniors – all seniors, in fact – want to stay in their homes, that they just need the help this government has promised and yet had failed to deliver, year after year after year.

For the CAO to state, to our committee: That would require more emphasis on home-based care with those supports that are needed there, so that is part of what we're looking at now as well as, if we had that, what would the bed-based care numbers look like?

If government had followed through on its promises, we would already know the answer to that question from the CAO. Now we are living with the reality of this government's failure. We are living with the reality of a severe shortage of long-term care beds.

The committee also learned that it costs 900-\$1,200 a day for hospital care compared to the 185-\$230 a day cost for long-term care in non-hospital facilities.

Government tells us they are looking for efficiencies, yet they do nothing to address this serious matter.

When asked in our committee why government was not utilizing the empty beds that are ready and waiting for new nursing care licenses, the CAO indicated that this was an option being considered as part of the strategy.

The time for consideration is over.

I raised the fact here on countless occasions over the last number of years that there's 24

beds at Andrews of Stratford – beautiful facilities that are ready and waiting, fully-equipped, state-of-the-art – but unfortunately they're sitting empty for well over two years. And why; because this government just will not allow these beds to be licensed.

Government itself encouraged these private facilities to meet the need for long-term care beds. And as I said before, they responded and they're basically being ignored.

The answer to the long-term care bed shortage as we see it is simple. Give these facilities that have long-term care beds that are sitting empty the licenses to open these beds and provide the care that our much-deserving seniors require.

That was the government's plan in the first place. Why they reneged, I have no idea.

What I do know is that it is not right for individuals who need long-term care to be laying in hospital beds while those beds are needed for acute patient care.

I am sure that every member of this House knows that is right. It's time to do what's right, and we don't need a study for that.

We ask for support for our motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. leader.

I will now call on the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid to speak to the motion.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the mover of this motion. the Leader of the Opposition has been on this file for a long time. I know many, many Islanders appreciate his hard work on this.

I'm proud today to rise and second this motion, and to speak for my constituents and all Islanders who have family members who are forced to spend cherished time in hospital beds or at home when they should be in a long-term care facility.

Our long-term care facilities today have so much to offer patients; recreation, music, church services, crafts, cards, Christmas concert, plays, fun. Our facilities today provide, not only physical care, but they provide programs aimed at meeting the physical, emotional and mental health needs of these patients.

Individuals at these facilities often make new friends and form special bonds with their caregivers. They dine together. They care for each other. I'm not saying that the individuals who are in long-term care hospitals are not cared for; they are physically. The health care workers in-house are trying to the best they can with the limited programs that they can offer.

The hospital is not in the business of long-term care; it's in the business of treating the very sick or injured individuals. Our hospital workers do the very best they can, but many are already working in areas where there are already staffing shortages.

They have heavy workloads and they deal with very stressful situations daily. I, too, simply do not understand why the government is not issuing licenses for the long-term care beds that currently exist in the private sector.

After all, as the mover of this motion stated: they were encouraged to expand and meet the need for long-term care beds. They responded and some had been waiting for at least two years to get licenses.

Is there a problem with the order, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. R. Brown: No, I just (Indistinct)

Speaker: Carry on.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The need for these beds has not declined. If anything, it's increasing annually. We had the guests in at our standing committee on long-term care beds and we talked about the continuum of care committee; this committee with inside the department of health that's coming up with this magical

number of how many licenses that we need, private and public.

We've asked for the numbers; we've asked for the formula. I think, we as legislators, should see how this committee is determining the numbers, and I think the quicker the better, so we can judge that. We'd like the results of that committee's work. They're going to present that to the minister. We requested that as a committee. I hope that comes soon.

There are 900 seniors who are looking for seniors housing. Every year this government stalls the need for long-term care beds; the need for seniors housing; and the need for affordable housing grows.

Why is government failing to respond to these needs? Not all those in long-term care beds are seniors, but we already have close 30,000 Islanders, who are age 65 or older, and many will, no doubt, need long-term care. Islanders are tired of waiting and of the talk. We need action.

The minister said that today they need evidence to make this decision. Well, I would suggest that he gets delivered a note every day that is evidence enough. This minister gets a note every day that says the number of people that are medically discharged in hospital, but are sitting in beds waiting. Every day, he gets an update on that. I think that's all the evidence that he needs.

The use of hospital beds for long-term care does not only impact the individuals in those beds, it impacts the delivery of health care services to patients who should be in those beds. It has a ripple effect right through the hospital. Patients are being housed in emergency care beds when they should be in acute care beds. But the story is: there are no beds available.

Again, we find it very hard to understand government's reasoning. Perhaps, they're trying to save money by not issuing licenses. But if it costs more to have long-term care patients in hospital beds, that argument doesn't make sense.

It's disturbing to hear that the issues of shortage of hospital beds and the use of long-term beds is on hold pending the

release of the seniors' health and wellness strategy, which may or may not be ready next spring; another strategy.

We believe that opening up the existing private long-term care beds, licensing these beds can have an immediate positive impact on the care of individuals needing care. We also believe that moving these individuals in long-term care out of hospital will have a positive and immediate impact on the stress that currently exists on the need for hospital beds.

It would not only improve the quality of life for long-term care patients, but will also help to alleviate some of the stress that our health care workers have in trying to meet the needs of long-term care patients while trying to balance their work in caring for acute care patients.

The current minister has stated that the province does not plan to build more public facilities. So what is stopping them from allowing our private facilities to take on this need for long-term care beds? If this is government's stated policy, why are they stalling?

It worries me when I hear the director for long-term care for Health PEI stating that they do not believe adding more long-term care beds is the solution.

I don't know how long it's going to take for this government to figure out that people are looking for it. That they're looking for long-term care – they're not looking for long-term care in a hospital bed.

I understand that this government is looking at ways to keep people in their homes longer, and that's a positive thing, too. We understand that our home care needs to be improved and we want to keep people in their homes longer. We need to provide the better supports in home care for this to happen.

I'll give an example, and I know all the MLAs in here have heard this when they've gone door-to-door; they've talked to constituents. We have people that are already caring for their mothers, their fathers, or a sick aunt or uncle and there is no financial help for them to take care of them in-home. That's a shame because I think that's one way that we can help.

We know that the line-up or the queuing of people trying to get into the system is many and that is one way to alleviate it. We know that people, when they finish acute care in hospital; it can take a month, it can take two months; we've have heard many stories of it taking multiple months in hospital, sitting in a bed. We're told that every day that someone sits in a hospital bed they're losing 1% ability on average.

You might have someone that could be in there for – could be rated as a level one, two or three as community care and then you're talking if they're in there for four, six, eight weeks, because of their reduced ability, they're now rated as a four or a five and now need long-term care and that's a problem.

I think we've got about nine manors, 11 private care spots on PEI. It's time for government to stop messing around with this issue and put people where they should be and where they need to be to maximize the quality of life and mental and physical health requirements.

I know that there's this study and strategy that's being formed. We do need to come up with that number that's going to be the appropriate number. We know we've got a lot of baby boomers that are coming into an age group; this aging demographic that is going to be a large bump. On the other side of that, that we'll be okay.

What we know right now is that the need is there. It's a desperate need right now. The government can say that: yes, we need to wait and find out what that proper number is going to be, but we know right now that there will be a certain level of need. Yes, we need to figure out the finite details of when we get to the top end of that curve of how many beds that we're going to need in the future to maximize it long-term. But we already know, right now, that there's a need. We're very safe in issuing those licenses now and then we can plan for the additional beds after.

Our motion is about people. It's about meeting their health care needs, both in the hospital and out-of-hospital. Please support our motion. I would urge everybody to license the existing private long-term care beds, get these individuals out of hospital

beds or waiting at home. Let's do what's right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion. When it comes to long-term care beds and the shortage we see here on Prince Edward Island, I think the situation is very clear. It's something that has been talked about for years, and we've seen the demographics increasing; the number of people over 65 retired. Those people, of course, are growing older and need long-term care facilities. This is not a new problem this has been around for literally for decades.

That's why, here in the official opposition we're calling for action. We want something, some action to be taken to fix the problem. The time for studies and consideration is over. When I say the situation is clear, it really is.

At standing committee on October 31st, Halloween, this year, we found out, and confirmed, I should say, that in a private long-term care facility beds cost \$185 a day. In a public long-term care facility it jumps up to \$230 a day. What's, perhaps, is not clear here is, in fact, the amount that a person pays if their income is at a high enough threshold is actually more in a private facility than in a public even though the private facility costs less. That was an issue that was raised and I would imagine that the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness will put that forward as a recommendation in their report to the Legislature.

But here we have private and public: \$185 a day, private; \$230 a day, public; whereas a hospital bed costs the province between \$900 and \$1,200 a day. These are directly taken from the standing committee on October 31st.

When you have seniors in hospital beds – acute-care beds, they cost \$900 and \$1,200 a day, but if they're in long-term care beds,

it's somewhere between the \$185 and a \$230 a day mark, depending on private or public. The whole idea here is you want to have people, not only in the low-cost beds, but the place where they're going to get the best care. Everybody agrees – I know that the Minister of Health and Wellness agrees – we've talked at standing committee before and he's testified. I look at the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park – I know he agrees. I think everyone here in this House can agree that a senior who has been medically discharged should be in a long-term care facility, if that's where they're assessed – not in a hospital bed. Everyone agrees with that.

The question is: Why, if it's less expensive and it's better for the person, are these seniors not being moved to a long-term care facility? The next question is: Well maybe the beds aren't available. Maybe the long-term care facilities don't have enough room. But, in fact, private facilities, at least, are saying: We have beds that are available. They're there. They're empty. We want the licences. Please give us the licences, we'll bring them in.

So we've got, as of today's tally, there were 74 people who are in hospital beds awaiting long-term care facilities. The beds are there. Private care facilities want them to be licensed. It's better for the person; it's going to cost less. Why not do it?

At the standing committee on October 31st, probably one of the most disturbing things I heard was: Well, you know, if we move a senior from a hospital bed –

Speaker: Hon. Members, I'm having a problem hearing.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you move a senior or a person from a hospital bed to a long-term care bed, they said: Well, you don't actually realize any savings unless you close that hospital bed – that's how you get the difference. And they said: There are always people waiting to get into those acute-care hospital beds. So, not only is the person waiting for long-term care – who's been medically discharged – not only is it bad for them to be in the hospital, they are blocking a bed that is desperately needed by other people who need that

hospital care. That's why those beds cost more. They have an elevated level of service that's required for people who need acute-care.

That's what this motion is all about. When you look at this, the situation is very clear. What's really unclear is why no action is being taken. Again, if I go back to the standing committee on October 31st – the thought was: Well, we need to look at our long-term plan and our strategy. How many beds should we do because we're going to bring in home care? But you know what? When you're dealing with private care facilities, I believe the government can strike a deal and say: Look, we want to have these long-term care beds licensed for one to five years. We may have to pull them at some point, but let's put the people in them right now. Let's achieve the benefit. This is what we want here in the official opposition; we want meaningful action. The situation is very clear. The benefits are very clear all the way around – for seniors, for government, for people waiting acute-care beds, for our health system as a whole.

That's why this motion is so important and that's why we're bringing it forward. If someone indeed does not support this motion, I will be scratching my head, I will be shaking my head, and I'll be wondering if they understand the issue at all.

I do rise to support this motion and I do hope that every member in this House supports this. It's about treating our seniors with respect, it's about being financially responsible, and it's about doing what's best for health care in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As everyone in the House knows, this is near and dear to my heart. What I did in previous career – work in a long-term care facility. We asked the minister of health questions today and I fully understand it's a fully complex part of his portfolio. Dealing with seniors and what happens to them when

they're no longer able to take care of themselves in their home.

The one comment I always made about the Gillis Lodge is everyone thinks it's a wonderful place, but nobody wants to go there. He talks about aging in your home – well that's what every senior wants to do. They want to stay in their home, they want to remain there, they want to be productive in their community, they want to be part of their community. Most people – I'd say almost all people – do not want to end up in a long-term care facility. It's kind of the last resort. When they get to a point where they can no longer take care of themselves, their health is declining and they are assessed and they're told they're a level 4 or 5, which means nursing care; they need to go in a long-term care facility that provides nursing care – end of story. There's no other answer to that. The fact that we're housing them, parking them in hospitals, is concerning. My seatmate here mentioned the fact – and it's something I didn't know – but 1% per day of their ability is lost if they're left in a hospital room.

I can speak to the fact of two particular gentlemen that come to mind on a regular basis. One of them was in the Kings County Memorial Hospital for a year waiting for a long-term care bed. The other gentleman was waiting for a year and a week. They came to the Gillis Lodge within a week of one another. Their health had declined a lot. Their mobility had declined. Their cognitive skills had declined. Once they arrived, that improved. There's socialization, there's card-playing, there's church. It's part of giving back from the community. I know there are at least four, if not five, churches that participate in services where you can come and worship with whatever denomination you choose, depending on the week. That makes all of those seniors feel that they're part of their community – that they remain part of their community.

The concern that we have: that all of these people that are parked in hospital beds because it seems to be a fiscally good thing to do, is not what's right for them. All the seniors should be looked at through a person-centered care and that's what is encouraged and that is what is taught for all the nursing staff. We want person-centered care for our seniors. So, it's not what's best

or most convenient for the hospital or for the nursing home, it's what best for the patient. When we look at it, we need to look at the patient or the resident – what fulfils them on a daily basis.

The best way – if they need to be in a long-term care facility – the best way for them to be enriched is to be given the opportunity to go to a facility and not to wait for three months, six months, a year, a year and a week. It is happening and maybe the wait times are down and I give the minister the benefit of the doubt on that. I said it before: it's a tough story – from beginning to end, but when you're at the other end of the phone, hearing from families: I'm desperate. I don't know what I'm going to do. My parent cannot be left alone. Home care is not filling the need anymore. They need a room. It's a tough position to be in and it's a tough position for the minister to be in because he's dealing with it on a daily basis. Seventy-four, he says today – well I believe it's more than 74. There's a waiting list all the time. It's very hard for staff – the health care staff – to choose who out of that 74 is the next person on the list.

We hear of it all the time – you can ask any long-term care facility. There's a death in the paper and that's where their parent is going – they're on the phone the next day wondering: Am I the next one on the list? That's a terrible, terrible situation to be put in – to be looking at the deaths and hoping that maybe there will be a spot for my parent at a long-term care facility. There's not one person in this room wants us to be in that position, but that's where we are. We do not want our loved ones to be parked in a hospital.

We talk about plans, we talk about strategies, we talked about collaboration. We know that there is a seniors' housing crisis. We know that there is a great need for community care and long-term care. We heard there's going to be changes. There's part of a strategy to have more home care. I believe there was an announcement through the federal government; \$800,000 for home care. That happened quite a few months ago now. Are we any further ahead with ensuring there's more home care for our seniors and for our loved ones? I don't think so.

Maybe it's just another announcement. We know this government loves announcements, and I think the federal government loves announcements too.

Mr. R. Brown: There are a lot of good ones lately.

Ms. Biggar: Great ones coming.

Ms. Compton: It would be great if you followed through on those announcements. An announcement is nothing but that; a photo-op and an announcement. If you don't follow through on it, that's all it is and people get tired of listening.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Announce future announcements (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: \$800,000 for home care; I bet there's not one more home care person in there. We've hired someone to develop a strategy. It's another strategy. That's great, but it's not helping the neighbour down the road who calls me and says: I need help with home care, or I need to ensure that if home care is not the answer, there is a bed waiting; there is a bed waiting in a long-term care facility.

We talked today in Question Period about saving money. Is this a way of saving government money? We'll house them in the hospital. We'll park them there because it's cheaper than making sure or ensuring that the person waiting for a knee replacement or a hip replacement, or any other in-care hospital service, gets into the hospital. There are no beds. There are no beds; one reason is because we've got seniors parked in hospitals. Every one of us have heard from our constituents about: I've been waiting on a list for two years for a hip replacement, for a knee, for any in-care service and there are no beds, I'm on the waiting list.

The seniors health and wellness strategy; well, it sounds like a good idea. It's another strategy. When's it happening? Is the person who calls –

Mr. MacEwen: Three more announcements.

Ms. Compton: Yeah, three more announcements; save it for the next election. That would be a good time.

Is the person who calls any one of the long-term care facilities waiting to see if their parent or loved one is getting in there, do they care that there's a strategy in the offing? They do not. They care that there's no bed for their loved one, and that's the issue.

Replacement of two manors –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. MacEwen: Promised 10 years ago.

Ms. Compton: The same number of beds.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) 2011 (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It is (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: We talked about announcements – how many times have they been announced?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) more beds.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: How many times – no, not any more beds; the same number of beds. How many times have we announced that? Riverview Manor, liked we talked about before; the only person that made any money off the Riverview Manor up until just very lately was the person that put up the signs, over and over again, about the new announcement.

Mr. R. Brown: Just look (Indistinct) Tories.

Mr. MacEwen: Good business.

Ms. Compton: It's a good business, that's for sure.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) around

Ms. Compton: We're pushing it down the road, and it is concerns. It's a concern for everyone and it should be a concern for everyone in this room. It's a concern for this side of the House, I can tell you that right now, and for every hon. member across the

way who hears from a constituent on a regular basis about where their loved one is going to go and where they are on a list for a long-term care facility, it should be your concern as well.

It's great to talk about strategies; it's great to talk about a plan and a collaboration. We hear it over and over again. What we need is more long-term care beds. They need to be across the Island. Every one of you have people in your community waiting for long-term care beds; I know it. We need to ensure that the beds are there, to the very best of our ability. It is going to be an increased demand, until I'm there. I'm the last of the baby boomers. Then, people –

Mr. R. Brown: No, I am.

Mr. Roach: I am.

Ms. Compton: – will stand in this Legislature and say: What are we going to do with those long-term care facilities? But right now, that's not the concern. The concern is –

Mr. R. Brown: Bradtrivers.com (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: – what are we going to do with our aging seniors who no longer can be at home. It's not about –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: – a stop-gap measure –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) very serious.

Ms. Compton: It's not about –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) should too.

Ms. Compton: – providing more home care in its entirety, it's about what happens if the home care doesn't work. What happens if that's no longer the answer? What happens when they're assessed at a level four and they need nursing care? That is the real struggle here. We need more long-term care beds. We all know it.

I urge everyone in this room to support the motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker for letting me speak.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. R. Brown: Here we go. Here are all the facts.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, maybe the podium would be helpful.

Better get the big one; it's a big issue.

Anyhow, I'll start off. I appreciate bringing this motion forward by the opposition. This is a subject that many Islanders like to have an opinion on and to see what we can do to try to alleviate some of the pressure points that we face as a province. As minister of health – I've been minister now for 22 months – and these are the two issues that have been front and centre, have been the issue around mental health which we had a good debate about yesterday, as well as the issue around long-term care and the state of how we care for our seniors as we move forward as a province.

Our seniors, they've contributed greatly to our province over the years. Many of them fought in wars. Many of them raised large families. They've contributed greatly to our community, our community organizations, and we want to make sure that we try to make sure that we're providing them the utmost of respect and appreciation for what they've contributed to our province over those years.

This motion speaks to one of the major needs that we are hearing from our seniors, is how we handle long-term care and the care of our seniors. I think there's a lot of different issues pertaining to the issue. It's not only about long-term care; we have to make sure that we're providing stable, accessible care that seniors can depend on as they do age and work through the process. The reality is that Islanders are in their homes. They want to stay in their homes. They don't want to be institutionalized. They want to have the supports that can allow them to fully function in a community, provide their own care for themselves and feel enjoyable in their elderly years.

Also, the next step from that – sometimes seniors get to a point where maybe their properties are rather large or they have issues in trying to maintain, doing all of the general physical work that is required to maintain a particular property. They may decide that they want to go into a housing unit and we have many developers that are out there that have developed good senior housing complexes. They provide apartments, condominiums, the list goes on. That sometimes can meet a need for many Islanders as they're ageing.

If after a period of time that they wind up starting to need a bit more support and care from where they are, whether that's at their home or an apartment or a seniors' complex, they may require more of the day-to-day domestic duties. It may be around housekeeping isn't up to their ability to be able to deliver that. Their ability to cook and get around the community; maybe transportation becomes an issue. That's another phase in an individual's life. Maybe they have to look at more community care facilities, and we have a great number of community care facilities across this province. I know the Member from Belfast-Murray River was involved in a community care facility that also provides long-term care, and she would understand that there's a certain stage in seniors' lives where they require that sense of support. That's something that we have to make sure that we're looking at.

Once an individual or a family gets beyond the point that their physical or mental capabilities that will be causing a potential detriment to their – in a situation in a community care facility, that's when they go through an assessment tool through our professionals and home care to determine whether an individual now would qualify for long-term care.

In Prince Edward Island, we have a tool that we use that's called the seniors' assessment tool. We're one of the few provinces that use that particular assessment tool. Most other provinces use the interRAI assessment tool. As minister, we are embarking on a process to get some further details on this assessment tool that the other jurisdictions are using and see how that interacts and would affect Islanders here on Prince Edward Island when they're going through

that same assessment tool. Is it a situation that's going to be more difficult to assess people? Or is it going to be too easy to assess people? We need to get a little better interaction to how that would work.

Then you hit the other issue, and the question becomes: If we added more long-term care beds, how many would you add? You can say 74, maybe. We've seen that number decline significantly over the last couple of years, yet our senior population is increasing, so we've made some significant investments as a government in preventative issues around home care and supports.

We've got a more of a healthy and wellness strategy out there. Islanders are taking more responsibility for their health. They're getting active. They're out in communities, sporting events, skating; the list goes on – walking. And these individuals, maybe as we move forward, may not require the same needs of urgency for their level of care. It may be a slower progression as they age.

These are the types of things that we have to get a better sense of.

And then the other question, if we added – we'll say 50 beds, 70 beds, whatever that number might be – where would you add them? I mean, I've got communities, I think every community out there in Prince Edward Island would say we'd like to have more long-term beds to our facility or our community. There's some fairly daunting questions here that confront myself as minister and ourselves as government, and as legislators.

It is simply not about adding more long-term care beds without the right evidence and where the pressure points are in our system and where those pressure points are within the province, so it's important that we make sure that we're making the right investments in the right locations so that we are meeting the needs of seniors and as individuals as they age.

I think that as a government, we have added – I think it was 145 more long-term care beds to the system since 2007. When I look at our statistical information about the amount of long-term care beds that we have and compare it with other jurisdictions, we have actually one of the most – highest

number of long-term care beds per capita to other provinces, so you have to ask that question: Why is that?

And then I also look at some statistical evidence as a department, as minister, when it comes to home care. But on the other hand, I'm finding that we don't – we're one of the lowest spenders when it comes to home care in this province as per capita comparable to other provinces. That's why I have to get a better sense of where those needs are and what would be the interaction and balance between home care investments and long-term care.

And then the other question that was brought up many times, they mentioned people that are in acute care beds. Once again, what's the interaction between long-term care beds, acute care beds, community care beds, and the hospital beds? There's all these different components when it comes to the care and requirement that Islanders as they age require.

So, is it a case that maybe we have too many acute care beds? If that's the case, okay, how do you interact and change that?

There's a lot of very fundamental questions that need to be answered, and that's why in my department and with the blessing of government, we have accessed the services of Dr. Michael Corman, and he's developing a seniors strategy here on Prince Edward Island, and he's – these are the types of questions I've been asking him. I need that kind of consultation and advice back to me.

I've had the opportunity to tour many of our long-term care facilities in the province, and wonderful facilities. I must comment about the staff, whether it's in our public facilities –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, great.

Mr. Henderson: – or our nonprofit facilities, or private facilities that are out there. These staff are so compassionate and dedicated to their clients and their patients and the residents within their facility, and they do great work with that. They become very attached – they become family members, almost, to a certain degree.

They are doing good work, and we are providing good care, and I think it's a very

important thing to note, when we talk about – the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River said about people in acute care beds that are awaiting long-term care. These people are still receiving good service. They have nurses; they have access to nurses, LPNs, RCWs, primary care providers. They are getting good service, and we're doing our very best to try to accommodate them when it comes to their interaction with more of the recreational types of activities that most long-term care locations provide. And I think it's very important that that's noted out there, that just because an individual may be awaiting long-term care, and they may be awaiting long-term care for a month or two months, or who knows – that would depend on the situation – but yet, they are still getting a good level of care.

That's one of the things I think is very important to note here. From my perspective as minister, it's very important that I make evidence-based decisions that have fact behind them. It's not about just throwing a number out and saying, you know, that's the number.

I've had the opportunity to have conversations with many of our community care facilities out there, to see what the availability of long-term care beds would be. I want to reiterate the importance that when a bed is licensed long-term care, there's a process that that goes through. So if the government says that we're adding 20 beds or 10 beds to this facility or that facility, there's a process that they have to go through, and right now Gillis Lodge is going through that. And part of that is they are assessed by the community care facilities board. They go through, making sure that they have the right staffing complement. They have to make sure that they meet certain criteria when it comes to square footage of space. They have to have the ability to provide lifts in the room. They have to have washroom facilities that meet standards.

It's not just about saying you turn on beds and away you go. It's not that way. You have to do – make sure that it complies with standards, and these are standards that are compliant with other jurisdictions across the country, and I just think that's very important to note that.

Then, once the community care facilities board determines that the bed is licensable, then the next step is there has to be a timeframe for them to ramp up the staffing and hire. That's why when we went through the process with the Atlantic Baptist Home, there are processes there that they have to give us 90 days of notice if there's any change in the designation of their beds.

We've done a fairly thorough review of where beds are possible. I think it's important to note, though, people are saying here that some of these beds are empty; maybe some are, but that's not always the case. They may be having people that are at a level of community care in those particular beds.

I had the opportunity to tour with the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning *La Coopérative de Chez Nous Ltée* facility in Wellington, and they do have some beds that would meet standards, or they think they would meet standards if they went through an assessment, but they have people in those beds. Those people are there getting a level of community care that I would almost say is second-to-none; beautiful facility.

I think that's always important to note out there. It's not that all beds are empty.

With that, I'm in support of the fact that I think we're going to be requiring more long-term care beds in our system. I don't think that's the question at this point in time. But it comes back to how many; where would you locate them, and it looks like that the concept will be more from a nongovernmental perspective. I think we've made that statement a number of times. So it could be a cooperative facility; like *La Coopérative de Chez Nous Ltée* may be a possibility. It could be a private facility, like Gillis Lodge would be an example; Andrews of Stratford. All those places out there would be the ones, the type of organizations and business models that we'll be looking for.

We basically said that we're not necessarily going to build more beds into our system, through the public system. We've went through a fairly extensive remodeling of all our facilities, upgrades, new facilities being under construction in Tyne Valley and

Montague at Riverview, and I've had the opportunity to tour those facilities with the MLAs that are in those particular locations. I would say that these are going to be very impressive facilities. They're going to be very energy-efficient. They're going to have all the very best architectural science behind why walls are a certain way or a way that sunlight enters the building – more efficiencies as it pertains to the delivery of food to the residents, the more comfort of the residents, so we are doing a lot of good things.

I know that in both those facilities we're going to have the ability to handle respite care, and that's another good comment to make. We have beds in even our public facilities that are available for respite. They're not always utilized.

Once again, we need to make sure that families are taking advantage of the services that we do provide currently, and respite care. I know in my own family's case, when my mother was going through these types of issues and was awaiting placement in long-term care, we tried to access all the respite services that were out there. We accessed every chance we could to enhance our home care, making sure that we were taking advantage of all those particular programs that were there to help families and seniors get through these periods of time before they actually get a designation for a bed.

There are times in our system that we have beds that are empty within the 1,141 beds that we have. Sometimes the individuals may not want to go to that particular community or that location. That's another factor. Is it a case, even the amount of beds that we do have in the system? Are they in the right location? These are fundamental questions that have to be answered before we, as a Legislature here, start making decisions on where we're going to, and how we're going to deal with this rather complex issue.

Without having a bit more further detail on this, I would find it very hard to support this motion. With that I will be putting forward an amendment to Motion No. 5.

I would like to move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land

and Environment, the following amendment to the motion.

I have copies here, Mr. Speaker. I'll get you to hand around.

I guess I'll give a little time for them to hand around the amendment. Like I said, the spirit of the motion is a good motion. I do not challenge or question that. I just think it needs to be a bit more accurate and reflecting today's situation. I don't blame the opposition. Like I say, when it comes to the amount of beds, people awaiting acute care; it changes daily. Sometimes it's up; sometimes it's down. We have trend lines that we've seen in our department that reflect that.

I think in general most – I'll kind of go through them:

I move that the first clause in the figure of 100 be replaced with the number 70, so it more accurately reflects our current statistical data;

In the fifth clause, I move to:

Add the word 'potential' and remove the word 'immediately' so that it reads: there are a number of potential long-term care beds in private facilities that remain unlicensed that could meet the needs of these individuals.

Like I said before these beds, they may be empty at the moment, but they still have to go through the licensing process and make sure they meet the standards that we have outlined in our community care facilities act.

I also move that whereas clause be added which states:

Whereas a continuum of care advisory committee – which I mentioned earlier – has been established to provide information and insight into long-term care, home care and community care on Prince Edward Island, but they focus on the current funding models and best practices in bed allocation with the Canadian and international context.

Finally, I move that the clause, the phrase:

Immediately grant licenses to those private long-term care facilities – because once

again they're not all private – be replaced with:

Move towards granting licenses to private long-term care facilities as deemed necessary.

I have the amendment written out. I've passed it around. I have given a copy to the members.

Seconded by the minister of environment.

Afterwards, I'll speak to the amendment motion. Is that the process?

Ms. Biggar: It is.

Mr. Henderson: Oh, I am speaking to it now, okay.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: I want to now give the rationale and reasoning to why I'm proposing those amendments to this particular motion.

Ms. Biggar: Great job.

Mr. Henderson: As I had mentioned before, Islanders do have among the best access to long-term care beds in the Maritimes and Canada. Many times I've gone to our federal-provincial meetings and when I say that we have 70 beds of people waiting in long-term care – even in the correlation that Prince Edward Island can be a bit smaller – those numbers are pretty relevant for our perspective that those numbers are good.

I think Ontario made some recent announcements; their numbers were, you know, hard to imagine. That tells us that we are doing pretty good and we do have a fair number of long-term care beds.

But yes, we all fundamentally recognize we can do more and we can do better, but there are some fundamental issues that need to be dealt with.

There are certainly individuals that are awaiting long-term care placement, but that's 15% lower than it's been in 2012. In 2012, we had 195 individuals awaiting long-term care. So, that's quite a significant

change. Once again, we are heading in the trend lines that, once again, makes sense on how we deal with this interaction of home care.

But yet, we've increased our supports for home care, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Premier. We've invested in them. We're doing much better service when it comes to the delivery of home care in this province. In fact, that was one of the highest priorities of the federal government and speaking with then minister Philpott, now Ginette Petitpas Taylor, the Minister of Health for Canada, in seeing that mental health and addictions and home care were their two biggest priorities. We went through a relatively long negotiation process as provinces and territories, led by the Premier in a number of cases to come up with a model of funding that would see money go to these particular issues.

Once again, we haven't actually received the money as of today, but I'm told it's coming very shortly. We will be, then, launching some new announcements that will deal with home care. We have to see what kind of impact that that's going to have. We think that that's going to, once again, slow down the trend line of people who require long-term care.

In 2007, we certainly have increased the number of long-term care beds. Actually, back at that time when government was formed over here, there were 996 beds in the system with zero plans to add more.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: Nothing.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: Today, we have 1,141 long-term care beds; an increase of 145 beds in that period of time, that's significant.

Once again, we did that with plans. We thought this out. Now, we're at a point where we have to review that and we have to renew that plan. It's time for that and that's part of the reason why we've got this committee and this committee led by Dr. Corman has engaged many Islanders.

I had the opportunity to speak. We are also working with the Minister of Family and Human Services and her department and how this interacts with community care, long-term care, as well as, independent housing for seniors.

We've engaged Islanders. We've got a number of people, I know there are a few from my district, they're on it. They're from all across Prince Edward Island. They are helping get the facts; get the information; make some decisions; make some recommendations to me as minister, which, at that point in time, I will then forward that information on to government and we'll put together a plan on how we deal with a number of these issues.

The issue, like I said before about the assessment tool; critical issue in how we deal with long-term care in this province. Today, we have an assessment tool that's different from most other jurisdictions. It's been a tool, I'm sure it works to a certain degree, but, you know, we do see Islanders that wind up getting admitted to long-term care. I had one recently in my district and with some interventions, with a period of time, I think it was in about a month in long-term care, he was able to come back home. That's a fundamental difference that we haven't seen before.

We're able to do a lot of investments around physio, occupational therapy, all those types of investments are there to help people get more functional and get back, and not be institutionalized. They don't want to be. I know the individual I'll talk about; his name is Lawrence Gallant from the Duvar Road, wound up his family was having a hard time working with him. He seemed a bit disoriented; went through the assessment tool; got admitted to long-term care eventually. He got admitted, and this guy lives in Duvar, got admitted to The Mount in Charlottetown. So we had a first available bed policy.

In that particular case, he gets down to The Mount, with the great care that the workers and the staff provided him there and our health care providers that intervened, within a couple of months he was back home. He was able to be discharged from long-term care.

These are interventions that have never happened before. We have a lot more of those types of investments. That's where, if we can do those kinds of things in slowing down people from going directly into long-term care, we can provide better service to Islanders that's more reflective, more accurate and the level of care is at the right time.

Certainly, the wait time average to access long-term care from hospital varies from one patient to another, depending on the type of situation; whether it be a standard bed or a dementia bed. That's a factor that makes a big difference in the – we have some of our licensed beds of the 1,141 beds; some of them are designated dementia beds. There's a reason for that. The reason is, is that it has a lockdown facility. It has to have a certain level of care provided. We reflect that in our budgeting. We pay our private facilities, our non-governmental facilities differently for dementia beds. But they have to provide a certain level of service that meets that standard.

The bed availability, it just depends what the wait time is, but we do admit patients to long-term care and it's based on the most urgent situations; those most in need. Some people that may be progressing much slower in requiring long-term care may have to wait longer than somebody that is in a crisis situation when it comes to the disorientation or the family supports, and the list goes on.

These are the types of things – we've seen situations – adult protection is under my department and there are some very sad circumstances out there sometimes that individuals aren't able to provide the level of care that's required to a loved one. Sometimes, we have to intervene and provide that level of care and try to get that patient into either a long-term care bed or a hospital bed.

The combined budget allocation for our public manors and private nursing home grants has increased by 75.5%. Back in 2007 the budget was \$53 million – today: \$93 million this fiscal year – \$93 million; worth every penny. We need to invest in those seniors in making sure we're providing the right level of care, and I believe we're doing that.

Since 2007 – I think this is another fundamental issue that's important: 154 new full-time equivalent positions have been added to our public long-term care homes and an overall staffing increase of 25%. So, once again, our budget is reflective of the aging demographics in this province and also reflective of the increased investment individually that we're providing to seniors in this province who require long-term.

What I'm saying is: that we have increased access, we have increased investment and we've increased staffing for long-term care. We are seeing dividends and results of that paying with seeing our numbers reduce here.

The number of Islanders requesting or requiring long-term care beds has decreased and despite a steady demand due to an aging population. So it shows that we are on the right trend lines, but once again, we need to make it more reflective to where the future is and what the demands are for long-term care. We have opened manors in Souris, Alberton recently, Summerside, O'Leary's had some investments, Charlottetown – a \$63 million investment with the minister of transportation of infrastructure. Construction is underway at the moment with our new facilities at Riverview and Tyne Valley. Like I say, fantastic facilities and people will be very impressed with these.

So, we have to talk about the plan as we move forward. As we look into the future, a provincial review committee on the continuum of care is underway – I think that's important to note – it is there to examine ways to support a more coordinated approach to home care, community care and long-term care services.

I noticed in the throne speech, there's some talk about a seniors' program that's going to be able to help seniors stay in their homes a little bit longer, make things a little bit easier. These are the types of things – as we see these investments move and get in place, you're going to start to see a change and an outcome. That's why I think it's important that you can't just take the simple solution and say: Oh, add more beds into the system. That solves our problem. There's a big complex issue in how all these systems interact with one another and if you increase long-term care bed, what impacts does that have on community care? If you decrease

home care, does that have an impact on long-term care? We have to make sure that we know these answers and it's based on evidence and it's based on fact and I, as minister, that's the way I operate and we'll see what recommendations come back.

I think the other part is is that this government has always been about engagement and public engagement and we have that. When I spoke to this continuum of care committee at Holland College, I think there was probably about – I think Mr. MacIsaac was there – I think there was about 40 or 50 people there. We had some good discussions and, once again, we're looking at the evidence based on this and making sure that we're giving it a real good review and that when those recommendations come back, I'm going to have to be reassured as a minister that the public has had good input into this and that it's going to reflect what the needs of the public would be.

I think the goal here is how we can link our public and private sectors to improve access to quality services for aging Islanders. I think that's key. We certainly have a number of non-governmental organizations out there that have the ability to provide long-term care in this province – and provide other supports. I think we have to make sure that we're fundamentally engaged with them and knowing what they're able to provide and what they're able to do.

Seniors are now the fastest-growing segment of our population – not only on Prince Edward Island, but in Canada. With an aging population comes both opportunities and challenges, but ultimately the aging population reflects the need to further develop the health care system in ways to better address these complex needs. Is there a correlation between acute care and long-term care? Maybe there is – we have to make sure that we're meeting that. We have made some changes if you look at how we designate even acute care, as Mr. Premier and our hon. colleagues would know.

I know in O'Leary, now we've designated – there's thirteen acute care beds in O'Leary and we've designated them to provide a certain level of service. We provide restorative care to seniors or individuals that require the ability to restore from – maybe

it's a situation where like – as I've mentioned before with Minister Gallant there, who wound up going to long-term care. Maybe we can get with the right physiotherapy, with the right occupational therapy – that we can get those individuals back home. Maybe they can rehabilitate from a stroke – things of that nature. They go to the stroke unit then they go back to get restorative care at the Community Hospital O'Leary and then they go from there into maybe home care back in their home. There has to be a plan and a process in how all these things interact.

We also provide convalescent care. So, somebody had surgery at the QEH or Prince County Hospital; how do we get those individuals from that location back home to their home community and get their ability to convalesce over a short period of time and then back home – and palliative care as well.

It's all about trying to make sure that we're providing that right level of care, that staff understand exactly what they're to provide – we select our staff based on their credentials for certain levels of care. That seems to be a very successful process and we have to maybe relook at that as we look at others. Not necessarily changing the acute care status of facilities, but we have to make sure that we're all working as a team and that our health care system is one Island health care system that supports one another and they all focus on their certain level of care that you're always going to need somewhere, at some point in time in your life.

With our aging population comes opportunities and challenges, but ultimately it's about making sure our system meets those needs of seniors and as a province, we do have this continuum of care advisory committee and I'm looking forward to their outcomes. This committee is tasked with providing information and insight into long-term care, home care, community care in a Prince Edward Island setting with a focus on current funding models – I think that's another issue that I want to get some sense of. We have a current funding model that says: a bed is allocated for long-term care and this is the funding that we provide these facilities, this is what it costs – maybe there needs to be a third option. Is there a pressure-relief valve that we can designate a certain bed or certain location in conjunction

with our community care facilities that we can take the pressure off the system when we run into over-capacity protocols? I know the hon. member talked about that it costs yay-much to put a person in a bed. The only time it costs money is when you get into this over-capacity issue – that's when it really has an impact. That's where we have to make sure that those pressure – there's a pressure relief valve that somehow allows us to better reflect the needs of Islanders and to also be cost-prohibitive in these things too. That's where I have to look at the – how do we interact our bed allocations as it deals with our Canadian context on how this is delivered?

The intent, certainly, of this committee is to make sure that it's evidence-based and it's gathered within the advisory group setting and we'll continue to develop a good continuum of care strategy and I think that's important – there has to be a strategy.

The hon. member from Summerside-Wilmot is all about strategies. We've got strategies in our throne speech and we're going to deliver on those strategies. You cannot deliver a project or implement anything without having a strategy. I'm sure the hon. member of Summerside Wilmot will endorse that. We have to have the right strategy here. You just can't go off and just make decisions without a fact-based approach to it. That's what I'm always about as minister and we are as government here.

Actions have already commenced in PEI to enhance and expand various types of services though this continuum and to implement best practices. I want to tell a few of these things: This includes the creation and expansion of the Caring for Older Adults in the Community Care and Home approach – it's called the COACH Program.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: If you recall, we've announced numerous times we have mental health walk-in clinics, both in Prince County and Queens County and I'm very close to announcing that that'll be in Kings County too, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: I've mentioned earlier, we've enhanced restorative and even enhanced our geriatric programs. We've hired a new gerontologist, Dr. Carmichael. She's doing a good review of – and interacting with Dr. Corman in where this continuum of care will go and how it interacts.

A comprehensive look at our continuum of care is required in order to determine steps to move forward to address the needs of our aging population in a fiscally responsible manner. Under the direction of our principle advisory for seniors and wellness, we are asking the big questions: Do we need more beds? We have to answer that accurately. Where would we need them? We have to know that. It's no good putting them in areas – like I say; there are times when we have beds that are empty because the families do not want to access those beds because they're maybe too far away from home.

I get calls all the time as minister; my advice is always: Take the first available bed. Wherever that's at, it may be an inconvenience, but that gets you in the system first and then you can work through the transfers from there. I know my own mother's case, she went through three locations before she wound up where she's at now and we were very grateful as a family to be able to access that service and I appreciate that, and I understand the complexities of adapting your mom to a new location and some of those types of things. Even ourselves as a family in our travel patterns when we'd go visit – but eventually the system worked through. She got into a nice location and she's next door to the minister of transportation's mom.

Ms. Biggar: She started in Crapaud.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, so these are the types of things that the system can work under.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: We have to understand, once again, what interaction –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – long-term care and community care have, home care. We need

to make sure that these services are very integrated, and I work very closely with the Minister of Family and Human Services. We're always looking at ways to enhance seniors' programs and work collaboratively together as departments, but as well as within our staff to deliver that.

The institutionalization, particularly for a long duration, is not always the best solution. It seems like the opposition always seems to say: You've got to have more of this, more of that. It's all about institutionalizing people. Our goals here, as a department and as minister, is how to integrate people back into the community; how do they be productive, regardless of their age? Regardless of their affliction, if it's a mental illness or things of that nature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: These models have –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) weren't listening, we'll Tweet it out to you.

Ms. Compton: Are you integrating your parents back into the community? I don't think so.

Mr. Henderson: These models have changed over the years –

Ms. Biggar: Let's not get personal here and talk about our parents (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: You're talking about my mother? (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: But, if you talk about the issue, when it comes to integrating – I'd mentioned earlier –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: I mentioned earlier about Mr. Gallant, Lawrence Gallant, from my district. He did integrate back into the system. He went to long-term care and integrated back home. Now, he's back home and he's now back closer with his family and his family is able to care for him. Even if that extends that by six months; anything that you can do to help people and not

institutionalize them is really their best situation.

Mr. MacEwen: We're all for it.

Mr. Henderson: Right now, our length of stay in long-term care is above the national average. That tells you something there too, that once again maybe we don't have the balance right. I think it speaks volumes of the level of care we're able to provide to individuals and their comfort and their stability that they have. But, we have to look at how that interacts in a Canadian context.

We need to look at the alternate solutions and how we can elevate our pressure points on bed capacity, which leads me to my final point. I think home care is part of the solution; it's part of what the federal government is prioritizing –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – and it's what we've discussed as all of the jurisdictions across the country, and we are going to see monies flow for a good integrated home care strategy. I have to note that the initiatives that we are developing, they have to be new initiatives. It cannot be repetition of exactly what's provided at the moment. It has to be new initiatives. It has to be approved by the federal government to qualify for those dollars and we've had some good preliminary discussions and we feel that we'll have an announcement in the near future that will reflect that money and how it will be spent. Once again, we feel that it's going to have a significant impact on extending peoples' opportunities to live at home.

Home care is certainly a very important part of our Island health care system, and we are committed to ensure that Islanders continue to have access to this vital program so that they can safely remain in their home for as long as possible, or return to home sooner after a stay in hospital. We have to make sure that we are providing those supports, with the help of families, I might add. Families play a responsibility here too, to make sure that collaboratively, between home care, our hospital system and families, that we can reintegrate people back home as quickly as possible and as comfortable as possible.

Home care services support individuals who have acute, chronic or palliative, or even rehabilitative healthcare needs that may include issues around nursing care, home support, palliative care, dietitian services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work and adult day programs.

I had the opportunity to be down at, I think it was Prince Edward Home here not too long ago, where one of the day programs and we had some individuals – family members that were there and said what a difference it made in the care of their father to be able to drop him off and go through a good program where they interacted with other seniors; that they had a purpose, they were excited about getting out. It made a big difference in their mental health, and then it also made a big difference in the mental health of the family members.

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

This House recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may be seated.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 1, Adjourned debate on the Draft Address and reply to the Speech from the Throne. Debate was adjourned by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Speaker: I will call on the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, to speak to the motion.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's with great pleasure that I stand today and second the Speech from the Throne.

As stated in my member's statement yesterday, I am especially proud to have a Tignish resident the 42nd Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, Her Honour Antoinette Perry, present the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Third Session of the 65th General Assembly of Prince Edward Island Legislature.

In just over two years of being elected, this government has made significant factual growth. Our population is growing: With 1.7% growth from July, 2016 to July, 2017, PEI is the fastest growing province in Canada.

With the trend across Canada being an increased median age, our province is actually decreasing the median age.

Our government, in the coming year, will take steps to encourage more immigrants to stay and for more young Islanders to pursue opportunities here on Prince Edward Island.

In partnership with the federal government, the seafood processing sector, and our government, the Team Seafood initiative has given 250 Island students the opportunity to earn up to \$1,000 bursary in addition to their regular wages.

Team Seafood has been highlighted as the best practice in Atlantic Canada for its innovative approach to engaging the youth in the local workforce.

One of the best things about Team Seafood, it's giving young people an understanding of the importance of traditional industries to our rural communities.

I know, in my area, this initiative has helped students to support the community, while earning money for postsecondary education, and this is a win-win situation.

I am pleased to see that a similar initiative is taking place in the construction and the transportation sectors.

Fishing is so important to my community and to our province. A strong rural PEI means a strong province for everyone. It was great to see good landings this year. It means more money for families, for businesses, and for our communities.

Initiatives like the Future Fishers program, increasing lobster holdings' capacity to 800,000 lbs, and events like Love our Lobster, are supporting our hardworking fishermen and their families.

I grew up in a fishing community, and although my family didn't fish, it was the fishers that kept my family going. We grew up in a construction business, and when the fishers did well, they spent and we did well, and that trickled through – not only throughout just our community, but right across the province.

More Islanders are working, and our total labour income is one of the fastest growing in the country. Our economy is more robust than any other province in our region, and in fact, in the country. And above all else, our government has balanced the books.

Some more highlights that I am proud to speak of that positively impact my district are: Our government has invested in the town of Tignish with a new sewage treatment lagoon. The original lagoon was built in 1964, and was running at near capacity. This new infrastructure will allow the town to approve new building permits, an opportunity for growth.

The Stompin' Tom Centre, located in Skinkers Pond, opened its doors on Canada Day to an overwhelming crowd. This living memorial to a Canadian legend whose music transcends generations has proven to be a huge hit. And in fact, they had 15 programmed dinner theatre events planned, and due to demand they scheduled an additional 15 events, and they still had a waiting list. This shows the importance of culture to our community.

This new centre played a significant role in boosting tourism activity in West Prince. In fact, overnight stays in the region were notably up, and I confidently can say, it is due in part to this centre, and also to the new Mill River experience.

The new Tignish district heating system is the first of its kind here on Prince Edward Island. This project utilized European and Canadian technology to heat water in the central plant with locally sourced woodchips, and heats 10 large commercial buildings within the town of Tignish.

It was great to see this project happening in my district, showing how Tignish can lead the way on implementing greener technologies and helping out the local economy.

Our government's continued support for many programs certainly helped people, businesses, and communities in my region.

One new initiative that I am very proud to have had a role in is the opportunity for postsecondary students to collect EI while attending school. This is such a great help, especially for students in my district who have no choice but to move out of their homes to attend university. The cost of room and board can be considerably high.

Being able to have an income during these years of education will drastically decrease the amount of debt that they have and provide more stability upon completion. I believe this will encourage more young Islanders to remain here on Prince Edward Island.

The province's home renovation program, the Seniors Home Repair Program, and the Seniors Safe @ Home Program can provide much needed funding to many vulnerable Islanders to help them stay in their own homes. I cannot say enough good things about these programs. I've seen it many times over and over, the positive impression that they have made to the people in my district.

After reviewing the Speech from the Throne, I truly believe that Islanders will be optimistic and confident that there's opportunities for Islanders through continued growth in our economy, that more Islanders away will come back to start a family, opportunities for our youth, continued support to our seniors to help them stay in their own homes, confidence and growth in our primary sectors.

Since being elected to proudly represent the great people of District 27, Tignish-Palmer Road, I have experienced some highs and some lows. But I will give 100% of myself to give direction, problem solve, or just lend an ear to someone who needs it. I have not changed who I am as a person, and I enjoy each and every day that I spend within my

district. It is an absolute honour to serve my community and the fine people of Tignish-Palmer Road.

I believe that we, as a government, are moving forward with the needs of Islanders in mind, and I am so pleased to have this opportunity to second this motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is definitely a pleasure to rise and respond to the Speech From the Throne.

Isn't it strange
That princes and kings
And clowns that caper
In sawdust rings,
And common people
Like you and me
Are builders for eternity?

Each is given a bag of tools,
A shapeless mass,
A book of rules;
And each must make –
Ere life is flown –
A stumbling block
Or a steppingstone.

That's what I see when I read this Speech From the Throne. I know R. L. Sharpe may not have been directly talking about this, but I'm sure he would agree with that statement, as well, because this Speech From the Throne, I think, really is a stepping stone for our future; for our government.

I know some people may say it's a stumbling block in some ways, but we're much more positive than that, and we really see this as a stepping stone to our future.

I think it was a really strong speech and I want to congratulate our new Lieutenant Government Antoinette Perry for the job she did on delivering it. I think she's going to do a fantastic job as the new LG and I wish her the very best.

I'd like to touch on some of the progress on our agenda here. A lot of this – my comments will relate to my portfolio of agriculture and fisheries and how this really speaks to my portfolio.

We'll look at some of the highlights here, such as, an economy – the economy is stronger than it even has been. And we see that. We see the jobs. We see the people working. We see the excitement in the air and we see the positive attitude of so many people.

More people are working. Twenty-five hundred new jobs, that's absolutely fantastic. That's exactly what we need. Our population is growing, too; 152,000, was a good goal; a goal that we had set of making 150,000 by this year and we actually exceeded that. We're on track, I think, to exceed, perhaps, the goal of 2022 of 160,000.

People are looking at PEI. They're liking PEI. They're moving here and they're loving it. We have a lot of people coming home, too. The balancing of the books is not going to hurt that either.

I think that's very positive when we look at that. It actually allows us to do new things, and expand things like health care, education, whatever that may be; work with our farmers and fishers.

We just don't have to look too far away across a bit of water to see some of the provinces that, unfortunately for them, are not doing near as well as we are. We wish them all the best in that, but some of them are in a real serious situation, but on PEI we're in a really good spot.

We talk about the cable too. The minister from down – from Charlottetown-Victoria Park spoke about that, as well, and what it actually means to this province. Certainly, means a lot to agriculture and fisheries, too, to have that cable in place and secure the energy we need to allow us to grow in the future.

These points, they all directly relate to my portfolio, my department, and I think it's terrific. We talk about the work we've already done; 113 bills thus far, and we have a fairly busy agenda for this fall session, as

well. I think we like to work and I think we like to get things done, and we've proven that we will get things done, that's for sure.

We have an increasingly diversified economy. When you talk about diversification you could talk about the diversification even within our portfolio ourselves. When you see the new crops like the blueberries, the expansion to the cold crops, all of those sorts of things that we have people coming here and expanding, investing their dollars into agriculture, into fisheries, you know, our land, also, in the processing side, as well.

We need that. When we talk about a diversified economy, I think we need to talk, we talk a lot about small business, but we really need to give credit where credit is due. A lot of the small business in this province is in agriculture and is in fisheries. I know my counterpart there from Souris-Elmira can tell you that every fisherman that's out on the water is a small businessman. It's so important. He runs that, or she runs that, and we see both he and she running their businesses and running them very well and they're doing very well and we're very pleased with that. They're coming back and producing an extremely fine product, whether it's in the fishery or whether it's in agriculture, it's a prime product that people really need and really like.

Just to go over a few of the accomplishments, perhaps, that we've done in ag and fish, let's talk about the Atlantic Fisheries Fund.

Here's a fund, which we didn't have before. It was actually led by our province when federal minister Tootoo was here; we talked to him about it because we knew about the Growing Forward programs in agriculture. We said: we really need to have something like that in the fishery so we can invest in our infrastructure; invest in our fishery; similar to what we're doing in the agricultural piece. He had thought it was a great idea. Then, when Minister LeBlanc came onside and we had our Premier go to Ottawa to talk about it on our behalf, as well, we succeeded in getting that. It wasn't a lot of time taken to get that in place because everybody saw the good ideas and the benefits of that fisheries fund.

It was successfully negotiated with the feds and this is \$38 million for our province over the next seven years. It's for innovation and development. The projects are being approved at this time, which is great. There has not really been a program like this for many years.

Again, we talk about the Growing Forward 2. Just this summer, again, we signed the extension to that it's the new CAP or Canadian Agricultural Program and partnership and it's a five-year deal. We have some really good discussions and tough discussions at the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meetings.

Some of them thought we should hold off a year, and really look at what we've done in the last several Growing Forward programs, studying it even further and go forward. But we had surveyed our producers, had their input on what they liked about Growing Forward 2. What they would like to tweak or change a bit if we had a Growing Forward three. They did not want to see a delay. It happened one time before, I think, between the new first program and Growing Forward 1, that things were delayed for a year. We can't move forward if we don't have security; don't know exactly when this thing is going to go. It took a lot of hard discussions, but at the table, at the end of the day, we got an agreement on that for another five years.

That's a \$37 million for the non-business risk management programs for PEI over the next five years and 129 million for business risk management programming. That's absolutely fantastic that we have that in place. I thank everyone who was involved with that.

Quality Oyster Aquaculture Program, a new program that we just launched with our aquaculture oyster folks. We put \$200,000 into that. ACOA came in with 500,000 to match that up. The fishermen are putting in another 450,000 themselves.

This is five times the funding that was available previous to this. It's quite an initiative and we're looking forward for big things from that, because in the fishery, as in agriculture, things are booming and oysters,

I think, are going to lead the way in this, that's for sure.

The lobster levy, that was introduced and I think you have to give credit where credit is due. A lot of the Atlantic Provinces were trying to get a levy in place so we could have some dollars, in a little bit of a cheque-off to put towards marketing.

When I spoke to the ministers and we met the idea was that each of the provinces would do it. We take our lead from the fishermen. The fishermen on PEI agreed to do this, to take a cent a pound for their lobsters to put towards marketing. The processors were doing the same thing, so we actually garnered two cents.

We put together quite a fund that we could for marketing. Unfortunately, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, they couldn't come to that agreement. Kudos to our fishermen, they did that, we now have funding in place and we can do some promotion in that area.

The sad part is, we would love to have done this as a Canadian lobster or as an Atlantic region lobster; the funding was only gathered by the Island. We have the dollars in place. There's a lot of work that the groups are doing to decide now what they will do with the money, to spend it, to grow and improve things in the lobster industry.

Again, kudos to the fishermen for actually taking that on, taking the initiative and putting it in place, and it was a lot of tough discussions. They came down to a vote and approved it and that is absolutely terrific.

Another interesting thing we put in place was the provincial veterinarian. I know again, the Member from Souris-Elmira and I had the opportunity to congratulate her when we approved that position. This is the first time we actually had a provincial vet. Dr. Carolyn Sanford took on that position and that role and she's working, not only for agriculture, but agriculture and fisheries.

When we had the meeting last week of the Veterinary Medical Association here, from the province, there were a lot of kudos thrown back for the province for actually moving forward; putting in place a provincial vet and they were exceedingly

proud of the fact that Dr. Carolyn Sanford was in that chair. She's is just doing a great job. She's well liked, by both people in the agriculture and in the fisheries sector.

Animal welfare legislation, we've put that in place too. We had a good discussion on that again at the veterinary medical association meeting. Very pleased with that, because that legislation had not been updated for many, many years, and it took 5.5 years to actually get it together, but we moved forward on it. It can be tweaked perhaps in the future, but we have moved a big step towards dealing with issues like that with animals that need to be dealt with if they are under stress.

The agricultural stewardship program, we had a little bit of a debate about it here today, some of the great things that are happening there, but our staff has worked with the farmers; on average 165 projects a year. Absolutely fantastic, what is going on in our community; and I say it many, many times, our farmers do not get enough credit for the work they're doing with watching over their land because it is the number one resource.

It's the thing that allows us to farm, is our topsoil, and we cannot have it flushing into the streams or flushing down the hills and into the valleys and that sort of thing. We've put a lot of money through our stewardship program in putting in place berms, grass waterways, so if there's water, heavy rainfall, it is guided down in a proper way and not washing the topsoil away with it; again, kudos to a lot of the farmers and the engineers in my department who are working on that full-out.

They've now got drone technology, too. It used to be that they'd go into a field with a tripod and try and work the elevations of the land sort of thing. Now they can go in there with a drone and do the whole area so much quicker, come back; input the information into the computer overnight. Call the farmer in, and they can show them the elevations in the field and where they would like to put the grass waterways, the berms; whatever may be needed to hold that soil in place. It's just absolutely fantastic and a couple of the guys in our department are now being guest speakers at different agricultural meetings,

looking at this drone technology and what can happen.

We've also talked to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment to discuss this very thing and between the two departments, we're both looking at this drone technology and how we can use it even further. But, that's technology. It moves on and advances and we're doing upwards of \$1 million worth of projects there through the department ourselves.

Public trust; public trust is another thing in our new CAP program, Canadian Agriculture Partnership, that the federal government and the provincial ministers discussed. It is really key because our farmers and our consumers need to come together on one. We produce such a high-quality product, both in agriculture and in fisheries, but our consumers; they're the end game for us. We want them to buy our products, but we're developing a real great reputation for producing a high-quality food and delivering it to their table.

But, public trust is something you just don't get; you have to work at it. We have a lot of our commodities like the dairy, the hogs, the chickens, whatever; they had developed their own code of practice. How do we actually look after these animals properly so that we can deliver the milk or the chicken or the eggs, or whatever, to the consumer and they know when they're buying it, it is actually grade A. When we do projects now under the CAP program, public trust has to be a part of that. What have you done to prove to us that you have a grade A product there? It's just of great benefit, not only to the consumer, but to the farmer in allowing us to continue to farm.

Food security and food education program; I made a ministerial statement on that and I think it's just absolutely terrific, that project, and we had such a buy-in for it from the schools, from different community groups, from the Mi'kmaq association as well, because food security is really important. We are not at the point; we want to be here and, again, we had the discussion around the FPT table, and if you want to have a serious issue, talk to people in the outports of Newfoundland or in our territories. Their food security, it's unbelievable the situation they are in there. We are in good shape here

compared to many. We'd like to improve it even more. I'd like to see us – in a small province such as we are – work with the territories and look at trading there. We do not need to send everything to China or wherever. We can get a deal, if we can work it with the federal government. I talked this over with the Premier as well, if we can somehow get out product to the North; and it's tough to get it in there.

I know when I was in education; we had a federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Nunavut. Flew in there on the 3rd of July and it was snowing. Frobisher Bay was completely frozen over. They had an ice breaker in there trying to break it up so they could bring in the sealift, which is the big boat that takes in the dry goods.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: If you can help in any way, hon. member that would be terrific.

But, we need to work on things like that, but food security is something that we have to work on and I'll really be excited to bring back the results of these projects that we talked about earlier on today.

Diversity; I spoke to it again a little earlier about the diversity within agriculture and fisheries, and the new crops that we're growing and new markets that we're developing. When you look at high bush blueberries, we never really did a lot of that here before. There's a farmer now looking at putting in 1,000 acres of high bush blueberries. He's got 200 in place right now. The apples, really expanding and PEI apparently, before Annapolis Valley, we were the better apple grower in the Maritimes, and apparently we have the better climate for it, so hopefully we'll regain our position there, too.

The wild oyster enhancement program, which is terrific for the wild fisheries; we usually put 75 to \$100,000 into that for enhancement. We put some new oysters in three of the rivers this year. The spat was gathered and the small oysters were gathered last year. We're growing them out there to improve that fishery because the wild fishery is still about 60% of our industry. The aquaculture part of it is growing; it's 30-40 and gaining steam, but we still have

the wild fishery there. We have about four to 500 fishers that are actually still active in the wild fishery; a lot more licenses on that, so it could possibly grow as well, but we have to look after that. We have a great structure in place there in the new board that's there under the chairmanship of Kenny Arsenault and we look forward for great things from that as well.

In aquaculture, we're looking at our finfish and stuff. We look at what's happening in AquaBounty, again, up in the Souris area there. That's absolutely fantastic what's happening there, and also Northern Harvest who has put a new hatchery for salmon; expanded that, a new \$1 million building down in the Cardigan area to expand that area. It was interesting, again, sitting around the table talking about working together as provinces here in the Maritimes. When you can hatch the salmon out on PEI and you can take them to Newfoundland and grow them out and then you take them back and process them in New Brunswick, that's working together here as provinces, and that's what we need to do more. We will grow these industries as we work these things through.

We have an increasing diversity and we need to continue that for sure. I think it's been said a couple of times from some of the speakers so far, and it's nice to hear it from the people in the city if you go back to the former mayor or you go back to the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park right now, he firmly believe it and I think most people do, that when agriculture and fisheries are doing well, the whole province is doing very well.

Again, I think we have to give credit where credit is due with regards to our budget. If we're going to balance our budget we're going to do a lot of it, I think, based on how our farmers and fishermen are doing and they are contributing big time to this, to the economy of the province. Again, they're a small business. They're also very big businesses and they employ a lot of people and we need to work with them and we'll keep this economy rolling and they'll keep our coffers full as well. We have some great things happening there.

Just a little bit of a background on that, just on the cash receipts side of things and

diversity in agriculture, the farm cash receipts were almost over a half a billion dollars; absolutely fantastic and that leads to the economy help as well. Our department continues to support diversity in crops, and the livestock we produce.

We had meetings with the Maritime Beef Council in Nova Scotia over the summer. They have a goal of doubling the beef herd in Atlantic Canada. They're at 10,000. They want to go up to 20,000, which will work well for our beef plant as well. Our beef plant is really starting to turn a corner there. We have a great board of directors there and a manager of the plant. It is starting to make some marks into the black, which is absolutely terrific. We're going through an upgrade on the waste management plant there right now and putting a lot of dollars into that as well, not only from our government, but also from ACOA as well, which is needed.

They could use more animals going through there so the plan is to get up to 20,000 head, which will be terrific and we'll work with them on that. We do a lot of the finishing of the beef cattle here. A lot of cow calf in the other provinces, but again, we work together on the beef and get those animals, as many as possible, through our plant. We have a lot of the cull cows and things that are spent cows, you might say, when they're finished milking that will go through for hamburger at the plant too. We put a lot of those through. We need more animals in order to make the plant efficient. We still bring some animals in from outside, but we want to make that plant efficient and return as many dollars to the pockets of the farmers that we can.

The landed value in 2016 for fisheries and aquaculture was \$268 million. Lobster alone was 70% of that. Again, absolutely fantastic what they're putting forward for the economy of this province. The landed value for aquaculture is \$45 million with an economic spinoff on that of \$90 million. This is a place where there's great growth potential, and we need to work with them and some of the programs we have, with the Atlantic Fisheries Fund and stuff like that, that will help.

The finfish industry, I already spoke about AquaBounty and Northern Harvest, and

working with our shell fishers, putting in high-quality seed, and a lot of our staff are working with that to develop this even further. We have supported the association. Again, they have a good board in place, and we'll continue to do that.

But as Canada's food Island, we continue to have successful promotional initiatives, and I know some of these are very well known to you, and these encourage buying local and putting our Island foods front and centre: Love our Lobster, for example; Burger Love might be one of the biggest and most well known – we started that seven years ago. There were 20 restaurants, and we sold 2,700 lbs of hamburger. Last year, we had over 80 restaurants, and we sold 84,000 lbs of hamburger from our own plant, Island beef, absolutely fantastic.

There's lots of people trying to sample every one of them. It's interesting, you see some guys and gals, they go out and they'll have four or five, and what they do is – but they'll go out, now some of them are getting a little wiser, and they'll split one of these burgers in two or three pieces and share it and then go to the next one. But still, we moved 84,000 lbs of hamburger in that promotion.

Porktoberfest just finished up right now –

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, it shows.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: Porktoberfest just finished up again, and that was fairly successful this year as well.

Our International Shellfish Festival; there's not a better event around, and I was really pleased, not this past September but the September before, we were able to have the federal minister LeBlanc here. We had Rick Doucet, the minister of fisheries from New Brunswick. We had Keith Colwell, the fisheries minister from Nova Scotia here to come over and see what we were doing with the shellfish industry, and minister Colwell wanted to make this a Maritime event, and we bounced it around, but this is our promotion.

It is absolutely fantastic, and when you walk in that door and you see the dozen processors there with their oysters laid out there and they're shucking them and you can walk along and sample them, and at the end you vote for your favourite oyster, because coming from the different bays and the different rivers on the Island they have different colours, they have different tastes. Not everything is a Malpeque oyster, but everything is every bit as good as a Malpeque oyster, and we're now branding them in different names, and it is just a treat when you go through there.

Then, we have the – you go inside and you get the –

An Hon. Member: Thank you, Liam Dolan.

Mr. McIsaac: Yes, and congrats to Liam Dolan; he started this and it just took off.

We're really pleased to work Liam and the organization to get it to grow even further. I don't know how it is, but it comes up to that – becomes better than the last one. We have the chef competition there and the chowder competition and all this. It's just absolutely terrific what is happening in this little province, and our fishers and farmers are driving this economy, and I'm so happy for that.

We are creating stronger communities and addressing poverty in a top priority across – it is a top priority across our departments for our government.

We announced the healthy schools and food education program, and that wasn't just our department. That was a joint effort that worked with education. We worked with health. We worked with several groups to see what we can do in this area, and we're finding that now – I know for so many years that we seemed to work, likely, like in silos, but I know the Premier's initiative was to get us working in a hub, and so many areas that we, as different departments, depending on the topic, we work together, share the brains behind it, the ingenuity, and the dollars to make many more things work, and it has really paid off for us, and will for the province down the road; absolutely terrific.

But this school program, like I said, I'll report back to you. I'm just so excited about what it can do.

But these projects that were selected, they're going to promote good nutrition and healthy food choices, going to build community self-reliance. They'll link the farmers with the community, with the customers, which is key for our department for sure, and they will build pride and joy in preparing foods. Like I say, when we get the results back from these projects, we'll certainly share it with you.

We move, too, again, in the speech here about a clean energy and a sustainable environment, and our fishermen and our farmers, and we talk again about the watershed groups. They are so key. When you get the opportunity to travel to Kensington, to the Kensington North Watersheds group, see what they're doing; they're working with the streams, working with (Indistinct) – pardon me?

Mr. Trivers: Nice to get some more funding for it.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, no, we really appreciate that. But you know what?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: There's so many things you can do without just dumping a whole lot more money at it. When we have people who are not even –

Mr. Trivers: Ten-to-one return.

Mr. McIsaac: – not even involved with the farming –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – want to be so involved with what's happening in their watershed.

When I was with Kensington, I was talking to a lady there; she just moved here from away, got really involved. She lives in the community of New London now. They were talking about the streams there and what

they were working at, the projects that they had going. We went and talked to some of the farmers and saw the land that he had done through engineering with our department, putting in place the grass waterways, putting in place the berms, directing the water so it went down the proper way. They were catching it in a holding pond and recycling it for water.

We also had an opportunity to look where that water was spread around, and you can see in the corners where, in his farm, that did not get the water, the size of the potatoes from where it was irrigated is unbelievable, the difference.

We saw another field that day that didn't get irrigation at all, and the scab on those potatoes was the worst I have ever seen. Very unfortunate, but you get water when Mother Nature gives you water if you can't get water anywhere else.

In many cases, we were looking, I thought, at perhaps a disaster this year, but the water seemed to come at the right time, and a lot of people for irrigation from those ponds to put on their crop. It looks like – some of the scabbed potato – it's just a blemish on the outside. They still can be used in a lot of cases, and we hope that – it's a lot of money to put a crop of potatoes in, and we need to ensure that we can harvest and sell every bit that we get.

Water is key, and I think we're going to have a great debate on the Water Act –

Mr. Trivers: That's why we need policy and regulation.

Mr. McIsaac: – and we will –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) you're going to put to (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: We will continue to have that –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: Why don't you just wait for your own turn?

Mr. McIsaac: – that debate.

But some of the things, I think the newest project we talked about –

Mr. Trivers: We're here being patient. It's you guys (Indistinct) if you'd stop the laughing we'd (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – about the stewardship group, it has to do with a concentrated flow analysis and the potato guys – the potato farmers have really bought into this, and even better grass waterways, and improving on the work that we've done so far, and again using the use of the drones to make sure we put those in the right place. It's absolutely key.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: We talk, as well, about healthy population. We talked about the schools. But if you look around the country, and you look – even out the back of the farm centre, where we have these community gardens. If you look in Stratford where they doubled the number of community gardens for next year, absolutely fantastic. When you look at our Future Farmer program where some of our small farmers who weren't farming at all before, but they had dollars, they received dollars and we helped them with a business plan, we give them some interest relief, get them started. They have community box programs.

Some of them I know moved here, fell in love with the Island when they had a visit, wanted to have a little acreage, and now they're producing food; not just for themselves, but for their neighbours as well, and we will continue to see the Future Farmer program grow, just as we see the Future Fisher program grow – great initiatives, and very pleased that we can put dollars in that.

And again, we're not dumping massive money into that, but the little pieces we are putting in, we're using them very wisely, and they're going to great benefit in the end, and we're really pleased to see that.

There's a section in here on investing in our future, and we talk about our early childhood education. I think the Leader of the Third Party reflected on that yesterday as well. To me, I think it's one of the highlights since we came into power in 2007 when we

put the kindergarten into the school system and we put the early years system in place. We needed to do those things. We needed to make the injection of dollars in that, and that was a substantial amount. We see another 10.5 million going into that as well (Indistinct) through the programs ourselves with the federal government, and it's great.

We see the announcements that the minister of education has made yesterday with regards to the funding we're going to put into the education system there and teachers in the system because we have growth in the population and we need more EALs, and that's absolutely terrific.

There's a lot of things in this Speech From the Throne that I am so proud of, and I don't know if anyone reading through the first time caught so much of the relation towards agriculture and fisheries, but it's certainly hit home to me, and I'm very pleased to speak on it.

We have made significant progress in the last 30 months. Kudos to our Premier and kudos to the team and kudos to yourselves over there for trying to keep us sharp, and that's the role because we are, really, all in this together. I know you critique us on certain days and that's absolutely fantastic.

We do listen, as well. We appreciate that. If we sat back and said nothing we'd think we were doing everything perfectly, but you point out that we need to fix a few things, and sometimes we have listened to that.

We have made progress and I'll give you credit for part of that, as well, because you keep us sharp. We will put a lot emphasis in doing what we can to grow this economy and work with out – work as a team here to move our province forward.

We talked about addressing our most difficult social issues and working together on that. We need to do that to provide a greater sense of possibility for our young people and that's really key. Again, we have a lot of young people in our fishers and our farmers and we want to do that.

If we look at what we're going to do this term with regards to this session, with regards to the Water Act, early learning and child care, *An Act to Amend the Child*

Protection Act, An Act to Amend the Health Services Act.

These are all things that are key, as far as I'm concerned and they reflect back to our children, our workers and our commodities here in order to make this province even better, when we ask for your help in getting those pieces, and other pieces of legislation, through.

I'm really pleased to stand here and talk about this speech and what it means to our commodities here be it in agriculture be it in fisheries and I'm sure the other hon. members will talk about their roles, as well.

I want to say again, as I said at the start, I think the Speech From the Throne if a real stepping stone towards our future. Let's not be stumbling blocks. Let's move this province forward. Let's follow the path that's set out here, work together and move our Island, our terrific province here on Prince Edward Island forward and faster.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Casey: Great job.

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

Ms. Biggar: I'll have that please.

Mr. R. Brown: Now, you'll get the facts.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my great pleasure to rise to support the Speech From the Throne. I feel that it highlights the many accomplishments our government has achieved in the short time, as well as hints at what many of our priorities will be going forward.

In 2015, our government was elected on a platform prioritized people, prosperity and engagement. We continue to move forward with initiatives to help our Island grow and thrive under these central ideas.

Infrastructure is an important component to our mighty Island's success. Modern and reliable infrastructure allows our products to

get to market efficiently, and for our people to get safely where they need to go.

Developing and maintain strong and stable infrastructure supports business growth, provides job opportunities and leads to long-term economic growth. Infrastructure investments in areas such as transportation, public buildings and upgraded water and sewer systems, not only boost economic growth, but improve the quality of life in Island communities.

Prince Edward Island has 5,338 kilometres of roadway; enough to travel from here to Kamloops, British Columbia. Ensuring that these roads are properly maintained and safely engineered is one of the upmost importance, especially since we have over 100,000 licensed drivers in our province.

Since 2015, the Province of Prince Edward Island has constructed nine roundabouts and replaced 16 bridge structures, as well as completed paving projects on hundreds of kilometres of roadways.

From the roundabouts in Bloomfield, Slemon Park, North River and Mount Herbert to the new bridge structures in Cascumpec, Souris and Bideford are examples of this work that can be seen right across our province.

Our major road networks have been improved with provincial investments of over \$22.8 million on Route 1, and \$12.6 million on Route 2. We have also enhanced Route 6 with provincial investments of almost \$6 million to support our tourism industry. Some of this work has been done with the cooperation and partnership of the Government of Canada.

Prince Edward Island played a critical role in persuading the federal government to adjust the New Building Canada Fund funding criteria for roads and bridges.

In 2006, this resulted in the federal government lowering the traffic threshold from 10,000 per day to 1,000 per day, which has enabled our province to access funding for an additional 400 KM of strategic Island roads that were not previously eligible.

Through the New Build Canada Fund we have cost-shared projects totaling over \$100

million. This includes projects right across PEI; on the Trans-Canada Highway with over 80% of that going right across all parts of Prince Edward Island.

The Province of Prince Edward Island appreciates the support of the Government of Canada. Working together we can build and can improve infrastructure and achieve local and regional priorities while supporting national objectives.

We have worked collaboratively with the road builders association and the construction association who, right across PEI, employ local workers for these projects despite the fact that the opposition would have us think that nobody is getting any jobs from the investments that we are making right across PEI. I would hope that those opposition members get a chance to get out and see the roads that we have paved and the people from their districts that are working on these projects –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) they all got lots of pavement.

Ms. Biggar: Since 2015 –

Mr. LaVie: Are you talking to me?

Ms. Biggar: – our collective development of infrastructure across PEI –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) got your campground.

Ms. Biggar: – has been unparalleled with more than \$300 million –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) seatbelt buckle to buckle up.

Ms. Biggar: – in provincial-federal investments coming right to PEI, right to Islanders, right into the pockets of Islanders, into businesses and families –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) yesterday (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that we are investing in right across PEI –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Seatbelt on.

Ms. Biggar: Part of that \$300 million –

Mr. R. Brown: Three hundred million.

Ms. Biggar: – includes the –

Mr. R. Brown: Did you hear that?

Ms. Biggar: – completion of the PEI New Brunswick transmission cable –

Mr. LaVie: That's a phase.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the largest infrastructure for Prince Edward Island since the Confederation Bridge.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) pictures on it.

Ms. Biggar: These new electricity cables will expand our capacity and provide energy security –

An Hon. Member: Get the popcorn.

Ms. Biggar: – and more flexibility for power purchase agreements allowing for larger purchases of electricity when prices are favourable. Over the long-term, we anticipate that these new cables will help mitigate future electricity cost increases to Islanders.

Since 2015, our provincial and federal investments have also focused on clean water and wastewater initiatives. These projects will help safeguard the environment, deliver reliable supplies of safe drinking water, and help improve the quality of life of Island residents. These projects, 49 in total, have taken place, in communities right across Prince Edward Island, totaling approximately \$90 million.

My department supports our communities from tip to tip, with 21 service delivery sites and the maintenance upkeep and new construction of government facilities from Tignish to Souris. Investments in our public infrastructure over the last two years has included over 300 capital building projects tendering totaling of more than \$100,000. This includes the new construction of manors in Tyne Valley, in Montague and major construction to the Three Oaks Senior High School and the *École La-Belle-Cloche*.

I'd like to touch, a little bit, if I may, on the developments in the community of Tyne Valley-Linkletter. There has been the new Linkletter Community Centre. We paved the runways at Slemmon Park, completely rehabilitated the sewer structure in the residential area. Completely repaved the residential area of – and the –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) soapbox derby.

Ms. Biggar: – achieved funding that they were not able to access funding unless, we as a provincial government –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – certainly we're partners in it. In Tyne Valley we do have great tourism attractions.

Mr. R. Brown: That's good.

Ms. Biggar: We have Rock The Boat Musicfest and we do have the soapbox derby and it takes – you know what? That's the best day of the year – the best day of the year in Tyne Valley. We have over this summer, 110 children, and their families, and their grandparents and they lined the streets in Tyne Valley and they had a smile right across their face and that's the best thing that we could have done for Tyne Valley – is have the soapbox derby.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Ms. Biggar: And I'm proud to support it as a minister and as an MLA and I was happy to partner with the soapbox derby and I'm proud that our government has supported Rock The Boat because it's over 5000 tourists come to Rock The Boat every year and that has increased development and taken dollars into a small, rural community that otherwise would not have it. As the MLA for the area, I'm very proud of that.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: During the Tyne Valley Oyster Festival, we have our oyster festival championships live telecast right across Canada. That profiles, through livestream, what is happening in a little town – a little village in Tyne valley – and highlights the

important industry of the oyster industry here on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. R. Brown: Sell, sell, sell.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Yes, that's right.

In the area of Tyne Valley-Linkletter there are 10 dairy farms and I'm proud of the farming community in my area and support them. We have the Farmboys and I think we're very familiar with the Farmboys – new generation – fourth generation farmers, continuing on the legacy of their family and what they're doing and I'm very proud to see the businesses, and the farming community, and the dairy industry that is thriving in the community.

I, also, am an MLA representative of the Summerside area and I've very proud of the partnership that our government has had to do upgrades with the city of Summerside on their water and sewage on their roads and working with their community municipal government to ensure that that city is strong in its development purposes as well.

I'm just driving through my district – we have seven new homes being built in rural PEI, in just one little area of probably ten kilometres – seven new homes – and those are young families building those homes. It's great to see those young people staying in rural PEI.

I'll just highlight one new business – two actually, that have just opened. One that's in construction right now is the Valley Pearl Oysters – and that's Mr. Jeff Noye. Most people know him from the Tyne Valley Rock the Boat, Tyne Valley Oyster Festival – a great community volunteer, and he is now branching out and having an oyster business right in the heart of Tyne Valley.

We also had the new Tyne Valley Tea and Company open there. We have great businesses like Dillon's Convenience & Pizzeria and Backwoods Burger and that is right in the heart of Tyne Valley, bringing people from all over the world into Tyne Valley to visit, to settle, and to branch out around the smaller communities and bring prosperity to that area.

If you want to drive up to Tyne Valley and have a look at the new manor, when you drive down that hill, you can't miss it because it's there in all its glory and it is pretty-well all completed outside. Over the course of the next winter – the next summer, that will be completed inside and it's going to be a wonderful new home for the residents that live in that area that are presently in Stewart Memorial.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: You know, that was put in the capital budget of 2014 for the funding for both the manors that are being constructed at the moment. That has moved through the process of the capital budget and we're very proud to be able to deliver that to residents in rural PEI.

As well, we have made investments to ensure that our existing infrastructure of public buildings is helping to contribute to our province's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Twenty-one provincial buildings: schools, manors, hospitals are currently using biomass heat. By the end of this winter, that number will be up to 26. I want to highlight one that's just recently completed and report that the Prince County Hospital in Summerside is presently heated 100% by biomass heat.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Through utilization of biomass –

Mr. Trivers: Biomass (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: You know what that is there (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – we have reduced our greenhouse gas emissions –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – by approximately 12,000 tonnes, displacing approximately 4.3 million litres of fuel oil. The increased use of biomass is one of the recommendations of our government's energy strategy.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Biomass, not biogas.

Ms. Biggar: Did I say biogas?

Mr. R. Brown: No, (Indistinct) saying biogas.

Ms. Biggar: Oh. I'll just explain the difference –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) he's in the woods yelling (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: I think we probably know the difference between biogas and biomass, but thank you.

Announced in March 2007 –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) biomass (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) wood pellets (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – the new energy strategy focused on moving us to a greater –

Mr. Watts: Okay, Members.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes. They're getting carried away over there.

Ms. Biggar: I know this is tender and you don't want to hear the great things that are going on, but I'll just continue on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's hard to take, I know.

Moving us to greater electrifications –

An Hon. Member: How come your voice is shaking?

Ms. Biggar: – to remove our carbon emissions, enhance efficiency as a way to save on energy expenses per household, and have an expanded role for more PEI-based solutions, particularly through additional renewable energy.

Perhaps I will have a drink of water, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know I was being critiqued

on my speaking ability but I certainly will continue on.

An Hon. Member: You were doing good.

Ms. Biggar: The cheapest source of energy is the energy you never use and efficiencyPEI –

Some Hon. Members: You're pretty efficient (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – is working with homes and business to ensure more efficient use of our energy supply.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: I know this is hard to take, but I'll just continue on.

An Hon. Member: Work through them.

Ms. Biggar: I can work through it.

Being more efficient in our use of energy supply will help reduce energy costs for Islanders through programs such as the Home Energy Audit Program and an online resource called MyEnergyXpert. Since opening in 2008, efficiencyPEI has provided over \$7 million in grants to over 8,500 residential homes – \$9.4 million in loans to 1,775 residential homes. We've generated over \$50 million in building renos and over 500 businesses have been supported with programs and services to help reduce their energy consumption.

As the Speech from the Throne outlines, Prince Edward Island is a pioneer in clean energy. We have made significant investments in wind energy and, through the PEI Energy Corporation; we currently own 37 turbines which produce 234 million kilowatt hours. We are the second strongest wind regime in the world after Denmark and we have plans to grow our capacity over the next several years. All of the wind power produced by the corporation is purchased by Maritime Electric and used and consumed on Prince Edward Island for Islanders.

One of the infinite successes our department is seeing is the creation of the Bonshaw Hills Provincial Park.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Great – one of the best parks on the Island.

Mr. LaVie: I love that. Can you repeat that?

Mr. Fox: You never heard that before.

Ms. Biggar: I'll repeat that. We are very proud of the creation of the Bonshaw Hills Provincial Park which opened this past summer.

Mr. Fox: Borden Hills.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: The park includes over 25 kilometres of multi-use trail and wheelchair accessible natural playground. With five parking areas and terrain designed for hikers, bikers and natural enthusiasts, there is something for everyone to enjoy. I'm very proud of when I had the opportunity to consult with the committee that I wanted to make sure that there was a wheelchair accessible area for people to enjoy this beautiful area and I'm proud to have been a part of that – making that happen.

A lot of hard work went into the creation of the park, and we're pleased to see the overwhelming success of it.

This year, the Bonshaw Hills Public Subcommittee was awarded the 2017 Murray Pinchuk Community Builder Award for their efforts in establishing the Bonshaw Hills Provincial Park and a management plan for the park properties.

I've talked about the investments this government has made to improve our Island road and bridge infrastructure, but my department has also strengthened our legislation to ensure our Island roads are safe for all; motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

Amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* have increased penalties for impaired driving. This has included mandatory licence suspensions and increased ignition interlock requirements, and the addition of motor vehicle impoundment rules. I had the opportunity last night to speak to an RCMP officer who thanked our government for that because it gave them another tool that they

could have to work against impaired driving on these roads. The act has also expanded the mandatory addiction and consumption program as a requirement for licence reinstatement and has ensured penalties for drug-impaired driving are the same as alcohol-related offences.

Bicycle Safety Regulations were also added to the *Highway Traffic Act* and include a mandatory one-metre distance when motorists are passing a bicycle. Our government wants our roads to be safe for all users and we are developing legislation and making capital improvements to continue to meet the needs of the travelling public.

I'm proud to be the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Mr. R. Brown: And we're proud you are too.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I am equally proud to be the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

In this role, and in partnership with the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, I work each and every day to advance equality and opportunity, encourage inclusive policies and programs and promote our province's diversity as a strength.

Since 2015, we have developed gender and diversity guides for government policy and programming and for community organizations. The guides are a tool to ensure that decision-making takes into the consideration the needs of all Islanders. We have also provided funding to 15 projects through the Interministerial Women's Secretariat Grant to community organizations across the province. This funding, over \$200,000, is helping achieve the goals and objectives of our partners. I'm pleased that soon my department will be announcing recipients of a new Violence Against Women Prevention Grant.

Looking back over the past two years, I'm proud of the work that we, as a government and has a department, have been able to accomplish. I would like to recognize the professionalism and expertise of the staff in my department who have helped in this work.

The Province of Prince Edward Island will continue to work with federal, municipal and community partners to build upon our successes. I look forward to the work ahead as our government continues to make investments that help our province grow and thrive. I look forward to the work ahead to further strengthen our province by working together with people for prosperity and progress for all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wholeheartedly support this Speech From the Throne.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Speech From the Throne. First of all, let me start by saying how proud I am, too, of our new Lieutenant Governor, Antoinette Perry. She'll do a great job. She's a great representative, not only for the West Prince area, but now for the entire province. It certainly made me feel proud to see her deliver the Speech From the Throne and she's done a great job in delivering that speech.

I might also say, too, that listening to the Speech From the Throne and absorbing what was being said, and I was thinking to myself: It must not be a very good day to be an opposition member.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Anyway, we speak about collaboration in here –

Mr. Trivers: It's really hard watching you guys (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Thank you for that (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: I was there (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Our economy is stronger than ever, and I definitely see that in my part of the province. In the district that I represent, it's the three primary industries are what's driving the economy in the entire province; the farming, fishing and tourism. We rely heavy on them and all three of them are running on all eight cylinders these days. It's quite evident. I see it because I operate my own business, and the relationship that those primary industries have to my business. If the economy is doing well, then my business does well; every other business in the community does well.

I'll give you a little example, I guess, this year of how there may be – there were a lot of boats and Sea-does going around West Prince this year and I think that's a good sign of the great economy, that there's money around to spend on toys and there's money around –

Ms. Casey: Bicycles.

Mr. Murphy: – for everything else.

Yes, we had some bicycles, too, that drove right across the Island and –

Mr. Dumville: Visited from Charlottetown.

Mr. Murphy: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: It's really great being in government at the time when the economy is doing so great, and when we're hitting for a balanced budget. It allows government to do a lot more things to help keep the engines of the economy turning, and there are some things that are being done that might not be, I guess you would call them, sexy, like the sewer work that's being done that nobody ever sees but it's definitely a necessary part of sustaining our economy and our growth.

I know we had – thank the minister that spoke prior here for the great work she's done up in my district. We had storm drains

in Alberton. At one point we had a rainstorm there in West Prince and in the Town of Alberton, pretty much shut off from the rest of the province because we didn't have proper storm drains. If there had of been an emergency or whatever, I don't know how people would have got in or out of the community and government was quick to respond to that and install the storm drains that solved that problem. We don't have to worry about that anymore.

Not only that, our bridges – we had some bridges replaced in the district; the Cascumpec bridge, that was on the agenda for quite a while and it's good to see that replaced; the one in Miminegash. Something that I've been promoting for the last few years in the Legislature and asked several questions on it was the roundabout in Bloomfield and the community is –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: The community is very pleased with it and it's very well accepted, and I never hear of anymore accident reports at that intersection.

Ms. Biggar: That's great.

Mr. Murphy: There's a busy highway there between the – I think most of you know where Westisle Composite High School is located out in Elmsdale, but a lot of the kids come into Alberton for their lunch to go to the bakery and go to the other eating establishments in the community, and there's a lot of traffic there. The road was never really – I didn't think it could be – I thought it could be improved on quite a bit, and there were no paved shoulders or nothing like that. Now we have those paved shoulders and a good highway surface.

Ms. Biggar: All the way to Alberton.

Mr. Murphy: Yeah, and it's –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) going to Souris (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Good things are happening right across the province.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) going to Souris (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: No paved shoulders (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: But of course, the road to our prosperity and our sustainability definitely includes immigration; always has always will.

I was pleased to see the announcement of the new intermediaries or the new agents. What I was really pleased to see about that was the rural aspect that is put to it. That some of them are actually going to have offices in rural Prince Edward Island and they're going to be working with the local communities and the – to emphasize development in rural Prince Edward Island, and to have some of these immigrants actually locate in rural Prince Edward Island.

I think what the intermediaries, or the agents, being located in rural Prince Edward Island, they can work with the communities, they can, probably, target the proper fits for different regions of the province. By that I don't mean racially or anything like that; what I mean is, maybe, target immigrants from farming communities that might fit more in a rural setting than somebody from a city of eight million people, say.

If you take somebody from a city of eight million people and you put them in Alberton or Souris or Tignish or O'Leary, well, they may not stay. If you get somebody from – a family from a rural setting and they come to another rural setting here in our province then there's a better chance that they might stay here, they might stay and put their roots down. I was very pleased about that.

I'm also pleased that our Department of Rural and Regional Development are going to be involved in the welcome to the community initiatives, which is going to have – make sure that the immigrants that do come to rural Prince Edward Island are well received and welcomed into the communities.

Team Seafood, too, just moving on a little bit here in the speech, it really touches the rural parts of the province. It was a great program. It's a great opportunity, not just for the food processors, the seafood processors to get the employees, but also to expose the

students to that type of work and show them that there is, that there could be a career in the seafood industry.

It's also a great opportunity for the student to make quite a few bucks. I know a lot of students that traditionally would be wanting to work at parks, or working for the province, or for private sector, but instead they wanted to work at Royal Star because they had an opportunity there to get that \$1,000 at the end of the year. Plus, they had all kinds of hours. They could work and they'd have a – by the time they went back to university or in the college in the fall, they'd have a nice chunk of change in their pockets.

Also, something else that I like that we're doing here with WorkPEI is to match jobseekers and employers looking for new employees. I think that's very important. What I really like about is that the website will include a comprehensive and evergreen database for expatriate workers and entrepreneurs. This new database will be used to recruit and entice Islanders to return home.

I know, from my own experience, a lot of people that are working out west in the oil fields or whatever, they'd rather be home here with their families if they could. It's good money, but it's tough on the families. I think, most of them, if they were given an opportunity to work here on PEI and provide for their families, I think they'd certainly take it.

A food cluster, I recently attended; I had the opportunity, I guess, to attend the rural development conference out in BC. Most of the stuff they're talking about out there is stuff that we're already doing here on Prince Edward Island.

Ms. Biggar: We're having (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: A food cluster is one of those things; specializing in different niche markets.

Tourism has experienced its fourth consecutive year of record growth. In my mind, there is lots of potential for growth there, especially in the rural parts of the province. I know in my part of the province, in West Prince, we traditionally only receive

like five, four to 5% of the visitation, so there's all kinds of potential there for growth. I'm glad to see that it's mentioned in the throne speech that there's going to be some attention paid to that. The whole province will definitely be more successful because of that. Because I'm sure that once people come up to West Prince and visit it they're going to be impressed, they're going to tell their friends about it, and it's going to increase, overall, tourism product in the province.

Something that the Premier and the department and the government has done is to do Regional Economic Advisory Councils. I think they're necessary. It breaks the province down into four economic zones. These are people that were chosen from Engage PEI and they're all highly qualified people. They all have their communities best economic interest at heart. We're going to be working with them to create development in rural Prince Edward Island.

Mr. LaVie: Falling asleep.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: Well, we're on a tear, brother.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: I like to think that's a good West Prince term –

Ms. Biggar: #onatear.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: That's okay, you sleep. We'll wake you up when it's over. Like I said, I don't think it's a good day to be in opposition, anyway.

I think, too, the creation of the – it says, it tells me a lot about this government's commitment to rural Prince Edward Island when there's an entire department dedicated to rural Prince Edward Island.

There is a lot of emphasis put on it, and it's – out at the – I think there are only two provinces that dedicated an entire department to rural development, and we're one of those provinces. I think it's great. I

think it says a lot about what we're doing as a government. There are lots –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) budget (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: – with the rural development strategy, there's an emphasis put on rural Prince Edward Island. I think that says a lot about what our government's doing for rural PEI. We have a lot of different programs that are dedicated towards rural Prince Edward Island. The economic development agency, that's primary rural PEI to help people that may have experienced barriers to employment.

Our department is going to provide leadership in rural and regional development initiatives related to the economy, population and community and growth. We'll hold other departments accountable. It's good to have a minister that's dedicated to rural Prince Edward Island around the Cabinet table –

Mr. LaVie: You've got your hands full.

An Hon. Member: He knows (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Keep going. You're on a tear (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: That's where the decisions are made that affect the province and it's good to have a rural perspective there, not to say that there wasn't before, but now there's – that's my job. The Premier told me that's what he wants me to do, so that's what I'm doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: We know what happened to the last fella who listened to the Premier.

Mr. Murphy: We'll work and we'll identify success and promote benefits, the assets of rural PEI and support rural and small businesses in the areas of strategic infrastructure, skills development and investment opportunities.

I will collaborate closely with other economic portfolios such as workforce and advanced learning and economic development and tourism. We already have

a hub committee, economic hub committee, set-up there that meets quarterly and to discuss the directions that government's going to be going.

We have offices; our department is responsible for the Rural Action Centres, which have offices in Summerside, Montague, and Alberton, O'Leary, Wellington, Bedeque, Charlottetown, and Souris, and we're currently doing a review of those rural action centres to make sure that they're functioning the way that they're meant to function.

I know the school review wasn't a very pleasant –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: Telling the truth on that one.

Mr. Murphy: – mightn't have been a pleasant process, but it was a necessary process, and we had some good outcomes because of that.

Mr. Roach: Yes we did.

Mr. Murphy: The new minister and I visited some schools in my district there last week, and we're very pleased to see the – that we met with the student wellbeing team and the great work that they're doing –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct).

Mr. Murphy: They –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: It was accessed by 80 students since its being and that hasn't been that long, it's only been probably since September, so a couple of months, so I mean there's really good take up there.

Then the addressing poverty; I know that we've put up the minimum wage several times in a short period of time. I think we have – what – probably second-highest minimum wage in the country now? I mean that's – and we're getting the poverty reduction – comprehensive poverty reduction strategy will be coming this year. That's good to hear.

I think that's the end of my comments for today, but the Water Act, definitely looking forward to seeing that. There's been some talk about it here today. I wasn't particularly impressed by some comments made about my deputy here today, but I guess that happens, politics.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne this evening as well. A lot of what I'll talk about this evening will be relating to my department and the good news that was in the Speech from the Throne regarding my department and the hard work that is going on in my department.

I want to talk a little bit first maybe about poverty reduction, and I want to reiterate government's commitment to introducing a poverty reduction strategy in collaboration with Islanders and other partners, such as non-government community-based organizations, businesses, and other levels of government.

In the coming days, we will be putting out a call for members to create a poverty reduction advisory council. This advisory council will work with government to develop a strategy. It will also play a key role in engaging with community groups and the public to clearly understand the issues surrounding poverty.

We will examine a wide variety of issues, such as education, health, food, and employment. This will happen over the coming months, with a report due in early fall of 2018. We will build on the great work that's already being done and develop further solutions that work for Prince Edward Islanders.

Government cannot address poverty alone, and our strategy will focus on the role of all partners.

I am very proud of the initiatives our government has implemented, and the improvements that have been made in recent years to address poverty. Some examples include: The Be Aware & Get Your Share. It was an initiative in collaboration with Canadian Revenue Agency to raise awareness that Islanders may be eligible for federal and provincial benefits that they are not receiving. I hear stories daily on how Islanders have heard of this program and they have reached out through community-volunteer income tax programs, and they are now receiving benefits that they did not receive before.

The hon. minister of economic development had a great story that he shared with me. He was in Tim Hortons one day, and he was ordering his coffee and he was talking to one of the ladies that was serving him coffee, and she said: What's this "Be Aware & Get Your Share" program all about that I'm hearing all about? It's on the news, it's on social media. And he says: Well, you should check it out.

And she did. She went to the website and she got the information on it, and she was proud to say the next time he went in that she had received an additional \$3,000 that she did not know she was entitled to, and we hear stories like that daily, just from that one initiative.

We are also into our fourth year of a five-year plan to increase food rates for social assistance clients on Prince Edward Island. A \$2.8 million investment was promised, and we are now into over \$2 million that we have invested. This is helping Island families tremendously, and it is outpacing the consumer price index increases.

Last week, I was very proud to launch a new grandparents and caregiver provider program –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: After I was newly elected, I received a call from a resident in Summerside by the name of Pat Poirier, and she identified herself as being the facilitator for a group of grandparents who meet on a weekly basis to support one another while they are raising their grandchildren; their

children's children. And they get there just to give one another support and to share stories and to share care giving ideas, and it was just a support group, but she felt that I should go and I should listen to them, that they had stories that needed to be heard.

I was moved to tears that day. It was only supposed to be an hour meeting; I was there for over two hours. When I left there, I came back and I shared with my caucus colleagues what I'd heard, and everyone was in agreement: Prince Edward Islanders needed to hear their story. And I brought forward a motion, Motion No. 60, in the Legislature that year, and it was unanimously supported to explore supports for grandparents who are caregivers to their grandchildren and to see if there was any kind of assistance that could be given to them.

That little group of grandparents, they were empowered, they were ignited, they were energized because someone had listened to them. This government had listened to them.

Mr. LaVie: Listened to us.

Ms. Mundy: They went –

Mr. LaVie: Listened to us.

Ms. Mundy: – and they went and they then went before standing committee – many of these grandmothers who had never worked outside the home in their lives, their voices were now being heard in the Legislature. They were so empowered, they couldn't believe it. And I remember at that first meeting I was at, there was a lady named Joan, and she said to me, she said: Minister, I'm not doing this for me, she said, I know I'll never live to see the changes. I know how governments work. I know it takes time, but I'm here today and I'm telling my story and I'm using my voice to help those other grandparents: The grandparents who are going to come after me; those caregivers who are going to come after me that are going to be raising their children's children, or maybe their sister's children or their neighbour's children, but that's what I'm here to do.

And I said to her: Joan, we're going to prove you wrong. You're going to see those changes.

We then went to work and we produced a brochure that came out with a lot of the programs that are available across Prince Edward Island that could help those grandparents that could help them immediately to try to navigate programs throughout their communities. When I went back and produced that program to them, they were happy with that. They couldn't believe that we'd done that much in that little time.

They had found their voice. Then, as we launched the *Child Protection Act* review, they started going out and sharing their voice again. They were interviewed on TV. They were interviewed for newspaper. We were having people from places in Alberta and British Columbia contacting us and wanting to talk to these grandparents who'd found their voice. We continue to work with them and we continue to report back to them. Every time we went back, they were happier and happier.

Then when we'd finally developed the program and government wanted to make the announcement to say: We've got a program now. We've got a program that's going to help. It's going to help you because you are doing the best thing for those children. Those vulnerable children – you're helping them. You are supporting them. You are giving up your golden years to raise those children and protect them and keep them safe. They had to hear it first, so we took the announcement back to them – to the same room where we'd had the conversation the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: They gathered there and they thought it was just going to be another update and I shared with them how their stories touched my life, and how their stories touched Islanders' lives from tip-to-tip, and how their stories touched Canadians' lives across the country, how this mighty, little group of grandparents banded together and they were able to create a program. They were able to have a Legislature sit up and listen to them.

Now I was going to share with them the program. They were speechless. They were speechless and then one grandmother, she

broke down. She said: Thank you, thank you. And then the cheers erupted and they were so happy. They were so happy. I looked at Joan and she looked at me and I said: I told you so. She was so happy. And now they have a program that is going to support them and their children that they are raising.

This is just the first step. This is the first phase. We are going to be providing them \$700 per month per child to help cover the costs of clothing the children and feeding the children, but it's not going to stop there. We're also going to provide child care for them. We're also going to provide respite for them because a lot of them are aging and their health is suffering as well, so they might need a break. In addition to child care, there's also going to be respite. They're going to get dental care, they're going to get prescriptions, they're going to get medical. This little group of grandparents came to government – government listened and now they have help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: The second phase of that program will be rolling out shortly. That will deal with the medical, the judicial, and also the educational needs of those children, so we're not stopping there – the program will continue.

Another program that government listened to the people, went out and engaged was the child care subsidy transformation. Another wonderful program where we not only invested the \$300,000 that we said we would during our platform commitment, we did a comprehensive review. We drilled down into the program to see what other improvements we can make without just – as the opposition keeps saying: put more money into it.

We took a look at the entire program and broke it down. We talked to parents, we talked to child care workers, we talked to the early child care centres, and we talked to the association. We took their input and we recreated and reinvented a program that not only increased the income thresholds, which will benefit approximately 1,600 children across Prince Edward Island. We increased the rates for private sitters, we increased the before and after school rates, we increased

the full-day rates, and we reduced the paperwork that parents would have to file – busy, busy parents – hard working Islanders – now only have to provide income once a year. So, the comprehensive review – again, we listened to what Islanders said.

We had a young woman by the name of Sam Guerette who was so thrilled because when she heard the announcement on CBC she said: Those are my ideas. She couldn't believe it that, once again – she said: I was heard. Those are my ideas. Government is choosing my ideas. She felt so empowered that there was a government there that was listening to her.

Alyse Rossiter – a single mother of three says she can go to work now. She can work. She can afford to work. Her three children are being cared for. This is a valuable, valuable program where we learned that it wasn't just about throwing money at the program, it was about improving the program and listening to Islanders – engaging in Islanders, and that's what we did.

There are many other programs. Another one that – again, we listened to Islanders – is the increase in the Personal Comfort Allowance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: Claretta MacWilliams, I think from O'Leary, was, again, someone who contacted us and lobbied. Government listened. We listened to her and we raised the Personal Comfort Allowance not once, but twice. There's not a day that goes by that MLAs on both sides tell me what a difference that makes in the lives of their constituents. The MLA from Charlottetown-Victoria can't walk down the street without someone stopping and telling him –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Mundy: – how much of a difference those increases made in the lives of his constituents – a huge, huge improvement benefitting upwards of 1,300 social assistance clients, helping them to meet their personal needs.

Another wonderful program and we have our former minister of health to thank for

that – Minister Currie – the Generic Drug Program – another wonderful program that helps Islanders that they could have to choose between eating and their medication now. We have over 18,000 Islanders registered to date.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Let's get him back. Let's take him back.

Ms. Mundy: This program is a wonderful program –

Mr. R. Brown: Don't worry (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – and it's designed to limit the out-of-pocket expenses for eligible prescriptions. Maximum cost Islanders will pay on that program is \$19.95. Again, another example of government working together – that was an example coming out of health and wellness to help my program.

Another one, coming out of finance – the Minister of Finance increased the personal tax exemption, assisting upwards of 85,000 Islanders.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Mundy: Some 3,000 of them will not pay taxes at all.

Mr. R. Brown: That's the Liberal way.

Ms. Mundy: That's government working together.

Mr. R. Brown: That's the Liberal way.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: Coming out of education, doubling the support to Island breakfast programs – an increase of \$200,000 supporting 64 schools across Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Big.

Mr. MacEwen: 150 years to get to (Indistinct) – ten to get to (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: We can't forget our federal government and the investments that they have made to the Canada child benefit –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Members.

Ms. Mundy: Islanders now receiving –

Ms. Biggar: They can't take it.

Ms. Mundy: – up to \$6,400 a year per child. This is estimated to increase Island economy by \$25 million annually.

One thing we were proud of in Family and Human Services: We do not include that Canada child benefit when we are calculating our child care subsidy, our social assistance or any of our housing programs. That money stays in Islanders' pockets and it goes towards their children.

Another great example, coming out of workforce and advanced learning is again, and it was mentioned by my colleague in rural and regional development, is the increases to minimum wage. We know have the highest in Atlantic Canada as of April 1st. We're up to \$11.55 an hour. It's increased by 38% since 2008. By comparison, inflation has only risen by 11% during that time.

As I said, all of these are very important elements in helping to reduce poverty. Government certainly has a role to play, however, we cannot do it alone. Communities and various sectors also have a part to play. I always like to say that Islanders are doers and dreamers. We have many Islanders and organizations that are stepping up. They want to be part of the solution.

We have people like Belinda Woods in Summerside, who started a Free Store. This is where anyone in the community can donate something that they no longer need, but it's still very useable. She opens one day a month. Anybody, no questions asked, can

come in and they can just take what they want for free.

I was in there one day visiting with Belinda. The place was packed. What really touched my heart is that for every Islander that came in and took something off the shelf and put it in their bag, they went out to their car and they brought something back in that they couldn't use again. It's teaching us. People like Belinda are teaching us not to be a throw-away society, that there's always someone that can use something. By giving back, by taking, but giving back, is the way.

The other day, we just heard about Rachel Peters, who started the Sleeping Bag Project to ensure that no Island child would ever be cold. Overnight, Islanders opened up their hearts and they gave because that's what we do.

We have the Buddhist monks and nuns who bake daily and donate their bread and their rolls to the soup kitchens all over Prince Edward Island.

We often talk about 'it takes a village to raise a child.' I say, it takes an Island. It takes a mighty Island, and that's what we are. We are a mighty Island.

We're also moving forward with our provincial housing strategy. We brought together a co-design team on October 13th. Yes, we picked that date specifically because that was going to be a good luck day for us.

We brought together approximately 40 people from all sectors, municipalities. This group spent the day together and they were energized and it was electric. They came away very positive, and all saying the same thing: that government cannot do it alone. Government does have a role to play, but we all have a role to play, as well.

This co-design group will work collaboratively with the Housing Supply Task Force that was mentioned in the Speech From the Throne. This task force will also include developers, financiers, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, representatives from the not-for-profit communities, and our co-op sectors. They will all, together, collaboratively enhance our understanding

of market trends, as well as identify opportunities that will address the housing challenges across Prince Edward Island.

Our first Housing Supply Task Force meeting is going to take place in early December. Consultations related to housing have already started with targeted groups, and public consultations through online surveys will take place very soon. The housing strategy, we anticipate, will be final by June, 2018.

I'm very proud of what government has already done and what currently is in progress to improve seniors' and social housing. We've made many investments in these areas, as well, the introduction of 135 rent supplements; 75 last year, alone. Two hundred and fifty-five million dollar investment in those rent supplements, and 25 of them were allocated to Canadian mental health to support those Islanders who are living with mental health issues.

We've also invested in 257 rent supplements, currently. We've made an investment of over \$400,000 in our 2016 budget for renovation programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: I was not surprised this evening to hear the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road mention it because he is one that is a believer. He talks and promotes that program regularly. He is sending letters and emails constantly to staff over at the housing division telling them what a difference those programs are making in the lives of his constituents.

I get letters daily; handwritten letters, cards of thanks from Islanders, who want to remain in their home and are now able.

The PEI Home Renovation Program itself has tripled since the changes that we made in 2015. We realigned the program, like I said: tripled the number of Islanders that are receiving that program.

The Seniors Safe @ Home Program was a program that this government developed. That program allows seniors to make modifications to their homes; safety modifications such as grab bars, renovations to kitchens, renovations to bathrooms so that

they can feel safe in their home. A program that we heard about from Islanders that there was a need and we implemented.

The Seniors Home Repair Program is another program that we have that helps Islanders remain in their home. I will add that we reinstated that program in 2015 because the previous Conservative government had eliminated it.

We've made investments for shelter victims of family violence. We have committed to over \$100,000 over the next five years, Habitat for Humanity; \$250,000 over five years for 10 new homes for low-income Islanders.

We've also partnered with community groups and developers over the years for the creation of 350 affordable housing units. We've also committed to investing more than \$3.75 million over the next five years to upgrade and improve seniors' housing through our PEI Capital Budget. We've started spending that already.

We're also in the process of investing \$7.2 million, which will see 50 new housing units in the areas on Prince Edward Island who need it most, initiating two projects to support victims of family violence and children aging out of child protection. We're currently, as I said, completing renovations to existing social housing units, upwards of a million dollars will be spent there.

I want to elaborate just a little bit on that last piece; the investment of \$7.2 million in provincial and federal funding that we announced this May. Five-point-two million, as I said, is allocated for 50 new seniors units; 1 million for renovations to existing family and seniors units, and 1 million for transitional housing for vulnerable Islanders including victims of family violence and children aging out of protection. Let's not forget again the 1 million that's currently being used for upgrades. Many are due to be completed very shortly, and they've been spanning the entire province.

What that means is more than \$1 million, as I said, being spent on 50 renovation projects in social housing. So this money is being well spent. I'd also like to note that requests for proposals will be issued in the coming weeks related to the 5.2 million and the 946

in separate RFPs, each targeted for specific projects.

I must add, extensive planning is required to prepare those RFPs to ensure that the projects are allocated to the areas that need it most and that the essential design factors are considered, such as the number of units, size, and accessibility needs. I am very pleased of the hard work that is being done to move to the next steps in these projects, and that the RFPs will be issued very soon so that our partners can prepare for the spring construction season.

These are all very important elements for reducing waitlist in social housing and helping to ensure that we are meeting the needs of Islanders now and into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: We continue to invest in social housing through partnerships with the federal government, and we will also continue to look for ways that we can collaborate with municipalities, private developers, and communities on the long-term solutions to growing housing demands.

I'd also like to mention the new seniors program that we mentioned in the Speech From the Throne. This program will focus on enhancing the quality of life for seniors and enabling to remain in their homes and in their communities by providing services such as light housekeeping and yard work if needed.

We have started to develop this program, and we expect to introduce it in 2018. This will complement many of the other initiatives government offers that help enhance the quality of life for older adults in our communities.

And I just want to – I know I'm going to repeat a couple, but there's a lot of seniors programs that we are currently investing, and I just want to make note of them here this evening.

I already mentioned the additional 400,000 to the home repair programs, enabling Island seniors to stay in their homes and in their communities; the changes that we made to the PEI Home Renovation Program, tripling the number of Islanders; we introduced the

Seniors Safe @ Home Program; reinstated the Seniors Home Repair Program; we have 1,117 rent-geared-to-income homes across 32 communities on Prince Edward Island; rent supplements; arrangements with private landlords to provide an additional 129 senior housings across Prince Edward Island.

The Seniors' Drug Program, in addition to the Generic Drug Program, seniors pay 8.25 for eligible prescriptions; we have home care funding – another first, we increased the home care fund from 9.2 million to now 16 million; we have out-of-province travel support program that provides assistance to seniors that have to travel off-Island for medical appointments; we have the Seniors' Secretariat – policy and program, they give policy and program advice to government and administrators, and they administer community grants that help improve the quality of life for seniors, and they're a mighty group as well. They have loud voices and they're not afraid to tell their minister what seniors need. They're very frugal as well, and every cent that is spent in those grants, they make sure helps the most Islanders, Island seniors, as it can.

We have a toll-free seniors' line that provides information on programs and services to seniors. Through the Department of Finance, we have a Seniors Property Tax Deferral Program.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Mundy: We have emergency ambulance fees that are free of charge for Island seniors. Through the Minister of Finance, once again, we introduced a new senior's tax credit of \$250, and as I mentioned earlier, increased personal tax exemption assisting 85,000 Islanders, many of whom are seniors, with 3,000 of them who will not pay any tax at all.

The minister of health introduced free flu shots to all Islanders – huge –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Free parking.

Ms. Mundy: Free parking at Queen Elizabeth Hospital –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: – and he's also increased mental health supports for Island seniors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: Speaking of Island seniors, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment and talk a little bit about Island seniors. We have a range of programs, but as minister responsible for seniors, I also sit at the federal, provincial, and territorial table, and I hear about what's going on across the country, and we talk about seniors' issues.

Right now, there's a shift in thinking and in practice and in values that promotes and supports how older adults in all of their diversity make Prince Edward Island, and make this country, a better place for all of us.

Mr. LaVie: It is a good place.

Ms. Mundy: It is time that we reframe the discussion –

Mr. LaVie: We'll make it better –

Ms. Mundy: – about aging, and that we start to build on the good news –

Mr. LaVie: It's always a good spot.

Ms. Mundy: – and the benefits of our demographic shift.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: An aging population reflects advances in population and health, and improvements in the social and economic wellbeing of Prince Edward Island. Older adults offer knowledge, skills, experience, and connections that help people and communities thrive. People of all ages, including older adults, have much to contribute.

The fact is a massive population shift is underway. The world is aging, and so is Prince Edward Island. The first of the baby boomers have turned 70 –

Mr. LaVie: Speak for yourself.

Ms. Mundy: – and longer life expectancies and lower birth rates mean that from now on our population will be older.

But, that's not a problem. There's so many opportunities that come with that. Older adults help sustain families, workplaces, communities, and the province as a whole. They care for others, they work on community projects. They donate time, money. They donate to charitable causes. They volunteer. They run business. They participate in full and part time work, and they get involved in politics. They are leaders, they are guides, they are mentors, and they are sharing a wealth of knowledge and experience. We all benefit when we value and encourage and support these diverse contributions.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: But unfortunately, ageist attitudes and stereotypes in our society perpetuate the notion –

Mr. Trivers: – (Indistinct) finally talking about seniors (Indistinct) –

Ms. Mundy: – that getting older isn't itself a problem, rather than a natural part of life.

Ageism and stereotyping and discrimination based on a person's chronicle age, it is engrained in some thinking and in the ways of relating. Ageism manifests itself any time someone is thought to be too old for something; a new job, a physical challenge, a style of clothing. It shows up in quips like: I'm having a senior moment, or you look good for your age.

Ageism is so pervasive, and the effects can be so powerful that many people come to believe the stereotypes, even older people themselves. Ageism can get in the way of people being appreciated and included in things that matter, even when the evidence shows how important older adults are to our province.

Getting older does have its challenges, yes, but we need to understand that aging is a highly individual process, and chronological age is not a precise marker of capability or ability to participate. Factors such as

income, education, gender and gender-identity, ethnicity, racialization, sexual orientation, disability, health statues, family status, and geography have a profound impact on a person's experience of life and getting older.

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Mr. LaVie: Extend the hour.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to extend the hour?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Ms. Biggar: Lots of time to talk yet.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, November the 17th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.