

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

(Audio delay)

**Mr. Myers:** – confidential budget details that apply to the Capital Budget.

On Friday, I raised this specific issue at the time related to the Liberal party tweeting intimate budget details during the speech and how the Liberal party came to be in possession of the budget before it was presented to the House.

The point I raise today is related to a new development over the weekend, so I'm raising it here today at my earliest opportunity.

On Saturday morning, the Liberal candidate in District 11 ran a *Guardian* ad that referenced the confidential details of the Capital Budget. The ad specifically stated: I want to work hard for you on behalf (Indistinct) towards great initiatives like these recently announced, and referenced the new Sherwood school.

The reason I'm bringing that up is the deadline to submit ads for Saturday's *Guardian* is Thursday morning at 11:00 a.m. That means not only did the Liberal party have confidential details of the budget speech on Friday, but that the Liberal party's advertising agency had those same details at least one full day ahead of this very Chamber, and I feel that this action has violated the privilege of all members of this Assembly, and I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you review the matter and see if we can determine how this second breach of budget confidentiality happened.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, I will take that under advisement.

Thank you.

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

Point of Order

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Yesterday, the minister of education and culture held a press conference to announce a new government policy. To quote Mr. Wayne MacKinnon, the PEI political lecturer at UPEI, a historian, and former assistant to premier Alex Campbell from his article in 2011, an article on the PEI Legislative Assembly for *Canadian Parliamentary Review*:

“...by convention, government announcements must be made first to the legislature when it is in session.”

In fact, I will quote the Premier from April, 2016, to this House:

“In general, I feel strongly that as members of the Assembly, we should be especially careful and respectful when it comes to our parliamentary traditions.”

But when it comes to our traditions and to the very institutions that provide us the opportunity to serve, that enable Prince Edward Islanders to enjoy the benefits of democracy and freedom, we should be very careful to respect those institutions, the customs, and traditions.

Your previous rulings of April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, and December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016, on this very matter has apparently been ignored by this government. The last time this government disrespected the House in the manner was an announcement in Summerside during the 2016, District 21, by-election. Yesterday was yet another attempt to influence voters in a by-election. This government announcement took place in Charlottetown, and as we all know there is a by-election underway in Parkdale.

It saddens me to see this Premier continually undermining the Legislative Assembly, putting his own political interests above the House.

I strongly encourage you to come down on this government and their repeat offence behaviour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

I, too, will take that under advisement and rule on it at a later time.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

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

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back after the weekend to another great week of our Assembly, and a pleasure to welcome my constituents in York-Oyster Bed and everyone viewing on EastLink or via the Internet.

Of course those here in the gallery – constituent John TeRaa, who's with us today, others who are here as regulars, and in particular, draw attention to the attendance in the gallery of a group from Toronto-Ottawa and a number of our colleagues from here in Charlottetown who comprise Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. I welcome you to the House and I appreciate the invitation to a reception later today.

There were a number of events over the weekend, indeed, in the culture domain. On Saturday, the launch of a fine new book by Leonard Cusack, and assisted by Lori Mayne on the life and legacy of Owen Connolly. It's a very fine piece of work and a high quality publication. Congratulations to the authors, researchers, the Owen Connolly estate and the publishers, the Island Studies Press.

Sunday, a very fine afternoon with the PEI Symphony and various others; choirs, younger and adult choirs, the Hey Cuzzins group, the Conductor, Mark Shapiro, and, indeed, the conductor of *O Canada*, Lieutenant Governor Antoinette Perry, and I think we all got off to a real lift with that performance.

It continued through the afternoon yesterday, we had Basel Alrashdan, a 12-year-old Charlottetown youngster, a very accomplished youngster that we got to see last night, parts of his address to the United Nations. Yesterday, Basel and his family arrived in Prince Edward Island less than 24 months, and to think that he was there

yesterday representing the children of the world on World Children's Day and a fine representative of our province. It was a real lift.

In the gallery today we have Eric Andersen and Dylan MacLennan, who are two of the three recipients of the John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship about which I'll be saying more later.

In a final note from the weekend, congratulations to Ashley Condon and her partner Ken Spears on the opening of a new brewery, the Copper Bottom Brewing Company in Montague. There's lots going on in the province and great to be part of it.

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.

As always, it's a great honour to rise in the Legislative Assembly and to greet those that have joined us, not only online, but also live here in the gallery.

I, too, would like to say hello to the members of Advocis that have graced us with your presence today. I appreciate the briefing this morning, as well, on our continual dialogue as we endeavour to make things better for all.

I'd also like to set a special shout-out to my mother-in-law, Doreen MacPhee, who is an avid watcher of the proceedings here in this House.

Also, I'd like to send my sincere condolences to the Compton family on the passing of Henry Compton; just passed away over the weekend, to Ada and the family and all the boys from Bangor Road. My heartfelt condolences and sympathies go to the family.

We had a wonderful event in Stratford over the weekend, well, several events all across the greater Charlottetown area and Stratford with, of course, the Early Bird Minor Hockey Tournament. I attended a breakfast

there in District 11, or sorry, actually it was held in District 10, at the Sherwood school. I know the minister of environment was there. It was great to see you. Most importantly, it was wonderful to see all of the parents and volunteers, and especially the young hockey players that participated in this great tournament, the first of many to be held and hosted here on PEI throughout the hockey season.

In particular, over the weekend, the Stratford & Area Food Drive took place. I'm extremely proud to announce that we surpassed our accomplishment last year. I believe, last year, we brought in about 17 pallets of food. I'm very proud to announce that this year that the Stratford and area actually brought in over 20 pallets of food for the Food Bank, as well, approximately \$1,800 in cash donations. I'd just like to applaud all the residents in the Stratford and greater area –

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** – for your tremendous generosity.

A couple of last shout-outs to a couple of people that I encountered over the weekend: Wayne – works at Dino's Pizza on University Avenue. I frequent the establishment now and then. Look, I have to tell you, customer service is top-notch when you go in there and you encounter Wayne. He goes above and beyond, always has a pleasant word, and a great smile.

In closing, I want to say a very, very special thank you for an individual that I met last night on St. Pius X Drive in District 11: Ms. Cora MacDonald. I couldn't be more appreciative of the wonderful hospitality, the kind words that you spoke to myself and the candidate, Melissa Hilton when we were in the area. So, Cora, thank you very much and we look forward to your support.

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'd like to welcome everybody back for another week in the Legislature, particularly the representatives from the financial service sector advocates. I had a lovely meeting yesterday – I learned a lot and I really appreciated the time that you took to come and visit us in the basement there.

Also want to welcome John TeRaa. We had a nice little chat downstairs – first time he'd been in the House this session, I believe John. Also, for those of us who are CBC addicts and listen to *Sunday Moring with Michael Enright*, you may have heard Catherine MacLellan and her partner Chris Gauthier on Sunday morning – filling out much of the third hour of that program with beautiful words and equally beautiful music. So, congratulations to them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Ms. Biggar:** It's great to be back. Everybody, I'm sure, had a busy weekend. I'd like to send out greetings to the members of Tyne Valley-Linkletter and especially residents at Stewart Memorial manor – my mom watches there every time the session is in.

I had the opportunity on Saturday to meet with representatives of the Status of Women Canada who were in meeting with the Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island. So, we had great discussions around opportunities for our Aboriginal women's association.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of hosting a delegation from Nova Scotia who were here touring our biomass heating plants. I'd especially like to mention that the minister of finance for Nova Scotia, Karen Casey was here – MLAs Hugh MacKay, Bill Horne, and Gordon Wilson. We had representatives from the department of transportation, infrastructure renewal; department of energy; department of natural resources; woodlot management groups; and I was also pleased to have Mr. John TeRaa attending yesterday as one of the PEI delegation. I want to welcome him here today to the Legislature.

It's great to see that PEI is a showcase for the work that we're doing under our biomass and that being part of our energy strategy. It is certainly great to see that we are being recognized for the work that we do.

I want to welcome everyone that's here in the gallery today, especially our journalism students from Holland College.

Have a great day.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora

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

Welcome everybody in the gallery here today and everybody watching on Eastlink.

I want to give a shout-out today to congratulate Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip for 70 years of marriage which they celebrated yesterday. It's a great milestone and I have the utmost respect for the couple.

I'd like to say hello today to Pearl MacEachern who's watching on Eastlink and also Noreen McKenna – a good friend of mine from up in District 19. Welcome. I hope that we fulfill their best expectations today.

I'd also like to give a big shout-out to Dylan Thompson, who on Saturday night was awarded firefighter of the year for Kinkora. Dylan's a great man – he's come a long way in the fire department. That's one fire department that's really – they've just done so well over the past years in training and equipment and I wish them all the best.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It is great to be back in another start of a great week in the Legislative Assembly. I'd like to welcome everybody to the public

gallery today, especially the advocates group – it's great to have you in with us today.

Eddie Lund is back again, and a constituent of mine, Rona Smith is in the gallery today. Rona and I have known each other for a number of years, so it's great to have her in the House as well.

John TeRaa at the far side of the room; John's a great advocate for watershed groups out in his area, so it's always great to see John visit with us as well.

I'd like to also say hello to a faithful viewer that I know will be watching in today; Katheryn Mason watches every day the proceedings here and it's always a pleasure to hear how she feels things are going.

As well, I'd like to congratulate resident Merrill Cronin who has picked up a motorsports award on the weekend. Meryl has been associated with stockcar racing on PEI for many years. I would like to call him a pioneer. I don't know if he'd like that term or not, but he's done a lot of work for stockcar racing in PEI, so well-deserved award for Meryl Cronan.

As well, to many of the people in my neighbourhood out busily getting up their Christmas decorations and outside ornaments; it's great to see before the snow flies that everybody is on top of all of that.

As well, as I close today, I would certainly like to thank the Member from Souris-Elmira for bringing my wife's car back with a full tank of gas last night.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, want to welcome those in the gallery as well as those watching back home on the computer or online. I want to wish a Happy Birthday to my mom, actually, who is at the Stewart Memorial manor and she's probably watching with the hon. minister of transportation's mom, watching the proceedings today so –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** – she’s got double sevens on her birthday now.

The other thing I wanted to acknowledge is that I had the opportunity to watch on the weekend a number of the oyster growers starting to get their trays and their oyster bags all sunk getting ready for the winter, and to get their buoys out of the water and things of that nature and I want to wish them ever success in getting that done before freeze-up, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It’s good to be back in the House and I want to put a shout-out to my district, of course, Vernon River-Stratford. I want to say hello to those in the gallery; John TeRaa, a good friend of mine, and Eddie Lund, and the advocates group who I’ve met with several times; I’m going to pick on two of them: Daniel Martens, who is actually a constituent of mine and married to a cousin of mine, and Joe White who is a really good friend of mine. They do a terrific job and I’m going to try and get over there after the wake to see you there.

We have condolences I want to send out to two families; John Campbell on the Grahams Road, a fantastic farming family there. His son and daughter-in-law were actually outstanding young farmers for Canada back in the 1980s, and Marie Hooper, who is from the Speaker’s riding. Condolences to those families on the loss.

Thank you very much, 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 recognize everyone in the gallery today. I attended the firemen’s banquet there Saturday night, and I must say it was a spectacular event. As the member from Souris has always said, the firefighters, the volunteer firefighters, do a great service. That night there was over 300 years of volunteer service recognized at that night. One person in particular was Chief Moe Sherry; 50 years on the fire department, 50 years.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** If you look at the old pictures at the fire hall, not so many years ago the gear that they were in was pretty wide open and some of the fires in Downtown Charlottetown, the pictures that were there, they were covered in ice from top to bottom and working the fire all night on a volunteer basis. They have some questions for me to ask, and I’ll be asking them in the House.

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 especially those watching at home in Summerside-Wilmot. I’d like to brag about Summerside for just a minute.

In October, 63% of our power was generated by wind, and we’re not done yet. We’ve recently added a solar farm and a battery array to the Credit Union Place. Great things are happening in Summerside, and I’m very proud that we are having the success we are in the energy sector.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It’s great to be back here on a Tuesday. I want to welcome to the gallery the

advocates group. I want to talk about a couple of people who I ran into on the weekend. I was in Charlottetown on Saturday, as probably most MLAs were helping out in District 11, and to my –

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

**Mr. Myers:** – all the Tories were there for sure.

Myself and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, and the Member from Belfast-Murray River here, we were over at Tim Hortons and we ran into Al MacAdam. I just want to say about Al MacAdam; what a fine gentleman he is. Growing up, Al was one of my hockey heroes because he was an NHL player right from little Prince Edward Island. Not even little Prince Edward Island, but Morell, which was pretty close to where I grew up, so I always had a great level of fan following for Al MacAdam. What I always say about Al MacAdam; it's great when your heroes live up to the expectations, and Al is one of those guys who is a top-shelf individual, he's one of the nicest gentlemen you'll ever want to meet, and I was happy to have a conversation with him on Saturday.

Then the Member from Belfast-Murray River and I, we took a trip over to the Charlottetown Farmers Market and we took a twirl around. We talked to quite a few people over there. We bought some Larkin's turkeys and that type of thing and we ran into another old friend of mine, Ronnie MacKinley. I want to just give a shout-out to Ronnie MacKinley; sat down and had a great chat with him. Great to see that he's following so close. Thank you for the advice; I'll take you up on it.

**Mr. LaVie:** What did you talk about?

**Mr. Myers:** As always, he's got his finger on politics on Prince Edward Island, so thank you Ronnie.

Also, finally, this week marks the five-year anniversary since the former minister of transportation ran a bulldozer right through the centre of Prince Edward Island and created that Plan B project.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I guess for some people, we'll be mourning the activity and I guess in fairness to the former minister, I guess the Cabinet was lucky they had him at the time because from what I hear, I'm not sure that the current minister would be able to handle the heat that he took under those circumstances.

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 today and say hello to everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald. I also wanted to recognize anyone who is watching from Geneva Villa here in Charlottetown. We had a great sing-along there with Luke Thompson, and I was on guitar and people singing Christmas carols and other songs; just fantastic. So if you're watching today, hello.

I also wanted to give a shout-out to my constituents, part of the great community of Breadalbane; Catherine MacLellan and Chris Gauthier, for their debut on the Sunday edition of CBC.

I wanted to welcome everyone in the gallery; of course, the Holland College journalism students, especially Josh Lewis; a friend of mine. I wanted to welcome advocates here, especially Richard Russell. I've known Richard for many years and he's done some fantastic work. He's the type of financial advisor who will go in, and he's looking to really help people get ahead in their finances. That's really what financial advisors are all about, so I salute you because you make a big difference.

I know last year I got to talk to them about the idea of an out-of-province self-employment income tax credit and most of them thought that was a fantastic idea and people like Catherine MacLellan and Chris Gauthier, who are exporting their service out-of-province, could really benefit from this type of thing so I'll put that forward again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish everyone a great day in the House.

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

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

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

Pleasure to rise in the House and welcome all the folks in the public gallery, especially Liam Gilks; one of my constituents. It's not very often we get to recognize somebody in the House here from up in the Alberton area. On a footnote, Liam's grandfather served in the House here for two terms.

I'd also like to say hello to all my advisors in the coffee shop in the morning, Ray and Wendell, and Sheldon and Fred and Gordon, and Wayne and Wendell Oliver, and of course one of my biggest fans, although he wouldn't admit it, Lawson Adams. I would like to say a big shout-out to all those folks and all the good people in Alberton-Roseville.

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 welcome all those in the public gallery. I have some of my team here from family and human services as well. I would like to echo the comments that were made by the Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

I attended the Summerside City Council meeting last night and it was fascinating to sit there and listen to all of the good things that are happening in the City of Summerside. My time on council, I was well aware of how they were leading the province in green energy so it was very reassuring last night, and very comforting, to know that during the month of October that 63% of the city's energy came from the wind farms. I do want to congratulate them as well for that.

Also while I was there, Mayor Martin made a point. He wanted me to thank the Premier

today for making time out of his busy schedule to sit down and have a face-to-face with him and have a meeting with him, and he also wanted to say that he appreciated all the time that you do give to him and that it was a very productive meeting, Mr. Speaker.

So, thank you, and let's have a productive day.

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

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

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

I welcome everybody to the gallery, especially Advocis. I met with Zac and Justin yesterday, and we had a great meeting, a great discussion; great to see two young men being enthusiastic about the roles that they're playing in society. Also, Zac, I hope you're entertaining these gentlemen that are from out of province as tourism minister. A kitchen party would be in store, and Zac's very talented on the guitar and sings very well, just to let you know, so hit him up. He'll do it.

Also, this morning at my coffee shop, Barb and George Lowther are celebrating their 58<sup>th</sup>, and Barry and Della MacPhee are celebrating their 59<sup>th</sup>, and the two of them came together in the coffee shop and said happy anniversary and the other fella said happy anniversary, but then the discussion turned to – well, who was married in 58 – or who's 58 and who's 59? So, there was a little discussion in that, but anyway, happy anniversary to them.

But all in all, Mr. Speaker, great to be back in the House, and looking forward to a good day.

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

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

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

I'd like to welcome everyone here at the House again, everyone visiting in the gallery, the Advocis group, the journalism students, welcome.

It was a great weekend in District 4. We had a great event with the Lions Club, the elimination draw happened, and I just want to share with the House that the final three winners were all from – basically from the area. Gillis Lodge had a ticket; ten of the employees there. Mona Ryan and John Morrison are both seniors from the area, so it was great. They decided to share the last three prizes, so it worked out really well for the community.

I'd like to wish John MacPherson from Bellevue a happy 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He's a great supporter and a great member of the community.

I'd also like to congratulate Dylan Menzie. He had his national debut on CTV today, I believe it was, and he's going to be on a new program called *The Launch*, so we look forward to seeing Dylan on that program. He's from the district as well.

Also, I'd like to compliment the Premier on his new eyeglasses. I believe they might be from Fellow Earthlings, a great new business in my own district, and I think they have two new employees because of the increase in business they've had, and I want to thank the Premier for frequenting Fellow Earthlings.

Thank you very much and everyone have a great day.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

It is a privilege every day you get to rise in the House. I welcome everyone into the gallery. It's great to see such a crowd; the gallery is full.

I'd like to say hello to those watching on Eastlink from District 1 Souris-Elmira, especially Patsy Laybolt and Joe "Maverick" MacDonald. They watch faithfully, they were telling me this past weekend, and I want to say hello to them and give them a big shout out.

I want to echo the words of the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park about the

fireman's dinner he was at. I attended one Friday evening, and I attended as a fire chief, and I can echo the comments that the member made about. I wore a coat and long rubber boots with the ice hanging off me, and it is, for volunteers, it is hard work.

And BA – we were discussing that at the fire hall – BA is the hardest part of the job. You do the grunt work with all that equipment on.

But we had a gentleman, Sterling MacDonald, who received a 40-year medal, but Sterling wasn't able to attend. Sterling had some health issues, and he was in the Charlottetown hospital, and I stopped on the way home Friday evening to see him, to wish him my best. I wish he had been there, because I knew Sterling prior to entering the fire department, but when you volunteer beside somebody for 36 years, you do learn a lot about the individual, and Sterling has been a great firefighter over the years, but he has health issues. He was unable to attend.

I had a busy weekend, not only with the firemen's banquet. Saturday evening, I had the farmers – what the farmers in Eastern Kings do, they all get together and they have a little banquet of their own for the Eastern Kings group, and it was well-over attended by 200 people. It's all fundraiser for the Fortune Community Centre, and the Townshend family – Wayne and his brother – they organize it every year and it's a great event.

The reason why I love living on PEI is the good gestures that we do give to one another. You all heard about what the minister did for me Thursday evening. Well Friday morning when I came into the House and I'm sitting in here and I couldn't get anybody to fix my tire, and I was out in the lunchroom trying to make phone calls to get this tire fixed so I can go home in the afternoon. The Sergeant-at-Arms says: Colin, go in and sit and do your job and don't worry about your truck.

At 1:00 p.m., I went out and sat in my truck and I drove home. I want to put a big thank you out to the Sergeant-at-Arms and to the minister of environment, how they took care of my truck for me, Mr. Speaker, and got me home.

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

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** I wonder what's going to happen today.

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today. It's great to see the gallery filled.

I'd also like to congratulate the organizers for – I spent the weekend in rinks in Kings County, so I'd like to congratulate the organizers in Montague, Murray River, and Georgetown for a wonderful group – it was just a wonderful assembly, and the kids, they were absolutely fantastic, seeing all those families and probably spending a good dollar down your way.

**Mr. LaVie:** Who won the tournament?

**Mr. Dumville:** Well, I thought – I didn't think you would bring that up, hon. member, but it wouldn't be complete without saying that my daughter-in-law, number 15 and captain of the Charlottetown team, won, scored the winning goal in overtime, two minutes and thirty seconds into the five-minute overtime against Souris.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** But hon. member, Souris did put up a good fight. I want you to know that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

As always, it's certainly a pleasure to rise and welcome everyone here to the public gallery. I'd certainly like to welcome the Holland College journalist students, the media, all the guests, and the Advocis group. I look forward to out get together over supper this evening. I'd also like to welcome

the staff from the family and human services department.

I'd also like to congratulate volunteers that volunteer each year for the agricultural festival. They had their fundraiser; it was an elimination draw and they sold 250 tickets, and there was quite a few cheers when I came out in the first round; you don't buy these tickets expecting to win, you buy it to support, and it was a wonderful evening and great meal

I'd like to say hello back to everyone in Evangeline-Miscouche.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Three Oaks, Environmental Award**

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

Today, I would like to recognize Three Oaks Senior High School for winning an award at the 30<sup>th</sup> annual Prince Edward Island Environmental Awards.

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, I attended the PEI Environmental Awards Ceremony at Credit Union Place in Summerside, and I was very proud to hear that my community's high school was being recognized for its efforts in land and seascape preservation and enhancement.

Three Oaks Senior High staff and students are continually placing focus on preserving and protecting the environment. They specifically received the award this year for the development of an interpretive trail system around the school, which includes an outdoor classroom that allows students to learn outside in their natural surroundings. I think this is a fantastic initiative, as it is helping to enhance our local ecosystem, as well as creating a more diverse classroom in which our students can learn.

Three Oaks also has an active Envirothon group, who won the provincial Envirothon competition at the beginning of this year.

This team is a significant contributor to all environmentally conscious decisions made by the school, and is a major reason for the school receiving this award.

I would like to thank everyone at Three Oaks who worked hard and dedicated their time to earning this award. It is wonderful to see such a large group of community members, especially our youth, working to maintain and enhance the natural beauty around our home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Jason Aspin-Sydney Boutique Inn and Suites**

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

I rise today to congratulate Jason Aspin, his business partners, and his project manager Gordon MacPherson, on the excellent job they did at renovating Notre Dame Convent in Charlottetown into the Sydney Boutique Inn and Suites.

Investment into the former convent has restored the building, maintaining its historical character, while adding updated and improvements that will see it through the next 100 years.

It is important that we breathe new lives into our heritage properties as the buildings tell their story. Charlottetown has won many national recognitions as a place of historic significance. Each and every renovated property strengthens our reputation as a heritage destination.

It is important that we recognize those who contribute to maintaining the city's historical value.

I would like to thank Jason Aspin and his partners, Red Sands Development, for their commitment to respecting the historical character of the convent and preserving it for future generations.

I noticed an ad in the paper inviting former students to the open house this weekend so

they can see the changes. I'm sure it will be well attended, and many people have many fond memories of the facility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

### **2017 Fall Legislature Session**

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

I want to talk today about a situation that's causing me a lot of concern; a matter which I've been speaking about in the past; and a matter that is being brought to me from Islanders, not only in District 19, but across the province.

This matter is about the amount of trees and forests that are being cleared across the Island. We truly need a reforestation plan for this province, a matter of which this government is not addressing; a matter which is so important to our environment.

As I travel across the Island, large tracts of land are being cleared. However, areas that could be reforested are not being touched to a level to replace the existing cut rate.

Back in the spring session, I stated right here that it takes 30 years to grow a tree into a resource that I believe is so important moving forward.

It is vital that we protect our forested areas of our province. It is important that we maintain a proper forest management plan and we ensure the diversity of species throughout the whole province.

Reforestation projects increase biodiversity and have a positive effect on the groundwater retention. As well, trees have a positive impact on our climate by reducing carbons in the air, offering a positive environment for wildlife and birds, and reducing soil erosion.

I realize that companies are not breaking the laws by clearing land, however, as a province we must ensure our resources are protected.

I would hope that the province would follow the lead of Charlottetown, which has seen thousands of trees planted on their new well field in Miltonvale. This 206-acre site is to be reforested over time with trees and shrubs that are native to PEI, a move which will have a positive effect on groundwater retention and quality.

We've been waiting as a province for the new Water Act. My question is: Will the new Water Act ensure that all clear cutting operations and irrigation well and pond construction is carried out with sustainable environmental practice in place.

This new Water Act needs to address reforestation, because I have stated it takes 30 years to grow a tree, Mr. Speaker.

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

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Legislation for lower class sizes**

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

In the last six months, we've seen government twice have to play catch up on the continuing issue of increasing out of control class sizes, both here in Charlottetown and across the bridge in my home community of Stratford.

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, will you commit to legislating and enforcing lower class sizes to create a better learning environment for our children?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there are various ways to deal with the growing population, which is – we're happy to say – is the case in Prince Edward Island, a direct reflection of the priority that our government has placed on our population action plan to recognize that we now have a population of 152,000 people, largest ever as of the end of

June. That our population in that 12-month period got younger. So we are taking this to heart and we're willing to look at all the measured, but we're investing today in the priorities for teachers and learners in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I represent a district that has been growing exponentially over of the last number of years. In fact, Stratford has been known to be the fastest growing community in all of Atlantic Canada for several years now. It's only common sense to realize that as the population of a community grows the demands on the education system and other resources increase, as well.

Yet, what we're seeing is stop-gap measures that aren't working because this government just has to keep making the same announcements every few months.

Again, question to the Premier: Wouldn't a long-term solution to class sizes bring more stability to our schools than Band-Aid solutions every polling period?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, in our Capital Budget, presented on Friday, there was an announcement of a plan to invest significantly in the two schools in Stratford with the addition of 14 classrooms. I would not call that, by any means, a Band-Aid solution. Indeed, we understood from across the floor that the opposition was concerned that we were spending too much.

This comes out of a plan, through a planning process on the advice of the Public Schools Branch and we're proud to stand behind that, as we are, in the investments, major investments in water and waste water for Stratford and for the greater area here that's

providing the basis for public health and future growth, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

We already know that 14 new classrooms added to Stratford is not going to be enough, especially when we have continued growth at the significant level that we do.

After the upheaval over the past year thanks to this government, our schools could surely use some stability. During the school closure fight last winter parents were clear that large class sizes are making it harder for our students to succeed. We need to decrease class size and better address the composition in our classrooms to allow our educators to do what they do best and that is to teach.

#### **Reduction of class sizes and closure of schools**

Again, to the Premier: Premier, wouldn't your time have been better spent over the last year finding a way to reduce class size instead of trying to close schools?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the school review process was necessary and, indeed it was – had been not carried out for more than two decades and it gave –

**Mr. Myers:** 2008.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – Islanders an opportunity to take a stock of the situation across the province. Indeed, that has led to new investments. I find it ironic that today the call is for more capital expenditure when, on Friday, the protest was that we were spending too much. We did address the situation in Stratford on the advice of the Public Schools Branch.

Indeed, earlier last week, we made investments in an additional 41 teachers and education assistants, some of which are going to Stratford.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

We've seen the results of this upheaval from the Premier's micromanaging of this file; a botched attempt to fire teachers, low test scores in key areas, a three to five-year wait for students' psychological assessments, a failed attempt to close schools, five education ministers in just over two years, and now a by-election in District 11.

Question to the Premier: When will you recognize that you're micromanaging is only making this issue worse?

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

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

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

It's my pleasure to get up and address the House in response to this question. With the addition of 41 new frontline teaching positions on Prince Edward Island just last week, I think we're in a great position to move forward. We saw that we were proactively addressing the issue of classroom composition with an allocation of 10 teachers, seven of which will be put in the classroom right away, and room for three more to move along, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct) classrooms.

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

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

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

### **MOU and leaked emails**

The finance minister has repeatedly told this House, as well as the Auditor General and maybe even the RCMP that he had no knowledge of the exclusive MOU his own department executed. Last spring's leaked emails proved otherwise.

Question to the minister: Why do you continue to refuse to own up to your knowledge of this exclusive MOU?

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

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

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

I have answered these questions before at previous sitting of this Legislature. There is no question that one of the things that the Auditor General has done is she has reviewed each and every email that was involved in this.

Certainly, the Premier was the one who said: you know we're going to get the Auditor General to have a look at this file.

I wouldn't call myself being mentioned in one email by someone else is – would assert that I had been involved in this file. I never had sent an email and never received an email with respect to that file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Before I'm done, he will eat those words. This exclusive MOU was in place from July to October and it stated: PEI, nor any of its employees, officers, contractors, agents, representatives and/or professional advisors agrees not to discuss with any entity its interest and/or capacity in hosting or creating a financial service centre in the province.

Minister: Do you want to stick with your story that you knew nothing about this MOU and its exclusivity clause?

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

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

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

When we're talking about this e-gaming file the dates are important. This file was closed in February of 2012. When I received an email in July of 2012, it was with respect to an MOU that was signed from another staff member. It's simply a mention a financial platform; it didn't mention anything further than that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

### **Copy of document from NewCo company**

I have here today, and I'll table it for all the House, an email from this minister's very account, it was dated September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012. It was from Keith Laslop and it says: please find attached letter with our proposal to the Government of Prince Edward Island.

It was to you, minister: Why have you never mentioned this before, that you were sent a direct copy of a document from this NewCo scheme company?

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

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

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

In my role, at that point in time as Minister of Finance, I did get a lot of requests from many different companies. But, as I said with respect to a company wanting to come in and set-up a financial service in September of 2012, when this file was closed in February of 2012, I just don't see the connection, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

In September – in 2012, they had – there was an exclusivity clause and it ran until the end of September that year. Your dates are mixed up because you're definitely wrong.

In fact, you knew enough that you told Wes Sheridan about this exclusivity clause.

To the finance minister: What dates exactly were you brought in on this NewCo insider scheme that Chris LeClair cooked up?

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

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

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

I'm not sure exactly what the member is talking about when he's talking about a scheme, what his inference is to a company called NewCo.

I know that we did enter into an exclusivity clause and until such time as that clause, or that timeframe has elapsed, staff are not to discuss with any other company with respect to that.

I simply reminded the former minister of finance of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The email that I will tabled later today has brand new information that shows that you received information from Keith Laslop, it was his presentation to government of a financial services platform that was identical to the one that was inside the exclusivity contract and was brought here by Chris LeClair, and you were part of it. Wes Sheridan was a part of it. It was a big scheme. That's why I call it a scheme.

**Meetings with NewCo and Wes Sheridan**

Could you tell the House how many conversations and meetings with this NewCo insider did you have with Wes Sheridan?

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

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

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

That would be zero. None.

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

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

**Meetings with Mr. Laslop re: NewCo**

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

Question to the finance minister: Did you ever personally meet or have conversations with Mr. Laslop on the NewCo insider scheme?

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

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

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

I had no meetings with any individuals with respect to the financial platform, or whatever, that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is referring to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Meeting with Chris LeClair re: NewCo**

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

I'll tell you why these questions are important: because over time, this minister has come to his feet and told us – first, he didn't know anything; then he knew a little bit; then he knew a lot; and then he knew a lot more, right down to the point where he's talking to Wes Sheridan about it – right

down to the point where, in this very Question Period, he told me one thing that I'm able to prove otherwise. That's why it's important. When he gets to his feet, I'm not sure that the answers are believable.

Question to the minister: Did you ever personally meet or have conversations with Chris LeClair about this NewCo insider scheme?

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

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

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

Certainly, with respect to the preamble that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters had before he asked the question, there was at no time was I involved with this file. With respect to my knowledge of the file, after the Auditor General finished conducting her review, I became very knowledgeable about the file at that point because I had –

**Mr. LaVie:** Your nose is growing.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Roach:** – the opportunity to read the Auditor General's report and I was tasked to work with various departments in response to the Auditor General's recommendations and that's where I got my knowledge of this file.

Thank you.

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

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

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

### **Financial platform and MOU meeting**

Last spring, the finance minister told this House: I had no idea what that meeting was about, other than that there was a meeting to talk about a financial platform and that there was an MOU in place and that was the end of it.

Minister: Just what meeting about a financial platform were you referencing?

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

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

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

At that time that would have been a staff member who advised me that there was a group that were going to have discussions about a financial platform and that there was an MOU in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** That's it right there.

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

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

That is, in fact, what happened. I have more emails that have come to light about this insider scheme that was going on.

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, Wes Sheridan had a lunch meeting with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop from NewCo.

Minister: Would you agree that this meeting broke the exclusivity contract of your MOU?

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

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

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

I don't have the dates or the MOU with me here today, but I'll gladly go and have a look at that and try to confirm the dates of that.

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 very much broke the exclusivity contract of the MOU – very much.

### **Exclusivity clause and MOU**

On August 30<sup>th</sup> the former premier's chief of staff, Allan Campbell met with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop about NewCo.

Question to the minister: Would you agree that this meeting broke the exclusivity clause of your MOU?

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

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

As I stated in the previous question, I don't have the MOU in front of me that would have the various dates on it and I certainly wasn't aware of that meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So, more emails again I have – and I have a lot of them that I'm going to table for everyone to see here today.

On August 30<sup>th</sup>, the CEO of Innovation PEI, Cheryl Paynter and staffer Brad Mix met with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop about NewCo.

Question to the minister: Would you agree that this meeting broke the exclusivity clause of your MOU?

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

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

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

I think I'd like to remind the House that this matter was turned over to the Auditor General. The Auditor General and her staff took a thorough amount of time; they reviewed some – in excess of 10,000 documents. I couldn't tell you the large number of people that they interviewed and the Auditor General came back with her report. She made 15 recommendations, which were all followed-up by the various government departments. I still support the Auditor General and the great work that she

had done and brought back to this Legislature on that file.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In the same email, Chris LeClair asked the CEO of Innovation PEI for a chance for Keith Laslop to get an overview of the initiative: meaning, of course, e-gaming and financial services.

Question to the minister: Would you agree that this also broke your exclusivity clause in the MOU?

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

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

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

Again, I have the utmost respect and faith in the Auditor General and her department. The Auditor General had the opportunity to review all emails with respect to this file. The Auditor General came back to this Legislature and made 15 recommendations. All the recommendations have been followed-up upon and I, again, continue to support the work that was done by the Auditor General and the recommendations that were made from that department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Of course, we all know that the Auditor General said clearly in her report that one of the limiting factors was that she didn't have access to all the information because you guys hid it from her. So the fact that you hid it from her makes it easier for you to stand behind a report because you hid information from her, quite frankly, and we're getting to the bottom of it.

**Meeting with Chris LeClair re: NewCo (further)**

I'm going to ask you a question again. I'm going to go back to one that I already asked: Did you ever have a meeting or conversation with Chris LeClair about this NewCo insider scheme, Minister?

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

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

**Mr. Roach:** Again, Mr. Speaker, on this particular file, there was a tremendous amount of work done by the Auditor General with respect to emails. The Auditor General had the opportunity to interview many of those that were involved in the file and the Auditor General has come back with her report and it's one thing, I believe, that when we have processes in place, we have to support those processes and the work done by the departments that bring it back. I support the information that the Auditor General has brought back for this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Actually, this Premier and this Cabinet deliberately tied the Auditor General's hands and she never looked into any part of the insider scheme about NewCo.

**Audit and NewCo**

Question to the Premier: Why did you take this decision to avoid an audit on the NewCo insider scheme?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was given a wide mandate. This was a mandate that she was asked to take up in early March – the ninth day after we formed a government. We said clearly that this meant that we were doing business differently.

I want to note that in her 2017 report – her annual report – the Auditor General said: All recommendations have been accepted by government and that in addition, government responded to the Deputy Minister of Finance and secretary of Treasury Board – communicated to all deputy ministers, the Treasury Board, and the comptroller's office are committed to monitoring compliance with legislation, policies, and procedures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

And that is, of course, because the Premier and his government hid information from her – wouldn't let her look into all of it, gave her a very confining space with it to work in. You planned all this. You're directly responsible for it. You're the guy that was on t.v. boasting how: it didn't matter who was involved, they were going under the bus. Boy, that certainly changed, didn't it?

The only office in this province with the legislative mandate to determine criminal action and lay charges is the Crown Attorney's office. The Auditor General states: The purpose of the MOU was to allow TBT to negotiate exclusively with Innovation PEI on a financial services platform for the province.

**Exclusivity clause and MOU (further)**

A question to the Premier: Do you think multiple senior staff, including the Premier's Chief of Staff, taking a meeting with Chris LeClair and Keith Laslop on the NewCo insider scheme breaks that exclusivity clause?

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

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

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

This matter has been thoroughly reviewed by the independent body of the Auditor

General. I note in the Auditor General's remarks that she had brought in outside counsel to review whether or not any laws had been broken, and she advised that no laws had been broken.

The Auditor General's report and her mandate was far more than just that of being financial, and I certainly respect the Auditor General and the fact that she would go and get support from a lawyer to determine whether or not anything of a criminal nature occurred, and she said it did not.

**Mr. Myers:** Not the job of a lawyer (Indistinct) start.

**Mr. Roach:** So, I certainly support the work that the Auditor General does, and I certainly appreciate the fact that she brought in legal counsel to advise her beyond that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Myers:** You (Indistinct) how the law works.

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

**Mr. Myers:** You know that's not how the law works.

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

### **MLA severance packages**

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

With the recent resignation of the former Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the issue of overly generous MLA severance packages has once again been raised.

Could government please inform this House and table what the current liability for earned, but not yet paid out, severance packages is?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Who's the question to?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Mr. Speaker, the rules of the House are that I can specify a minister if I wish, but of course anybody in government is free to answer, so I'm not fussy.

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

**Mr. Myers:** They're dying to answer.

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

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

Certainly, I don't think there's a member in this Legislature, including the member of the third party, that is not aware of this particular policy, and in terms of the total value, it's not a number that I would have here with me today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

### **Bill reducing MLA severance packages**

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

In the 2015 throne speech, government promised to, and I quote: Bring forward proposals to reduce transitional allowances for MLAs. This was reiterated in the 2016 throne speech, but it's conspicuously absent from the speech that we heard last week.

This is part of a disappointing trend with this government where promises are dropped when they conflict with interests of the Liberal party or Liberal MLAs.

A question to the Premier: Why has government not yet tabled a bill to reduce MLA severance packages?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker and it's been said in this House before that the intention that was mapped out in those statements that are referred to by the Leader of the Third Party would be that whatever decisions were taken would be on a go-forward basis. That's to say, for a further Legislature, that they wouldn't be retroactive in terms of any changes that would or that might be contemplated.

And, in a further part, this is something that concerns all members of the House, and it's something that we should be undertaking in a more collaborative manner, and that will be done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Campaign finance reform**

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

Another promise dropped because of party interests is campaign finance reform. The Premier went from progressive reform to minor reform, and now we're back to a discussion paper.

I'm not sure what this government expects to get out of this discussion paper, but it's clear where the consensus lies on this issue. The federal government and five provinces already banned corporate and union political donations – and BC will soon make that six provinces – and all of the elected parties in this House except the Liberals are now on board.

When will this government bring us in line with best practices and ban corporate and union donations to political parties?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, there is a letter that I wrote to the Leader of the Third Party and the then acting interim Leader of the Official Opposition in – I believe it was – December of last year, spelling out the thinking at the time and the rationale for the position with the indication that there would be further conversations about that. That may indeed be timely to take up, and that is something that we continue to look forward to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### ***Municipal Government Act and amalgamation***

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment regarding the *Municipal Government Act*.

Minister, some municipal leaders in my area are concerned about the MGA. In particular, they feel that you are forcing them to amalgamate. Is that correct, minister?

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

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

Certainly, I would like to assure the hon. member, and in fact all members of the Legislative Assembly here that no, there is absolutely no intention of forcing amalgamation in western PEI, in eastern PEI, or anywhere in the middle, hon. member.

What we will continue to do and encourage municipalities and communities is to go out and talk to existing communities around them – in other words, their neighbours – to find areas of commonality, common interests, and beneficial outcomes that if they did form some kind of a larger region, how it would benefit them all collectively as a larger region.

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

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

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

Minister, the same municipal leaders are also concerned about the regulation that each municipality will have to hold an all-day election.

Is this set in stone, or is there some possibility that it can be changed?

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

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

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

As I've said before on the floor of the Legislature, the updating of this *Municipal*

*Government Act* is something that hasn't been done for 30 or 40 years, so these are minimum standards that the act will deal with moving forward. It's things that residents of municipalities, and in fact all levels of government, expect of their governments.

Indeed, if there is a contested election on election day, there would be a need to have a full-day election, but we do have to remind ourselves that some of the small municipalities, who in the past have had councils decided by acclimation – well, that will probably continue in the future, and therefore there will be no need for an election as there wasn't in the past. So, moving forward, that's how the *Municipal Government Act* will deal with these situations.

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

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

#### **Accessibility of municipal offices**

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

Moving forward with minimum standards, my question, minister, will be: Will you entertain the request to relax the requirement of having a municipal office accessible to all members of the public for a minimum of 20 hours per week?

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Good question.

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

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

Once again, as an updating, or modernization, of this act – you know, requiring a place where residents can go and do their business is certainly a requirement of the act.

What we've been doing as a department is talking with municipalities to say: Who could you share a service with? And identify existing municipalities around them that may have parts or pieces of those that they could work collectively on, and the 20 hours

of service could be provided by a neighbouring community.

We will continue to do that with municipalities. If they have any concerns, they can feel free to call myself or members of the department and we will help them in the system in that way.

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

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

#### **Use of EAL support funding**

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

My question today is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. Minister, I was pleased with your announcement last week of \$1.2 million in much needed supports for EAL students and students whose first language is English.

How will this funding be used?

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

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

I'm pleased to say that our population growth strategy is showing very positive results on Prince Edward Island and that this investment has been made to help to address the issues where young students are landing, particularly in the Charlottetown-Stratford areas, with a \$2.8 million-a-year investment.

We've got 41 new educators that will be put on the front lines in our schools to help with classroom composition issues going forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** When?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your first supplementary.

#### **Role of classroom composition teachers**

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

Minister, a few years ago there was a valuable initiative by the teachers' federation where you would take your MLA to school day. I participated at Spring Park School, and my eyes were opened to the variety of students that made up a classroom: High achievers, those with learning disabilities, those on the autism spectrum disorder, new immigrants.

Minister: Could you let us know what the role of the new classroom composition teachers will be?

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

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

There will be 10 new classroom composition teachers included in this new allocation and those teachers are set out with very specific roles in mind. At the high school level, there will be two teachers put into Colonel Gray and one teacher put into Charlottetown Rural, and those teachers will either allow for new class sections to take place, or team teaching, where in some cases there might be two teachers in a classroom or teachers pulled out.

At Queen Charlotte, there's a new grade 7 homeroom, which will allow for supports to English language arts and where we see them in Glen Stewart and Stratford, as an example, there will be the addition of classroom teachers to help support.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your second supplementary.

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

Minister: Are the new positions posted and when do you expect these much needed positions to be filled?

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

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

I am pleased to indicate that at least one of the positions at Colonel Gray has already been filled and we suspect that the balance of the positions at the high school level will be filled by the end of the week. The rest of the positions are either posted or will be filled within the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **Industrial waste dumped into Northumberland Strait**

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

The lobster fishery in the Northumberland Strait creates a lot of jobs and economic activities for Islanders.

Question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Minister, yes or no? Do you support industrial waste being dumped into the strait or any Island waters?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, definitely not.

The Member from Souris-Elmira brings up a very good question, one that is of grave concern, to not only our fishers here, our processors here and those of us who consume lobsters. We do not want any waste going into the Northumberland Strait.

I have had letters from Nova Scotia fishermen. I've spoken with the PEI Fishermen's Association about this, and two weeks ago I was in Nova Scotia. I spoke with my counterpart, hon. Keith Colwell. I came home and wrote a letter to him expressing the dire concern we have about this, and we want this plant cleaned up, but not by dumping the waste into the Northumberland Strait.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

### **PEIFA and representatives meeting in Moncton**

Second question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. The PEIFA and other fisheries representatives attended an information (Indistinct) Pictou in Moncton this month. You chose not to attend.

Minister: Did you send any of your staff over to this meeting?

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

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

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

I did not attend the meeting. I'm not sure if I had staff at that meeting. I know we had staff over at the right whale meeting that was put on my the hon. Dominic LeBlanc, but this usually was something that we have really keyed in on, and we also wrote to – copied the letter to the federal minister as well because this is of dire concern.

This is one of our largest industries here. How can some private operation dump wastewater into the stream? We, as a government and agriculture, we spend so much time in stewardship and making sure that we keep the waters clean. We have the wastewater treatment dollars that we spend, over \$90 million, to make sure that the waters are clean. We cannot have this effluent coming from that plant going into the waters that could affect not only our lobster fishery, but also those in Nova Scotia.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Another question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. Minister, your staff is responsible for technical aspects of the Water Act.

### **Wastewater and Water Act**

Minister: How does wastewater pipelines dumping discharge into PEI waters fit into your long-delayed Water Act?

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

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

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

We spend a lot of dollars through our department working on this very issue. We do not want waste of any kind going into the streams. We put a lot of dollars into this program, through the stewardship program. If there are pipes that are going into the water, we like to hear about it. We heard about a couple last year and worked on them to get them cleaned up. If the hon. member knows of others, certainly bring it to our attention and we will look into it.

But our greatest concern is that we keep these waters clean. It can affect one of the largest industries in this province, and we cannot have something like that happen again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Again, a question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries; 19,800 pumper fire trucks worth each day that will have a huge impact on the long-term health of our lobster industry, recreational fishery, shell fishery and the Northumberland Strait itself.

Minister, I stand with our fishers and I oppose this project into the Strait, will you do the same?

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

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

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

Definitely, and we're on record right now of me – like I know that I made with Honourable Keith Colwell, spoke with him on this when I was in Nova Scotia two weeks ago, written a letter to him to follow that up so that he could it to his environment minister to make sure that everyone on that side is well aware, which I know they are. I copied it to Dominic LeBlanc, our federal minister.

We are working on this because we do not want this effluent – the pipe change to go into the Strait where our lobster are. This is a massive industry for our province and for Nova Scotia, as well.

We are fully behind the fishermen in both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to make sure that this does not happen. We implore the company to make sure when they do the clean up, they do it some other way than dumping the waste into the Strait.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

Another question to the minister of agriculture and forestry: Minister, people send emails. People send letters that happens all the time.

What else are we doing, are you doing, as a minister to stop this project from dumping into the Northumberland Strait?

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

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

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

I think the key here is to make sure we have the communication lines open and working full blast.

I've heard from the fishermen in Nova Scotia. I've met with the PEI Fishermen's Association here. I have spoken to the provincial minister of fisheries in Nova Scotia. I have written to the minister, copied it to his environment minister and the federal minister, LeBlanc.

We have to keep the communications going. We have to make sure everyone knows the seriousness of this issue. The plant does need to be refurbished. We have to have it cleaned up, but not dumping effluent into the Strait. They have a responsibility to clean up the issue, but not put the wastewater into our fishing area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, your final question.

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

Another question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Yes, this plant has to be refurbished. Fishers, are not against this plant whatsoever as long as it's built in-land. They don't want it dumping into the Island water.

Minister: Have we done any work on what legal action we could take and will you take legal action if need be?

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

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

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

We have looked into the fact that there is a plant, a similar plant in Saskatchewan, which is in-land. They did the refurbishment. They didn't dump into a water source. That's what we're following up on. I think the plant has to be refurbished by 2020. In that time period, we will keep the communication lines open so we do not have to end up in court over this. Let's give them the message, work with them, and hopefully solve this problem before it ever gets to that stage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship**

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

I'm pleased to rise today to recognize three outstanding Indigenous youth and their achievements. They are the most recipients of the John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship, which was established by the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat in 2009 to support Aboriginal students studying at the University of Prince Edward Island.

This scholarship is named in honour of the distinguished Mi'kmaq Islander, John James Sark, who earned his post-secondary education at Saint Dunstan's University, and was the Island's first Mi'kmaq teacher.

This year's recipients are Eric Andersen, John Ryan Francis and Dylan MacLennan. Eric Andersen and Dylan MacLennan are with us today.

These students, each in their own way, has already made significant contributions to their community, and has made education a priority in their lives.

Eric Andersen of Makkovik, Labrador, is in his second year of a political science degree. Eric has already established an impressive academic resume, being awarded the student excellence award from UPEI for 2015-2016 and the Dean's honour list for 2016-2017. Eric played an active role in his Aboriginal community in Makkovik, and has continued this role at UPEI with the Mawi'Omi Aboriginal Student Centre, including organizing the campus first ever Indigenous Games.

John Ryan Francis, of Rocky Point, is in his third year of a Bachelor of Arts degree. During his time as a UPEI student, John Ryan has taken the opportunity to learn more about the cultural diversity of the student body and to educate other students about Mi'kmaq culture. John is currently

looking for ways to transform his education into positive action in his community, with a special focus on helping Aboriginal youth to choose a positive and productive path, starting with a good education.

Dylan MacLennan, of Tyne Valley, is in his third year of Sustainable Design Engineering. Dylan has been involved in several Lennox Island youth programs and helped facilitate a tour of the Wind Energy Institute of Canada in North Cape for the Lennox Island Youth Group. Dylan has also been a member of the Canadian Armed Forces since 2003.

Eric, John, and Dylan are exemplary role models for the young and fast-growing Aboriginal youth population on Prince Edward Island and I wish them well in the remainder of their studies.

Please join me now in congratulating them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's always a pleasure to stand in this Legislative Assembly and follow a great ministerial statement such as this, especially when it involves, not only the youth of Prince Edward Island, but our Aboriginal youth as well.

I, also, along with the Premier, would like to applaud Eric Andersen, John Ryan Francis, and Dylan MacLennan for their great initiative and hard work in their studies. Recognize, as well, of course, John Joe Sark for the tireless effort that he puts in continually here on PEI to move very important issues forward.

I'd also like to – just because of some of my background – I'd like to also recognize Mr. MacLennan for your dedication and commitment to our services. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It is indeed a pleasure to stand up and to receive this statement and to be able to respond to it. One of the recipients, JR Francis, was a long-time soccer player on a team with one of my sons and I have very many happy memories of JR playing with my son, Sam. It was quite clear back then that he was going to go on to do some great things and, indeed, he is fulfilling that potential.

So many challenges are faced by the youth of today and, in particular, Indigenous youth. There are so many scourges which are a result of mistreatment and some other, quite frankly, horrors that occurred to the Aboriginal community here and that's just beginning to work its way through the generations. All kinds of supports are needed to address the damages that have been done.

One of those damages is that there's a far lower percentage than one would expect of Aboriginal children who go into post-secondary education. Any opportunity, or anything that can be done to facilitate that and improve their chances, is very welcome. This John J. Sark Memorial Scholarship award is certainly one opportunity to do that.

Children – all children – have limitless potential if they are given the freedoms and the opportunities to fulfill what they could do, and scholarships like this are one way that we can allow and help children, particularly Aboriginal children, reach their full potential.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Poverty Reduction Advisory Council**

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

I am pleased to rise today to announce that Islanders are invited to help create a collaborative strategy to further reduce poverty in the province. The Poverty Reduction Advisory Council will provide input and advice on poverty reduction, focusing on housing, food, and employment. Islanders can apply to join the advisory council through Engage PEI until December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Engage PEI, it is important to note, helps Islanders volunteer fill vacancies on more than 70 agencies, boards, and commissions of the provincial government.

The members of this Poverty Reduction Advisory Council will bring a range of experiences and views that will help us consider the many factors contributing to poverty, as well as ways to create and take action on short and longer-term solutions. The council will also engage with the public; community groups; not-for-profit and service organizations; leaders in private and corporate sectors; and provincial and municipal governments.

In addition to the contributions of the groups and individuals across the province, the Poverty Reduction Strategy will build on recent government initiatives to reduce poverty that include: increases to the social assistance food rates and personal comfort allowances; increases to seniors and low-income home repair programs; increases to school breakfast programs; increases to minimum wage; income tax changes to help lower-income Islanders; introduction of the Generic and Catastrophic Drug Programs; introduction of the Harvest and Prosper Program; and introduction of a Grandparents and Care Providers program.

Government cannot address poverty alone and our strategy will focus on the role of all partners. We must work together to ensure everyone has the chance to be self-sufficient, healthy, and able to thrive in our Island society.

Public consultations will take place in early 2018, as part of the development of a collaborative poverty reduction strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

We're all aware that there are issues around poverty that are deep and complex. We need a wide-ranging approach that addresses income, housing, food security, and other issues. I'm cautiously hopeful that government's latest attempt to tackle poverty will bear fruit because of the fine community members that they're going to ask to be part of this strategy and taskforce. However, when I look back at this government's history and the efforts on this file, I'm given pause.

In 2011, a poverty reduction strategy was announced just before an election, with great fanfare. Six months later, this government brought in the HST, and that pretty well threw the work of any poverty strategy out the door. Government has been limping along ever since, with no vision or no plan on poverty reduction.

I might suggest to the minister that many of the individuals who find themselves needing this help do not have access to a computer, so I would like to ensure that some information, brochures, posters could be seen at the food bank, the soup kitchen, clinics, and any public space.

Hopefully this latest poverty task force is a good-faith effort to really try and tackle the root-causes of poverty, and not just the root-cause of a by-election in District 11.

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 want to acknowledge the many efforts and programs that government has brought forward in an effort to reduce, and hopefully ultimately eliminate poverty. We are a long way from that as the minister is fully aware, but you had a long litany of various programs and I appreciate that. I appreciate what your government is trying to do.

We all know how devastating poverty can be in our society. Walking around District 11, there are areas in District 11 where clearly poverty is not an issue, but there are some parts of that district where the poverty is crushing and you absolutely see that in the housing, it's just a distressing thing to see.

We know that poverty impacts families at all levels – particularly children when it comes to their long-term health; their long-term ability to reach their potential educationally; and of course, perhaps later on with mental health issues and law and order issues and all of those things that have their roots very commonly in poverty.

So, it's very important that we deal with this. I hope that this is a really profound and constructive way of doing that, Minister. I welcome this because the healthiest societies are those where the inequality between those that have and those that have not is as small as possible. Here on Prince Edward Island, we are a long way from that goal – and in so doing, we will improve the well-being of all Islanders, which is everybody's mission in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **National Child Day 2017**

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

I would like to recognize the many Islanders who participated in National Child Day activities yesterday to celebrate the rights of children, which are; the right to good health, and good education and protection from harm, the right to be included whatever their abilities and to be proud of their heritage and beliefs.

I was honoured to marshal the National Child Day Parade here in Charlottetown. In fact, I did that with my two sons, Finlay and Aulay, yesterday morning.

There was a parade in Summerside, as well, which was very well attended. Thanks to all who bundled up on a crisp November day to march for children or to take part in

activities at early childhood centres throughout Prince Edward Island.

National Child Day reminds us of our collective responsibility to keep our children safe. We are fortunate on Prince Edward Island to have strong supportive families, excellent early childhood educators, and many others who work quietly to protect children.

I was reminded just how lucky we are yesterday, when we saw 12-year-old Basel Alrashdan, in the news speaking on behalf of Canadians at the United Nations.

The Alrashdan family is one of the first Syrian refugee families who arrived on Prince Edward Island in 2015. Basel was just six-years-old when we was forced from his home by violence and war; six-years-old. He's very happy now to be settled here, but he hasn't forgotten the six million refugee children who are still impacted by the Syrian war.

National Child Day is an excellent opportunity to celebrate children and to be reminded of our collective responsibility to keep them safe.

Our children are the next generation of leaders and contributing citizens of our province. They do have the right to be taken seriously, and they deserve the very best that we can give them.

Thanks to all who took part in the activities yesterday, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise and recognize National Child Day, as well. It's the commemoration of documents that were signed at the UN, and by ratifying this agreement and commitment in Canada, we are also showing proof that we, as a country, feel that the dignity and respect of children is so very important.

It's important that they have a voice; that they be protected from harm, that they have

their basic needs met and that they reach their full potential.

I think it's the responsibility of each and every one of us in this Legislative Assembly to ensure that the children, not only in our district, but in our province, also have that full opportunity. Children should be active participants in their own lives and in their communities. I think that each and every one of us need to show by example how that can happen and to provide the support and encouragement that every child on this Island needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Who could not fail to be inspired by the young new Islander who stood up in the UN and made that eloquent and incredibly dignified speech for one so young, it was an extraordinary thing.

It's been a sort of common theme in the ministers' statements today on the well-being of our youth, whether that be in poverty or the Sark scholarship, or this recognition of National Child Day. I hope that in everything I say and in everything I do in this House that I try and keep in front of mind the impact that my ideas and my words will have on the children of this province.

I got involved in politics because of my children. They, and my one grandchild now, remain my inspiration for my work here in politics. When I think of the economic and the social, and particularly the environmental challenges that our generation will be handing on to them, sometimes I feel ashamed, and I feel embarrassed by the decisions that we have made. I'm not talking necessarily in this House, but our generation generally. I hope that we will do better in the future.

Where politics is so often concerned with short term thinking, we don't always take into account the decisions that we take today

on how that is going to impact our children and their children down the road.

It's important that we recognize National Child Day, and I wish that the thinking that is associated with that was more present in some of our political decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table this is a copy of September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012 email from Keith Laslop on his and Chris LeClair's NewCo and (Indistinct) scheme that he sent to the Minister of Finance which broke the exclusive MOU and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

**Mr. Myers:** I have another one here.

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

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email retrieved from Wes Sheridan's account on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from Chris LeClair to Wes Sheridan stating, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, asking for a meeting with Chris and Keith Laslop on a NewCo insider scheme and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email retrieved from Wes Sheridan's account on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017, from Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan, dated August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012, asking again for a meeting on NewCo scheme and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email chain that was from Wes Sheridan's account between Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan dated August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, desperately trying to arrange a meeting with Chris and Keith Laslop on the NewCo insider scheme and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email from Cheryl Paynter to Brad Mix dated August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, asking him to sit on the August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012 meeting between Cheryl, Chris and Keith Laslop on the NewCo scheme and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.  
The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email chain between Cheryl Paynter and Chris LeClair dated August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012, concerning a meeting with Keith Laslop and the NewCo scheme and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-

Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

**Mr. Myers:** One more.

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

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

This is my last one.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email chain between Cheryl Paynter and Chris LeClair dated August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, where Chris LeClair confirms the meeting with Allan Campbell on August 30<sup>th</sup>, and asked for an overview of the e-gaming financial services initiative from government to Keith Laslop and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

Reports by Committees

#### Introduction of Government Bills

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

**Clerk:** *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act*, Bill No. 14, read a first time.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of amendments included in, sorry, there are a number of amendments included in this legislation to the existing legislation

that would address, essentially, the numbers of students that would be included in the various centres, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

**Clerk:** *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act*, Bill No. 17, read a first time.

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

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

Changes to the act will ensure that the PEI Energy Corporation has standing before IRAC as a public utility to submit a demand side-management plan. This comes from a recommendation the province's energy strategy, that one agency be given a mandate to deliver energy efficiency programs to all Islanders in all sectors.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2018*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

**Clerk:** *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2018*, Bill No. 19, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Finance.

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

The *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2018*, is the legislation accompanying the budgetary plan that I put forward in the Legislature this past Friday in my statement. We'll certainly be dealing with it in more detail when it's brought to the committee of the whole in this Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Motions

#### Recognition of Guests

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

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

I just want to recognize two people in the gallery today. I want to recognize John Aylward. He is an extremely hardworking person on behalf of people that need housing, in both Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada. He has worked extremely hard in Nova Scotia creating hundreds of co-op housing and not-for-profit facilities over there.

I also want to recognize Bill Campbell, who is also a big advocate of housing here on Prince Edward Island; especially I've seen Bill over the years create many homes for many families on Prince Edward Island. I'm a firm believe that if it wasn't for Bill Campbell and his efforts, and the people he has around him, a lot of families wouldn't have a home today to live in.

Thank you very much for your efforts, Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Orders of the Day (Government)

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 2<sup>nd</sup> order of the day be now read.

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

**Clerk:** Order No. 2, Consideration of the Capital Estimates, in Committee.

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the Capital Estimates.

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and Chair.

**Chair (Casey):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to Consider the Grant of Capital Supply to Her Majesty.

Is it the wish of the committee that we go through this department by department?

**Mr. Fox:** Line by line, Chair.

**Chair:** Line of by line? Great.

Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** Granted.

**Chair:** Great, thank you.

Good afternoon.

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Good afternoon.

**Chair:** I'd like you to introduce yourself and your title for the record.

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Jim Miles, Executive Director of fiscal management for the Department of Finance.

**Chair:** Welcome, Mr. Miles.

Hon. members, before we get started we're going to go through the Capital Expenditures department by department. We're going to start with agriculture and fisheries and then we'll work our way through the book. In order to keep it organized, I would ask that you would indicate to the Chair when you would like to

speak and I'd be happy to add you to the speaking order.

Minister, do you want to open with anything? Do you have a statement?

**Mr. Roach:** No, Madam Chair.

I think we'll just start and go through line by line with each department. That's fine.

**Chair:** Thank you, minister.

I have Leader of the Opposition and we are actually doing agriculture and fisheries, in case I didn't make that clear.

Leader of the Opposition, you have the floor.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

It's not specifically on agriculture and fisheries, but actually the entire Capital Budget. I guess what I'd like to ask is: Is there any detailed information handouts that can be provided from the minister or the individual that you've brought to the floor with regards to specific departments and detailing projects?

**Mr. Roach:** I have no documentation on the detailing of the projects. I will have the dollar value to the projects, and the ministers from the various departments are available.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Before you get started, I'm going to read the section and then we'll open questions to (Indistinct) that section.

Capital Expenditure

Agriculture and Fisheries

2018-2019 Budget Estimate

Equipment: "Appropriations provided for equipment purchases." Field equipment: 50,000.

Total Equipment: 50,000.

Total Capital Expenditure Agriculture and Fisheries: 50,000.

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

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

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

My question is actually on the overall number, just before we get into the details, if the minister is okay to answer that. He's agreeable?

**Chair:** Ask your question.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thanks, Chair.

Is this the second-largest Capital Budget ever in PEI's history?

**Mr. Roach:** I believe that might be the third largest.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Third largest? Okay.

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

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

I know when we had the largest one ever; there was a lot of talk about economic downturn and trying to boost the economy and all that. What's the reasoning now behind that? Everybody – I'm sure there's many industries love to see lots of good spending and there appears to be some good news as well, but I guess my question is: If there was so much talk about big Capital Budgets in economic downturn to drive the economy, to boost the economy, I'm wondering what the rationale is this year about having, potentially, the third-largest Capital Budget ever.

**Mr. Roach:** Certainly, I think that once we start to go through the Budget, I think most of your questions will be answered, because it's quite obvious when you see the areas that – where the money is being spent, and I think certainly many areas that I believe that the opposition has been showing concern for over the last number of years, as well.

I think in terms of being in a position to – we're in a position right now where we're able to do this and recognizing that there are a lot of requests out there from various communities, not only from inside the

Legislature here, but certainly as you know, I'm sure you've been lobbied by a number of different agencies that are looking for more money and those sorts of things, so we certainly see an opportunity now within our fiscal capacity to move forward with these projects, where we're through our mandate at this point in time.

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

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

Thank you, minister.

Do you have any projections for when the Capital Budget comes back down to maybe a more historical level?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** Good question.

**Mr. Roach:** Certainly by 2021.

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

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

Thank you, minister.

What would the reasoning behind that be, and if we happen to have another economic downturn, do we go even higher than this, or is this simply a case of the need was there right now, so you wanted to, decided to spend it?

**Mr. Roach:** I think the answer to that; I think you pretty much answered that yourself. We feel there is a need there now, and we feel that we are in a position to respond to that need.

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

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

As far as bond raters and that, how does that play into the Capital Budget? I know roughly how it works, what with your operating budget. Do we – are we held to account by bond raters on our Capital Budget, as well?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, we are.

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** And they're good with our spending levels there, as far as out till, as you say, 2021?

**Mr. Roach:** Well, I don't think we've talked to the bond raters in any kind of detail about this particular capital expenditure that we're doing, but the bond raters certainly indicate that there was room there for spending. In fact, all three commented on that.

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

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

I'm good, thank you.

**Chair:** Sorry, Morell-Mermaid – oh, you're done? Sorry.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

Minister, I just wanted to comment first off, and this is something that I've commented the last couple of Capital Budgets. It's frustrating to me when I see the line items at such a high summary level, and I know you've tried to justify it in the past, but I see no reason why we can't have the Capital Budget in electronic format with hyperlinks to drill down into the information. I mean, you obviously have a lot of information at your disposal there at the table here, and I think it's just not very open and transparent if you don't provide that information to us here in the Legislative Assembly and to the more general public.

I was wondering if you could comment on that.

**Unidentified Voice:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** I certainly appreciate your comments, and that's why when we go through this process we do like to go through it line by line. The ministers have all made themselves available here in the Legislature and are available should I not be

able to answer your question as to the dollar values there, and they may be able to drill down a little deeper for you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** And, of course, if you just published the information, make it open – open data’s a great way to do it – then we wouldn’t have to go through this time in the Legislature.

But, I do have a question regarding agriculture and fisheries. I notice you have one line, it’s for equipment; what we’ve seen is the PEI Shellfish Association this year has gone through an ordeal where it really – they’re having trouble with their oyster bed seed, and it was because of some internal issues. But, the province said that they were going to come up with some money to help make sure that the public beds were seeded this year, and I was wondering why that’s not reflected in the Capital Budget. It seems to me it should be a Capital Budget item, not an operating budget item.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much for the question and actually it’s not a capital item. It falls under our enhancement program, and those beds were seeded out with new seed this year, but it’s handled under a different program than – it doesn’t fall under the Capital Budget.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes and the other thing I wanted to bring up: The North Rustico harbour is in my District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and there are a number of harbour improvements that have been on the radar of the local fisher people, as well as the village and just people of the area. They include improvements to the winch area on the wharf, which is used by Raspberry Point Oysters; I know generate a lot of economic benefit.

The main breakwater erosion at the beach needs to be addressed. There’s a range light, as they call it, breakwater that needs to be maintained, finger wharfs that need repairs.

There’s a bullpen wharf area for dredging and development that needs to happen. There’s some parking area maintenance that needs to be done as well, and there’s some general wharf repairs to fix safety and usability issues.

Now, I realize some of this is federal jurisdiction responsibility, but even if it is I really feel like I’d like to learn more about why there’s no money in this budget to help address some of these projects.

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, and very good questions, too.

A lot of those areas fall under the federal department, and we are in conversation with the federal department with regards to a lot of those issues with the wharfs and the silting up of the properties.

We also have worked with the minister of transportation in access to roads and the parking lot areas to get the fishermen down there, and we’ll continue to carry on that work.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Have you spoken directly with the North Rustico Fishermen’s Association, the harbour authority, and/or the village on these issues?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** We have been in contact with the feds with regards to them. There has been communication between my department and them from my understanding, and then again the issues were communicated on to the federal department of the concern we have in those areas.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Who have you spoken to from the North Rustico area about these issues?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** I can bring those names back if you need. I don't have the names with me right now.

**Mr. Trivers:** But you have –

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Well, I'm sure someone from my department has, because the issues certainly have come across through our department.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Yeah.

**Chair:** I would ask you to come through the Chair so you're not going back and forth.

Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I think these are very important for the economy of the area and for safety as well. I mentioned Raspberry Point Oysters use the winch area on the wharf, for example, and it's getting old and degraded, so I'm glad to hear that you're aware of the issues, and that hopefully you'll be addressing them, maybe with the help of federal funding, but we didn't see it in this Capital Budget, but perhaps in a future one.

**Chair:** Thank you. The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the \$50,000 that is showing in the book here; what's that 50,000 – what equipment is that for?

**Mr. McIsaac:** It actually breaks down into two areas. One of them is a map plotter; it's like a big printer for our soil conservation in mapping area. So, the old plotter is pretty well at the end of its days and has to be replaced. That'll run between \$10-12,000.

The other one is a really interesting piece, as we've talked about before, even on the floor of the House here. Our engineering area has

gone into the area now of mapping lands as such with drone technology, and it's really helped out in that area. We can cover a lot more areas to find out the lay of the land in different fields.

We are going to expand that program because it's worked so well, and we're buying another drone, but this one will have a multispectral camera on it that will be able to give us a much greater picture. It can test moisture, temperature, the whole works. Interestingly, they actually work with TIE and with CLE using the drone technology because there are areas where we do work together between the different departments.

This is going to cost us \$38,000, but the technology – and I'm sure the Member from Rustico-Emerald will be quite pleased to see that we are moving on in a technical way.

But we really look forward to this, and we have to continue this area. It's pretty cool that the camera can go over and check from over top and see the moisture in the soil, see how much might be there because we may be able to do something to stop, perhaps, a flood or a rush of water down later on because it may be super saturated or whatever.

It also can fly over a school and tell us where the heat loss is coming from the building. We do that at night. In those areas we work with the other departments, but this technology is phenomenal.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Chair, no, and I agree with him. I was looking forward to it and your department and our committee couldn't get together and see the demonstration on it, and I hope that happens while we're sitting that we get to see that demonstration, which is a good demonstration because I was talking to your deputy about it. I was impressed when it first came out.

What will happen with the old drone?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The old drone, we'll still continue to use it, but there is such a need there that we need the new piece as well and it has a different facet of abilities to it that the old drone has. It's still really good technology. We do hope to get before the standing committee to give you a rundown on what exactly we're doing in the engineering department with the drone technology that we now have in place.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Is your department the only one using drones?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I know we do work with other departments. We have the drone. I'm not sure if other the departments have it, but I know they know we have it. We can trade-off some expertise in one area for expertise in another. I think it's pretty important that we work with departments like TIE and CLE.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

You know it'd be good advertisement in the fisheries and stuff when they're doing their marketing stuff using the drone.

Question to the minister: I've been talking back and forth with Dominic LeBlanc, the minister of fisheries and oceans. The Naufrage Harbour, I don't know if you're aware of it or not; had a lot of issues this fall with silt built up in the harbour and actually boats could not come in and out and I mean could not. They were actually hauling their boats across water to get to another harbour.

I've been dealing back and forth with Dominic and I did receive the last letter from him that his department will be doing work at Naufrage Harbour in 2018.

Are you aware of that?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Very much so. We're watching all of the ports and harbours to see where it may be silting in. It does fall under DFO, but we certainly are in communication with the minister, the federal minister with regards to those issues to make sure that our fishers can have a free run in and out of the harbour.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

It's a safety issue, for sure, definitely for these fishers. These charters are, two of the charters that you're aware of, they got 12, eight to 12 people on board and when you lay a boat over it, it's a pretty scary feeling.

Does your department, the provincial, do they put any money into that work? Do they split it with the federals?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Madam Chair, no that's federal funding –

**Mr. LaVie:** It's all federal –

**Mr. McIsaac:** – that's federal funding with regards to the harbours, yeah.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

That's all federal funding?

**Mr. McIsaac:** Yeah.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Do you have another question?

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Another issue in one of our harbours and I know that you're aware of it, and this would come under your department and transportation, is the North Lake bridge.

Is there any plans on replacing it, fixing it? Where are we at with the North Lake bridge? It's a road that is used by farmers, fishers, tourism, so where are we at with the North Lake bridge?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

With the North Lake bridge, as you know, right now, it's under restriction. We're continuing to monitor that. We review that every year. It is under review every year and it's still under restriction, but we'll continue to monitor that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister of transportation, your department was supposed to meet with the public and the port authority in North Lake, has that meeting taken place, yet, are you aware?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll have to follow-up hon. member on that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

No, it didn't take place. Can you make sure that this meeting takes place because this is a very important meeting with all users of the bridge; your farmers, your tourism, your fishers, your general public, your fire, and it's an important issue that they should be met with by now.

Can you make sure that meeting takes place?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're always happy to meet with community. It's not in the Capital Budget so it's not really, you know, part of the discussion that we're having – I understand

you raising the discussion, but we will follow-up on that with the community.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, I've got a long list here, I'll –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) one more question.

**Chair:** I'll allow that. I was going to put you to the end of the list and come back to you.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** I've got to do an interview.

Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. LaVie:** They were –

**Mr. Myers:** He has to go do an interview.

**Mr. LaVie:** They were told that this meeting was going to take place by December, and the meeting hasn't taken place. I'm asking you, you're the head of your department, and make sure that they get their meeting before December. It's only fair.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

When we're trying to coordinate meetings we have a lot of people that need to attend that meeting so we will continue to arrange dates that are suitable to everyone to have a meeting.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm interested in a comment you made a minute ago. You said something in effect when questioned by Morell-Mermaid that you met with the bond raters and they told you, you could spend money. Did I understand that right?

**Chair:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** No, you didn't.

**Mr. Fox:** What did you say about the bond raters?

**Mr. Roach:** I said, the bond raters, when we do meet with them they have great discussion around, obviously, previous budgets. They look at the trends that are taking place. When we were talking, they never tell us to go spend money. That's a decision that we make.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay, I'll have to check –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah. I have got all kinds of them.

I'll have to check. I'm sure you said this; I'll have to check Hansard. So, I'm curious on another point: What is the average capital budget expenditure that is normally by the province?

**Mr. Roach:** That would vary from year to year and depending on the rest of your fiscal capacity, would determine how much you were going to spend.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** If I notice in 2018-2019 you're projecting \$133 million plus; in 2019-2020, you're projecting \$108 million, \$754,000 plus. The question being is, that has nothing to do to correspond with any election coming up in the near future.

**Mr. Roach:** Madam Chair, as the Minister of Finance, I take what we do extremely seriously. We –

**Mr. Fox:** Simply a yes or no answer, minister.

**Mr. Roach:** Well –

**Chair:** The minister is answering hon. member.

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

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I did think I had the floor there. I'm quite capable of answering my own questions –

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, I don't know, what we saw today

**Mr. Roach:** – whether I choose a yes or a no –

**Mr. Myers:** – in Question Period (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – so, Madam Chair, we take this very seriously. We have worked extremely hard as a government to place ourselves in the fiscal position that we're in. In determining and working through to this Budget, not once did I ever hear anyone mention that we were preparing this for any kind of an election –

**Mr. Myers:** You're not in the loop.

**Mr. Roach:** That's my answer.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes, I do. Thank you.

Switch to the minister of agriculture. You're projecting \$50,000 spending here and I'm wondering what the government or what your department is doing in regards to bioscience or disease control in regards to the potato industry because I'm hearing that we're not putting enough into evasive species into the province or being found.

What's your stance on what we're putting into disease control, specifically wireworm?

**Chair:** The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

None of that falls under the capital budget. We are working with the Potato Board, and the parties involved with regards to the wireworm. It's not exactly an invasive pest; it's been here forever and ever. We're looking at how we can offset the damage done by that. We don't have a lot of tools in our toolbox with regards to chemicals or whatever to use on that, but a lot of our farmers have become very inventive and they're now growing different crops like radish, mustard, buckwheat, sorghum – crops that the wireworm doesn't seem to care for.

They're working those crops into the rotation to diminish the number of wireworms and it is working to some degree. We are working with the federal department of agriculture with regards to that. Dr. Christine Noronha from ag-Canada, out of the research station, is working on that. We've had a couple of doctors here from BC because they have an issue with the wireworm as well, working on what we can do to actually fight this pest. It's a tough fight. It is spreading – it has spread across the province since our toolbox is so small, but our farmers – I think we need to give them a lot of credit for what they do because they are giving up a cropping year to put in place these crops that seem to not be tasteful to the wireworm and it is paying off to some degree. So, we're putting a lot of effort – a lot of concern about that whole issue and we are working with all the partners: federal, provincial, and with our farmers that are involved in the potato industry.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, minister.

I talk to a lot of farmers because I live in the potato belt and I'm wondering – what farmers are wondering – why we're not seeing Capital Expenditures by this government and your department anywhere in this area. We're depending on the federal government; we're depending on this agency. Why aren't we making a commitment, saying: Listen, this is a problem; maybe we need to put some money into a Capital Budget to help the agriculture industry to handle this problem?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madame Chair.

I don't see this as a Capital issue. It's certainly one that we are working on – we're spending dollars on for sure. It is a grave – it's a serious concern and we've been working on it now at a wireworm committee put in place almost 8-10 years ago when we came into government ourselves because we recognized the seriousness of this.

We have to get any combatants to this, such as chemical sprays or whatever, approved through PMRA at Health Canada. That's a very, very slow process, but working with the scientists like Dr. Noronha and the other ones that have come into the province. We are working diligently on this and hopefully we're making some headway with the things that we're doing at the present time, but we will continue to fight it because, again, it is a serious issue, especially for our potato farmers.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** I'm not saying that we need to add more pesticides to the ground, but I think we could be doing some innovative testing on this province in regards to different plowing and tillage models and one-way equipment that possible could combat these invasive species and that's one thing I'm hearing that we're doing and maybe this is a province we should be looking at that.

I'm interested, minister, in – you made a comment a minute ago about harbour dredging and that you were in consultation with the minister Dominic LeBlanc's office in regards to Souris-Elmira's question.

Can you tell me what the state is of the Victoria and Borden harbour? You said you knew about them, so what's the state of them.

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madame Chair.

We do monitor all the harbours. I can't tell you right offhand what's in Victoria, what's in the many harbours around here – Tignish Run – whatever it might be. I can get those facts for you, but – and if you want those, I can bring them back to you.

But on the other issue that you brought up first before you turned to the water issue, I think we have to give kudos to our farmers and to all the partners who are involved in this issue. It is a serious issue. Do we need to throw a lot of Capital dollars at it? I don't know. We are putting a lot of dollars on it. Our farmers are using a lot of innovative

ideas and ways of dealing with this pest. I don't think it comes down so much to plowing as such, but it does come down to crops that we can grow – and they can grow – that can offset the growth of the wireworm. It's a seven-year cycle that the wireworm goes through and we have to hit it at the right time. I'm not saying spray it with chemicals.

That tool is not in our toolbox in a lot of ways, but there are things that our farmers are doing and they're growing mustard, which we didn't do before; buckwheat; sorghum is a new one this year too – it is adding fibre to the soil as well. The sad part of the whole thing is, the wireworm really appreciates the legumes that we're growing. It used to be barley, grass, potatoes – in that three-year rotation. The wireworm really loved the legumes – the clovers as such – so a lot of our farmers now have gone away from growing those clover crops which, again, affects our dairy farmers to some degree, when they're looking at getting the first cut off those fields. So, it is having big repercussions right across our different commodities, but it's something that we are putting dollars in, we're putting a lot of time and effort in and I think we certainly have the right people in place to work on this topic.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** I can tell you, minister, that I think the farmers are doing a fantastic job, but I think the province needs to show some leadership in Capital Expenditures if we're only putting \$50,000 back into the industry, but with that, I can tell you that the Borden Harbour is unusable except for high-tide. If you do not have extreme high-tide in Borden Harbour, you cannot launch a boat.

Victoria – Victoria's down also in that harbour is becoming in some cases unnavigable. This year, I contacted Fisheries and Oceans Canada and we were successful in getting the markers of the buoys repositioned so that the boats could come in and out.

I'll take you up on your offer. Will you provide to me the condition and the list of all harbours on PEI?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

I can take back any information we do have, hon. member.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

I just want to start with a couple of general comments and the first is to echo Rustico-Emerald on the lack of movement towards a more user-friendly format for the budget process here. I think it's time that we did integrate exactly the measures that Rustico-Emerald suggested and I hope – again, I'm just echoing what he said.

Because it's hard to find in this Capital Budget where the fibre optic backbone expense is, and I don't know which – I'll just wait for the minister to –

**Mr. Roach:** I'm listening.

**Chair:** Sorry, but hon. member, I know you're asking where that question – where we can find it, but we're sticking to the agriculture and fisheries, but I'll allow the question.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay. My point is that nowhere in this Budget do I see, or can I find the 30 million – how long a period of time that expenditure is made, I don't know, but could you tell us which department we would find that expense?

**Mr. Roach:** There's no \$30 million. That's not included in this Budget. It's not part of the Capital Budget.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Can I ask then why it was part of the Budget announcement and speech?

**Mr. Roach:** Because we do have –

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

**Mr. Roach:** – I'm sorry. We do have the opportunity – we do do things in different ways – through different Crowns and

different departments, so that certainly becomes part of expenditure, but it's not part of this Budget.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

The point I'm trying to make is that it was a Capital Budget announcement and ministerial statement which contained a large portion on the new fibre optic backbone and now we're told that's actually not part of the Capital Budget so –

**Mr. Roach:** It's part of our upcoming budget, but it's not Capital Budget. It is monies that are going to be invested from tip-to-tip in Prince Edward Island and it's important to ensure that Islanders receive that information so that they know that this government is paying attention to what's going on around us and that we are going to be investing. However, there's different ways of investing into Capital other than through this particular booklet.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I'm fine.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Chair.

Maybe I'll pick up on that last exchange, minister. There's the Capital Budget and then there's the Capital Investments that are being made at this time in our province. For example, the transmission cables would not have appeared in the Capital Budget in the same way that the fiber backbone will not. But, none the less, they are both very important strategic infrastructure investments that will allow Islanders to benefit and our province – including our economy, but our province in a larger sense – to grow and do well. You will find the same thing is true of the investments that are made in water and wastewater – \$90 million dollars over a three-year construction period with, in fact, 25% of that coming from the province.

If we think about the references that have been made to the federal government's

work; small harbours, Province House next door; \$40 million plus, the national park investments, there's a lot going on, and then in the private sector. The reason I'm saying that is to take the minister back, or to ask the minister, about that larger context of this Capital Budget relative to how our province is doing and to our economy.

I'm inclined to say that this is like buying a house, partly financed by a mortgage but in a rising market, and that's a way of expressing what it means to say that we are making capital investments at the same time as our debt-to-GDP ratio is declining. I'd ask the minister to give us that sort of perspective on the debt to GDP relative to these capital investments.

**Mr. Roach:** Well, it makes a big difference when, fiscally, you're in a position where you're starting to get to balance and you are able to grow your economy, as we have. I mean it's obvious to everyone that our revenues have grown tremendously over the last couple of years.

As the revenue grows and as we put ourselves, as a province, where there is infrastructure that's investment – it's not money that's going out the window when we're talking about capital; it's money that's going into assets right across the province.

In particular, the bulk of this particular Capital Budget with the increases going into long sought-after health facilities; it's going into schools and education, so I think if you look at that and if you look at the rest of the Budget, it's all pretty much stayed at a flat-line level. But, when our net to GDP starts to decrease, the way it is, that allows us a lot more room to spend money on things that Islanders have been asking for and that are needed in the province.

Again, I can't stress enough, that the vast bulk of this increase is going towards health and education, and Islanders have told us over and over again that's their priority areas. Again, we're not just throwing money out the window; there's assets at the end of that spend, that we own as a province and as communities, and as an Island.

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Minister, could you tell us where Prince Edward Island stands in relative to other provinces in terms of our current debt-to-GDP ratio and where your five-year projection envisages that we will be with that debt-to-GDP ratio?

**Mr. Roach:** Well, right today we stand at about 33% and I think that over the five years, we'll be down to around 30%. Now, with respect to other provinces –

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** I look at other provinces, for example, around the same time – and that's as of 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2017 – we're fourth in the country, but if you look at some of the other larger provinces and see where they are, they're quite high.

**Chair:** Premier.

**Mr. Roach:** When you look at Quebec –

**Chair:** Sorry.

**Mr. Roach:** – for example, I think they're sitting at around 44% right now, roughly. Is that correct?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** (Indistinct) higher.

**Mr. Roach:** Possibly higher.

**Chair:** Premier, do you have another question?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Chair.

I do, and minister, it's to say that at 33 or 33 to 34, we are in the top half among the provinces and I'd like to explore the – in terms of on a range of conservative to – and small C conservative in an economic sense – from conservative to, I might say, over the optimistic projections when we make a prediction as to what that trend will be, or what headway will be made, happily it's headway, in debt to GDP, there's always the question of the assumption that is made about the economic growth or the real or nominal GDP.

Are you still working with the 1.3% that we put into the operating budget or what numbers are we working with there?

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct)

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** The numbers we used for our projections here were Conference Board of Canada numbers with nominal GDP between about 2.8 and 4.4% over the next five years.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** That's to say GDP, including inflation?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Yes.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Yes.

In the last number of years, certainly the years that I've been involved with this, Prince Edward Island has surpassed or beaten those forecasts.

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** They have, yes.

**Mr. Roach:** Yes.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Right, good.

Thank you.

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

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

That was some interesting statements on agriculture and fisheries going on there, but I wanted to ask about the drones and whether you feel that you'll be able to properly enforce the crop rotation act now that you have this new drone purchased?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, certainly. I believe that when the drones are used, they will be able to capture and record a date and time stamp. As you know, some of this equipment that's on the drones is some of the state-of-the-art that we have today.

So, it will have the date, the time. It'll have all the latitude and longitude coordinates of each piece of property that it's looking at, and I think that will assist greatly – that now you'll have a record of that to return to year over year. Over time, you'll be able to look at it at a 10-year cycle, for example.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** That's really good to hear because farmers, in particular, are coming to me and saying that the crop rotation act is really, in many cases, not being adhered to and they feel that either people are not adhering to it intentionally, or they're trying to take advantage of loopholes.

So, my next question is: Will you make all of that information, including the photos and possibly videos that this drone takes, available to the public so that – this is where open data can really shine – that way developers can consume the data and perform the function of determining whether they feel that things like the crop rotation act; whether buffer zones or the adequate widths, these sort of things, are being adhered to.

So, will you make all of the information, including the photos and the videos this drone takes, available to the public?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

We'll certainly look at the possibility, but this technology, we're just getting it in place at the present time. We will spend a lot of time – we're spending a lot of time on it right now, and we're working with individual farmers is basically what it is.

If you have a field that – different contours to it, and you need to keep the water from running off and you wanted to look at berms or grass waterways or whatever, this is what this technology does. It goes in and studies that specific field.

I know our engineering department would be happy to meet with you or any of your constituents who have a field that they want to look at or anyone else's, and they will help them in that. There's only so much work we can get done in a year. It's certainly speeded it up and helped the accuracy of the program with the drone technology.

The camera technology, we feel, will help again, but we haven't got it in places yet. We hope to have it very soon. We pass this Capital Budget we can move in that area,

but we are looking for great things from that.

**Chair:** The Minister of Finance has something he would like to add.

**Mr. Roach:** I think we're all aware in here as we move towards that type of technology, then when it comes to storing that data, as you're aware, if you have a picture or a video, storage capacity to save that is of a concern and that's something that we have addressed as this moves forward.

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

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

I'm glad that you mentioned that, Minister of Finance and minister of agriculture. I wasn't sure whether you were answering yes or no to the question, whether you will make the data available.

I appreciate your concerns about storage space. This is why it's so important, I think, that the government move to a model where we can use cloud-based storage, which is very inexpensive, easy to scale. I would definitely want to recommend you do that and I would also recommend that you budget for it, as well.

I believe that if you have the tools like the drone with the cameras and the videos and you're not actually budgeting for the space –

**Mr. LaVie:** Good point.

**Mr. Trivers:** – to store the information and communicate that to the public, then you don't have a complete picture.

**Mr. LaVie:** I like that.

**Mr. Trivers:** I guess, the next question would be: We talked about the crop rotation act, but do you feel this will be used to allow you to do things like variable buffer zones, which is something I really strongly believe could be better from an environmental perspective, as well as from a farming perspective.

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

This actually was our engineering department. They are the expertise in this area. That's why they work with the farmers for this very specific reason. Do we need buffer – do we need larger buffer zones? Do we need a hedgerow in there? Do we need a berm? Do we need grass waterways? Whatever that may be and this technology will help us get a more accurate handle on that. It will speed up our surveying, for sure. With the new camera as such, we can be able to really look down as to the heat in the soil, the moisture in the soil, and those things as such.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you.

With this new technology in place, like you said, it'll allow you to cover greater areas, be more efficient. Do you expect to save any money by implementing the technology and do you expect to eliminate any positions by implementing the technology?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Actually, no, we may be adding a person with the second drone. However, with the technology; it's not so much as saving money, we will be upping our game, you might say, because we will be able to cover more area in a year. Right now, I think we did 165 projects last year. With the drone technology and the cameras we will be able to do, perhaps, more in the run of a year than we did previously because we'd go out and we'd do the surveying with the drone and we'd take that information that was gathered back and overnight it's uploaded into the program. Then, we can take the information back to the farmer and work one-on-one with him.

Again, this keys right into one of the major new parts of our CAP the Canadian agriculture program, which is in addition to Growing Forward, the next extension of Growing Forward 2 and that is public trust.

With this technology, I think, it will certainly help us in that way, as well. Our farmers live with everyone else in the province here and vice versa. We need to build public trust, and we must have that with our consumers, with our neighbours, whatever, in every project that we do.

This technology, I think, will help us in a great way to reach the goals that we have set through the public trust.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes, I agree, but the only way you're going to win public trust is if you commit to releasing the data publicly so everybody can see what you're working with. I haven't heard that commitment today.

I have heard an excuse about, perhaps, needing storage space. I haven't heard the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries say one way or another whether that data will be released publicly. I think that's essential for public trust.

I wanted to ask if you're admitting then, that right now, you're not able to properly enforce the crop rotation act because you're not able to actually cover the province, is that right. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr. McIsaac:** (Indistinct) any way, shape –

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Not in any way, shape, or form. And as far as showing the public what's going on, we're actually – and I already spoke to the Member from Souris-Elmira about that, about appearing before your committee to give a demonstration or explain exactly what we can do. We can talk at that time about how much further we need to go with that, possibly, but we are going to use this technology to cover more acres per year, which will help our department and help our farmers do that.

It should help build the public trust that we are trying to work with, with our consumers

and our neighbours. This is just another piece of technology that will certainly help us in that direction.

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

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

I've got a couple of questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. The Member from Borden-Kinkora talked about the dredging.

Has there been any money ever been allocated in the capital budget in the past or potentially in the future for dredging on Prince Edward Island.

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Hon. member, that's a project that is under federal, that's covered by federal dollars. We work with the feds and the fishermen to make the feds aware of where the work needs to be done, but those dollars all come under the federal department.

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

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

My next question, I guess: We've had quite a bit of issues in Malpeque Harbour in my district. This summer I was out with one of the fishermen, I went out and we got stuck out there. Their concern is that if something doesn't happen in the near future that somebody's going to be seriously injured or potentially killed. They don't seem to be having any luck getting that rectified out there.

I know it's a federal issue, but have you had any contacts with the federal departments on Malpeque Harbour, minister?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** We discussed with the feds a lot of those issues. I know that one, specifically, did come up and it is an issue

that has to be dealt with. Some of them need to be cleaned pretty near every year. Some silt in very quickly. We do work with our federal counterparts on all those.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** I guess that leads into another question.

Have there ever been any discussions provincially and federally on maybe, somehow, getting a dredger along the lines of a co-op that would go to harbour, from harbour from harbour across Prince Edward Island, and just it keep it flowing steady.

From my understanding it's hard to get a dredger to clean some of these harbours out. It's getting worse all the time. We need more of a long-term plan. Has that ever been discussed?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm not sure if there ever was a discussion on doing a cooperative model such as that. It has always fallen under the feds and we work with them closely on that. But I'm sure they're looking at each and every avenue, but depending on the year the need seems to be greater in some than others, but there are some areas that need to be cleaned out on a fairly regular basis.

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

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

My final question: I realize that the harbours and the wharves are federal. Now, for something simple, I'll use an example: I was in the wharf in French River last weekend, and the federal government done a beautiful upgrade to part of it, and the other part is in rough shape. But when I was walking across the wharf there was a pothole of a couple of feet that I near got my leg into, so would that be something the provincial government would ever look at doing, along with the transportation crew in the summer to check

some of those potholes out in the different wharves across the Island?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

We can look at that. I know we have done work with regards to the roads into the shorelines such as that. The department of transportation has helped us out with that and we'll work with the port authorities in whatever way we can to see if we can get some of those issues resolved.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks very much, Chair.

I just want to go back to series of questions and responses back and forth between the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the minister of transportation a little bit ago when they were talking about the North Lake bridge.

The minister referenced the North Lake bridge and said: it continues to be monitored. It's on a restricted access usage basis.

I guess my question would be: How long has this particular bridge in North Lake been on a restricted access usage basis?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The weight restrictions were posted in November, 2016. There is an alternative route in place for those people, for those that aren't able to have that, you know, that are overweight. It's a 7 kilometer reroute for those particular people. But it's 2016.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for that. I guess my next question would just essentially be: How long typically would restricted access usage,

weight restrictions, be in place before it actually makes it to the list for capital improvement for either replacement or reconstruction?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** The traffic volumes on that are quite low, hon. member, so as terms of priority in replacement of bridges, it is all part of our capital planning is where the high traffic volumes are on bridges that are restricted would certainly have more priority than a bridge with the low traffic counts that are there at the moment.

Again, as I said, the detour for those vehicles that are overweight is seven kilometres, so at this point it's not on the priority list for replacement.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

Okay, so seven kilometres. Chair, I wonder if the minister could inform the House whether or not a fire truck would be able to cross that bridge if it needed to in an emergency.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll have to bring that back to you, hon. member.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

I wonder if the minister could answer whether or not an ambulance with EMTs in it would be able to cross that, the North Lake Bridge.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I can't say for certain, but if it's a van, I would expect that it would meet the weight requirement, but I certainly stand to be corrected and will verify that.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

The Leader of the Third Party brought up a good point there just a short while ago when he asked where we would find the \$30 million investment that was so graciously announced just a few days ago with regards to the Capital Budget speech, and we were told that it's actually not contained in the Capital Budget.

I guess I'm wondering what other grand announcements, good news stories, during this polling period have been announced, especially during the Speech From the Throne or the speech from the Capital Estimates, the Capital Budget; that those monies also would not be found in this Capital Budget that sits in front of us.

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

**Mr. Roach:** With respect to the backbone, and we've all heard I think loud and clear the last couple of years that everyone has been requesting higher speeds at home so that they can do business and they can do these sorts of things and people want wireless.

This is certainly nothing that just came up for this election. This is a file that's been being worked on for a long time in order for us to get to the point that we're able to move this forward.

Again, this will be a tremendous asset to all Islanders, particularly those who are unable to access higher speed or wireless in the smaller communities, and I think that going down the road we'll definitely see the benefits, not only to private citizens but to small businesses in particular, and in fact some of the larger businesses that I've had the opportunity to speak to with respect to this. I don't believe that this was announced as part of this Capital Budget going forward for any other purpose other than this is something that I know the Member from Rustico-Emerald has been asking for, for some time.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition, do you have another question?

**Leader of the Opposition:** I do, thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Is it related to agriculture and fisheries?

**Leader of the Opposition:** It's related to the discussion that we're having.

Again, my question would be –

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct) election (Indistinct)

**Leader of the Opposition:** – with regards to a \$30 million announcement in the Capital Budget speech, the minister says it's something that we've been talking about for quite some time now. Within page three, we have a five-year outlook with regards to Capital Expenditures, but yet again, what a grand announcement it was, but we're still not able to be told where this \$30 million of capital investment is scheduled. Is it this year? Is it next year? Is it in 2020-2021? 2021-2022? 2022-2023?

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

With respect to that, we had said that we project over the next three years the province, through a Crown corporation, will commence a project to develop 1,500 kilometres of fibre backbone to go across the Island, so that's the outlook is that we've projected that we're going to do that over the next three years.

Again, as was mentioned earlier, similar to the cable or the energy corp or other corporations, Crown corps, this is the way we will be approaching it.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

So, in short, we don't have the \$30 million to do a fibre-op backbone from one end of the Island to the other because it's not identified here anywhere in your Capital Budget book over the next five years?

**Mr. Roach:** Well, I think you're partially correct.

It's not in our capital book over the next – that there would be any money spent out of capital on that, but certainly there is a plan going forward similar to that that we have developed for the cables that came across to

PEI, and other Crown corporations that we have, that that's where we'll be developing with our funding and perhaps in partnership with other governments as well and other department to do that.

But certainly, I look forward to that. I think it's a tremendous project. I think it's a project that is great. It'll provide the infrastructure for future technologies and future business, and new businesses, and certainly existing businesses across Prince Edward Island will greatly benefit from that. And that's what it's about. That's what the Capital Budget's about. That's why we're sitting here in this Legislature is – when we can – to spend those dollars to make this place a better place for Islanders to live and to work and to grow our economy.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

To me, what the Capital Budget should be about as well, because you want to remember and always remember that we're talking about taxpayers' dollars here – we're not talking about Rumpelstiltskin or somebody that's just going to miraculously spin some hay into gold. These are real dollars that are paid to the government by hardworking Islanders.

So first and foremost – and we hear it daily on the doorsteps, whether it's in District 11 or in any of our districts – people are really looking for openness and transparency. People want to be able to believe in government, but that's getting harder and harder to do every day, especially when we see an announcement of the magnitude of –

**Chair:** Do you have a question?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah, I do, Chair.

Especially when we see an announcement of the magnitude of \$30 million for a much-needed fibre-op network from tip-to-tip here on PEI, then we start looking at the Capital

Budget to only find out that the money is not even there.

So, I guess myself – first and foremost as an Islander, and secondly as an MLA in this Legislative Assembly – is asking for openness, transparency, and honesty in all the dealings that we do.

Let's follow the rules. Let's be open, and let's show the true facts here.

**Chair:** Okay, thanks.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, thank you for the question.

Certainly, as I have said earlier, there's \$30 million mentioned there for the backbone of the –

**Leader of the Opposition:** Where is it? Where's the \$30 million? Show it to me.

**Mr. Roach:** – and –

**Leader of the Opposition:** Five-year spread here; it's not identified. Open and transparency.

**Chair:** Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Finance has the floor.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Chair, I can go back and forth all day on this. I'm just asking for openness and transparency –

**Chair:** Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Finance – if you could show some respect – the Minister of Finance has the floor.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Let's show respect to Island taxpayers.

**Chair:** Let's show respect to the Chair.

Minister, you have the floor.

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

As I explained earlier and I was quite candid and forward in my answer that the \$30 million is not included in this Capital Budget. There are other ways of obtaining –

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

**Mr. Roach:** Madam Chair.

There are other ways of obtaining funding to do projects. We did it with the cable, very recently, that came across the Island to Prince Edward Island and we look forward to doing the same thing on that particular file.

Thank you, Madam Chair for the time.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct) I've had enough.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, do you have a question?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yes, thank you, Chair.

I'll go to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries since we're on his department here.

The minister of transportation stated an early question that there was a 7 kilometre alternative route around the bridge at North Lake. There is a bridge on that alternative route, is that being monitored, as well?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll let the minister of transportation touch on that. But first, I know from watching what's going on in my riding, as well as others, there are a lot of bridges in this province that were not monitored for many years.

The minister did take it under her watch to make sure that we check those bridges. We actually had a person come in, individuals, engineers, come in from out-of-province to help us catch up on that. We found that some of the bridges were not passable and they closed them. Other ones, they closed them to a certain degree like the bridge you're speaking about. They put a lot of time and effort into the bridge to keep the Islanders safe. As the dollars are available the work is getting done.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, I understand that, but here's a bridge that had work done on it. It's been a year since anything has been done. Nobody has met with the community. Nobody has met with the port authority, which they said they would.

There is a bridge on the alternative route, that's pressure on it now. We already lost a bridge in District 1; closed it, tore it out. I'm worried about this bridge. You know yourself, minister of fisheries, how much North Lake and the surrounding area in agriculture brings in to that community. That's a high-traffic road, which the minister disagrees with because she said in an earlier statement: there wasn't enough traffic. But the minister of tourism puts his counters on the road in the fall of the year when there's no traffic; when the tourist season is over. Put your traffic counters on the road when there's a tourist season there.

You know yourself, minister, we have a tuna fishery out of there. It's the number one tuna fishery in the world. The money that the tuna fishery brings into North Lake, not only in tuna, in your lobster, in your halibut, the traffic up there; don't put your counters on the road in the off-season. Put your counters on the road in the busy time of the year. That's when you'll get your true numbers.

**Chair:** The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The hon. member is quite right. I mean, this is a serious issue, but the department of transportation, as she'll tell you in a second, they are working at this and they have to make sure that the bridge is safe.

I know there was a big issue with the main bridge going into Souris on the road in from Charlottetown. A lot of dollars were put into that. It had to be shutdown to some degree for a while until that new bridge was in place. It is in place now. It's doing a fantastic job. Have a little faith. The minister is working on that and the government is

working on this, but there are a lot of bridges that we have to work at.

I'll turn it over the minister of transportation and she can give you a few more details.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you.

I appreciate the intervention by the minister of agriculture on this because we do work closely with all communities when it comes to anything in regard to this.

Back in 2007, as the minister previously mentioned, things were in such a state that there weren't accurate records on inspections on the bridge at the time. We did bring in people to catch up on those bridge inspections.

Since 2007, we do regular bridge inspections on a rotating basis; in particular, to the North Lake bridge it was mentioned. I remember that we had to replace four bridges in my community. And at that time we had the hospital open and we had to park a fire truck on the other side of the bridge in order to secure coverage there.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition had mentioned earlier whether or not an ambulance can cross that bridge in North Lake and that is, indeed, correct. They can cross the bridge. The fire truck does have to detour, as I noted.

But as I noted when bridges are closed, we did this recently down in Wellington; the fire departments, we work closely with those communities in providing an emergency plan if it comes to a point where we have to restrict certain vehicles on that bridge. That is through our department's continued communications with the – but at the moment we have 10 bridges on PEI, either closed or restricted.

Out of all the bridges that we have on PEI, that's the total of bridges that are under restriction or closed.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

She covered a lot of basis, but she's missing my question. She was the one that mentioned that there was no traffic, high traffic up there. It's her government that puts the counters in the fall season, not in the tourist season.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries mentioned the Souris bridge. I'll give you the history on the Souris bridge. Robert Vessey, the minister at the time, went out and spent \$100,000 on top of the bridge in the spring. Well, I showed him some pictures that were under the bridge. There's your testing of the bridges. If you want to know the history of the Souris bridge. Until my constituents brought it me and I brought it to the House –

**Chair:** I have a question from the –

**Mr. LaVie:** – that's when they got the –

**Chair:** Do you have a question?

**Mr. LaVie:** – new bridge fixed.

When was the last time the North Lake bridge was monitored?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

With regards to traffic count, which he wanted me to answer in the first place, there is no restriction on tourists going across the bridge on a daily basis. You talk about tourism, going in during tourism season, there's no restriction on cars going across the bridge.

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, good (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Any time we come in and do a traffic count we want to get an average. We take an average of traffic counts. We don't do it on a certain month and take that as the overall traffic count on a road or a bridge or any area where we're doing traffic counts. We do it as an annual average. That's how we were able to get the money that we were able to get from the federal government in order to have our traffic count lowered down to 1,000 to have that 50/50 funding for road paving. Because we were able to do our road counts and do that average count on each

road across PEI, we now are able to include more roads in rural PEI for our paving program and that would not happen if we did not have our department –

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Ms. Biggar:** – out there doing the counting.

**Chair:** The hour has been called, minister.

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

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

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

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

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

**The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** You may be seated.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I'd like to take moment to recognize a visitor to the gallery tonight – Nick McGregor is visiting in this evening. Nick usually takes a bit of time out of his very busy schedule with his family to come in once or twice over each sitting, so it's great to have you in tonight, Nick. It's good to see you.

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

#### Motions Other Than Government

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

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

Opposition would now like to call Motion 7 to the floor.

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

Oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

Pursuant to notice given, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the same be now received and be read a first time.

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

**Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron):** *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*, Bill No. 101, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, could you give us a brief explanation?

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

We've been hearing a lot of things about people who refuse to stop for a school bus while it's stopped. I know there was an incident this morning that I read about on Twitter, and still asked to move the maximum fine from \$1000 to \$2000.

Thank you.

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

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

Opposition would now like to call Motion No. 2 to the floor.

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

**Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron):** Motion No. 2.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River. moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the following motion:

**WHEREAS** in the spring of 2017 a total of \$7.2 million was allocated by the federal and

provincial governments towards transitional housing for victims of family violence and affordable and social housing for families and seniors in our province;

**AND WHEREAS** the director of provincial housing services has indicated that there is a wait list of 900 seniors who require housing and another 400 families in need of family housing and that list is expected to grow;

**AND WHEREAS** this money has been allocated but not spent;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this Legislative Assembly call upon the provincial government to take immediate action to address the current and growing crisis in available, accessible and affordable housing for Prince Edward Islanders.

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

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

I'm pleased to rise this evening to move our Motion which has as its emphasis the need for affordable housing in our province. As the Mayor of Charlottetown has indicated, the lack of affordable housing options for our capital city is at a crisis stage.

Summerside, as well, has made its need for affordable housing known and is in the process of taking initiatives aimed at improving affordable housing in their downtown. Even the government's own director of provincial housing services, has been quoted in our local media as describing provincial waiting lists as 'daunting'. She has indicated that there is a wait list of approximately 900 people for seniors housing, and approximately 400 families are waiting for family housing.

At a modest estimate of four individuals per family, that's 1,600 people, plus 900 seniors, for a total of 2,500 individuals whose housing needs are not being addressed. The need for housing continues to grow.

A CBC story by Laura Meader indicates that the Kings Square Non-Profit Housing Corporation sees a steady stream of applications. The corporation charges the tenants 25% of their income for rent. But as stated by the corporation's administrator,

applicants can wait for years, some wait forever, and some will never get a subsidy. The corporation indicates that there are hundreds on their waiting lists, with the most needy being a priority.

However, if there is no housing availability even the most needy can find themselves without an affordable place to live. The housing corporation mostly serves single parents with children and according to other non-profit housing corporations, there is very little turnover from year to year.

The CBC story notes that the Abe Zakem House, a 23-unit apartment building in Downtown Charlottetown, was built by the Kiwanis Club of Charlottetown in 2004 to provide affordable housing. A one bedroom apartment rents for \$650 a month, and a two bedroom apartment is \$825 a month.

We are aware that the province will receive \$7.2 million in federal funding. It's my understanding that this funding will actually not be available until 2019 and that the majority of the funding for affordable housing will not be available until 2022.

This government has indicated that part of those dollars will go towards 50 senior units, but it is anticipated that with our aging demographic, the numbers of units being built will not only fail to deal with the current waiting lists, but will not address the additional facilities required year after year. Federal dollars are also to go towards transitional housing for victims of family violence and for children who are too old for protective services. It will also be divided into several projects, including renovations to existing family and seniors housing. While \$7.2 million is a lot of money, I just cannot see how it is close to being enough to meet all the housing demands in this province.

The Premier, in announcing the funding, talked about the need for seniors' housing, and the Minister of Family and Human Services in the release stated: Housing is one of the most important societal infrastructures on Prince Edward Island. The lack of affordable housing is disturbing, she said.

We agree, and frankly, we do not see a plan from this government to address these shortages.

According to government's own population projections the number of people aged 65 and over in 2016 was 28,092. This is projected to rise to 38,324 by 2026, over 45,000 by 2036, over 47,000 by 2046, and 51,412 by 2056.

Those kinds of numbers need to be addressed now in terms of projected housing requirements. Charlottetown's own MP is quoted as stating that getting bumped up on the senior's housing list is one of the top requests in his constituency office.

The number of people that come in, having to choose between groceries, or prescriptions or rent because of the lack of affordable housing is disturbing, said Casey. Those are things I see every day.

The need for more affordable housing in our province is obvious. Yet, just like the need for long-term care beds, the government appears to drag its feet on taking action to address these concerns, and while the federal government has announced \$11.2 billion is to be made available to the province and municipalities for affordable housing and other housing needs, according to *Huffington Post*, the majority of the \$11.2 billion isn't slated to be spent until 2022.

Our funding is part of the joint Canada – Prince Edward Island Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement. It is supposed to ensure the sustainability of social housing, and to provide housing to those who need it most.

But let's take a closer look at how these dollars will actually be split:

5.2 million directed towards providing 50 new seniors housing units – as stated there are over 900 seniors on the current waitlists. Fifty new housing units will not cut it;

1.02 million for renovations to existing family and seniors housing, and perhaps this figure will cover the existing facilities renovations. Perhaps, but those dollars do not address the need for additional family and seniors housing. It does nothing to

provide for the 400 families who are currently on waitlist for family housing;

946,000 for transitional housing for vulnerable Islanders, including victims of family violence and children aging out of child protection services.

Do we know these figures? Has government truly identified that need and will the funding allocation actually meet the need for transitional housing? From what I see, the current allocation of dollars will do little to address the need for affordable housing in our province. In fact, it won't come close to meeting the current needs of Islanders.

While the minister calls the shortages disturbing, I find it disturbing that nothing gets done by this government. There is never a plan. Where is the housing strategy that this government promised?

Islanders are waiting for a dementia strategy, a mental health and addictions strategy, a poverty strategy, a diabetes strategy. Year after year, government tells us they can't answer our questions. They are waiting for their strategy. That will be addressed in their strategy. The truth is this government has no strategy, no plan. Islanders are tired of waiting.

Again I mentioned, we talk about a strategy. We heard today about a strategy for poverty, and we understand it's deep and complex and that housing is just one part of that, and it does require a wide-ranging approach. It's not just about housing; it's about food security and other issues.

It's also about income, seniors especially. It's seniors who are low-income need help with housing. I see it in my own district how someone who no longer can be in their home, can no longer look after their home, needs a senior's apartment, needs a place to call home. But yet, the only way to find one is to move to Stratford and Charlottetown, and many of these seniors cannot afford that. They cannot afford that, and there's no place for them in Charlottetown or Stratford.

So it is a crisis. It's a concern for everyone in this House. I know we all get the calls: What can I do? I can't look after my family home anymore. There's a lot of work needs

to be done to my home, I can't afford to do it. What are the answers?

Well, we're waiting for the strategies. We're waiting for the plan. We're waiting for the answers.

It is disturbing and it's concerning. As I said earlier today, I'm cautiously hopeful with the latest attempt to tackle poverty, but I'm afraid it doesn't really help the person who's sitting in a home, in their own home, that needs work. It's not going to – they're not going to be able to stay through the winter. Where are they going to go? They can't afford to keep heat for the furnace. They can't afford to do the repairs that need to be done. I hear it on a regular basis: What shall I do?

Again, strategy, when are we going to have an answer to that strategy? When are we going to hear about what will be done with that strategy?

And I said earlier today, in 2011 we had a poverty reduction strategy. It was announced just six months before an election with great fanfare. Then, within six months this government implemented the HST and threw that work out the window.

Imagine trying to be a low-income senior or a family that needs housing, and to not only hear there's no housing available, but that now we're going to make you pay HST on top of all your other bills. It's a concern.

There are many individuals who need help, and I'd like to know where this government is going to go and how long is it going to take them to get there. You've had 10 years and we're still waiting.

We talked in committee, I believe it was, about the fact that there are seniors' apartments that are being built by private contractors, by private individuals, and that those apartments can be subsidized. You do not need to make the outlay as a provincial government to put up a housing unit. You can sign a contract with some of these investors, some of these people that are willing to put up an apartment. I know in my own district I would love to see an apartment being built that would be subsidized housing for young families, a lot of them single-parent families, and for

seniors, seniors that are looking for a home, an alternative to their own home, and an alternative to a senior's home.

I'm not sure what the answer is, but I can tell you right now if you're going to have a way of rejuvenating or revitalizing rural communities, one way to start is to ensure that seniors get to remain in their own community, and if that's possible – it's definitely something that's possible, and it's something I look to this government to do.

Listen to someone who has a proposal to put up a unit, in any one of our rural communities, to keep seniors at home in their community, and to keep young people there. We have a long-term care facility, as I know everyone across the floor – every hon. member across the floor knows that we have a wonderful facility in our community, and we have a development corporation, and through the whole thread of school closure, the development corporation said: Well, we need to get more people to come to our community. How do we do that? And lo and behold, we do a little research and realize there's no place for those people to come to.

We've got very few houses for sale. Property values are fairly high, and a lot of those are because the average includes shorefront property, but very few opportunities for young people or young parents, young families, or for seniors to make a change, to move to a rural community. So here we are, trying to encourage people to come to our community while there's no place for them to live unless they build their own house.

So we as a community are looking at that. How do we make a difference? How do we make it affordable?

Do we look at, maybe, through the development corporation of offering land, we talked about that; dividing up some parcels of land and purchasing them and selling them back to people at cost. Put in the septic and the power and make it ready, basically turnkey to put a house there and provide another accommodation in the community.

When you talk about young people, maybe it's a little easier for young people to do that, but that's a pretty daunting task for seniors.

There definitely is a need in our rural communities to ensure that we keep our seniors there.

I've seen it over and over again from across the district, people that say: Well, I can't stay at home any longer. My mother-in-law was a prime example. She couldn't drive; never learned to drive. She was an ER nurse and a very smart lady, but never learned to drive. When my father-in-law passed away, not only did she lose her spouse of her life, but she had to move to Stratford and move into an apartment where she needed two keys to get in, and she, this is coming from a family that never locked a door, so imagine the change in her life. If there would have been an apartment available in our community she would have stayed there, but that was not an option because there was not one available.

We talked about accessible seniors' housing, and I brought this up in committee. We have a great six unit seniors' apartment building in Eldon where you have to leave your apartment and go outside to do your laundry. Imagine for a senior who has mobility issues, in the middle of winter trying to exit their apartment with a basket of laundry and going outside and navigating an icy walkway to ensure that they get their laundry done. For a lot of it, it might not seem like a big issue, but I'll tell you, for a senior it is.

Although, we are very happy to have those six units, sometimes it's a challenge to fill them because people with mobility issues are not able to go there. Maybe on paper it looks like we do have housing and maybe seniors' housing that's available on a regular basis if somebody moves out, but the opportunities to fill that tend to be daunting.

When you say to someone: well, yeah, we have an apartment for you, you can stay in your community, but you have to go outside to your laundry. It's not very appealing. We talked about that in committee, too, to make sure that the apartments that are offered meet the standards we need for seniors in this day in age. You expect to have accessibility, expect to have maybe a common room where they can go and socialize. There are a number of issues to look at, but if you do have a private contractor who is willing to make that

investment in a community, I think it's imperative that you, as government, take the initiative to ensure that we have an accommodation for seniors in their own community.

That's just one example. We talked about poverty. When we talked today about the poverty task force, afterwards, I talked to a number of people about that vicious circle of poverty, it's not just about housing. It's about food. It's about if you need prescriptions and you can't afford prescriptions. It's about putting oil in the furnace, all of those things. If you have young children, it's about young children, and ensuring that you give them the best opportunity to strive and to grow and to be better off than yourself.

Everyone in this room, I'm sure, if you have a family and you have children, you want them to be better off and have more experiences. I don't necessarily mean financially; emotionally and educationally, you want them to have a better upbringing; give them more opportunities than you had yourself. You might have the very best upbringing, but you still want theirs to be better.

We talk about – my children are almost 37 and 34 and their priorities are a little bit different than ours. Their opportunities are different. We had, back when we went to university, you were pretty much guaranteed a job when you went out the door from your university. That's not the case anymore. You're lucky if you have a job after you have done a post-secondary degree or maybe two. Also, we had the opportunity to stay in a job and have job security for as probably as long as we wanted it, and that's no longer the case. How many times do we change careers?

For someone who is dealing with poverty, someone who needs that very basic; a room and a house, a roof over their head, it's a pretty basic place to start and the onus is on government to do what they can to ensure that that happens for the most vulnerable of Islanders. And, not only that it happens, but that we can assure people that it will happen.

As much I'm cautiously optimistic about a poverty task force, you'll realize I'm a little skeptical. I'm skeptical about any task force,

but I'm sure there will be great community leaders on that task force. We've had great community leaders on the Ferry Task Force and on the economic development task force. They can only do so much. If government is just doing lip service there is no sense in having those task forces. I do look to government to provide that task force with the tools they need to ensure that we will address poverty. That we will address low-income housing, that we will address low-income seniors' housing, that we will address housing for single families.

There are a number of good government programs and I will laud any time there is a success. I look to the program for young women where you can, basically, try a different non-traditional role and get educated as a tradesperson or really, anything that you think that would be capable of doing. I applaud that. I was able to help out a few young females in my own community to ensure that they got to try a new career, to get them out of that cycle and circle of poverty.

One particular female was pushed to find her weeks of EI, so that she could go on EI while she was pregnant. I just said: that does not get you out of the circle of poverty. If someone shows initiative and shows that they are interested in bettering themselves and providing a better life for their children, then I think that if government has the opportunity to do that, that we need to provide that for any young person; young family, single family.

If we can provide housing for single families and low-income seniors, it's imperative that government does that.

Mr. Speaker, on that, I will finish my movers' notes and I thank you for your attention.

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

**Speaker:** I will now ask for the seconder of the motion to speak to the motion, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

It really is a pleasure to rise and second this motion today. I think it's so important that

we really address the issue of affordable housing here on Prince Edward Island.

I'm pleased to second our motion that calls on government to put together a workable strategy to deal with the current crisis in the availability of affordable housing in our province. Most importantly, it calls on our government to take action.

Strategies are one thing; but action is what we need now. This is something that we've been calling on this government do, and that's take action to fix problems. Frankly, it's nothing short of alarming that we have, on our waitlist for seniors housing, some 900 seniors. Yet, the province is only planning to build an additional 50 units in 2019. From what we know of the current agreement, it really doesn't appear to be any new construction of family housing.

Just last week we heard from the PEI Council of People with Disabilities, which has a waiting list of more than 100 individuals who have been looking for affordable and accessible rental units, but they don't exist.

I know the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point is very passionate about this subject, as well, especially the accessibility angle.

I must applaud, however, the initiative of the Cities of Summerside and Charlottetown, which now require that for all new apartment construction, one out of every 12 units be accessible. In apartment buildings with 36 or more units, the ratio was one in every 18 units in Charlottetown. That's a good start.

The PEI Housing Corporation Annual Report, 2014-2015, which was just tabled last spring, is rife with messages of concern.

For instance, it states:

“Of increasing concern is the consistently high number of families waiting for units in comparison to the number of units available and the low turnover rates in the Charlottetown and Summerside areas.”

I mean this talks about Summerside and Charlottetown, but I know out in my District 18 Rustico-Emerald, whether you're talking

about Hunter River or Wheatley River or North Rustico or Stanley Bridge or New London or Breadalbane, it's the same concern. People need affordable housing and it's just not available.

But this annual report by the PEI Housing Corporation also warrants that the proportion of seniors in the population is expected to increase dramatically over the next 20 years.

Statistical studies show that this population increase will translate into increased demand for subsidized seniors housing, and then the report further states: demand for senior's housing and family housing remains strong across the province, particularly in urban areas.

Now, the report notes capital funding of 750,000 is invested each year to continue to modernize and to improve aging housing stock – \$750,000 – and I know the Minister of Family and Human Services that manages this department is very pleased to tell us about the \$750,000 in the Capital Budget, and that needs to continue, but we need more. That's just to improve aging housing stock that already exists. We need more affordable housing.

It is anticipated this investment will be continued to be required for the foreseeable future to meet significant demands.

The annual report notes: that the PEI Housing Corporation continues to seek further dialogue with the Government of Canada for long-term sustainable funding for social housing needs; looking to the federal government, again, to help solve our problems.

To me, that statement suggests that we do not have a long-term sustainable funding for social housing and I don't know if the Minister of Family and Human Services could address that, but I hope she does speak to this motion, and I hope that she is able to talk about a plan for long-term sustainable funding for social housing. But the wait lists really bear out the fact that we don't.

The current allocation of funding and housing units is simply not meeting the demand. For instance, in 2014-2015, there

were 1,113 units under this program, and those numbers did not change in two years.

There were 396 new applications and 170 placements; that wait list for the 2014-2015 year was 895, up from 801 the previous year.

This government spends a lot of time bragging about the PEI Home Renovation Programs, yet there were 639 applications received in 2014-2015, and only 115 of them were processed – 639 received, 115 processed. That's an issue. People are reaching out. They need help. They want help, and this government is not providing it to them.

Numerous studies have shown a direct relationship between the health and well-being of a population and the availability of safe, affordable housing.

We all know that our health care services are also failing to meet the demands and needs of Islanders.

As pointed out by the mover of this motion, our population is aging and as it does, more and more baby boomers are downsizing and looking for affordable accommodation, and that puts pressure on our existing rental market. Demand also drives up the price of rentals. It means that we don't have enough housing, and it's too expensive.

There is no doubt that the demand for affordable housing is rising every year, and our province is falling further and further behind in trying to meet that demand.

Government needs to take immediate steps to deal with this reality or the situation is only going to worsen.

Our province needs a strategy that sets out a plan to deal with the shortage of affordable housing in a consistent and fair manner across the province. But our province does not just need a strategy; it needs a government that's willing to step up and take action. The time for talk has ended. The time for action is now.

While affordable housing is more acute in our urban centres, the reality is that many Island communities are dealing with aging populations –

**Mr. LaVie:** Not listening.

**Mr. Trivers:** – that can no longer afford to maintain their homes, some of which are falling into disrepair because there is no money available to make repairs.

Unfortunately, many are finding themselves living in poorly insulated homes, with costly fuel bills and groceries that are costing more and more.

When I was travelling across the Island, this was a common theme that came up to me at the doorsteps, and this was across the Island. In fact, there was more than one home where I sat in at the kitchen table or perhaps it was in the living room, and the senior in that home, the typical story was it was the senior and their spouse that lived there. Their spouse was no longer with us, and now they were trying to afford to live in their home on their single income, and they just couldn't do it. There were cases where they were so worried about their future and how they were going to live and how they were going to stay in their homes that they were moved to tears. This is the reality that our seniors are facing. Of course, it's not just our seniors, but this is what we're seeing.

Many want to find affordable housing, but there simply isn't any place else to go.

They cannot afford to pay high rents, so maybe they find themselves living in inadequate housing that may need roof and window repairs.

Now, I know I'm not the only one that's visited these homes. I would venture to guess that every single MLA that's out knocking on doors will see people in a situation in their district. That's why it's so important that we address the need for affordable housing in this province.

The Minister of Family and Human Services, I know she's listening over there as well. It's time to make affordable housing a priority, and I would ask for every single one of you to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

I just want to go over a bunch of points that I've noticed over the last number of years in support of this motion, and we're talking about affordable housing in rural PEI, and it's an issue.

Because what we're seeing in rural PEI is, as costs go up from tax increases, it's forcing people to move from one standard of housing to a lower standard of housing so they can make ends meet.

Some of the points that have made that happen, or causes of that, is this government's – how they jumped in bed with Maritime Electric and over the last two years – and we're going to go onto the third year in April – this minister and this government agreed with Maritime Electric to raise the electrical rates 2.3%.

I went to the hearing of IRAC, and I was the only one that went there and opposed the rate increase of 2.3%. You take a low-income family, and you add 2.3% in 2015, you add 2.3% – pardon me, 2.3% in 2016, 2.3% in 2017, and then you're going to add another 2.3% electrical rates in 2018. Not to mention, this government added – they jumped into bed with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and they raised the HST by 1%.

You did it, so don't shake your heads at it, because that's exactly what took place. You raised the electricity rates by 2.3% compounded. You added 1% on that in the second year, and where did that money go? It went right out of people's pockets into the government's coffers. That's a fact.

Also, with that we have the fear of a carbon tax coming on. We do not have to put a carbon tax on Islanders. There's other things we can do to mediate or lower carbon emissions across this country, and one thing I said today in a member's statement is in regards to reforestation. Reforestation reduces carbon emissions, and so all you have to do is go into any encyclopedia, or go into any environmental group, and they will agree with that, and I think the leader of the Green Party would agree with me.

Planting more trees –

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well, you need to go onto Wikipedia.

Planting of trees and reforestation will decrease carbon because it's a filter.

Let's talk about home upgrades. Yes, the government has come out with ways that people can upgrade their houses to make them more energy efficient, but one thing I think the members on this side have said before is: What happens if you haven't got the initial money to put in the house to put the new windows in, or to upgrade the furnace, or to put a more of a clean energy or LED light bulbs in the place?

Yes, they can apply for a grant, or yes, they can apply on a program. But what happens if they don't have the initial money in the first case? The upgrades or the improvements to their houses will not happen.

I think I said it last year or the year before, of the house I went and visited in Bedeque, and the woman, at nighttime, she'd take the red Tuck Tape and she had that around the doors in the nighttime to lessen the draft. I think that's a serious situation. We're talking about people on PEI that have to live like that. I think everyone in this House sits pretty comfortably.

It was pretty disheartening to go before IRAC and see these people sitting around there and trying to justify a 2.3 % increase in rate over three years, when 2.3% to them really doesn't make any difference. But it makes a big difference to somebody that's only making \$21,000 a year.

How I'm going to come up with \$21,000 a year is I remember this government brought in a program with home renovations that, I think, was based on \$31,000 or \$35,000. What we found out was people were actually being turned away and they lowered the threshold down to \$21,000. This government admitted there are people living on PEI in houses for \$21,000 or less.

Let's talk about IRAC for second. I can't wait for the day that the Auditor General comes back with a review on IRAC. IRAC

plays a role in this. We've lobbied and said that we should have a public advocator. To advocate for Islanders before IRAC and the decisions they make. We have IRAC, who is the one that okays and approves rate increases across the Island when it comes to rentals.

They go and raise the rate at 1.2% or 1.5% whatever the number might be, but do they take into consideration that the electrical rate went up 2.3%? I remember back in standing committee sometime in the last six months when the head of the energy corp was on the floor, and I asked the question: Are energy rates going to go up?

We had a Premier make statements in regards to the power cables that this was going to provide a more, I believe the words, and I'm guessing at this, was: A more sustainable or lower rates for businesses and ratepayers across PEI. I might be wrong on the way that wording was, but I remember the Premier saying that.

In that standing committee, I remember the head of the PEI Energy Corporation, and I believe the minister was there, and I asked the question: Are rate increases going to go up again, Maritime Electric? The lady, at the time, said: More than likely, yes, they are.

At what point does electricity get to the point when people can't afford it? At what point? When we look at our electrical rates in housing compared to other provinces we're almost on top of the scale. 2.3% might not make too much of a difference to the Premier or myself or any other member, but when you're talking to a family that only makes \$21,000 or \$30,000 a year, or senior citizens, it means a lot.

I want to talk about seniors for a minute. Seniors like to live in their own homes and they like to stay part of the community. I have an aging mother. She was born, and she'll probably kill me for saying this, but she was born in 1930, and she lives in a seniors' complex in Chesapeake Heights, and I know it's a struggle for seniors to live in these places and have to deal with increases.

Mom has fallen a couple of times in the last little bit. We've suggested to mom that maybe it's time she gets a lifeline. Mom's

very proud and it took us months to get her to get a walker. Then, it took us another several months; she didn't want to go to the store anymore. Finally, we got her one of those ones with the little brake handles on that she could turn around and sit in it and she'd go do her shopping. I think that was three hundred and some dollars. Where am I going to come up with the \$300? Don't worry about the \$300. We'll take care of the \$300.

Something that I encourage mom to do all the time is, I don't think she's active enough, I think seniors need to be active. They need to be going to card games and they need to be going to the shopping malls and stuff like that.

I'm now realizing what the barrier was. The barrier for mom, I believe, I hope she's not watching, she didn't want to spend the \$300 to increase her mobility. I'm starting to believe that. Now, that she's got the walker, she's being a little bit more mobile.

It's issues like this that our seniors are dealing with. We keep on taking money out of their pockets and putting it in government coffers. What we're doing is we're turning our seniors and some of these people that are trying to struggle and get by; we're forcing them to live below poverty.

I know seniors that have called me, I've got to go see a senior on Thursday morning, a dear old lady in Augustine Cove, she asked me if I'd come meet with her. She had a bunch of things she wanted to talk to me about. I said: No problem, call me anytime and I'll come down. She called me the other day, and I'm going to go down Thursday morning prior to coming to the House. I know this woman is having an issue with medication. She's trying to stay in her house with her husband on an old family farm. They're very proud. They don't want to leave. They're finding it very hard to stay in their house. I know one of the issues is that she can't afford her medication.

I know she was struggling with a problem with a son in addictions. I spoke to many ministers about this individual to get this individual help. That individual passed away when he was trying to get up the steps and he fell and he was found later on that day. I know that senior was trying to pump money

from her household income down to that individual. This is what our seniors are doing. They are, in some cases, forced to subsidize other family members to take care of the family, and in turn they're going without. That's a sad thing. It bothers me.

I have said it before, I think I suffer from PTSD, and I think that for many years I saw stuff in houses and I went and shut my eyes on it, and I didn't pay attention to it and I tried to ignore it and so on, but things like that bother me a lot.

When I see how we live, and I see how other people live and I don't think we're paying attention to that enough. It really bothers me when we see taxes going up, electricity going up and these people are faced with the costs. I know there are some hon. members over there that agree with me on that; it's hard.

I met with a family last night. I left here –

**Ms. Biggar:** We weren't here.

**Mr. Fox:** Not last night – no, yeah, last night, I was down in Charlottetown yesterday, and thank you, minister, you're right. I was down in Charlottetown yesterday and I had to go to a family for 5:00 p.m. up off the Searletown area.

This family has met with social services, it's a man, pardon me, the woman, the lady and her husband's sick, and has health complications. There is one child, an independent, at home, who works, and she presented me with – I asked her to, I'm trying to get her some help social services and she wrote down her bills.

When I looked it over, I didn't see anything that was very extravagant. It was basically bills to keep her and the family in the house. Then, you look at what's coming in, in income. You really get to understand how hard it is for people to survive and make ends meet.

Let's switch over now to young families. There's a lot of pressures on young families. We live in a seasonal economy. People are trying to work as much as they can. Mothers are working and dads are working. Dad works in the day and mom goes to work at nighttime to work at Tim Hortons, or

wherever, to try to bring some extra revenue into the house.

There's the pressures of the school system on them. There's the pressure of the kids wanting to belong in sports but they can't afford the sports equipment or they can't afford the hockey gear. I think every kid needs to be inclusive, and I applaud Canadian Tire, they've got some great programs on that no kid will go without or whatever the program is. The kids want to belong and they want to be part of it, but in some cases the parents can't afford it. Why can't I do that, dad, or why can't I do that, mom?

I came from a poor family. I shouldn't say that. I came from a family – dad worked for a New Brunswick Telephone Company all his life, and mom worked for department of health, and we lived in a good home; but we really couldn't afford to be in sports. I played basketball, I think it was the only thing, and volleyball – needed no equipment, need a pair of shorts and a t-shirt.

But there's a lot of families out there that the kids want to be involved but they can't partake in them sports. It's sad. Two weeks ago I got a call, or three weeks ago I got a call from a young lady. This lady is phenomenal. She's unbelievable. Her name is Robyn Walsh MacKay and she does so much for the home and school in Borden-Carleton and in Amherst Cove. She asked me if I would go to the school and help her with the breakfast program. I like that kind of stuff.

I went down and met with Robyn. It was seven o'clock in the morning there at Amherst Cove, and my job was to cook sausages; and I couldn't believe how many meals we put out for that morning. It was 124. We did 124 breakfast sandwiches. Egg McMuffin or whatever you want to call it, English muffin, toasted and the sausage on top and Robyn was frying the eggs with a little bit of cheese on top. I remember taking the bag of cheese and I had to do a tray of – we got a little bit behind schedule there and I was doing the sausage and I had them all caught up and I went to the cheese factory, then I spread this cheese over.

So we made up all these 124 sandwiches and they started taking them down to the centre of the hallway and they started passing them out. To see them little kids come up the hallway and get them sandwiches – and I know for a fact that in some cases that's probably one of the best meals some of them children get a week, and that's sad.

I'm actually going back in December sometime. I told Robyn that this is something that a lot of people don't want to know and they want to push it off to the side. They don't want to admit that problem's there; but it all stems, or goes into, that part about affordable housing. If we have affordable housing in the province, then it might make it a little bit easier for a family member or children or seniors that are out there.

School events are a big thing; kids like to partake. Sometimes there are school events that cost a little bit of money. In some cases I know of teachers – a lot of cases, actually – one teacher I'm thinking of lives out on the Emerald Road. She actually tries every paycheque to put a little bit of money aside to pay for some of the events that the other kids can't pay for. That's sad that us, as a province, with the department of education budget that we have, that some of these kids are going without.

That leads into school supplies. Teachers have told me – probably the Member from Morell-Mermaid knows this, but the amount of money that teachers put into the pockets of kids so they have the school supplies.

Affordable housing is a very serious issue, and it's part of a bigger issue in regards to spending money on seniors and low income families in the general population. If we, as a government do not control our spending, and be responsible for the money that's entrusted to us, then I think we're at a point where it's become unsustainable.

We cannot continue to go back to the trough and take more water out of the bowl. We cannot continue to go back to the trough and take more water out of the bowl. We cannot continue to go back to the taxpayers and say: Well, we sort of overspent the budget last year, we need to raise taxes by another 1%, or we need to put in a carbon tax or we need to do this raise of 2.3% next year in 2018.

What is the rate going to be in 2019? What type of deal is going to be struck between Maritime Electric? I have to question: At what point do we say enough is enough, we can't afford to take anymore out of our families and out of our community and out of our taxpayers and out of Islanders' pockets.

The more money we can put in Islanders' pockets, the more money they will spend in the economy. This is a fact. If the people have money they'll go into the gas stations, they'll go into the stores, and they'll buy things and that money will circulate. But if we continue to take money out of the pockets of Islanders and not provide affordable housing and not provide reasonable tax rates, then we will hurt the economy.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my thoughts on this and I support this motion. I think it goes to the bigger picture of, also, where Islanders are and where seniors are and where low income families are, and I think we need to really take a hard look at how much we're taking out of Islanders' pockets.

Thank you.

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

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Can I have the podium, please, Mr. Speaker?

**Speaker:** Yes, Minister, you may have the podium.

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

I do appreciate the opportunity to respond to this motion as well, and to reiterate our government's commitment to providing affordable housing on Prince Edward Island.

We are moving forward with the provincial housing strategy. Just last month we brought together a co-design team, and this group is going to work collaboratively with our housing supply task force that was mentioned in the Speech From the Throne.

This was a diverse group of stakeholders who had a common purpose, generating new energy and new exciting ideas around housing, and they also brought with them the momentum to carry us forward. We had over 40 people that arrived one Friday morning, not knowing what the expectation was; but not more than an hour into the conversation, there was so much buzz around the tables and there was so much excitement that such a diverse group were there to be able to exchange ideas. They felt engaged and they were excited moving forward, and they felt that government was listening to them.

We took the information that we gathered from those stakeholders and we compiled a document to send back out to them to make sure that we were reflecting their views and their opinions and that we had indeed heard their stories.

This co-design team, as I said, will now join forces with the task force, which will include developers; financiers; representatives from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; representatives from the not-for-profit and co-op sectors; amongst many, many others. These two groups together, will enhance our understanding for market trends as well as identify opportunities to address housing challenges across Prince Edward Island. The strategy will bring great collaboration between those that fund, plan, and deliver housing. So, collectively as a group, collaboratively, we can meet the needs of Islanders.

We talked a little bit tonight about affordable housing; however, there are broad challenges across Prince Edward Island. It's not just affordable housing. It's affordable home-ownership we were talking about. We were talking about social housing. We spoke about rent-gated income housing. We spoke about accessible housing.

Our growing economy and our growing population brings new challenges because now we have a wonderful group of newcomers who have different housing needs. It's not all about white picket fences. Each individual has their own unique housing needs. It's about vacancy rates; it's about social inclusion, mixed housing needs, and multigenerational needs. There are many young families out there who are

choosing now to add on a suite or to bring their parents into their homes with them. I'm one of them. My father lives with me and he has lived with me for many years and he has brought immense pleasure to both my life and my children's lives.

So, we're not just talking when we talk our provincial housing strategy. Affordable housing, yes, that is one issue that we will be looking at, but collaboratively there are many others.

The first housing supply task force we anticipate will take place in early December and then we will start rolling out consultations; although many consultations have already begun with targeted groups, but the public consultations will take place very shortly. We anticipate that this collaborative provincial housing strategy will be final by June 2018.

Government does have a very important role to play, but we know we can't do it alone and every one of the members of the co-design team agreed. As I travel the country and attend FPT meetings on housing, each and every province says the same thing: Government has an important role to play, but they cannot do it alone. Communities and various other sectors have a part to play.

**Mr. Trivers:** So, what are you going to do?

**Ms. Mundy:** Because it's together, Mr. Speaker –

**Mr. Trivers:** Tell us what you're going to do.

**Ms. Mundy:** – we will thrive.

I'm also very proud of what our government has already done and what is currently in progress to improve seniors and social housing.

Some of those examples include the introduction of 135 rent supplements since 2013. That's a \$2.2 million – \$555,000 – million dollar investment – with 25 of those rent supplements allocated to Canadian Mental Health Association to support individuals with mental health issues. A total of 257 rent supplements, we currently have. Those rent supplements are portable because they go with the individual. So, an

individual living in a rural community can access a rent supplement even though there may not be a social housing unit available for them.

We've made an investment of over \$400,000 in our 2016 budget for our home renovation programs. That was one of our platform commitments in 2015 and we kept it, Mr. Speaker. We made an investment of \$100,000 to shelter for victims of family violence over 5 years. Habitat for Humanity: an addition \$250,000 over five years, which will help build 10 new homes for low-income Islanders.

The redesign of the home renovation program in 2015; it helped us to streamline the program process and provide access to more Islanders. We actually tripled the number of Islanders that were receiving it prior to 2015. The Member from Member from Tignish-Palmer Road – not a week goes by that I don't hear from him, that he hasn't heard from an individual within his constituency that that program has helped.

We introduced a Seniors Safe @ Home Program in 2015 that will allow seniors who want to stay in their home make modifications to make their homes safer and I get letters from happy seniors because it may have been something as simple as a handlebar, or adjusting a sink, or making a floor skid-resistant. We reintroduced the Seniors Home Repair Program. It was eliminated by the previous government. That helps numerous seniors year after year.

Speaking of seniors, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that very shortly we will be announcing a new seniors' program that will focus on enhancing the quality of life for seniors and enabling to remain in their homes and in their communities because we all know – we've all said it here: People want to stay in their homes, in their communities.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** We created over 350 affordable housing units in partnership with the federal government and developers and community groups since 2007 and we have committed to investing more than \$3.75 million over five years to upgrade and

improve seniors social housing through PEI Capital Budget.

We are currently in the process of investing \$7.2 million of federal funding in: 50 new housing units in areas of most need on Prince Edward Island; we are initiating two projects to support victims of family violence and children aging out of the child protection system – we'll be investing \$1 million in that program; and another \$1 million has been invested as we are currently completing renovations to our seniors' social housing.

I just want to, once again, elaborate on that last piece. The \$7.2 million of federal and provincial funding that was announced this May at Park Royal Seniors, if I'm not mistaken, in Parkdale, and I remember that day because it was a rainy day, but seniors from the unit and seniors from adjoining units came to hear the announcement. They stayed until the end of the announcement and they were excited, and they were telling me about some of the repairs that were going to be happening and the renovations to their seniors' home, and they were very excited, and they were very thankful; very happy and very thankful.

Again, we made that announcement that 5.2 million will be allocated for 50 new seniors housing units; 1 million for renovations to existing family and seniors housing; and another 1 million for transitional housing.

Currently, the 1 million that is being used for upgrades are being done this year to several seniors and family units right across the province – 32 communities across the province.

What that means is that more than a million dollars is currently being spent on more than 50 renovation projects in social housing.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** So this money is being spent, and I would also like to note the requests for proposals will be issued in the coming weeks related to the 5.2 million and the 946,000 in separate RFPs, each targeted for specific projects.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** There's extensive planning that is required to prepare these to ensure that the projects are allocated to the areas most in need, and that all the essential design factors are considered, such as the number of units, the size, and the accessibility needs.

I'm very pleased with the hard work that's being done to move to the next step on 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 in reducing wait lists for seniors' housing and helping to ensure we are meeting the needs of Islanders now and into the future.

Our government continues to invest in social housing through partnerships with the federal government, and we will continue to look at more ways to collaborate with municipalities, private developers, and communities on long-term solutions to growing housing demands.

I am, of course, in support of providing affordable housing to Islanders, but I can't support the motion as is written, so therefore I'd like to move an amendment –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) here we go.

**Ms. Mundy:** – and I'd like to move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the following amendments to Motion 2:

In the second whereas clause:

Delete 900 and substitute with 670, and delete 400 and substitute with 300;

In the third whereas clause:

Delete the words "...this money has been allocated but not spent..."

And substitute with the words:

"...government has started to dispense the 7.2 million allocated by the federal and provincial governments..."

**An Hon. Member:** Oh yeah, it's much better wording (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Zero dollars is a good start.

**Ms. Mundy:** In the operative clause, delete the words:

“...this Legislative Assembly call upon...”

And after the words:

“...provincial government...” insert the words:

“...continue with planned investments under the current Investment in Affordable Housing Agreement while continuing to develop a collaborative housing strategy to create short and long term solutions to housing challenges...”

I'd also like to delete the words:

“...to take immediate action to address the current and growing crisis in available in accessible and affordable housing...”

And with that, as I indicated when speaking to the motion, our government takes housing very seriously. This amendment includes more accurate numbers for the waiting list and recognizes that 7.2 million in funding has started to roll out, because indeed it has.

We are working with our community partners, community, government, not-for-profit, and private. We are working on a housing strategy to address current and future needs, and we are currently making investments.

The investments referenced in the motion are being spent, and as I said, RFPs will be going out in the coming weeks.

This amendment reflects the work being undertaken by government with our partners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** I will now call –

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order?

**Speaker:** Hon. member, I'm going to the seconder –

**Mr. Trivers:** It's a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Oh, a point of order. Go ahead.

Point of Order

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah, sorry.

Yes, I'm just looking at the amendments proposed to Motion No. 2, and in fact it amends the therefore be it resolved clause to change the intent of the motion. The intent of the motion is that the government take immediate action, but the amendments say to continue with planned investments and continue to develop a collaborative housing strategy, which is not taking immediate action, and so therefore I believe that –

**Ms. Mundy:** We are. We're already doing it.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** It changes the intent of the motion. If they disagree with the motion then, Mr. Speaker, any MLA that disagrees is welcome to vote it down, but I think these amendments actually change the intent of the motion.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah, well I'm making my point of order.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Yes. We'll have a brief recess while I consider this member's.

[Recess]

**Speaker:** Hon. members, I will speak from item – amendments – the item on amendments §567 from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, and I will read:

Citation §567:

“The object of an amendment may be either to modify a question in such a way as to increase its acceptability, or to present to the

House a different proposition as an alternative to the original question.”

Hon. members, this amendment is in order.

I now call upon the seconder to speak to the amendment.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, could I have the podium please?

**Speaker:** Yes, you may.

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

It’s a pleasure for me to rise tonight and speak to the amendment of this motion. When we rise in the House to speak, I think it’s important that when we speak with the facts. I think that this motion does that. There’s nobody that knows this file better than the Minister of Family and Human Services.

The amendments that the minister is showing in this motion doesn’t change the motion in any way as previously stated. I think, people when they’re listening to the debate on this motion would like to know that the waitlist is 670 seniors, not 900, and that there are 300 families in need of family housing not 400.

The work that the minister is doing is decreasing the number of people who are in need. People who are listening to this debate would also like to know that where the motion stated that we were not spending any money or to make us hurry up and spend the money that the minister clearly indicated in her presentation that investments are already underway and the work is underway in her department.

I’m pleased to stand and to speak to the amendment. If anybody were to follow my questions over the years, and I know there are a number of hon. members, who’ve always, when they speak to this motion, always indicate that the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, they know that this is priority for me and for the people who are living in Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

One of my colleagues, every time I bring up housing in caucus, always says: Well, hon. member you are consistent.

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

**Ms. Casey:** I’m pleased to stand on behalf of the residents of Charlottetown-Lewis Point and let them know that I have made this a priority. I see it each and every day where people need adequate housing. I see a need for single seniors, persons with disabilities, single persons with learning disabilities and young families.

We all know that having 670 who require housing is still too many. You would have heard over and over again over the years the questions that I have asked to every single minister responsible for housing. I’ve always talked about the waiting list. I have always spoken and asked: Minister, how often do you update the waiting list? I’m pleased to say that this minister has done extensive work on the waiting list and that the waiting list, the people who shouldn’t be on the waiting list are moved off the waiting list and people who may have passed on, are still not on the waiting list. I give credit to this minister who, over the years, has taken the waiting list and now has been able to accurately state that not 900 seniors, but 670, still far too many, but at least we’re talking about the facts here with this amendment.

Although, I’m excited about the National Housing Strategy, which is going to be followed by the provincial housing strategy, I have been pressing this minister and she knows that. I have been pressing this minister and our government to be shovel ready when the federal housing strategy is announced.

When I was elected in 2007, Charlotte Court was in my constituency. Charlotte Court was the first senior citizens housing development on the Island, and it was old and it was in need of replacement. When I met with the residents to talk about a new place for them to live, of course, they were skeptical, because many, many politicians have come before them. There was a long line of them who came through their door before me promising them a new home.

I didn't promise them anything. I only promised that I would work hard and I would work with the minister of the day to ensure that a new home could be built. There were many meetings with the residents to ensure that there were barrier-free apartments, that there was an elevator, there was a common room.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, when speaking mentioned that we need to partner with the private developers in order to increase our housing stock at a faster rate. We did this with Charlotte Court. I'm pleased to say that a new Charlotte Court is now a reality.

One of my most moving moments for me was on the opening of Charlotte Court when a single senior in her 70s came up to me with tears in her eyes to say thank you. She said: I have never lived, in my whole life; I have never lived in a new place in my entire life. It was very satisfying for her to be able to do that. I'll never forget it.

The only thing I would caution the minister for is when Charlotte Court was built there were a number of barrier-free apartments that were built in it, but I think barrier-free is much more than wide doors going into the apartment and the bathrooms and the bathrooms. It's imperative that this minister, the Minister of Family and Human Services, ensure that when they build any new apartments for seniors in this province that they consult an occupational therapist or a consultant who know about persons with disabilities. We need sinks that are built so you can roll, actually roll, under the sink and do your dishes. You need accessibility in bathrooms. I think that it would be wrong for us to move forward building these buildings if we didn't have a consultant to make sure that these were truly barrier-free.

One of the unique things with Charlotte Court when it was built, in my former career in education as someone who hold a bachelor of science in physical education and a teaching degree is that, and worked many years as a recreation director, in fact, came to Prince Edward Island as a recreation director in the community of West Royalty and planned many programs for children, youth and seniors, I was insistent that a fitness area be built in this seniors' home because we all know, in the

winter, as we're coming into our winter, we all know that seniors aren't able to get out as much in the winter and it would be great for them to have somewhere where they could go where they could walk instead of having to go out and walk in the malls. This has worked, but I think we can do a better job. We can partner with our provincial Department of Health and Wellness to actually do programming for seniors in these homes. I think it's imperative that we make sure that we have consultants who know, exactly, what is happening when we build these barrier-free homes and we also need to make sure there are fitness rooms or rooms where seniors can remain active.

We've heard that we can't do this alone. I've recently attended a public meeting hosted by Charlottetown City Council. Nobody invited me to go to this meeting. I just know that affordable housing has been a priority for me. I was there because I was interested to hear what the developer was going to build in the community. We can't do it alone and that night I challenged the mayor. I said: Mr. Mayor, we can't do this alone. We need you to start, you and your planning department, we need you to start to identify land within the city that we, as a province, may be able to utilize when the time comes when the provincial housing strategy comes out, we need to be shovel-ready and we need to identify lands right here in this city where we can place affordable housing. We need developers with a social conscience to join us. We, as a province, need to move on this housing strategy.

I think rent supplements are a good idea if we can't build the units fast enough. I was encouraged to hear that that was happening.

This amendment only makes sure that we are being accurate in the facts while we're discussing this Motion No. 2: Urging government to take immediate action to address the lack of affordable housing in Prince Edward Island.

I'm pleased to stand to support and second this amendment. I'm absolutely thrilled to hear the minister say that RFPs for this proposal will be issued in the next few weeks. Minister, I encourage you to make sure that we give people what they deserve, a proper home.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'll end, and I'm pleased to second the amended motion.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member.

Speaking to the amendment, the hon. Member for Morell-Mermaid.

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

A couple of points; the amendment on the numbers, the reason that this motion talked about a wait list of 900 seniors who require housing and another 400 numbers in need of having housing is the update from the department in May that says: For seniors we have a wait list of approximately 900 people and for family housing approximately 400 families.

I guess I would confirm with the minister that we've reduced that from 900 to 670 since May 29<sup>th</sup>. If they could bring back those numbers that would be good. If that's true, then I'm okay with that amendment.

I'd like to amend the amendment. In the last clause, in the "therefore be it resolved", that the provincial government immediately make investments under the current investment in affordable housing agreement while immediately developing a collaborative housing strategy to create short and long term solutions to housing challenges –

**Ms. Mundy:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** – for Prince Edward Islanders.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** That's what we're doing.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct) in the process (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** We did that.

**Mr. MacKay:** We've heard that before.

**Ms. Mundy:** We're already spending (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** Haven't issued the RFPs yet.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Then you would have voted for this.

**Mr. Myers:** Who's seconding that?

**Mr. MacEwen:** The Member from –

**Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have the amendment to the amendment in writing?

**Mr. MacEwen:** I do, Mr. Speaker, but I'll need copies.

**Unidentified Voice:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Yeah, we need copies.

**Mr. Myers:** Who'd you say seconded that?

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's seconded by the Member from Rustico-Emerald, unless you want in.

**Mr. Myers:** No, you go ahead.

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

**Speaker:** Now I just want to remind all members now we have an amendment to the amendment, so if you were on the speakers list to speak to the amendment, you're no longer on it. Now it's a new list.

**Speaker:** I have a number of speakers.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, I am? Okay.

**Speaker:** Hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, you're not going to speak to the amendment to the amendment? You've already spoke to it.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Okay, I will now call on the seconder of the amendment to the amendment, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, and I just want to remind everybody that you will speak only to the amendment to the amendment. That's it. That's all you speak to.

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

Speaking to the amendment of the amendment, the key word here is 'immediately.'

I just want to let the Minister of Family and Human Services know exactly what we're talking about here. She's kind of smirking over there and I'm looking here: Provincial plans in the works. This is an article by Laura Meader posted May 29<sup>th</sup> this year, this spring, several months ago. The heading is: Provincial plans in the works.

"The province said the recent \$7.2 million dollar investment..." – great, 7.2 million dollar investment – "...will go towards 50 senior units, expected to be completed this year. There are also plans to develop a long term housing strategy."

So here in the official opposition, and I would assume that most of the MLAs in this room if not all, I think would like to see that money immediately put into action to help with affordable housing. Based on this article from the spring, several months ago, these 50 senior units were supposed to be completed or expected to be completed by end of this year; but from what I've heard from the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point in her speaking to the amended motion, the RFPs haven't even been issued yet.

This is exactly what we're talking about. It's not enough to announce you have the money. It's not enough to announce what you're going to do with the money. You have to actually take the action and make it happen. So how come the RFPs haven't been issued? How come the buildings aren't going to be completed by end of this year as promised in May?

That's what we're talking about. That's why it's so important to have that word 'immediately,' because we want action to be taken. We're tired of talk. We're tired of announcements. We're tired of broken promises. We want to see action.

The second part of this was: There are also plans to develop a long term housing strategy. It's great to have plans. These are just plans to make plans. What we want to actually see is action. That's what we're talking about here. That's why we say immediately make investments under the

current investment in affordable housing agreement. That's at 7.2 million. Yes, please, please build those 50 senior units, please. I wish it was done last month. Fifty units, and even with the revised numbers, there's still 970 seniors and families that need housing. We're talking 50 units.

Then the second part is while immediately developing a collaborative housing strategy. That's not having plans, getting the groups together, trying to have more advisory councils, trying to figure out who it is going to be on that. This means make it happen now. I'd like to see that housing strategy tabled this session; this sitting of the Legislature, that's action. That's what we're talking about.

This is why I support the amendment to the amendment, it's about taking action. It's not about forming more groups, writing more strategies, making more plans, lobbying the federal government for more money, making promises that are not kept, Mr. Speaker, it's about taking action.

Thank you.

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

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

It's certainly an honour to rise this evening and speak to the amendment of the amendment here. I, too, agree with the word 'immediately.' The reason behind that is I have been elected now in the vicinity of 2.5 years. When I was going door to door, this was obviously a concern. You'd go to a senior's home and they were struggling. They were on a list for a year, two-year waiting list and they're waiting for the call. These are people that are struggling every day.

There are certain stories that stick in your mind. One home I went to, there was a lady that had nothing to eat but bread and peanut butter for three days. She was taking in the vicinity of about \$1,000 a month. She was struggling. She was on a waitlist to get into a lower income home. I believe she told me she was on the list for about a year. Every month that went by for that lady was a month of hardship.

What bothers me the most is how long everything seems to take, right? I see wasteful spending all the time. You look just in the two years that I have been here. We've seen \$18 million of loan write-offs. How many people could you have helped in poverty with that \$18 million?

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacKay:** In the two years I have been here we've seen the interest and debt alone is \$357,000 a day, every day. That totals \$352 million over two years.

**Mr. Trivers:** Wow.

**Mr. MacKay:** Nobody should be living in poverty when there is \$352 million a year being wasted.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacKay:** Another thing I have seen in the two years I was here; a plebiscite that cost three-quarters of a million dollars that the vote wasn't honoured. How many people, could, in poverty could you have helped with \$750,000?

**Mr. Trivers:** Hear! Hear!

**Mr. MacKay:** We have seen no problem finding \$9 million to give to Mill River Golf Course. That wasn't an issue. You seemed to find that overnight. How many people could you have helped in poverty with \$9 million?

**Mr. Trivers:** Hear! Hear!

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Cornwall bypass, a \$65 million project. How many people could you have helped with \$65 million?

**Mr. Trivers:** Wow.

**Mr. MacKay:** Stop wasting money. That's \$352 million since I have been elected, two years, what could you have done with \$352 million?

It shouldn't be that hard to find a strategy, something sooner than two-years time to help these seniors in poverty, to help every

Islander in poverty. There shouldn't be a child go to school hungry. There shouldn't be a senior hungry when you can find that kind of money and write that kind of money off and waste that money, nobody should be living in poverty.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This was a very simple motion when it first hit the floor here tonight. The whole purpose is to kick-start government into doing something about affordable housing on Prince Edward Island. The amendment to the amendment to add the words, 'immediate' and 'immediately' bring us back to the fact that it has to happen soon.

Recall here last year whenever the whole block was being torn down by Holland College here and that was what was left of affordable housing, and that wasn't even government housing, but it was some of the few places that were left in Charlottetown that people with lower incomes could afford.

The government was party to it, I mean you were all involved with it, I know your involvement down there with that whole project and Holland College and how you made sure that it happened, you made sure that the money was there and you diverted money from other projects to make sure that that happened.

But, there's never any money, like the Member from Kensington-Malpeque said, there's never any money to divert when it comes to helping poor people. There's never any money to divert when it comes to helping seniors. There's never any more to divert when you're trying to help people who are trying to get out of a violent situation or get to a safe place.

I believe very much with what the member from Kensington said. I've been around here for six years now, and I have watched government come up with money to spend whenever they are behind something, boy, look out; there's money. If Kevin Murphy

wants to pump out another 500,000 beer out of there this year, there's a lineup of Cabinet ministers waiting to get their pictures taken in front of his beer tank, but if there are poor people living on the streets; crickets. There's nobody.

That says something about this government. It says how far away this government is from the people in need. The fact that they don't understand the level of poverty that exists in this province, the fact that they can't expedite a process to help alleviate some of the pain that comes in the lower income levels, the fact that this House agreed unanimously to explore the options of a guaranteed basic income, and nothing has happened. Government can't lead the charge on that.

I hear that the economic development minister, I see him on Twitter all the time talking about how the economy is booming. I hear the finance minister with his report saying how great the money is. I see the Premier talking about how well he's doing on his Budget. There's all this money and there's all this prosperity, where's the immediate action? Where's the immediate action for people that need it?

I don't understand. I don't understand the mentality of government that they no longer care about the people. You have all kinds of care for the likes of Kevin Murphy and the likes of Tim Banks. You trip over yourselves. You trip over yourselves to give them money.

I was reading through Orders in Councils here the other day to see how much money you have given some of those people and it's ridiculous. But there is no process to expedite something that is so needed here on Prince Edward Island; something that would help so many people; something that would help children have a better life; something that would help seniors have better golden years. I just don't get it.

I don't get why there's never an urgency when it comes to helping the most vulnerable people here on Prince Edward Island. I don't understand where the social conscience has gone with MLAs.

I know what everybody makes here, except for the ones that have a family fortune in

their bank account, you aren't making that much money that you should be that far away from the understanding of poverty and the understanding of – and I know where a lot of you came from. You have to have, at one point, understood poverty. I can't understand what has happened since you made it to this Chamber that has changed; why that doesn't matter anymore. Or, perhaps, it's just the Executive Branch of Government led by the Premier dictating how to help the rich people here on Prince Edward Island and do nothing for the poor because obviously, that man doesn't get it.

There's nothing that I can say, in the past two years, to change his mind. There's nothing, I'm sure, that your Cabinet could say that could change his mind. There's nothing that any member of this House can say that could change his mind and show him what it's really like for people here on Prince Edward Island.

You should be ashamed. You should be ashamed that we're fighting over stupid amendments to a very simple motion here tonight. It's such a simple motion. All we want is help. All we want is acknowledgment that there's help. There is money there.

You know what? Okay, so maybe you are trickling it out, I don't know, but it's a trickle. I don't know one person today that I've heard from who has seen any benefit from this \$7.2 million that the federal government has put on the table. Not one single person. I didn't see an RFP. I haven't seen drawings. I haven't seen tenders in the paper asking for builds.

I grew up in a construction family. I know how much time it takes from the time a drawing comes out until the key opens the door. That takes a long time. You don't even have drawings. You're not even at the point where you have drawings. That's what immediate means. That's what immediately means. It means now. Help us now. Help us help the people who need help now.

Why are we waiting? Why are we waiting? Is there some rich Liberal friend who's standing in line who needs the money worse? Come on. I don't – anyways, I'm quite sick of this. I'm quite sick of this game that everyone seems to play –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Do you want to talk to the motion? You're one of the guilty ones. You're the one spending \$60 million building a highway. Like the Member from Kensington said: How many people would that put in a home? How many people would that get to a place that's warm this winter? We all know what the cost of heating a place is. We all know what it's like – at least some of us, me being one – knows what it's like when the house is cold at night because you can't afford to keep the furnace on at the level that you would like. Well, you know what? There are people that are living like that during the day time; they're living like that all year round. There's people who don't have more than a couple of sticks of wood to put in a woodstove to keep warm.

If you don't believe me, come with me and I'll show you, or come with any member over here and they'll show you where these people are. They need help. It's high-time that there was help available. You've got to quit dragging your heels on this. It's embarrassing – I'm even embarrassed and I have no decision-making power over there. I'm embarrassed to even be a party to any of this – that this is what we're arguing about – that you guys can't see how wrong you are. That you're going to play games with a motion on a Tuesday night. The first Tuesday night we're going to sit – you're playing games with a motion? You don't have the guts to stand up and say: I don't believe you and I'm going to vote against you. You should be ashamed of yourself. You don't belong here, and if you can't stand up for the people who you were put here to stand up for, if you can't stand up for the most vulnerable people in society – and Jordie, you can wipe the smirk off your face – you're the rich lawyer from Brighton. I'm sick of you smirking at me all night while I'm talking about something that actually matters. Why is this so funny? Why is it so funny?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** (Indistinct) speaking to the motion.

**Mr. Myers:** And the Premier calling the shots in here – you're not the Speaker. I am speaking to the motion. We're asking for immediate action on something that you

don't understand and I don't know why you don't. I don't know why you won't listen to people. I don't know why you can't see how people are hurting in this province. You talk every day about how booming the economy is. Walk around the streets here. Park your car and walk around the streets here tomorrow and see it for yourself and come back to this House and tell me I'm wrong – you won't be able to. You won't be able to. Get out with the people and see what life is really like here and see the people that need help and then come back and amend our motion. Then come back and tell us we're wrong. Then come back and tell us that you're doing great things because I don't know who's benefitting from it. None of the people that I talk to are benefitting from it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Next speaking to the amendment to the amendment, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** No, I'm not speaking to that.

**Speaker:** You're not speaking to it?

The hon. Premier.

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

I will speak to the amendment to the amendment and I will speak to the overall proposition about the importance of housing.

Tomorrow, November 22<sup>nd</sup> is National Housing Day and housing is an issue in this province and it matters to people in an important – I'll say structural, sense – in that it's partly about having a roof over their head, it's partly about having a place where they can be safe, but it's also about having an ability to make other choices in their lives.

Indeed, if you go back to the developments that took place here in the 1970s, of all of the things that were done under the comprehensive development plan, there was nothing more important than housing in terms of the long-term impact it had for families and communities – and ultimately

for the ability of the province to grow and move forward.

Let me say about the housing situation in the province today: it's a supply issue. It's a supply issue because we have a growing population; we have greater numbers of international students; we have people who are living in smaller family units – and that's a significant factor if you look even in the two most recent census periods. It's a factor because there are properties that are being more – I'll say committed – to the Airbnb and equivalent in the tourism sector. This is not something that government by itself is going to fix – we're talking about \$7.2 million and, in fact, there are active plans – and the minister gave a good account of that.

On the point of people who are in need in ways, other ways to provide for themselves, we have in soon to be five stages increased the food allowance to the tune of \$3 million a year. We have increased the comfort allowance to the tune of 75% increase on a monthly basis. We've introduced the Generic Drug Program, the minister spoke to eight other programs last week.

But, let me come to the housing and the question of how quickly this will happen. There are indeed planning cycles. There are indeed decisions that people need to make to bring the capital together, to find the right collaborations, and the minister spoke about the co-design work, and we spoke in the Speech From the Throne about a housing supply taskforce.

There are things happening in this province and across different sectors that do affect the housing supply and will affect, ultimately, the ability of people to have the kind of housing in the place where it will suit them.

In the year, to the end of July, there was a 46% increase in housing starts in Charlottetown and Summerside. That's in response to a market.

There are initiatives. There were people in the gallery this afternoon who are working with a religious congregation that could be a significant investment in what is intended to be affordable and accessible housing in greater Charlottetown.

There's an initiative on the waterfront for micro-housing which is very interesting and innovative and could respond in multiple ways, too, for housing for younger people and artists. I know of a significant initiative in the works in Summerside. I know of something in Eastern Kings and in West Prince that's a combination of tourism in the summer and a place for people in the country to go and have a community through the winter months. That's because there are Islanders, some of them with capital, more capital than we're talking about by a significant measure, when we talk about \$7.2 million, who are working in their communities with partners and who are thinking about what people need, and we should, as legislators, as members of this House, and as a government recognize that this is a collaborative, multi-factored enterprise.

There are people in my district, young people, who are working on micro-homes; 420 or 450 square feet that they can put on the market, and that's going to be part of the overall solution, and yes, there will be further units for seniors. There will be initiatives to have affordable housing with the subsidies in the – or the reduced price in the way that it's been done all along, and the minister spoke to that.

There's a report in the media this evening that the prime minister will be announcing the federal component of a federal housing strategy tomorrow. That will be done in Vancouver and Toronto.

This is happening. This is unfolding, and this is seriously –

**Mr. Trivers:** You announced 50 units six months ago. Where are they?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** This is seriously –

**Mr. Trivers:** Where are they?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – on the mind of our government and of people –

**Mr. Trivers:** All we want is action.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – in our province, and I think we –

**Mr. Trivers:** No more talking.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** This is not a matter of saying government, do this immediately. The minister has spoken and spoken sensibly and spoken responsibly about the work that's being done through that, various initiatives and with partners, to implement –

**Mr. Trivers:** We want action.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and to roll out, and this is –

**Mr. Trivers:** Tired of (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** But, this is being done. It is being done, and in fact, the first amendment was to continue the work, and to continue the work, indeed, to envisage that it's going to have to happen on a much bigger scale than anything that is being talked about through that \$7.2 million. We're talking in the several hundreds of millions to properly respond to the overall demand for housing –

**Mr. Trivers:** When's it going to happen?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – in our – it will happen because it will –

**Mr. Trivers:** When will it happen?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – there will be leadership, there will be a climate – did you hear me say that there was a 46% increase in homes being built in Charlottetown and Summerside in the first six months of this year?

Prince Edward Islanders are smart people. We have an economy that's working. We have a diversified economy. We have many players, and when I hear a port authority in one part of the province saying they might do something about housing, or a religious congregation in another part of the province saying they might do something, a development authority, indeed, in the Belfast area that's got a very big plan to attract people and to make properties, or at least land, available, I'm optimistic. And I believe in our province. And I believe that this Legislature needs to be in step with, and working with, the various parties, and that's why we're talking about a collaborative housing strategy, why we're talking about a housing supply taskforce, because when we understand in this House the many

initiatives that are underway, we will have a better sense of where we can make the most difference.

That's exactly the approach that's being taken, with the understanding that we have a population action plan, we have a population that's growing, we have a population that's getting younger. We have a population that's growing in various parts of the Island, in rural communities, and that is the spirit in which the amendment was moved. That is the spirit in which we are saying continue, and which the opposition objects and say, don't continue, make it immediate. And I think that's what the debate is, or what the point is –

**Mr. MacKay:** So what do you tell the seniors that are home here tonight watching? How long is she going to wait?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The – that senior – I'd –

**Mr. Myers:** Bundle up for the winter, I guess.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I'm telling – we actually did tell, on two occasions last week, about the many initiatives that are being taken to extend and to add to the support for Islanders.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) must have you read it in a book somewhere.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** And Mr. Speaker –

**Mr. Myers:** Not a man of action.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** These initiatives are being taken in terms of social supports, and it's not just a matter of what government will spend or what government will build. A very big part of this is home care, and the systems and the collaborations and the capacity that is in place for seniors and other people to choose to continue to live independently in the rural communities. We have 2,000 people a year who are turning 65 in this province, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

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

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

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

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.