

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

It's an honour to rise; welcome colleagues here, visitors in the gallery, those watching from home or on the Internet. A particular welcome Peter Rukavina, he's a great contributor through home and school, a member of the Learning Partners Advisory Council, and in many other ways. Welcome Peter to the gallery. Everyone else, of course, who is here today.

Note, of course, that it's November 30th a big St. Andrew's Day; the day to celebrate the patron saint of Scotland. I notice there are some plaids and tartans around the room and I'm sure elsewhere on Prince Edward Island today. It's a great event that brings a lot of Islanders together.

This morning, I took part, as did colleagues in the Island Advance, the network, the Island network event organized by the Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce. There were, I would say, 250 to 300 people there. A great spirit of accomplishment and of getting things done and of really pride in what immigration is doing and the amount it means for our province. It's really great to be in a place where you have that feeling.

One further thing, a gentleman, who has arrived since I started recognition, Billy Bridges, a great Prince Edward Island native of –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – an athlete and a representative for our province wherever he goes. He covers a lot of ice. Billy Bridges, of course, is here, in conjunction with the sledge hockey competition that will take place starting on Sunday. It's great to welcome him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's always a pleasure to rise in this Legislative Assembly to greet people that are joining us here in the gallery today, but also that are watching on EastLink or online.

As the Premier said, I would also like to recognize a few people that are here in the gallery here today. Peter Rukavina, as well. A good friend of mine, Dean Lund, who is here, obviously, with Billy Bridges; it's wonderful to see you here, Billy. Particularly, I was interested to watch you put Jay Scotland through his paces the other night. It was quite interesting. I'm sure, for Mr. Scotland, especially this being St. Andrew's Day, it was an interesting opportunity for him, as well.

I would just like to remind people that as this is November 30th, tomorrow we'll be turning the calendar over to December 1st. The Christmas season is fast upon us. There is going to be a lot of social activities out there. I just urge every Islander that's partaking in merriment this particular season that they do it with due diligence and remember the laws of the road and I encourage, I not only encourage, but expect everyone to drive without any form of impairment.

Thank you very much, 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 welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and, of course, everyone who is in the House here today.

I wanted to recognize Peter Rukavina. It's good to see you in the gallery. And Sylvia Teasdale, nice to see you here and the rest of the crew from out District 2 type area. I know you're anxious to see a petition tabled later today.

I wanted to wish everyone a happy St. Andrew's Day. It's a great time to, for me at least, to recognize my Scottish heritage. People keep asking me: Brad, what are you wearing under your kilt –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Trivers: – and I tell them. Apologies, Mr. Speaker. I'm wearing both my socks and my shoes.

I want to wish everyone a great day in the House.

I just wanted to wish condolences to the family of Johnnie Campbell from out on Grahams Road. He was born in 1930. He lived there all his life. Really, someone who has helped with the agricultural industry in that area and I wanted to signal out that he is the father-in-law of Bertha Campbell, who, of course, I ran against in the last election. I wanted to recognize her and wish my condolences to her, specifically.

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 and certainly want to acknowledge Billy Bridges and the World Sledge Hockey Challenge is coming up a little later. I will be reading a minister's statement a little later on regarding that. I know I had the opportunity to play sledge hockey a while back and it's some hard to do, so I have great appreciation for their skill-set.

Also, obviously I'm wearing the Henderson tartan today for St Andrew's Day and Hendersons hailed from Tynron, Scotland, so someday – it's one of my bucket-list items to get to Tynron and see what exactly those people were coming from to come here.

The other thing I wanted to mention was what a great night last night at the Red Shores Racetrack where we had the PEI Matinee Track Awards for 2017. I must say, O'Leary did an exceptionally great job in

almost cleaning up all the awards. I want to give great accolades to Allison Sweet, Jacob Sweet, Philip DesRoche, Brady Sweet, Jenae Wallace, and Jessie-Lynn Sweet for all taking home awards. We probably took about half of the awards for the entire province. Wishing everybody every success back in O'Leary-Inverness and, I might add, Hockeyville, PEI.

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 as minister in charge of the culture portfolio to rise and acknowledge Rose Cousins, who was nominated for a Grammy Award for the production of her album entitled *Natural Conclusion* and she's from Sea View, Prince Edward Island – she lives in Nova Scotia right now and certainly we wish her the best in the Grammy selections.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery – a special welcome to Margaret MacKay who will be in my new district when the boundaries change – coming soon. I'd also like to say hello to everyone back in Evangeline-Miscouche.

I'd also make mention to a ceremony I was at this morning. It was the citizenship ceremony at Memorial Hall and there were 58 new citizens –

Ms. Casey: Nice.

Mr. Gallant: – inducted into our citizenship and it was wonderful to see the camaraderie and the friendship on their faces and the happiness and they were from 22 different

countries and I want to welcome all and congratulate them all.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone back today. Everyone joining us in the gallery, it's great to have you. It's great to see the gallery full.

I'd like to say hello to everyone in District 4 watching on EastLink, or also on the computer. I'd like to especially say hello to everyone at the Gilles Lodge – great residence there and I look forward to attending their tree-lighting service on Sunday evening.

I'd also like to recognize that it's St Andrew's Day – a national day in Scotland. I'm donning my MacRae tartan and very proud of it.

Everyone have a great day and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see the gallery filled here today with people from out in an unincorporated area in District 2. I suppose you're wondering why they're all here, but the minister knows and we'll talk about it here in a little bit and I do have a petition to table later today and the work of the petition was done by the people that are here and many other great volunteers to help along the way.

I also want to talk about a piece of road that's becoming a bit of an issue in my district and it's been brought to my attention. There was a bad accident there a week or so ago and it's from Pooles Corner to Cardigan and there's a lot of concerned residents in the Cardigan area who feel like the passing zone isn't long enough to actually pass and there's a blind double-

lined corner right at the very end of it. I'm not saying – I don't know the cause of the accident the other night, but I do know that several people have noted that they've seen extremely close calls there because of the short sight-lines there along the way. Hopefully maybe the minister and somebody in her department could have a look at that sometime. I just want to look out for the safety of the people who live in that area.

Anyways, I'm looking forward to this afternoon and the petition and presenting the great work of the people of District 2.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back in the Legislature today and it is a full-house here today, which is good. I'd like to say hello to everyone back in District 1 Souris-Elmira.

I did say that I would announce an event every day this week for the Souris annual Christmas parade. Every night of the week they have an event and tonight it's the carnival at the SRHS school and there's activity there for every one of all ages. So at 6:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m. this evening at the Souris Regional High School, carnival, and they hope to have a good crowd.

Again, my day didn't start off good. I took my wife into town this morning to pick up a car for her father at the rental place. Of course, we get in there and there was no car for her. I went to pull into the parking lot here again this morning; flat tire.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) cheap tires. He's buying cheap tires.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: I'd like to give a big shout-out to Chris from OK Tire who is fixing my tire as we speak; a big shout-out to Chris. He came on just a phone call away and he was here to fix the tire and he said he'll have it

fixed by 5:00 p.m. when we're done here this evening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Don't tell him we're here til 9:00 p.m.

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

Statements by Members

Our Family Traditions Restaurant

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to stand in this Legislative Assembly to recognize the efforts of a constituent of Tignish-Palmer Road, Bonnie Gaudet. Bonnie has recently built and opened a beautiful new restaurant in Tignish called Our Family Traditions. The restaurant is built on the lot of the former Cousins Restaurant which was destroyed by a fire in August of 2015.

It is terrific that Bonnie is continuing the tradition of having a restaurant on this property, as the location has had a food service establishment since the early 1970s. The restaurant is licensed and has seating for up to 96, allowing the space to be divided off for private functions and parties. The menu offers delicious home cooked, family meals by head chefs Linda Wells and Sheila Bernard. There is currently a staff of 40 full-time and part-time workers.

The restaurant will be open year-round, and I would highly encourage everyone to stop in, and try this fantastic new restaurant in Tignish. From now until Christmas they will be offering a feature night on Wednesdays called Eat, Drink and Be Merry. The evening meal and show will include Christmas music with Abby Peters and Rodney Arsenaault.

I would like to wish Bonnie all the best in her new venture, and also thank Bonnie for creating a new space in our community for people to get together and enjoy a nice meal, as well as increasing the employment opportunities within our community. It is

local businesses like this that keeps our community growing and thriving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Brackley Women's Institute

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate the Brackley Women's Institute on 70 successful years as an organization.

I had the honor of attending the celebration at the beginning of October, and to see all of the women who dedicate their time and energy into continuing to allow this organization to thrive, and it was an honor.

Women's institutes across the province provide outstanding leadership and help to enhance the quality of life in rural communities. They are vital in keeping alive traditions of home cooking, preserving the fruits of the harvest, and inspiring others through arts and crafts.

The Brackley Women's Institute historically directed many of its activities towards the local school, purchasing much-needed equipment and supplies. The Institute obtained a music teacher for the school, bought an organ, and arranged for students to be entered in music festivals. The organizations also participated in the rural beautification program and donated money to a wide range of causes, including the cancer society, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Anderson House, and Brackley church.

Today, the Brackley Women's Institute is involved in activities such as the annual roadside clean-up, raising funds for hospitals and making significant contributions to many other local and provincial causes. They also have a strong voice in agriculture, and provide an essential pillar of support for the success of their rural community.

I would like to congratulate all members, past and present, of the Brackley Women's Institute on this significant milestone. I extend my best wishes for continued success in the coming years. It's organizations like

these that keep our Island history and culture thriving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Stewardship of the Environment

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to be part of a Progressive Conservative team that continues to stand for the protection of our natural environment.

Stewardship of the environment is a core value, leaving the land as good as or better than we found it; intergenerational equity. As Conservatives, our principles call for precaution when making decisions. The late hon. Angus MacLean, former MP and premier and the late hon. Leone Bagnall, a former interim leader of Progressive Conservative Party, made protection of our land, water and all of the natural environment here on our Island their priority.

These two outstanding Islanders are role models for me, fellow legislatures and future generations. Their shared passions and love for this province form the basis of legislation in this province for the protection and stewardship of our land and water.

As an Island, we are faced with finite land resources that are slowly shrinking from erosion and sea level rise. The protection of and the rights to clean and safe water is an issue much larger than politics.

It is imperative that all levels of governments, regardless of political affiliation, recognize how precious our land and water is. We must protect our land for our future generations.

This statement especially holds true for our water. It is an essential base element for life. While I applaud this government for taking many steps toward this, we must continue to work together with all Islanders to ensure government does not misstep or lose their way.

It is of upmost importance that both the letter and the spirit of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* must be adhered to. The *Water Act* must explicitly enshrine and protect individual rights to water and give protection to all our Island waterways, rivers, estuaries, ponds, streams and our groundwater.

Islanders understand this, and relying on us to represent their wishes and effectively govern Prince Edward Island's land and water.

I ask MLAs across all parties to rise to our responsibility and come together to meet the important expectations Islanders have in governing our land and water.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Hillcrest Farm Disc Golf Course

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

Prince Edward Island is full of hidden gems; beaches and trails and buildings and waterfalls that are off the beaten trail. In the centre of the Island, actually right in the very centre of District 17 is one such gem.

A place that is not visible from the Trans-Canada Highway that goes right by it, but was recently chosen as the location for a national sporting championship. At Hillcrest Farms, just west of Bonshaw is a golf course. There is nothing unusual about that on PEI, of course. PEI is known all over the world for its golf courses.

But on this course there are no golf carts, there are no greens, there are no lost balls, there are no bent pitching wedges. This is a disc golf course, an 18-hole facility where people come to throw Frisbees into distant holes or baskets, weaving their way through the spectacular landscape of the forests and streams in the Bonshaw hills.

Over just a few short years, this disc golf course has gained a deserved reputation as an outstanding facility. In September of next

year, 2018, it will host the national championships, a first for Prince Edward Island.

Disc golf is one of the fastest growing sports in this region. It's played 12 months of the year. For this tournament next year, the best female disc player in the world will be there, as well as many of the top male competitors internationally.

The course was carefully and lovingly crafted out of the existing 100 acre farm by world renowned course designer John Houck; and Mary and Bill Best, who own and operate the farm and the course are rightly proud of this creation, which is ranked as one of the top 10 disc golf courses in North America.

Bill and Mary are nature lovers and one of the attractions for those that play the course is walking through the mature mixed forest and interacting with the diverse animal, bird and insect populations who co-exist very happily with the course.

Please join me in offering congratulations to Bill and Mary Best, and to the organizers whose dream it has been, for several years, to have the national championship come to our region.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Just before I ask my first question, I indulge you for a quick moment. I neglected to mention someone in my greetings.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Leader of the Opposition: Eric Payne has joined us here today in the gallery. Eric is a good friend of mine, and most likely one of the funniest individuals I know. Eric, it's great to have you here today, and I know that you are a huge supporter of parasport and many other initiatives here on PEI.

Thanks for joining us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!
Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Working for betterment of PEI

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, first question is to the Premier: Premier, are you genuinely committed to working collaboratively across party lines for the betterment of PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, when we had an election in 2015, we were heard all across the province talking about: let's work together and that's what we've been doing and that's why the province is doing so well and we're proud 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.

In November of 2002, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted general comment No. 15 on the right to water. Article 1.1 states: The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights. Comment 15 also defined the right to water as: the right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, and physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.

Water Act and comments within UN declaration

Question to the Premier: Do you share my concerns that the *Water Act*, as it currently stands, does not meet the general comments within the UN declaration?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the bill that's been tabled and that's on the floor here for consideration. It's been worked on for upwards of two years, with extensive involvement by the Environmental Advisory Council. There's been a lot of work gone into this – great respect for the work that the minister and department have done on it and it's the first time this province will have a *Water Act* and we are definitely happy to see what is included in that act.

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.

The *Water Act* has been called the most important act for our province. I would have to agree with that. Our caucus, the Third Party, and many Islanders have expressed concerns around gaps in this act.

Loopholes in *Water Act*

Premier: Why has this act come to the floor with what many Islanders view as loopholes and leave so much to Cabinet regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's not unusual in legislation for there to be provision for what might be considered supplementary action and to do that by regulation and indeed to have that spelled out as fully as it is in the bill.

Let me say that this bill reflects the work and the input and the extensive consultation with many Islanders who do care about water and we're proud to be bringing this forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The *Water Act* gives very large wiggle room to Cabinet to override concerns in the act behind closed Cabinet doors, such as fracking.

Question again to the Premier: Do you share the concerns that many people, including myself, have around these yet to be written regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's been clear in the development of the bill that the public has a great interest and a part to play and a contribution to make in developing and advancing our work together to protect our Island water and to ensure that we live up to the responsibilities that are spelled out in the purpose section of the bill and through its many provisions. It's been very clear that the work that is done subsequent to the bill or further to the bill in making regulation will also have that element of public engagement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, these regulations have yet to be written and are not planned to come forward until late next year. The Premier just said that he is in agreement to work collaboratively with everyone, so in the spirit of cooperation and to ensure these regulations reflect the wishes of all Islanders; I propose that a special standing committee of equal membership across all parties be struck off of them.

Request for *Water Act* regulations committee

Premier, will you agree with me and strike the special *Water Act* regulations committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm certainly pleased to talk about the *Water Act* in Question Period today, as I was yesterday during Committee of the Whole House. This *Water Act* has been a collaborative production of work from Islanders all across our wonderful province for the last two and a half years in very open, very informative, very passionate discussion.

Obviously, as was stated this morning on CBC by Catherine O'Brien who is the chair of the PEI water coalition, she feels the act has a lot of very good parts to it, which came to be because of the input from the water coalition – because of the input from Islanders from tip-to-tip. This is a very passionate piece of work and we will work with them on regulation moving forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

My proposal – this multiparty, equal committee would have authority and independence to craft regulations and hear directly from all Islanders, working in conjunction with the Environmental Advisory Council. The issue of access to water and protecting our water resource affects and concerns all of us.

Again to the Premier: Will you join with me and appoint a multiparty, equal committee to lead an open and innovative process to write the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier today and yesterday during Committee of the Whole House, as we move forward in the future with the development of the regulation for our *Water Act* pieces, certainly this is another piece of work that's open to 152,000 Islanders, it's open to all parties of political stripe across Prince Edward Island and I encourage and I hope that all members of this Legislature will be present at each and every one of those meetings to put forward their input, to put forward their vision of how they can help to aid the protection of our water on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I know that meaningful two-way dialogues is the foundation for good public policy. There was much consultation that occurred for this act and I'm proposing an innovative approach to foster the strengths of our people to craft regulations in an open way – two members from each caucus in this Legislature, a standing committee working with the Environmental Advisory Council.

Again to the Premier: Will you act on working collaboratively and strike a balanced all-party committee to write the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have committed as minister to go out across Prince Edward Island once again to have open and public consultation, to have online submissions, to have written letters brought forward as to how regulations should be on Prince Edward Island.

I heard this morning that in Nova Scotia just yesterday, there were some non-governmental organizations that were asking the Nova Scotia government to look at

Prince Edward Island's new *Water Act* as a process that they would love to see being formed this week in legislation in Nova Scotia. So, we're very proud of that as the department. We all should also be very proud of that as a province and I can assure you that this work will continue on Prince Edward Island to the best of its possibility in a positive way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, I go back to the Premier. I've asked him several questions now and he hasn't responded.

I'm asking the Premier: Will you support my initiative to put a special standing committee together to write the regulations for the *Water Act*. Question to the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the bill that is on the floor has extensive provision and detailed provision for the law that will apply to and protect and enable Prince Edward Islanders to have confidence in the approach that is taken to water in our province. It is not surprising that such a bill would include an ability or a capacity through time and with consultation and with the benefit of further evidence in science to perfect that regime through regulations and we do that in many provisions that come to this floor.

In this case we're going to do that with the input and the consultation and the engagement of Prince Edward Islanders, and we welcome every member of this Legislature to take part in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

All-party committee and Water Act regulations

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

Well, this balanced all-party committee could be supported by technical government staff alongside Islanders from all walks of life and the Environmental Advisory Council.

Can the Premier give his reasoning for not agreeing to a balanced all-party committee writing the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I could commit to as minister – I would certainly keep the first 27 chairs open for all members of this Legislature to be present, to hear from Islanders all across PEI, how they feel. This process has been a wonderful process thus far –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – how the next part where we build –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) sit and smile but no help –

Mr. Mitchell: – regulation will be brought forward in the exact –

Mr. Myers: Be a good student.

Mr. Mitchell: – same collaborative, productive way and we will give everybody ample time to have their say –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – when we move forward for public meetings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Lands Protection Act, PEI being followed properly

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Lands Protection Act, PEI* is one of the most important laws passed by the Legislature since Confederation. Our small size and unique history, including absentee landlords, have made generations of Islanders passionate about issues of landownership and land use.

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Do you think that the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* is being followed properly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier in the member's statement at the first as we opened today, he spoke of a couple of very prominent Conservative members from this House who were very passionate about the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*. All members of this House are very passionate about it, but he forgot to mention one other important member of this Legislature that sat here: Horace Carver, who just back in 2013 put a very substantial report together on land-use protection.

He, himself, toured Prince Edward Island, talked to land owners, talked to Islanders about what they'd like to see. He put together a wonderful report on how land needs to be protected on Prince Edward Island and absentee landowners was one of the very valuable pieces that he made great advances on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Spirit of Lands Protection Act, PEI being honoured

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for reminding us of Horace Carver and the great work he's done.

Recently, the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment heard concerns around the growth in Island land that's controlled by off-Island corporations. This trend appears to be at least partially responsible for driving up the cost of farmland, making it harder for young farmers to get established.

Question to the minister: Do you feel that the spirit of the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* is being honoured?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, all land holdings in Prince Edward Island by corporations and individuals are within their holding availability. I know the hon. member has, at committee, talked about sinister approaches. That's not going on in Prince Edward Island. IRAC is watching very carefully. We as a department are watching very carefully and there are a lot of great farmers moving to Prince Edward Island, forming new lives here on Prince Edward Island and moving forward with their agriculture businesses that they love to pursue right here in PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Large off-Island corporations exceeding land limits

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're not saying there's anything sinister going on. We're just hearing, and it's coming to our attention and I'm sure it's coming to your attention across the floor that large corporations seem to be exerting control over parcels of land that exceeds the limits in the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*.

Question to the minister: Just wondering, what work has been done by your

department to identify the scale of this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any land transactions on Prince Edward Island go through the normal processes. If you're a corporation, the land purchases go through IRAC who do investigations when need be. That information comes back to us through Executive Council, and it's processed that way.

There's nobody on Prince Edward Island that wants to see their land used in any negative fashion. We, as a government, are of the same approach as that, but I can guarantee you that currently all land transactions, or all corporations, are within our land-holding limits on Prince Edward Island.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Land sign-off in Executive Council

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, Executive Council plays a very prominent role in looking at land purchases on Prince Edward Island. In fact, close to 60% of all Orders in Council decisions by Cabinet so far this year were land sale approvals under the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*. Now, it seems that there may be a problem here that needs to be given a hard look.

Question to the minister: When these purchases came to Cabinet for sign-off, are you discussing the larger policy issues here or are you really just looking at them on a case-by-case basis and stamping 'yes' or 'no'?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that there is a certain influx to Prince Edward Island from people from other provinces and, indeed, globally people are moving to Prince Edward Island.

When you talk about land pricing and land values, transactions that have been occurring on Prince Edward Island are within fair market value prices. So, there's no land inflation, as was referenced earlier by the hon. member.

These transactions are occurring across Prince Edward Island. Fair market value prices are being obtained and in fact, people that want to retire from farming have opportunities to –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) fair market value.

Mr. Mitchell: – get fair market value for their retirement plans and to have their farm remain in farmland.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

CLE and minister meeting with IRAC re: land purchases

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As mentioned by the minister, the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission plays a big role when it comes to review and approval of land purchases on PEI.

A question to the minister: How many times in the last year have you and your department officials met with IRAC to discuss this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Conversations between IRAC and my department occur all the time. When transactions are being done and they're coming towards us, they give us a call to inform us of what's going on. These are things that, as a department, we are well aware of. We have them well in hand. We know that there are farmers that want to retire, and they should be able to sell their farms for fair market value to other farmers that are coming here from other areas.

Obviously, the member doesn't think that should be a normal practice. We feel it is, and we'll continue to work with IRAC and others in the community to help aid that process.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Ownership and control re: Lands Protection Act, PEI

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment has invited three particular entities: Cavendish Farms; Vanco Farms; and the Greater Buddhist Enlightenment Society, really to come forward and to speak to concerns that loopholes in the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* that allow the scale of land, both owned and controlled, to be greater than the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* intends.

Question to the minister: What discussions have you had with these groups about concerns regarding ownership and control of more than intended by the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, I, myself, had the opportunity to attend the standing committee for discussion on this and we brought forward a lot of great information to the hon. member and the others of the committee.

When you look at entities that have land ownership on Prince Edward Island, and some of the entities are fairly new to the province, we work with them. We work with them to establish here, to develop their communities. You can look at the Amish community who came in a substantive way over the last number of years, and we continue to work with groups like this and communities like this to make our province a better place, a stronger place with good vision into the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we feel it's so important for these entities, really, to come forward to the standing committee and have their say and discuss this issue. It's really about working together and being cooperative, and really getting to the bottom of these issues that Islanders are raising.

As the price of farmland continues to rise, and it is rising, and it's good because farmers are getting good value for their land, but farms are also becoming larger and larger and that means when the young farmers want to purchase land they also have to put large down payments down, often in the range of 40% of the value of the land, and it becomes harder for young farmers to buy land and get into the business. Left unchecked, this trend could imperil the sustainability of many family farms on the Island that go back many generations.

Question to the minister: Has your government done any work to look at the impact that this trend is having on young farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I, as every member of this House, talks to young farmers all the time across Prince Edward Island.

I know, probably, maybe the best person to answer the very question when it comes to young farmers and obtaining financing to get into the farming today, I know the minister of agriculture has a great program in place that just went into place not that long ago for young farmers to go in and get loans to begin to purchase for lands.

There's also talk about having land holdings that young farmers can get in there. There is a lot of work going on, on Prince Edward Island to help young farmers get started on Prince Edward Island because they are the lifeblood of the future of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Future of land ownership

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Really what we're hearing out there from Islanders is that people are concerned that more and more land is owned by non-residents. That means people that don't live on Prince Edward Island. More and more land is being owned by corporations that are headquartered off-Island.

Islanders are worried about what that means for the future of our Island. Really, I'm clear, whether, you know, the vision of the government across the way, it wants to see that happen or is that part of the vision?

I have a question for the Premier; I'm just wondering if you're comfortable with really digging in to some of the statistics that your government has access to and compiling reports to help us get to the bottom of this and figure out really what the future of our Island holds when it comes to land ownership.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the minister commented – indicated there was an extensive report done on this very question in 2013, work led with consultations all across Prince Edward Island by a former member of this Legislature, Horace Carver.

It's an excellent report. It's one that we've acted on. This is something that we're committed to and governments before us have been committed to in this Legislature. We believe Islanders are committed to, as the hon. member indicated in his earlier questions, going back into the 19th Century.

We're respectful of this. We believe in it. We intend to continue to live up to the act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Government spend on outside legal services

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

On October 10th, I submitted a written question requesting that government provide the total dollars spent on outside legal services by government including; every public body, department, agency, board and commission. That was seven weeks ago and we still have not received an answer.

A question to the Attorney General: How much does government actually spend on outside legal services each year? Is it hundreds of thousands? Is it millions or do you even know?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the staff in our department are, indeed, in the process of compiling the answer to the question that would – that was posed on October 10th, and that answer will come back.

Let me say, that it's something that we do on a basis of good judgment, on the basis of the leadership in legal services in the

department of justice, and we believe that we are – where we are spending money, it's necessary to do that. We'll be happy to bring back the answer to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Old fashioned patronage politics

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

In reviewing the list of donors who contributed over \$250 to the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island during the 2015 election year, you will find that legal firms or individual lawyers contributed over \$78,000 directly to the Liberal Party.

I hope this isn't what the minister meant when he said, in response to an earlier question of mine, that the government has relationships with a number of outside law firms.

A question to the minister: How can you expect the public to believe that in the absence of rules, your government is not practicing old fashioned patronage politics?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the lawyers, who do work for government are engaged on the basis of their expertise and they do the work that they're paid for. This is something that you don't get to predict or judge in advance.

We saw yesterday a criminal accused, then convicted who has appealed a murder conviction; is looking for legal aid. Government has to respond to that. Let me say, on the question of lawyers. I think if you went to the hospital foundations, if you went to the charities, if you went to the churches, you would find those same people contributing to their community and we should appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I was not bringing into question the integrity of the individuals.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Oversight for future hiring of outside Legal Counsel

Dr. Bevan-Baker: During the spring 2017 sitting, I brought attention to the fact the hiring of outside legal services is exempt from Treasury Board's procurement policy and therefore not subject to any oversight at all.

At the time, I tabled the Nova Scotia policy and asked the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to review and adopt it. He responded: I will, indeed, review it and it's something that I will be happy to take under consideration.

A question to the minister: Will you be implementing a new policy that will provide appropriate oversight for the future hiring of outside legal counsel?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me not take that question as if we don't have appropriate oversight at the present time.

We have a director of our legal services, we have a Deputy Attorney General, we have senior civil servants who deal with these matters and make judgments and give advice as to when it's necessary to get outside counsel. I have entire respect for them. I have to say, whether the Leader of the Third Party meant to or not, about impugning the character of the character of the people that he was mentioning in the first part of his question, when you're talking about patronage.

These are professionals who are rendering a service. They're leaders in our community and we have great respect for them and for what they do professionally and as contributors to our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Waitlist for senior housing in Charlottetown area

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Minister, affordable housing has been a priority of mine since being elected. I'm very proud of the new Charlotte Court that was built during my first term.

Everyone is aware the waiting list for seniors housing across PEI has been growing with the majority of the waiting applicants desiring housing from the Charlottetown area including Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Minister: How many applicants are currently on the waitlist for seniors housing, and specifically, how many of those are in the Charlottetown area?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, thank you for that question. It is no surprise, you have been consistent and persistent in your request for seniors housing for your constituents.

Our Island has benefited immensely with the economic growth and the population growth. However, it has put pressures on certain parts of the Island, as well, Charlottetown being one of them.

As of October of this year, the seniors waitlist, tip-to-tip Island-wide sat at 634 waiting for placement and 296 of those were looking for, their first choice, as being Charlottetown.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Funding from National Housing Strategy

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, there have been many announcements regarding housing, like the 2016 federal budget and recently the federal government announced a National Housing Strategy. And, you in May of 2017 announced that some of this funding would be used to create new seniors housing in areas of most need.

Is any of this funding going to be used to help provide housing for the 296 applicants waiting for social housing in the Charlottetown area?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another great question; not a day goes by that you aren't in my ear and asking me when that funding will be coming forward.

Today, hon. member, I can confirm to you that there will be funding going towards creating social housing in the Charlottetown area.

And, as with the Summerside announcement at the beginning of the week, we will be issuing RFPs in the next coming weeks for an additional 30 seniors units in the Charlottetown area.

We're looking forward to partnering with the municipalities, with the developers, with our NGO community and looking for more long-term solutions to housing on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, that's great news. Having 50 new social housing units, I couldn't be more pleased, but what's going to happen to those

who remain on the waiting list in the Charlottetown area?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you again.

Another great question, hon. member.

The federal funding – the social infrastructure funding that was announced in 2016 and committed by our government to going towards seniors' housing and 50 new units where the most need was, that was a bridge to bridge the gaps while we address longer-term issues.

So, it was to address current need – some of the current needs on Prince Edward Island while we put together our provincial strategy to address the longer-term needs. And as I said, we have already compiled a group of a co-design team that has already met. They are now going to be collaborating with the housing taskforce and they will be looking at innovative and new ways that we can address long-term housing needs on Prince Edward Island and we look forward to and anticipate the provincial housing strategy being complete by 2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Repatriation of skilled Islanders

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. A skilled workforce is key to the province's economic growth. We need to ensure that businesses have access to skilled employees so they're able to grow and expand.

This government is also committed to growth of our population. Mr. Speaker, I know repatriation is a key component to prosperity in our province. If we have more jobs, we have more people paying taxes, which results in more funding available to things that we all know are important like health care, education, and support for seniors.

Minister: What is your department doing to get in contact with Islanders who are living away who possess skills needed in our workforce and would move back if offered an opportunity?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, hon. member for the question.

I'd like to start off with, as many people in this House know, our population has increased greatly to 150,000 – the first time in history. In fact, it's 152,021 and we're well on target to meet our 160,000 by 2022. That being said, yes, I know there's more work that can be done as far as repatriation of Islanders and we're always looking for ways to do it. We work with the alumni –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: – of the post-secondary institutions to try and bring people back.

As we all know, most Islanders that are away have a piece of PEI with them and they'd like to come back so if we can do anything to reach out to them. We also do have Work PEI – has a website where we're trying to actively reach out to people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know running a business is hard work and we did not always spend enough time working on the growth of our business because we're caught in the day-to-day operations.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Growing skills in local businesses

Mr. Palmer: Minister: How is your department working with local businesses to

identify the skills they required to grow their business?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know very well that this is quite an interest to the Member from Summerside-Wilmot and he's brought some ideas to our department and we've talked about this in the past and we understand the importance of labour shortages in our business community and our department has worked thoroughly with them to help them expand and train new people. We've just got to talk about the aerospace industry at Holland College has turned out a lot of graduates to that. If we look at MacDougall Steel – there's been welders and pipefitters trained to do that type of work.

We've also expended into Team Seafood where people can get some experience in the seafood sector, construction sector, and trucking sector. The department is working very diligently to see what we can do and we've also reached out and formed a graduate mentorship program which helps students graduate and find a job in their field of studies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Number of repatriated Islanders to workforce

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you are correct. I am eager to identify Islanders living away and match them to opportunities based on their skill-sets so they can move back home.

Minister: Can you tell the House how many Islanders living away have moved home to new jobs based on the data your department retains?

Mr. Trivers: Great question.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Fasten your seatbelts.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd mentioned earlier, the department is working as hard as they can and through Skills PEI programs and different programs, we've had about 700 individuals working off-Island –

Mr. J. Brown: Great number.

Mr. Gallant: – connect with local businesses here –

Ms. Casey: Nice.

Mr. Gallant: – for opportunities. We have 19 individuals who came home and started new businesses. We look at the people that were out west – there's about 3,200 people who migrated back to PEI –

Some Hon. Members: Wow.

Mr. Gallant: – is what statistics have shown. I look forward to working with all Islanders to create more work and bring Islanders back home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

***Eastern Graphic* headline re: amalgamation**

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No one from this government seems to care about the unincorporated areas on Prince Edward Island except for us MLAs and the Leader of the Third Party.

Question to the Premier: Does the government believe that headline in the *Easter Graphic* that amalgamation is going ahead without ever hearing from unincorporated areas?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

As I begin today, I, too would like to welcome those to the public gallery that are from down in the unincorporated area of the workings of the new Three Rivers amalgamation area. I know many of you I've seen at a couple of open public meetings that were held in the region in the past month or so.

Certainly, I did witness democracy in action in a lot of forms in the last number of months. The Three Rivers group – the committee that has been working towards this – it's driven from the community what's going on down there. It's not being driven from the department. It's phenomenal the work that's been done. I'd like to commend the steering committee on what they've done thus far and to those that were at the meetings and I watched democracy in progress as a petition was being signed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister may not understand, but a petition is asking for democracy. It's the part that you won't give them, but we'll get to that.

The question I had asked was whether or not you believe Paul MacNeill's headline that said amalgamation was going to happen. You didn't answer that either, which should scare anybody who's following along today.

This petition that I have has 500 names on it, which is actually more than the number of people who have voted so far in any of the towns – something you should think about.

Question to the Premier: Why has your government put no thought into how you're going to hear the voice of thousands of Islanders who live in unincorporated areas?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, this is being driven by a group that wants to see a bigger, sustainable region for that area of the province, and I commend them for that. As of Monday of this week, three of the municipalities that are involved in this process have had opinion poll surveys done. There was indication from those opinion polls that they want to move forward with this. So, there is a process to this and I know the hon. Member knows that there's a process to this.

These councils now will take that forward after council meetings and determine if that's something they want to move forward with. There are still three municipalities that are trying to determine what method they will use. There is also the municipality of Georgetown, who I believe I've heard are having some discussion about this and when we get to the point where unincorporated areas – it's important that they are going to have their –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – opportunity to have their say as well.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Plebiscite on Three Rivers amalgamation

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to paraphrase for anybody who's following along. What the minister is basically saying is: The only people who have a voice so far are the towns, who have a council, and they're deciding, and they're going to decide whether or not it goes ahead and then, after they've all decided, we'll come back and talk to the unincorporated areas and what? Tell them it's a done deal and it's over? That is completely ridiculous and it's completely unacceptable.

Minister: Will you commit to holding a plebiscite?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member knows that I was at the meeting and took to the mic and said from the mic: This amalgamation involves 7,700 people and I feel it's equally as important that all 7,700 get the information, get the communication that's involved with this so they have a very good understanding of what this is about.

Mr. Trivers: Have a voice?

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, this is about the virtues of a larger region. It's about building economic development, strong local voice –

Mr. LaVie: Give the people a voice. Give them a voice.

Mr. Mitchell: – better consistent land-use measures, funding improvements –

Mr. Myers: If you're not pushing it, why are you defending it?

Mr. Mitchell: – but most importantly, is sustainable futures for our children and their children. I think everybody should have the opportunity to hear about the virtues –

Mr. Trivers: Have a plebiscite.

Mr. Mitchell: – to discuss them openly and then have their say.

Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Three Rivers amalgamation

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Have their say how? Like, I asked him a simple question and he read speaking points from Paul MacNeill about the virtues of how this is going to work and how great it is for everyone. Yet, you don't want to hear from the people, let them tell you themselves whether or not it's great.

You were the one who told this House: We're not in the middle of it; we're not pushing it. Yet, you're speaking right from the talking points of the people who do want it. How come you won't hear from these people as to whether or not they want it? Maybe they do? Maybe you hold the vote and they do want it. Why won't you let them have their voice?

Question to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development because he won't, we're going to have to hold our own plebiscite, will you fund it so that the unincorporated people can have a plebiscite? Will you find the funds for us so we can hold a plebiscite?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, as – in my discussions with people from the region and we're trying to determine ways we can get the information out. Maybe it's holding more public meetings. Maybe it's having opportunities for the representatives that sat, from the unincorporated areas, on the steering committee to organize meetings of that nature. It's so important that the information gets communicated both ways.

I asked: What methods are in place right now for their members of fire districts from existing municipalities. How do their fire dues get determined? They're done in a public meeting. How do their representatives for the steering committee get picked? It was done at a public meeting.

There are opportunities to do this, but it's a process and when we get there, I will assure you that all people involved will have their say on what's going on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This minister won't commit to a plebiscite, but he's saying he's going to let their voice after everyone else has their voice. They

want to have it with everyone. If they're going to be forced to be a part of something, they should also have the right to have their say now. All of the other communities are having a vote. It's not a public meeting; they're having a vote. They're putting ballots in a box and it's a secret ballot.

The question now to the Premier: Premier, you have to help us. Why won't you listen to the voice of the people? Why won't you allow us to have a plebiscite in rural Prince Edward Island about this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know the hon. member on the other side of the House has a vision for his community. He has a sustainable vision, as I do, as all hon. members of the Legislature do.

There is a process involved, or he knows that. Currently, there is a process right now of three municipalities. If they go to their councils and their councils say no. It's not going any further –

Mr. Myers: Why do they get to decide?

Mr. Mitchell: – so that's how the process –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – will go. They are elected by the members that they represent. They feel that they have the ability to do that at a council meeting. If it does not go any further than that the issue will not proceed any further.

When the process gets to the point where we will talk to the unincorporated areas, I assure you that they will have –

Mr. LaVie: Too late.

Mr. Mitchell: – that opportunity to have their –

Mr. LaVie: Too late (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – voice in a very productive, effective manner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the minister has had his head buried in the sand in Charlottetown for far too long.

What he's saying is that the same people who he won't give a voice as to whether or not they do want it, he will also not give them a voice if they don't want it. Because if the towns don't want it, then they can't have it, if the towns do want it, they have to have it.

Five hundred signatures we have. These people went door-to-door to their neighbours and that's what they came up with: 500 signatures.

Question to the Premier: Why won't you allow democracy in Three Rivers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I, as I said earlier, I feel equally as important as having their voice, is to have the information put forward in a manner that ensures them this is about the future growth of their area.

This is not the only region on Prince Edward Island I'm doing this work in. I'm doing it in central PEI. I'm doing it in western PEI. I can assure you, I'm not going to do something that is going to jeopardize the work that I'm doing in other areas of the province.

Their voice will be listened to and they will have an opportunity to have their say when the part of the process comes up that will affect them the most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

World Sledge Hockey Championship

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today as an able-bodied person. I am privileged to have two legs that allow me to stand, as well as, walk, run, skate, bike and ski. I have two functioning arms. My vision is mostly intact; I have got the glasses. And I'm capable of performing daily activities without much of a struggle.

There are many Islanders, who are faced daily with challenges due to physical disability. I would like to recognize a number of individuals in the gallery today who understand exactly what I'm talking about.

Summerside native, four-time world champion and Paralympic gold medalist, Billy Bridges, and Executive Director of ParaSport and Recreation PEI, Tracy Stevenson, and members of the World Sledge Hockey Champion Organizing Committee, Dean Lund and Eric Payne. Thank you for being here today with us and you are tremendous ambassadors for sport.

PEI's ParaSport and Rec have a mission to provide recreation and sport opportunities for any and all individuals with a physical disability on Prince Edward Island. Theirs is a mission that our department is pleased to support through an annual grant of approximately \$35,000. Islanders can support ParaSport by coming out to the 2017 World Sledge Hockey Challenge on December 3rd through 9th at the MacLauchlan Arena.

This is one in a series of international tournaments Canada will participate in leading up to the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in South Korea. Billy Bridges and Team Canada will compete against Italy, Korea, and the defending gold-medalist, the United States, in this four-team event.

I've been told that Billy's slap shot has been clocked at over 80 miles an hour, and that he is the highest scoring player in the history of sledge hockey, most assists, goals, and overall points.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Billy and all of Team Canada are tremendous athletes, and I look forward to seeing them on the ice this Sunday at the home opener against Italy. This is PEI's fourth time hosting the world championship. The legacy funding from previously hosted years allowed ParaSport and Recreation PEI to start-up a sledge hockey program right here in Prince Edward Island.

Once again, I want to again thank Billy, Dean, Eric and Tracy for being here today and I wish them all the best in the upcoming championship.

Go Team Canada!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the minister for this statement.

Tracy, Dean, and Eric, thank you for your work for ParaSport and all the volunteer hours that you put into it. Billy, thank you for being a role model, a leader for all of PEI. I know I'm quite excited for the sledge hockey challenge that's coming. My kids are very excited when we go to play hockey in Summerside; they talk about sledge hockey because they get to play in the bench that has the viewing for the sledge hockey. They're pretty excited for it.

I think the communication is important to keep repping this sport and to show what great leaders you are, so we much appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Thank you for this statement, minister, and I appreciate the preface that you gave it regarding how important it is to make our world accessible and welcoming to all Islanders and everybody. I think that's an

incredibly important thing, and of course the event itself is extraordinarily exciting; to have a world championship here on Prince Edward Island in successive years. I know that they're back here in 2017 because 2016 was so successful, so thank you for all your fantastic work.

Congratulations to all the players, and particularly, of course, our own Billy Bridges. We don't have many world-leading athletes in any sports and it's wonderful to see one of them with us here today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

SEAM and STAR programs

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From our past two YDAY's, we heard youth say that they want to be more prepared when entering the workforce, and that they would benefit from practical experiences that help ease the transition into career-oriented jobs. So earlier this year, through collaboration between several departments of government as well as community partners, we created the Skills Enhancement and Mentoring Program, known by the acronym S-E-A-M, or SEAM.

Government partnered with the community of St. Peter's Bay and the East Prince Youth Development Centre as project sponsors. The program includes five weeks of job shadowing, skill development and mentorship, and two weeks working at a placement in the private sector.

Our government also created the Start to Apply Right program, known by the acronym S-T-A-R, or STAR. Youth in Charlottetown worked with Dr. Bill Montelpare at UPEI to develop learning skills such as how to create a healthy lifestyle, and coding to help develop Dr. Montelpare's virtual wellness site.

Youth in the western part of PEI worked at Holland College in Alberton developing skills like financial literacy, budgeting, and local investment including promotion of the

Canada Learning Bond. For the STAR project, the departments partnered with The Adventure Group and the West Prince Chamber of Commerce.

Nearly 50 youth participated in the SEAM and STAR programs this summer. In addition to developing many work skills, youth had the opportunity to connect and contribute to their community. They weeded gardens, picked up litter and did odd jobs at local businesses and food banks. One participant shared their experience helping a gentleman who was so thankful to have help cleaning up the site of a non-profit organization. Another youth talked about cleaning windows for a business owner who said she could not see through her windows for very a long time. That business owner was so pleased with their work that she offered to write them a letter of reference. Participants also visited local farms and tourism businesses.

Guest speakers discussed with youth their fields of work and many conversations were had about job search and dealing with anxiety. Participants also did personality assessments to learn how to manage conflicts and understand themselves better.

I encourage everyone in this House to help spread the word about these great programs that are now available to our Island youth, and I thank our community partners for their collaboration in helping prepare our young people for our workforce and their future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know the SEAM program well. I actually remember it as part of tablegate too. It was one of the accidentally-tabled documents that when Vessey was looking for good news last year, it was one of the ones that showed up on the list.

Though I digress, because it is good news.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: It is good news.

I went to the closing this year of it and I think the closing of it the year before. It is a great program. There are some great individuals who are involved with the program. Barry O'Brien is part of the program and he's from down in Georgetown. He's a great individual and he's great –

Mr. LaVie: Great guy.

Mr. Myers: – with youth.

(Indistinct), Olive Crane, Karen Cousins, Stephen Cousins, and of course, Marie Burge and Jimmy MacAulay, who facilitate the facility part of it and do a lot of great work in the community and have done great work in ensuring that facility was there so we could bring some of these great programs in.

The program, honestly, should expand. It's been a great program for our area and it's something that I hope will continue and I'd like to see more of it around Prince Edward Island.

Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

The SEAM program is a great thing. Teaching Island youth practical, employable skills is – but it's more than that. It's really a life-skills teaching program and all of us; it doesn't matter how old you are, we could all do with some instruction on how to lead happier and more productive lives and be better citizens. That's exactly what this program does.

I was fortunate enough to attend an event run by this program at UPEI earlier this year where there were 12 or so youth who were graduating from the program, and it was very impressive. I was impressed by the youth themselves. I was impressed by the mentors that had been brought in to speak

with them, and just the general tenor of the program; it was very impressive.

What I would be interested to do, though, to know is: Is there a follow-up on this program and on the cohorts who go through this to see whether this has a lasting impact on their lives because it's all very well to boost somebody temporarily, but those skills need to stick and we need to know that it had a long-term impact, a positive impact on their lives. I don't know whether those metrics are kept by your department or not, but I would encourage you to do that because we all want to promote and we want to protect all of the good programs for Island youth that are out there and make sure that they are, indeed, achieving their stated goals.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a petition entitled Three Rivers Amalgamation Unincorporated Vote and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Rustico-Emerald, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: I'll just read the verbiage of it, and it says: To the Legislative Assembly –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) member statement.

Mr. Myers: It's part of the petition process, actually.

An Hon. Member: Go ahead.

Mr. Myers: It's a petition, so I can –

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Mr. MacEwen: Speaker knows.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island: These are the reasons for the petition: Residents of unincorporated areas impacted by the Three Rivers Amalgamation process have no official democratic voice as to whether they want to be part of the new Three Rivers Municipality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island as follows: To urge the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment to use his/her legislative authority to hold a plebiscite to determine if unincorporated areas impacted by the Three Rivers Amalgamation wish to be part of the new Three Rivers Municipality, with a simple 'yes' or 'no' vote.

It is signed by 500 people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Can't block democracy.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the document I referred to during my questions this afternoon, and it pertains to the general comment number 15, article (i) 1, and comment number 15 with regards to the human right to water and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, pursuant to section 46 of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, I wish to advise that I have received a 2017 Report of the Indemnities & Allowances Commission. I

move that the report of the commission be received and do lie on the Table.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, Bill No. 7, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, could you give us an explanation of this bill?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Last year the *Municipal Government Act* received Royal Assent in the Legislative Assembly, but was not proclaimed. Once the MGA comes into force several amendments are required to modified processes and timelines with respect to municipal elections.

A number of other amendments are also being proposed to clarify legislative requirements and correct inconsistencies with respect to the legislated language. These amendments will clarify requirements, timelines, regarding certain aspects for the election process to support transition to an all-day election process for all municipalities.

It also anticipates that these changes will ease the administrative and financial burden associated with preparing, conducting and concluding elections for all municipalities, but most especially for smaller municipalities that may be challenged by the transition, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Registered Professional Planners Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Registered Professional Planners Act*, Bill No. 20, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, an explanation about this bill, too.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The legislation is required to articulate membership and accreditation standards for all professional planners in the province of PEI. The *Registered Professional Planners Act* will ensure consistency with national standards for the profession and help the province met requirements for labour mobility, regulatory alignment and other protocols such as the agreement on internal trade for the new Canadian free trade.

This legislation will reflect and align with the legislation for professional land use planners in most jurisdictions across the country, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Planning Statues Amendment Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Planning Statues Amendment Act*, Bill No. 21, read a first time.

Speaker: Also, hon. minister, an explanation.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Several amendments are required to the *Planning Act* including; enabling the

application for provincial land use policies across PEI, and providing for long-term agreements for charges for new developments.

These amendments will promote orderly land use activities, as well as protection of the environment and water quality by allowing the province to set standards for municipal planning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Motions other than Government

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to notice given I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*, Bill No. 102, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, give us an explanation of what this bill is.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill adds new provisions to section 6 of the act setting out a presumption that a worker who has been exposed in the course of employment to a traumatic event or events and diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by a physician or a psychologist in accordance with the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition*, has suffered a personal injury by accident arising out of/and in course of his employment or her employment.

This presumption applies to a worker who is diagnosed with PTSD after the subsection setting out the presumption comes into force.

It also provides that for great uncertainty PTSD is considered an acute reaction to a

traumatic event for the purpose of sections 1, subsection 1.1 of the act, and thus, is not excluded from an accident. It also defines terms used in these new provisions.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition now would like to call Motion No. 16 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 16.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the following motion:

WHEREAS the sustainability of Prince Edward Island's agriculture and fisheries industries is critical to the economic stability of Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS both industries are often impacted negatively by changes made at the federal level, often without consultation or input from the provincial fishing and farming sectors;

AND WHEREAS both industries are facing many challenges relating to a rapidly changing global marketplace and instability in trade agreements with this province's largest trading partner the United States;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly encourage the provincial government to take immediate action to appoint a second Deputy Minister aimed at ensuring that both industries have strong representation to address the many complex issues and challenges facing both industries today.

Speaker: Thank you.

I will now call on the mover of this motion to speak to the motion, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MacEwen: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Thank you to the Member from Morell-Mermaid, for the applause.

Any time we get to rise in the House and speak on our fisheries or agriculture or tourism it's a pleasure.

I'll let it know right from the start that this didn't come from me, this came from the people of Prince Edward Island. I didn't wake up this morning and think of this. This is something that's been asked for a couple of years now, since this government took office in 2015.

We've heard from fishers. We've heard from the PEIFA, we've had our committee meetings where they're looking for, they couldn't get two ministers. They're looking for two deputy ministers for the departments; break up the fisheries from the agriculture, and give each department a deputy minister, at least.

I don't think that's a big ask for two of our biggest industries of Prince Edward Island. I think that's a fair ask. Especially, with these industries put back in to PEI.

During a presentation to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, the federation brought before us the case for a minister to deal with issues such as; minimum lobster size, loss of halibut quotas, and for that matter, the closure of the mackerel fishery.

I just asked questions last week about the mill in Nova Scotia. We had no representation at the meeting. It's probably fair on the minister's part. Because you have one deputy running three portfolios; rural development, so you have got them pushed to the limit. I can understand, he's pushed to the limit. He's a great guy, I know him; knew him for years, knew him when he was a young fellow.

Mr. R. Brown: When he was a young fellow.

Mr. LaVie: – and now I know him as an old fellow –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Honestly, though, he's a good guy, but he's pushed to the limits when he's

running three portfolios. He's pushed. I can understand him not making all the meetings. I can understand the fishers looking for their own deputy. I can see all sides of it.

The Premier was asked to honour the request; it never happened. Fishers asked for it to happen. It never happened. Some PEIFA came to our committee asking; recommendation was put forward. Nothing became of it.

While we have supported the concept of two separate, in the past, in the interest of the budgetary consideration, we will settle at less for now. For the additional of another deputy minister for the department of fisheries and agriculture, so here I am, again, standing up in front of the House speaking on behalf of the fishermen, which I said I would do when I was first elected; to speak for the people. This is coming from the fishermen. I didn't wake up this morning and think of this.

We need to consider the fact that the seafood industry brings, roughly, \$300 million a year into the Island economy and employees close to 9,000 people.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: Nine thousand people, and out of that 9,000 that's not counting the spin-offs from that. That's not counting your grocery stores. Any of your stores, actually, this is a big industry. This employs a lot of people. All this industry was asking for was their own deputy minister. They understood they weren't getting a minister, so they, at least asked for a deputy minister. That didn't happen.

There's roughly 4,150 commercial fishers in our province; 4,150 around our province. Out of that, there are 1,300 inshore fishing vessels. These fishers; they're hard workers, they love what they do, they'd do it 12 months of the year if they could, but we know, we'll ice up. We can't fish 12 months of the year. With the cutting quotas, we all know it's just not fair.

Look at the mackerel fishery shutdown last year. Nobody knew. The fishermen got a notice; the fishing was closed the day after: closed. Nobody knew. I called the minister. That's working together. I called the

minister to let him know the news. In all fairness to the minister he didn't know because his deputies are too busy. His deputies are too busy with three portfolios.

Mr. Speaker, you're well aware, you were in the fishery for a long time; 50-plus years, how a quota can shut down quickly. If you had your own deputy minister he would be on top of the issues. And no fault to the deputy minister, he's a hard worker, a great worker, puts in his time. He can't keep up. He's only one man; one individual.

We have 70 major shellfish shippers in our province. PEI produces almost 20% of Canadian lobsters. Our fishers fish numerous varieties of species including; snow crab, rock crab, lobster, herring, smelts, silversides, and mackerel, rock crab, and the list goes on. The list goes on.

Our bluefin tuna fishery, Mr. Speaker, as you were well aware of it; it not only supports our tourism industry, but the tuna is marketed globally. Unless, you're out on a tuna boat and fought one of these giant fish you have no idea what fishing is.

First day I was out fishing on a tuna boat. I was hooked the first day. I had no experience and this fellow asked me to go tuna fishing, so I took him up on it. No, so, I took him up on it. We were kite fishing and I had no idea what kite fishing was. There's a lot in here probably don't know what kite fishing is, but, Mr. Speaker, I understand you would.

What is it, you take the line, you tie a kite to it away from the boat and the line goes down through the water with a live mackerel hooked on it. The kite holds the fish at the top of the water and you wait for that tuna to come as fast as he can to grab that mackerel. When he comes, he's grabbing that mackerel and he's out of the water. When you see that fish flying through the air, and coming out of the water and that big splash, you're hooked.

I was hooked that day. I fought the fish myself. I was never on a reel before. I did lose him. The skipper was not upset with me. He understood that I was new to the fishery, and he didn't get upset with me. He said: we'll get another one tomorrow; which took the pressure off of me because when

you lose one of these big, giant bluefin fish you're losing money for the skipper.

Anyway, I was hooked and what I did that evening when we got ashore, I heard of a licence for sale down Little Pond way. So what did I do? Jumped in the truck and went to Little Pond to buy a licence. Thank God it was sold when I got there. I don't think I'd make a tuna fisherman.

I'm one of these guys, I grew up in the fishery where I was pulling, and I was dragging, and I was smashing stuff, and I was fixing stuff. That's how it was with my dad. So that's how I am. I like to be pulling, and dragging, and fixing stuff.

Mr. Roach: He knows how it feels when the tuna isn't catching, just what the tuna feels like, too.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

The tuna fishery takes a lot of patience. It takes a lot of patience to be a tuna fisherman and I haven't got the patience to be a tuna fisherman; I haven't.

As you know, no doubt, or where are hoping to see increase in tuna this year. Given the possibility of an elimination of current trade agreements with the United States that could impact our agriculture and fishing industries, I believe it is more and more imperative that we ensure the interest of these two critical industries have a strong voice, both provincially and federally. I do work with the federal minister of fisheries, Dominic LeBlanc, and I'm starting to build up a relationship with Dominic LeBlanc. I'm after sending him off a couple of letters now, and his responses are ASAP with results.

Of course these results are not completed yet, but you can say anything in the letter – something like our government here, but until you get the results – but at least I'm getting the letters back and he's recognizing that I am here and I mean business. So, I have a good relationship with him and he's supposed to do some work on the harbours come March in my district and hopefully that'll come true. It's great to have a relationship with our provincial minister and our federal minister and that's what it is – how you get work done, is working together.

It was mentioned here earlier – is working together and that's how you get things accomplished.

If everybody gets on the same page, it works. I have a great relationship with the provincial minister of fisheries, but he understands I have a job to do, and he understands that, and he knows I have a job to do – and that's to look after the people, the fishers of Prince Edward Island. When they go to the minister or the deputy minister and they can't get results, they'll come to me to see if I can get results for them. When you sit down and talk it out to the minister and he gets it, he usually goes with the fishers. It's all about working together.

For example, the PEIFA is asking the federal government to loosen up the restrictions brought in by the previous government, which limit the number of foreign workers entering our country. It is interesting to note that on a regular basis one of our major concerns, next to energy costs of our small businesses in the CFIB monthly barometer is related to the shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour.

We all know of workers in our district who have worked for years and years on farms and fish plants during the summer months. Many of these individuals are at, or beyond the age of retirement and they are finding it more and more physically challenging to do the kind of work they used to do. Some of us in here can relate to this. We've either worked as a fisher helper. I know the Minister of Finance can relate to this. Mr. Speaker, you can relate to this for sure. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the member is just catching on. He's just young. But we know what it's like on the stern of a boat with hard labour, or a fish plant – hard labour, long hours.

Years ago, and the Minister of Finance would know this more than I would, or yourself, with the fish plant back in the days – of the dragger days – the big 65 footer, 90 footer – used to come in with 90,000 pounds of fish or 110,000 pounds of fish. There were five or seven of them come in at a time for one fish plant and that fish had to be filleted, boxed and frozen. There was 24-hour shifts – 24 hours a day. If I came in with a redfish, or a codfish, or a flatfish

today and sent it to the plant, who would fillet it? We lost that. We lost it. Yes, there a few older people left that still want to work and stuff, but the majority of them people are gone. Those filleters are gone. You'd have to be automatic filet machines today because we lost that. We lost that trade. And it's too bad. It's too bad, but if the fish are not there, what do we need filleters for? How do we know the fish are not? Well, we've got survey boats out there testing our waters – we do in the summertime and when the weather's nice – we have survey boats testing our waters to see what kind of fish is there.

But Mr. Speaker, and you'll know this also, when I fished with my father, we fished cod in the spring or in the fall – that's when you fish cod – down off East Point. You fished your hake, your flatfish in the summertime. That's when we should be testing our waters off East Point, early in the spring or late in the fall.

I don't know if I mentioned it to this minister and after mentioning it so many times, but I don't know if I mentioned it to this minister, but I will now – in case I didn't. I know I mentioned it to the last federal minister, Gail Shea about test off East Point in the spring or the fall just to see about codfish. And I don't mean go out there with a big net and start dragging up the bottom and stuff. Send somebody out with a set of hooks just to see if the fish are there in the spring or the fall, because I'm hearing that there is nice codfish being caught – accidental catch in the lobster trap, of course. I fished out on East Point before myself and you do get the codfish and it's an accidental catch. So, just to see if that fishery is back and to see if we could make a fishery out of it.

Now that I'm on that subject, I'm going to go a little farther with it. I think I mentioned this to the deputy minister, but he's so busy, I'm not sure if it went anywhere – about collecting scallop spat and reseeding it on our beds. Back 15-16 years ago – it might be a little longer, we started doing that process and I was one of the ones collecting the spat, I think there were six of us and I was one of the ones collecting the spat, and where I was collecting spat was off east of Souris on a 600 line and off Souris lighthouse. The best

spat collection, believe it or not, was off the Souris lighthouse –

An Hon. Member: Who's fishing there?

Mr. LaVie: – going south. That was probably – in one year I had spat as big as my thumb, but the project never – we never kept it going. I wish we had of back then. We'd have a lovely fishery in the scallop today if we had of kept it going, but we didn't keep that process going. It's a process – they do it in the Magdalens. They seed the beds in the Magdalens, and you're only allowed to take so much fish off them beds per day, per week. That's it. Then they've got to move on to another bed. It's good.

Yes, I understand that the Magdalen Islands don't have the scallop licenses that PEI has. I think they wouldn't have 20 licenses. I think their licenses are in the teens somewhere. Just in area 26A, I believe, there are possibly 350 licenses. So how would you regulate it? I don't know. Everybody seeds, everybody fishes, it'd have to be a part of the process.

But you know there is more we can do in the fishery; there's great ideas out there in the fishery. It's just for somebody to take the initiative and do it. I know the minister is good at giving support whenever support is needed. I know the shell fishers come in to me – when was that? – that was last spring I believe they came in and met with me. I just pointed them in a direction and it was the direction of the minister's office and –

An hon. Member: Great job, too.

Mr. LaVie: – and the deputy minister took care of that issue right away; but that's all these fishers needed was that direction. That's what I was there for, is to show them a direction. I put them in the direction of the minister's office, he put them to the deputy minister, and he took care of it, and we worked together with it. It all got resolved. It all got worked out, and the deputy minister kept me updated on the issue.

I'm one of these guys – I don't have to go to social media with this. I don't need the credit; I don't need the pat on the back as long as they issue – the deputy minister kept me up-to-date that the issue got resolved and

that's the main thing right there; that the issue was resolved.

I believe they're still working on it, there's still some tweaks to do to it but it's being worked out. And no, I don't need the credit for it; it's done.

When these issues come to me and when they're brought up at committee – and they're good points, all good points by fishers. This is where it comes back to that fishers want to fish. You know it and I know it, we used to start fishing in April and we finished in December and that hard fishing. That was hard going. That's six days a week when it wasn't blowing. Now, the majority fishes in May and we're done June 30th.

Yes, there is some tuna to catch and there's a few mackerel to catch and there's some rock crab and a few scallops to catch – these fishers don't want few, they want fish. They'll fish, fishermen don't want to be on unemployment, they'll tell you, they do not want to be on unemployment, they want to work for a living. These fishers love what they do; they grew up in the water. They took over their grandfather's fleet, their fathers' fleet, their brother's fleet, whatever, they are fishers. It's something they have a passion for, and it's something they want to do.

The fishery today is a lot different than the fishery 30 years ago. It's a business today. It's not a small business anymore, it's a big business.

We have boat shops right across Prince Edward Island that are busy. Three-year; five-year wait for a boat. That's busy and that's because of the fishery.

Last spring as a fisher for myself, the fishers got both price and the fish. There's something I haven't seen is the fish and the price at the same time, which is good. Look at our economy today, the government is wondering why the economy is booming. Look at the year the farmers had, look at the year the fishermen had and look at the year our tourism had. It all combines into one. That's our three major industries there; tourism, fishing and farming.

Everyone that is in here can relate to somebody in one of those industries; a

family member, a friend, a neighbor, everyone of us are connected.

Is it simply too much to ask for a deputy minister for these fisheries and a deputy minister for agriculture? I'm sure the deputy minister of fisheries and agriculture and rural development would agree; it would take a lot of pressure off of him.

Today's industries are struggling to adapt to a globalized market place and new innovations in their industries. They're struggling. That's affecting the input and the output cost. International markets are being found for many of the goods and services and consumers are demanding all kinds of product revisions in a domestic marketplace, whether it be a small potato, carrots, fresh packed fresh lobster, organic meat products. There are new demands for labeling nutrition and even identification.

With groundbreaking technology such as drones, GPS, all kinds of major issues are developing in our farming and fishing sectors and to the good. We heard the minister of fisheries talk about drones in this session this year, just lately in this session he talked about the drones. I spoke to the deputy minister about the drones, also. We were trying to get him in to give us a demonstration on it; it just didn't happen with his work schedule being busy and our work schedule being busy. It just never happened and I'm looking forward to it yet; I still think it's on the table. I know the committee is asking for it because the committee is really interested. I heard the deputy talk about it, I heard the fisheries minister talk about it, so I'm interested in it.

Actually, I believe it was the minister of tourism sent me a little movie on eastern PEI from the drone; great marketing tool that can be used for tourism, fisheries or agriculture. I think it's a great marketing tool, the drones and it's going to be – I know it belongs to the fisheries but tourism will have it to do his marketing in eastern PEI. I know he's got his provincial park up there; Red Point Provincial Park. He's got his day park at Basin Head. We've got East Point Lighthouse. We've got Elmira train station. There is all kinds to do in eastern PEI. It's just, the tourism that's up that way it's just ungodly.

There is one thing I'll ask now that I'm on the subject of Red Point and Basin Head and east of Souris, is when you put your counters out and tries to get his numbers. When he put his counters out there in June, put the request in to transportation to get the real numbers for June in eastern Kings. Don't put their counters out in the fall so the numbers are down so they don't have to put pavement down. Get the real numbers in eastern PEI.

I know the minister of transportation can request, or the minister of tourism can request the minister of transportation to put the counters out so he can get the real numbers of tourism on PEI. We have the CTMA ferry in eastern Kings, 80,000-plus cars that ain't counted.

This is a great topic. I know this topic has been going on for some time now that the fishers are looking for a second deputy minister. I know they asked the Premier and they have asked the fisheries minister. I know there is a workload on the deputy minister; there's no doubt. He's looking after three departments and he's busy. There is a workload there. He can only do what the workload allows him to do. He's only human. He's a good guy. I know him. I have known him for years. I knew him when he was back in the fisheries. I knew him when he was in the agriculture. And now I know he's in the deputy. I know his family. But he can only do so much.

It's something like our nurses and our doctors. They can only do so much and we push them to the limit, that's when we see no results.

Just do what the fishers ask. They don't ask for very much. They don't ask very much and if they had their own deputy minister, you know, somebody they could work alone. Somebody they could get when they're call upon. I think it would be a great asset, not only to the fishers themselves, but to the PEIFA when they're doing their work on-Island, off-Island, or whatever it may be.

I want to turn this over because I know there's more here that want to speak to this and I know the minister will speak for it. And maybe when he's up speaking, he will do his commitment today for the fishers of

PEI. I'm just going to adjourn it for the seconder, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for your time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: We'll now move to the seconder of the motion to speak to the motion, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to rise today to second our motion, to address the need for a greater voice for two of the most important industries in our province; sustainable fishing and agriculture industries are critical to the economic security of our province.

It is becoming increasingly important that these industries have strong representation through the federal and provincial process. The mover of this motion made reference to the CETA agreement, but it's just one of a series of trade deals Canada is working out with countries including; Vietnam, Japan, Mexico, India and Singapore.

These agreements are critically important, not only for the impact on our province's ability to export more of our own products to these regions, but they can also help to reduce our reliance on United States as an export market.

Certainly, the future of our trade relationship with the United States is in a vulnerable situation and our industries could be critically impacted. It is critical in today's competitive environment that our industries are heard in every level of negotiation on issues, both provincial and federal and on the international scene.

Fishers are pushing for a full fishing season and there may be a battle brewing over fluid being dumped from a Pictou, Nova Scotia plant. There is continuing concern about lobster prices and carapace size. Many of our harbours are unsafe and need to be repaired.

Farmland preservation, the impact of CETA on our dairy industry, tax policies, pesticides, clean technology, the expansion of our beef plant, carbon tax, the list of issues that need to be addressed is broad and long.

As we all know, there's considerable concern this time about large irrigation ponds and how they might impact our water table, also; our land stewardship, land ownership, crop rotation, environment legislation, the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, the wireworm, the declining honey bees, crop insurance, farm regulation, inspection services, clear-cutting, et cetera.

As you can see there is a great need for strong representation when it comes to the fisheries and agriculture portfolios. I believe that we do need two deputy ministers in the department of fisheries and agriculture to serve the best interests of these industries.

I would ask for support in this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Can I have the podium?
Great.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a great opportunity to get up and talk about agriculture and fisheries in this province that's for sure. I'm very pleased to be the minister with that portfolio. I have full confidence in the knowledge and capability of my deputy minister to handle this portfolio.

He has been doing a great job, and he will –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: – continue to do a great job. I can guarantee you that.

I find it a little bit ironic that this motion comes to the floor calling for a second deputy minister when we have the Leader of the Opposition, during this leadership campaign is quoted as saying: even more importantly, ladies and gentlemen, we need to get serious, and we need to look at the size of the government because that is one of the biggest expenses here on PEI.

Seems a little bit contradictory in those comments with the message we're hearing here today. I do want to say, first and foremost, I have the highest regards well for my agriculture and fisheries critic.

This gentleman is doing a great job. He's great to work with. As he said: it's not his issue. The fishermen have brought this forward and you know what? They brought it forward to me, as well.

If you look at most of the portfolios in the House these days, most ministers, most deputies have one or two portfolios they look after. It's no different in ag and fish. I know ag and fish are the most important ones, that's for sure, certainly in our minds. They are some of the biggest revenue generators in the province.

Agriculture and fisheries are really, really important. It's important that we have the best people involved and I think we do with the deputy minister that I have in my department.

The Premier, as well as myself, have the greatest confidence in the ability of the deputy ministers as I've said. He is a great manager of his staff. I know the hon. member had said that he is overworked. I'll tell you he is great working with our staff, and not only that, he has very supportive and very strong staff underneath him, both on the agricultural side and in the fisheries side. I think that's being seen with a lot of the programs that we run, and the way the communications and things are going forward.

There is a very strong tie between the two commodities, both agriculture and fishery. A lot of the fisheries, if you look at the aquaculture side, is basically seen as farming, anyway. I've had that comment come from some of the people in the aquaculture side, which is seen as fisheries, but they see themselves very much closer to farming, as well. The two of them do go together hand in hand.

Our deputy minister has keen insight in the opportunities and the challenges for both industries. Just as a word about him. He worked in a fish plant growing up. I know that, so he's got great insight on that. He worked with the hog board before he came

into being executive director of the Federation of Agriculture, and did a great job there.

It's because of his leadership ability and his attributes that the Premier called upon him to leave the federation and come and work with us in government. His communication and relationship with the commodities, the commodity groups has continued to be strong since that time.

Another interesting point is that in all four Atlantic Canada provinces, as well as in Quebec and in British Columbia, all the deputy ministers in those six provinces are deputies of both agriculture and fishery. This is a result, of course, of them having a great working relationship across our country.

It also allows all the deputies to work together on very many issues. I know having sat at the FPT table with my deputy, there is a great relationship there between himself and the other deputies across the country.

Agriculture and fisheries are key contributors to our province, to our provincial economy. We've talked about that before. The dollars that it's brought in on those commodities; it allows us to do things like fix our roads, run our hospitals, build new schools – all of that sort of thing, and we need them. We need them to be strong, and we need to have the greatest people in place that we can.

To throw a second deputy in there, does that mean it's going to be any better? I question that. I think what we're looking for, first and foremost, is the quality of the person and I think we certainly have that in the deputy at the present time.

I was a little disappointed to hear in a discussion a little earlier in the House here when someone questioned the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, kind of attacked our deputy minister personally. He said and I quote: Will you admit – in his question to me – will you admit that your own deputy minister has been directly involved and, indeed, has been coaching these companies? Talking about the holding ponds –

Some Hon. Members: Shame.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – and how to exploit both current and future legal loopholes.

Absolutely unacceptable for that kind of comment, I think. I know the mover of the motion would not in any way shape or form –

Mr. Trivers: You didn't answer it.

Mr. McIsaac: – look at our deputy that way. They are good friends. They have a good relationship, and he recognized the potential and the qualities of our deputy and I don't think we should in any shape or form be slamming any of our civil servants. They do an awesome job in keeping this province moving forward. Very disappointed to hear that kind of comment, but I know it didn't come from the critic for agriculture and fisheries and I appreciate that from him.

The government is committed to strong economic growth and we run our programs that way, and we work together with the other provinces, with the other ministers, deputy ministers across the province. We feel we're developing great things and we have great things coming forward to continue in our primary industries.

We do work very closely with the industry and community groups to ensure that our policies and our programs meet the needs of stakeholders and our clients. We see that on a daily basis. There are a lot of meetings that I go to myself, my deputy goes to. If we can't make it, a lot of the staff will attend those things as well.

The hon. member who moved the motion brought up the comment about the northern pipeline, which we were not able to get to that meeting. That's for sure. We have great staff that attend a lot of them. They were at meetings in Moncton, in Montreal – many places across the country when an issue pops up.

But, we did deal with that issue very closely. I called the minister in Nova Scotia. I wrote to him as well, and he was going to discuss the issue with his minister of environment.

I did receive a very nice note back from a representative from the fishermen in the

Caribou region which said: Mr. Minister, I would like to thank you for your support with the proposed northern pipeline. Your statement in *The Guardian* was greatly appreciated by me and my fellow fishermen.

Again, we work hard to support our fishermen here and across the Strait. I did meet with the PEIFA about that, and my deputy as well as there. They brought this issue up and we certainly promised them our support and we continue to do that. We've met with the shellfish association; doing great things in there with the many other parts of the fisheries, because there are a lot of parts to it and I think we have a very good handle on that.

Our staff, our biologists, our soil scientists, our engineers, technical staff supporting the primary industries through different programs – we have a lot of great things happening there and we have the staff in place to do it, and they support our deputy minister and our deputy minister works very strongly and very closely with them.

The tie in agriculture and fisheries has, for years, gone hand in hand. We have people, of course, that are involved in both agriculture and in fisheries, and that's great, too. They are our primary resources and we're keying on those. Our deputy minister, as I said before, has great experience in all of these commodities and has worked with many of the commodity groups for many years now.

The hon. member that proposed the motion also talked about his relationship with minister LeBlanc, and we, ourselves, myself and my deputy, both have a very personal relationship with minister LeBlanc, as well as minister MacAulay. Of course, minister MacAulay is my MP and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira's MP as well. We both have a close relationship with him there and work on many of the agriculture files, and we even cross-reference. If we need some support from our agriculture minister federally to support on a fisheries issue, we certainly will go and work with minister MacAulay on that, and the same as with minister LeBlanc.

He's been to our province many times now. He came to our shellfish festival there the year before this. The previous fall, he was

here, as was the minister from Nova Scotia and the minister from New Brunswick. Our deputy minister here was very involved in making sure they had arrangements to be here. We made the invite at the FPT meeting previous to that, and we also – at several meetings that we've had on a regional basis because we try together, because at that point all the ministers had the same portfolios. All the deputy ministers have the same portfolios and we have a close working relationship there as well.

You need to build a strong relationship between the provincial and the federal, and I think our relationship here, both myself and my deputy, at the federal level is likely as strong here as it is anywhere across the province. We like to say minister MacAulay, of course, is in our hometown and minister LeBlanc who is just across the bridge, would really love to be on our side of the bridge. But anyway, it's a really close tie and we'll continue to develop that.

But some of the things that we have done – and I think it was pushed by our province here, good work by the minister and the deputy minister here in leading the charge for the Atlantic Fisheries Fund and I think the premier then kind of carried it home in our discussions. It started back when minister Tootoo was the minister at the federal level and carried through to minister LeBlanc, because we realize in agriculture we had the Growing Forward 2 program – we needed something like that in fisheries, and that's what we fought for and it was a team effort to get that done.

I worked at the minister's level and my deputy worked at the deputy minister level to get this going forward. A lot of discussions, a lot of points put forward explaining to them exactly what was going on in the Growing Forward program in agriculture: Can we do something like that in the fisheries? In the end, we have the Atlantic Fisheries Fund which is \$38 million over the next seven years coming to the Province of Prince Edward Island.

We never had those dollars before at all; never had such a program, but a lot of our fishers are really excited about that. We have our first cohort of programs suggestions put forward; programs put forward that will be decided on December

the 8th for the first piece of the dollars, and we're really excited about that. The number of inputs there from fishers across the province is very strong, and we hope to continue that and we will make very good use of the dollars, both provincially and federally in that.

Canadian Agriculture Partnerships, another one – it's the extension of the Growing Forward 2 program. My deputy minister and I worked at the federal-provincial table and he and some of his staff have worked on the multilaterals and the bilaterals that we're working on at the present time to bring this program home. There are a lot of dollars in that. It's a five-year agreement that we signed in July. It looked like it was going to be pushed back, but we fought hard and stood our ground, got the program to continue; no gap in the middle of it, complete smooth, flowing arrangement from Growing Forward 2 into the Canadian Agriculture Partnership and now a five-year program which is of value to PEI of \$37 million for the non-business risk management programs, and \$129 million for the business risk management program.

Another example of how good it is to be working together with the fishers and the farmers have some of the same people at the table, so you can look at one program and reach into the other commodity and see if we can get something like that growing there. That's been absolutely terrific.

The lobster levy – got to give a lot of kudos to the fishermen for that. We did work with them and they worked with marketing council to get the arrangement in place to get an agreement on the lobster levy. They have put several – a few hundred thousand dollars together now for lobster marketing, and they have those dollars in place because of cooperation, and that's a real feather in their cap.

We have a provincial veterinarian now that we didn't even have before. We sometimes had to go to the PEI vet college and get some veterinarian there to help us with an issue. But now, Dr. Carolyn Sanford's on staff there and she's working, not only with agriculture, but also with fisheries – again a key component because it does cross over. Lots of issues she works with in agriculture and lots of issues she works with in fisheries

and my deputy was key in making sure that position got in place and that we got an excellent person in that position as well.

We had a meeting with the PEI Veterinary Medical Association a few weeks back. They were overjoyed – it's one of the first comments they made when we sat in at the meeting. They were so pleased that we had Dr. Carolyn Sanford on staff and that we had taken the initiative to get a provincial veterinarian – not just for the agriculture side, but also for the fisheries side and that's terrific going forward. The stewardship programs, we've talked about those before.

We are looking at public trust – and public trust is something that we need to look at, not only in agriculture, but also in fisheries. It is key. We are producing a product or harvesting a product that our consumers want and we are producing and harvesting a commodity that we want our consumers to want – high quality, ready for the table, ready for marketing, and people worldwide are looking for that product. Be it in agriculture, or be in fisheries and we have the same goal in mind and we have the same great staff helping us in that area.

The public trust thing is something that's even included in the new CAP agreement that when we consider the projects that come forward, is there an aspect of public trust in that. Our commodity groups have put before themselves now and developed their own code of practice – like how do we look after our chickens? How do we look after our cows? How do we look after our goats? Because the public is watching and we have to continue to build that trust, whether it's in our oyster industry, or in our lobster industry, in our dairy industry, and our beef industry, whatever it is, public trust is so key. It's not only affecting agriculture, it's affecting fisheries as well and that's the tie that we see together to help with that and we will continue to do that.

We talked about food security and food education programs – another place. We're so keyed on food in this province because we are Canada's Food Island. That's not just agriculture, that's fisheries as well and people love our products whether they come from the sea or whether they come from the land and we need those products and we want those products to be in our schools,

wherever they may be. We had a great uptake for the first year in that program. I noted earlier, we're going to be bringing back the results of some of those projects and they're absolutely awesome, but we will have to continue with that – and again, working from both sides, agriculture and fisheries side.

In diversity, we're looking at diversity in our department – working with farmers who are looking at different commodities, perhaps that we didn't even grow here before. We have the influx now of WA Grain and Pulse Solutions and a gentleman who's growing Dexter cattle, which is terrific. We have the Lorne Valley Ranch where they're growing high bush blueberries. We have in our oyster industry where it used to be all the wild fishery – and still is 60-70% of it, but we're seeing such a growth there in our aquaculture side where they're growing the oysters now in the cages on top of the water, they're all coming out as choice, which brings a higher value to the fishermen who are looking at this, as again as I said, kind of farming in the water. Again, our deputy works with every one of those in the fishery, and in the wild oyster fishery, or in the aquaculture piece of that.

We have AquaBounty Technologies on the eastern end of our province in the hon. member who proposed the bill's riding there, who are growing salmon up there and they're expanding that. We've been up and toured that plant as well – looking at the great things that are happening there. They've got approval to sell that product in to the States and into Canada and it's absolutely awesome what is happening there, but a deputy again. They're very, very much involved in that and we had a great tour there.

So, the aquaculture – we see Northern Harvest Sea Farms as well – making big plans and they just built a plant down in the Cardigan area where they're hatching out the little salmon eggs and the plan is there is to work cooperatively again with the other provinces – and we had the other deputy ministers involved as well now. So, we have a hatchery here on Prince Edward Island – they're then taken to Newfoundland where they're grown out, and then they're taken from there back to New Brunswick where they can be processed – again, all the

provinces working together to grow our economy. Absolutely fantastic what's going on, but not too big for people to handle and for our staff to handle because when we look at our staff, our deputy minister has been key on that that we need to have the right people in place. If we need more extra dollars, we put in for extra dollars for that.

We've seen in the Capital Estimates that we just passed here – we've been working on the enhancement program there that we need another drone for the technology – pieces of that – to help our farmers with that. We only put in for \$50,000, but that got us a new drone with camera capabilities that can fly over the land, tell us where there's extra moisture, tell us where there may be issues of runoff that are of grave concern, so we can build grass waterways, berms, whatever that may be, so we can deal with that. Again, our deputies played a major part in that.

If you could look into the future sort of thing and see that: hey, this is something that we really need here on PEI. We're quite concerned, again, about public trust; about what happens with our water with the runoff from our agricultural land because if it runs off, it goes into the waters, which can affect our fishery. Again, the connection there is very, very strong and that's why we feel that these two commodities work very well together. They are the backbone of our province here. The two industries are keen to our growth and our going-forward. We just need to make sure we have the right people and enough of the right people in place. I think we do that at the present time. Our deputy is very, very strong and as the Leader of the Opposition has said, we have to be serious about our money, but first and foremost, let's spend it wise. Let's have the right people in place and, Mr. Speaker, I honestly think that we have. We have a great working relationship with our fishers and we have a great working relationship with our farmers and we want that to continue and I have full support, as does the Premier and most of my colleagues here, that we have the right person in place. He can handle the job and we will continue as we are.

So, hats off to our deputy for the great job he's doing and he will continue to do that for our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It really is a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion and support this motion calling for a deputy minister – both of fisheries and of agriculture. I think we do need two there. They're two big portfolios – I mean the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries knows that, being in the role that they are, big portfolios. They're the two largest industries on Prince Edward Island and that's why it's so important that they get the attention they deserve.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries was trying to cast aspersions on some of the questions that I'd asked in the House and he's also trying to imply certain things about how we think about the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries today. I think that what he has to do is look at the motion and realize this has nothing to do with how good the current Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries is – fantastic deputy minister, he does a great job. The point is, here on Prince Edward Island, with our two largest industries being agriculture and being fisheries, we need to give them the attention they deserve.

Here in the official opposition, we don't come and bring things to the floor just because we fell asleep one night and woke up in the morning and we had a great idea and thought that's the way it was supposed to be. We're all about listening to Prince Edward Islanders; we're about listening to our farmers; listening to our fishers; everyone who works in the aquaculture industry across the board.

The reason we bring this motion to the floor, is because we've been asked to do that by Islanders that work in agriculture and fisheries. They feel like they need to have another deputy minister in order to cast the right attention on those areas to make sure those industries get what they need.

In terms of going back, I want to address the quote that the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries brought up, it was right in

Question Period, it's in the Hansard for all to see. I don't take back anything I say in the Hansard. I mean everything I say. It was a very simple question, really.

The question was: whether the deputy minister of agriculture and fisheries was coaching corporations on how to create irrigation ponds. Anyone who is watching today, anyone who wants to watch us later on, anyone who reads the Hansard, can go back and they can go to that Question Period. They can look at the answer then. They can look at what the minister said today and they will notice that not once did the minister answer that question about whether the deputy minister of agriculture was coaching corporations on how to create irrigation ponds. I think that speaks volumes.

This is not some sort of accusation saying that it's wrong for the deputy minister of agriculture and fisheries to help corporations create irrigation ponds. The question is: are they doing it? And then the question is: why? What sort of direction are they getting from the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries or even the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, for that matter.

Politics is as an interesting thing and I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries is trying to twist my words against me here –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

An Hon. Member: You don't (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – that's why I'm standing up here today to talk –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – so, I'm glad he's able to quote, that's good.

In fact, I know he also quoted, I believe it was the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the new Leader of the Opposition, from our leadership race, and I'm so glad he was paying attention because he could learn a lot from what the Leader of the Opposition said during our leadership race. I'll even go a step further and the other candidate in the leadership race said a lot of things that I

think the government should really take note of –

An Hon. Member: Who's that?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) he's all done.

Mr. Trivers: – yes.

All I can say is that if the government opposite wanted to go and visit bradtrivers.com –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: – I think they would find a lot of information there that would really help them in their job to wisely govern the Province of Prince Edward Island.

When it comes to spending money, it's important to look at cost versus benefit. When we're talking about agriculture and fisheries, the two largest industries on Prince Edward Island, we're saying, here in the official opposition, that the cost of a second deputy minister will be well worth the benefit given the magnitude of these industries. That's why I rise and support this motion.

There's one other item I wanted to mention and this has to do with the aquaculture industry, and seeding the public beds with oyster seed. This is something that has been handled by the organizations on Prince Edward Island that are mostly outside of government control. Here's an example where they could use some more government support. Perhaps, if there was a deputy minister dedicated to fisheries and aquaculture, perhaps some of the things that happened with the seeding of the oyster beds, the public oyster beds here on Prince Edward Island, could have – the oversight might have been greater and, perhaps, some of the pain that oyster fishers have to go through could have been avoided.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, he's got to get his head out of the sand. He's got to realize what Islanders are asking for; what fishers are asking for, what farmers are asking for. He's got to listen to people. He has got to get out there and make an effort to do what Islanders want.

We're trying to help here in the official opposition. We brought a great motion forward. A motion that gives you the perfect opportunity to stand up and say: we're listening. We're listening to Islanders. I urge all MLAs in this House, whether you're in the official opposition, whether you're in the third party, whether you're sitting on the government backbench, or whether you're in Cabinet, to support this motion. Of course, if you're in Cabinet, take the steps to take action and make this change, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to rise to speak to this particular motion and to pay a thank you, I guess I'll say, to our deputy minister for the intervention, the guidance, the leadership that he has helped in guiding the PEI Shellfish Association through, what I would call, a crisis.

I'm from Bideford and in the 1940s the Bideford research station was created because of the red tide which wiped out most of the oyster industry on Prince Edward Island. And at that – up until probably 30 years ago it was a federal research station.

Through the work that was done at the Bideford research station the oyster industry was brought back to life. About 30 years ago, then, under Keith Milligan, in the day that he was MLA, the oyster enhancement program was created. That was to grow seed to put on the beds to make sure that that industry continued.

Tyne Valley, Freeland, Malpeque Bay area is worldwide known –

Mr. LaVie: Stanhope.

Ms. Biggar: – as a world-winning oyster across the world; it's known around the world. Because of the oyster enhancement program that has taken place in Bideford, and is still taking place, again, thanks to the

assistance from the minister of fishery and agriculture, but his deputy, who guided the existing, new association in ensuring that that was started up again.

Last year, we were in a critical situation with the PEI Shellfish Association. It's they, that run the oyster enhancement program through the funding and support from the PEI government, through the agriculture and fisheries department. Without that, we wouldn't be back on track with our oyster enhancement program.

We wouldn't, also, be now engaging with First Nations in Bideford, for their new aquaculture seed growing station that, again, is in Bideford.

I'm very disappointed that the opposition would attack our deputy minister and, in fact, all of our deputy ministers and civil servants –

Mr. MacKay: So you don't support farmers and fishermen.

Ms. Biggar: – and I want to quote –

Mr. LaVie: You don't support them.

Ms. Biggar: – again –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – for clarification from Hansard what was quoted during Question Period by the Member from Rustico-Emerald.

It says, explicitly, in his own words: will you, referring to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, admit that your own deputy minister has been involved and, indeed, has been coaching these companies on how –

Mr. Myers: Which he did.

Ms. Biggar: – to exploit both current –

Mr. Myers: Which he did.

Ms. Biggar: – and future legal loopholes. I'm –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) shame.

Ms. Biggar: – disappointed that –

Mr. Trivers: But he didn't say he wasn't.

Ms. Biggar: – the opposition –

Mr. Trivers: He didn't say he wasn't.

Ms. Biggar: – would make –

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Trivers: He didn't answer the question.

Ms. Biggar: – such a defamatory accusation against a member of –

Mr. Trivers: Defamatory. Defamatory.

Ms. Biggar: – the civil servants.

Mr. Trivers: Simple question.

Ms. Biggar: I am also –

Mr. Trivers: Simple question.

Ms. Biggar: – want to highlight some of the work that does go on in the Tyne Valley area because of the oyster fishing industry that is located –

Mr. MacKay: So you do support oyster fishermen?

Ms. Biggar: – there.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: The Tyne Valley Oyster Festival has been going for over 60 years and the department of fisheries does support that. The Fall Flavours, this year, came to Tyne Valley with the taste of flavours to highlight the great agricultural products that are grown in the region, Tyne Valley. There were Lennox Island blueberries, there were Farmboys potatoes, there was local beef, the whole dinner that night was taken from local products; farmed, fished, and cooked right in the Tyne Valley area. I'm very proud of that and thank the minister and the deputy minister for their support in that.

We talked a while ago this afternoon about young farmers, and succession. I want to highlight the fact that there are a lot of young farmers in my particular area in the

district of Tyne Valley-Linkletter; there are over 10 dairy farms.

Some of those dairy farms are not transitioning to third and fourth generation farmers. I want to just – I'll mention the last names; the Maynards, the MacKinnons, the Bryantons, the Matthews, the MacLellans, the Clarks, the Phillips'. All of those families, their sons and daughters, I would add, are now transitioning into succession for those farms –

Mr. MacKay: And they deserve it a deputy minister.

Ms. Biggar: – and so, that's because of the work that the department of agriculture and the deputy involved in the programs that are available are supporting those young farmers in the work that they want to do.

I want to congratulate, also, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for the new oyster fisher program that has just been announced. I had two young fishers call me and contact me on how they could – what do they need to do? They're interested in developing and getting into the oyster fishing industry. I think that's a wonderful thing. I said: call the deputy. I referred their name and I know and I trust the work that he does and it's a phenomenal program and I think it's going to do great things for the oyster fishing industry going forward and for enhancing it, as well.

As well, we have the young farmers program that was put into place a number of years ago. It is a great support for the farmers that are coming into the industry. Those, specifically, that I mentioned.

I am, again, I want to publicly thank the deputy minister of agriculture and fisheries for all of the work that he has done and is continuing to do to support the PEI Shellfish Association as they move forward, now, transitioning from a very critical place in their history; supporting them by providing guidance and governance and funding to move forward to ensure that the oyster fishers and the industry that started out in Bideford a number – like I said back in the 1940s.

That's right on my back doorstep. I can walk there in about 10 minutes. I'm very proud to

be from Bideford, and from that area, the Hardy family. The Burleigh family; all of those families that have – and ship all over the world and highlight the great quality, second-to-none, of the oysters that come from Prince Edward Island.

I'm just standing here because I want to support the work that is done by –

Mr. Trivers: Supporting the motion.

Ms. Biggar: – our public servants and by our by our deputy, in particular.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of this motion. The reason that I do is, it's a motion that is brought forward because it's an ask that is coming from the fishing community here on Prince Edward Island.

I believe in the farming and fishing communities on Prince Edward Island and I believe that they contribute greatly to the prosperity of Prince Edward Island. I hear, all the time, from government how well government is doing, and how government is balancing their books and how government, the forecast of the government's books looks so good.

I look in the quadrant of Prince Edward Island where I live and farming did well this year and fishing did well this year. This government can't take credit for that. This government was very fortunate that they have farmers and fishers on Prince Edward Island that are out doing this great work for them.

That's why each of these industries needs to be protected by their own deputy. I want to touch on a couple of points. One is that the current deputy and the minister talked about the great work that he was doing. No one is asking that he get taken out of fisheries. If he's doing great work in fisheries then, let

him be the deputy for fisheries and find a new deputy for agriculture.

The other was the comments that he made about the Leader of the Opposition during the leadership that we had this summer and fall. What he said was that the Leader of the Opposition said that we had to have less government, and this went contrary to that. When, in fact, that's a very terrible argument, in my opinion, because there's a lot of ways to have less government, but we shouldn't be taking it away from the fishing community on Prince Edward Island, we shouldn't be taking it away from the farming community on Prince Edward Island.

I believe that those industries, being our two biggest industries here on Prince Edward Island, deserve to have proper representation. One could argue that having them rolled into one department already takes away from the great work that they do. I take nothing away from the minister himself, who does the job of representing both of them. I know that he's busy with it. I know I see him at events at both agriculture side and fisheries side. That's all well and good. The minister, himself, knows that there's a lot of work that goes on in the offices to make those things run properly, too. That's why I believe that there needs to be a deputy.

One of the issues that the Member from Souris-Elmira brought up in this House in this fall session was the problem over in Pictou, with the effluent and the pipe that could out into the Northumberland Strait. I know the minister's fully aware of it. I know the deputy is fully aware of it. I know the Member from Souris-Elmira is fully aware of it.

It's issues like that, because it's going to be so detrimental to fishing, that would help having a dedicated deputy. I know the deputy has agricultural responsibilities now that he's responsible for.

This issue here could become a one polarizing issue in fisheries. It's the one that I hear now from fisherman all the time, every single time I run into somebody who fishes and they say: this is my biggest concern right now. Because, if you live where I live it doesn't matter where you fish. If you fish in the east, that pipe is going

to – it basically points at Wood Islands and based on the tide it could sweep all the way to the Confederation Bridge, or if the tide is running the other way it'll run all the way around to East Point and the tide will catch it and bring it around to the north end of the Island.

This could be something that really could harm the fishing industry on Prince Edward Island; something that could really harm the quality of fish that are harvested in our area. That's something that we wouldn't to happen as legislators. I know the fishing community doesn't want that to happen and certainly people who live on Prince Edward Island don't want that to happen.

Because this is becoming such a big issue, and it's one of the many issues. I know a number of years ago, there was a price issue and there was a tie up and the minister of the day was on the hot seat, they had a petition going around asking for his resignation. He skated his way out of it. He's back to – he made his way back out.

In our primary industries, considering the nature of them; the nature of farming and the nature of fishing are such that we need dedicated people there to fight for them. I know in the department the department is split in a way there's agriculture staff and there's fishery staff. I get all of that.

At the top level when there are big things happening, where they really need a big push and need a dedicated person they need to be there.

Richard Gallant. I saw Richard Gallant over in –

An Hon. Member: Moncton.

Mr. Myers: – Amherst. No, it was Amherst.

There was a meeting in Amherst and the member from Souris and I went over to that meeting in Amherst. There were representatives from all over the Maritimes. All the fisheries ministers across the Maritimes were there and they met and they were coming up with a plan.

I know, at that time, and Richard could tell you, himself, that he spent all of his time on that file because it was the number one issue

in our industries on Prince Edward Island, if not all of Prince Edward Island. It was the top-of-mind issue and that was the tie up of the lobster fisherman in the spring of that year. I think it was 2013, but anyways.

We don't know when the next big thing will come on any of our major industries on Prince Edward Island. Given the fact that two of our major industries are agriculture and are fisheries, I think that we can find savings in other areas to make it happen that the fishing community and the PEI Fishermen's Association have been asking for this since they have been merged together. I think that this government can see fit to make that happen.

I have worked in government. I know there's all kinds of – government's big. There is a lot of things going on. Government, all the time government is doing program review inside their own department and there is an opportunity to look at the programs that are there and say: are these programs the programs that best serve Islanders today?

I think if government did a program review and found some savings and looked at this industry and the landings on the wharves of Prince Edward Island, they would understand that this is a major industry on Prince Edward Island. Anybody who is an accountant or a lawyer or sells cars on Prince Edward Island could tell you that they had a good year this year. I know I've seen a lot of buildings go up. I may even have seen a boat building going up around in the Souris area there not that long ago that – there are a lot of boat buildings going up these days and that's a great sign for Prince Edward Island. That's a great sign –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: – that the fishermen – that's a great sign that the fishing community of Prince Edward Island made money. It's a great sign that they're investing money back in their community because the fishing community always invests their money back into the community.

They are great supporters of local economy. They have helped this government both boost their economy. They have the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism

stand in this House day after day and say how great we're doing. He's taking the credit.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – but we know on the wharves of Prince Edward Island who did the work for him. That's fine. They're not even complaining that he's taking the credit. All they want is their own deputy.

I think that in this day in age it's fair to say that this industry is big enough, like it has been for the past 100 years that they deserve their own deputy.

I don't see this as a humongous ask. I think it's important that government listens. I think that if government really stopped to think about this they would understand how important this is to the fishing community here on Prince Edward Island.

I've been hearing it. I know the member next to me has been hearing it. Anybody who has any ports in the area that they represent has been hearing it. Even those of you who don't have been hearing it –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – you do have a port, there's a boat down there.

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: It is something that keeps coming up over and over and over again.

We're just trying to help you. We're just trying to help government and I think it's important that when you take the motions that we bring forward in the Legislature, they're really meant to be: this is what we're hearing. Because there hasn't been any action on the government side, we kind of feel like maybe you're not hearing it in the same way that we're hearing it. Maybe you're not hearing it with the same set of ears on that we're hearing it. Maybe you're not, you know, maybe you've been around so long that your ear is closed to the issues that are around you. I'm not sure. I haven't been around long enough to know, but I know that some of you over there only hear what you want to hear. You're one, the

minister of environment, only hears what he wants to hear, which is fine.

Far be it for me to decide. Far be it for me to decide for you. I'm just saying, when we run motions here, we run them with the best interest of Islanders and we run them with the best interest of the people we put them forward for.

This motion was put forward in good faith and it was put forward with the best interest of fishing here on Prince Edward Island, that's all. If government was offended by anything that was said, I don't know, that's fine, I'm sure they can't be offended by anything that I've said because I've approached this from a very positive standpoint to what a great industry this is and how beneficial it has been for the economy of Prince Edward Island.

With that, I'm sure the member from Charlottetown would like to talk on that when he's got a fishing port down there and I'm sure he'll support this motion.

I think it's a good opportunity for government to do right by the fishing community here on Prince Edward Island. I will be supporting the motion and I hope many others will follow suit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I support this motion. In my area alone, I have, actually three ports; Bedeque is now closed, they don't have that port anymore, but they Hurds Point. The minister of transportation, last year, a couple of years ago we actually did a lot of work at that harbour because of the amount of oyster fishermen and other fishermen that go down there and use that port, even though it's not actually classified as a port.

We have the Borden-Carleton port, which is basically unusable unless you are at extreme high tide. Then, we have Victoria, which is actually shared – Victoria Harbour is actually in the member –

Ms. Biggar: It's going to be yours (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – the leader – yeah, it'll be mine next. The Leader of the Third Party's riding, but –

Mr. R. Brown: Maybe not.

Mr. Fox: – that's the only place that I can –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – knock on wood –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – that I can go down –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) that's true.

Mr. Fox: – and launch my boat because I cannot get it into Borden.

What I'm hearing from fishermen, in, from Hurds Point, and other places on the Island and in Borden-Carleton and in Victoria is that our harbours are not being taken care of. The message from the fishermen is not getting to Ottawa.

I was actually, this morning, talking to Minister Dominic LeBlanc's office in regards with some issues with the Victoria Harbour, and will be following up on meetings with that coming up very directly.

We're talking about the two largest industries on PEI. Number one being agriculture, and the second one being fisheries. We're saying that the two largest industries on PEI, they need separate deputy ministers to make sure that all concerns are being dealt with to the upmost ability of the government.

I think government has a responsibility to recognize the fishermen in PEI and the trials and tribulations that they deal with on a on a daily basis, trying to make sure that they get their products to market.

We're not only talking about the fishermen, but we're also talking about the processors and we're talking about the workers that, in

some cases, the fishing community has trouble getting enough fishing workers to work in our plants. That's a concern.

We're seeing that also in the potato industry in the fall when the farmers can't get enough people to drive the trucks, and to go on the harvesters, and to be in the warehouses to unload to product.

The department of fisheries or the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is so much PEI, that we are hearing that that industry needs somebody they can go to that's dedicated in regards to that resource.

As the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters alluded to; we're not talking about a lot of money. We can find money for a lot of other things in this province. Why can't we give the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries a second deputy minister –

Mr. MacKay: It's only a week of lawyer costs.

Mr. Fox: – to completely take care of the second most important industry in the province.

What would be the value for dollar that we could get from that if we were to do that? When you're talking about one deputy minister is trying to deal with two of the largest economic drivers of Prince Edward Island, there is a lot of stuff on his plate.

I think we need to give the respect to our fishers in the province with somebody that can be dedicated to help them in their industry. In my riding I have a lot of fishermen that just happen to live there. They have to go to other places to actually do their fishery.

I'm thinking of one right now. He's a great guy, lives on the Drummond Road. I constantly hear from this gentleman how sometimes they feel their voice is not being heard strong enough at the Cabinet table.

I know I've heard from this government that it's mostly a federal matter. Well, it's a provincial matter. We need to take ownership of it. We see that in other provinces. We need to say that fisheries on PEI is a staple of the community and it's a staple of our economical growth and that we

need to support it to the fullest – and most fullest as possible.

I want to talk a little bit about Borden harbour for a second –

Mr. R. Brown: You've got a second.

Mr. Fox: I got two or three minutes.

It's pretty sad when you see the fishing guys down there in the spring and the fall that they're using the large boat haulers to push, and I've seen this, to push the sand and the moss off the ramp so that they can get the boat into the water. I've witnessed that.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) crane in.

Mr. Fox: What's that?

Mr. R. Brown: Take a crane in.

Mr. Fox: They could be using the sand and dredging to put on our roads and highways, but anyway that's a different topic.

The fishermen that I've talked to, the Jimmy A'Hearn and the George MacKenzies and Randy A'Hearn and Morris Gallant and Vince Keogh down in Victoria, and George Ferguson – they feel like their voice is not heard at the Cabinet table.

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Mr. LaVie: Extend the hour.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to extend the hour?

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: Hon. Members, this House will recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: You may be seated.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 1, adjourned debate on the Draft Address, and debate was adjourned by the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise again this evening and, I guess, to wrap up some of my thoughts. I shared a great deal of the many wonderful programs that our government is providing to Islanders and to seniors and to those Islanders that need it most, when they need it most.

I spoke a lot about the collaborations between our departments and how each and every one of the members on this side of the House are so supportive of me and my department and my ministry. Whenever we sit around and we talk about how we can improve Islanders' lives, each and every one of them are stepping up to the plate and so are our community partners. Each and every day we work hard – we work hard with our community partners, such as The Canadian Mental Health Association, the John Howard Society of Prince Edward Island. We're working with developers now. We're working collaboratively with our community partners and we're working collaboratively across government.

I started to talk about one program before I sat down last week and that was the Harvest and Prosper program. That is a wonderful program that myself, my department – Family and Human Services, the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning, and the department of agriculture teamed up with one of our community partners and that being the Adventure Group PEI.

With the Harvest and Prosper program, what we did is we identified 50 social assistance clients, disability support clients, and newcomers who are all currently on social assistance – who had multiple barriers to connecting to the workforce. So what we did

is we provided them life skills training through the Adventure Group PEI. We provided them coaching; we provided them mentoring and all the while they could keep their social assistance benefits. They didn't lose anything. We provided them with clothing if they needed clothing to enter the workforce. We provided them with work boots, we provided them with transportation and they also went out and they helped harvest the crops that the agriculture industry needed help with so much.

They were also allowed to earn an additional \$3,000 without affecting any of their other benefits: their medical benefits, their drug benefits, their dental benefits, their vision benefits – all of it they were allowed to still earn. If they needed child care, we helped them with that as well.

So, this is a program that was so valuable and it just shows how, when we work together; when we work across government; when we work with our community partners and when we work with those individuals who want the help and need the help and help them overcome their barriers, that they can live successful lives.

In closing I'll say: We all want to have and live a life of purpose, but where do we start? There are many discussions taking place right now and they are very passionate discussions.

We also know that emotions are contagious and if you want to change a belief, or if you want to bring fundamental change in behaviours or belief, you first need to create a community around them where those new beliefs can be practiced, and expressed, and nurtured. It's an opportunity for innovation and for invention. We have to start having these conversations and we are having these conversations across government, across our communities, across municipalities and the time for us to begin innovation and looking at new solutions is now, and we're doing that. It's going to take a commitment from government, and we have committed – and we've shown that in the many new programs that we've launched. It's going to take commitment from all of us and it's going to take us to refuse the assumptions that we already have and to get out of our ideological boxes. It requires us all to start listening to one another, rather than pointing

fingers. It's an opportunity right now, in this Speech From the Throne, to build a province where we can extend products and services to all Islanders, so that they can make choices for themselves.

I truly believe that that is where dignity starts and dignity is so very important to the human spirit. We all want to be seen and heard by one another and we owe it to every Islander that is struggling and, just as important, we owe it to ourselves. Government will continue to build on the investments that we have made and build on the capacity of Islanders who are already contributing out there, for it's only together that we will thrive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker for the opportunity to rise this evening and respond to the Speech From the Throne. The start of a new session can be incredibly invigorating. The order paper is cleared, we hear a new throne speech and the session is full of possibilities. Add to that, as we had last week, the excitement of a by-election and it's easy to get caught-up in the day-to-day sport of politics and forget about the real reason that we are here.

I often hear politics compared to Canada's other favourite obsession: hockey – and it can be a fun comparison. Like a hockey game, politics moves quickly and play sometimes can get a little rough and the sport is rich in metaphors that easily apply to politics.

I can, for example, applaud Doug Currie's gamesmanship as he hangs up his skates; I can accuse the Premier of ragging the puck on electoral reform; I can complain even that government members may have set up a neutral zone trap to prevent me from passing any legislation.

And it may be impolite to point this out in public, but we all know who the other team's enforcers are and who is vying for the Lady Byng Memorial Trophy. We can even identify our own team by the colour of our jerseys, be that red, blue, orange, or green. And also, like hockey, it's easy to get

caught-up in the game and focus too much on trying to score. But, it's not the colour of our jerseys, or the number of goals or assists that we accumulate that determines whether we are winning; rather it is the values that inform our play.

We need to remember that we are here to represent the people, not the interests of our party, or our personal gain or fame. We cannot win the game of politics unless we focus all our efforts on making life better for all of our citizens. So, when I lace-up my skates and head out onto the ice, I try to think about whether the work I do makes the province a better place in which to live; whether the things I say make my children proud to call me Dad; and whether the way I conduct myself brings honour to this Legislature.

Shortly before the Legislature opened, I released a mid-term report card on how well the government has kept its promises that were made in previous throne speeches. That exercise might seem to be a little bit cheeky and therefore easy to dismiss because who am I to grade government? I'm well aware that I am the lone member elected for the Third Party, at least until the new representative for District 11 is sworn in. I also appreciate that my grades may be filtered through the lens of my own policy preferences.

However, it's important for us as legislators to step back and honestly examine whether we are truly heading in the direction that we intend. Politicians are very good at developing exciting new policies, and announcing initiatives, and scheduling photo ops, but we often fall far short on the actual implementation of our ideas. This is, in part, because we underestimate the challenges of advocating for change; or we fail to provide the support and resources to the civil servants who are tasked with its implementation; or, maybe, it's because we are a bit like the crows who immediately fly off to investigate the next bright, shiny object that catches our eye.

As much as we may long to build our reputations on the introduction of new policies, governments can be overwhelmed by the incredible challenge of trying to meet the demands of so many people with such diverse needs and expectations on limited

resources, but this challenge does not absolve us from the responsibility to do so.

Since the current administration has reached the half-way point in its mandate, or thereabouts, I thought it would be a good time to review previous throne speech promises and grade them in the familiar A-F report card format. Reviewing the implementation of past throne speeches also offers a sobering lesson on what we can realistically expect when it comes to the implementation of this throne speech. But ultimately it is not me who will grade government, but the people of Prince Edward Island during the next election and if the results of this week's by-election is any indication, some members of this Legislature may not be getting a passing grade.

But beyond the next election, we will also be graded by history and it is possible to win many elections and still find yourself on the wrong side of history. In 50 years will our decisions be seen as improving the lives of Islanders and protecting the future for our children and grandchildren? As we debate carbon pricing, marijuana legislation, and electoral reform, we must not only consider how our actions will impact the party of our choice, or our chances of getting a coveted Cabinet post, or being reelected in 2019, but also, how it will impact Islanders years into the future and how each one of us will be graded on history's report card.

For example, like other Islanders who voted in favour of proportional representation in last year's plebiscite, I felt betrayed by government's refusal to honour that vote and the voters. I watched in horror as MLAs, who had been elected to represent their constituents, scrambled to find lame rationalizations to justify putting the Liberal party's interests ahead of the democratically expressed will of the people who elected them. Yet, even at the height of my frustration, I knew that electoral reform is inevitable. The will of the people may be thwarted by the current batch of MLAs who vote unquestioningly in lock-step on so many issues, but eventually, progress will be made and future generations will look back and be amazed that we clung so long to an antiquated electoral system that distorted democracy by giving 100% of the power to parties that win less than 50% of the popular

vote. And like so many obvious reforms such as extending the franchise to women and Indigenous people, they will wonder why on Earth it was such a big deal.

I know you're sitting there thinking that I'm looking at the world through green-coloured glasses, but I'm not the only one who feels this way. Andrew Coyne, writing in the *National Post* – hardly a newspaper known for promoting radical progressive politics – also asserts the inevitability of proportional representation. And about Prince Edward Island, Mr. Coyne writes this: Turnout, however, was only 36% – and Mr. Coyne put 'only' in quotation marks – as high as for most municipal and many provincial elections in this country. On the basis of which Premier Wade MacLauchlan has ordered a do-over. Even Mr. Coyne seems to realize that ordering a do-over is like trying to move the goal posts after the other team has scored. He then ends the article by saying: Change is coming – somewhere, somehow, and soon. And when the sky does not fall; when the Nazis do not take over; when we do not turn into Israel or Italy; then, at last, maybe we can have a proper national debate.

Now, when the *National Post* claims the inevitability of electoral reform, surely I can feel confident that it is just a matter of time.

However, in spite of this confidence, I still feel compelled to address some comments made by the Premier during Question Period a couple of weeks ago, in response to my questions regarding the legitimacy of government's refusal to honour the results of the plebiscite vote.

The first comment that struck me was when he said, and I quote: There is a big difference between a by-election that will elect somebody to be here until the next general election, and changing an electoral model that has been in place for 160 years. I fear the Premier underestimates the importance of district representation and exaggerates the immutability of our electoral model. His feelings about district representation are clearly demonstrated by the fact that Liberal votes are whipped – whipped votes – no matter the interest of an individual member's constituents. As for the unchanging nature of our electoral model, the current one has only been in place since

1996 – hardly 160 years – when we switched from the dual-member system to a single-member system.

Indeed, Prince Edward Island's electoral system has always been living and vibrant and has changed and adapted to keep pace with democratic reforms for almost two centuries. In 1830, the right to vote was extended to Catholic males. In 1921, almost a century later, women were granted the franchise, and in 1963, Indigenous people were allowed to vote for the very first time. In 1940, amendments to the *Legislative Assembly Act* allowed women to sit as elected members – 1940. And even though it has been over 75 years since that particular innovation has happened, it hasn't quite caught on as much as I would like – last week's events notwithstanding.

Also, the structure of the Assembly has changed. Before 1861, PEI had a bicameral system with an upper house that was appointed and a lower house that was elected. In 1893, the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council were combined.

Up until 1963, there was a separate franchise for councillors, and only landowners could vote for their district councillor. Then, in 1996, the dual member system was replaced with our current single member system with 27 districts that we see in front of us today.

All of these electoral reforms radically changed the nature of democracy on this small Island, and all of them occurred without a plebiscite, never mind a plebiscite and a do-over. So yes, change is possible. Indeed, change is constant and it is inevitable.

The second thing that struck me in the Premier's response, and he has since repeated it, was his accusation that, and again I quote: "The logic of the Leader of the Third Party changed at about 8:00 p.m. on the night of the plebiscite." That is not only inaccurate, it is offensive.

Premier MacLauchlan: Between the third and fourth ballot.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The Premier's speculation on my state of mind implies that I did not expect to win, so my logic somehow changed at 8:00 pm. Well, for the

record, yes, I was not certain of victory that night. Those of us who campaigned in favour of PR never assumed that just because we believed it was the best and most democratic system, that other Islanders would support it.

So yes, the Premier is right on that count. On the night of the plebiscite I was prepared to lose, and it was my intention to accept that loss with good grace and honour. Believe me, if there's one thing I have learned during my many previous attempts to win elected office – nine in total – it is that when the people have spoken, we must always accept their wisdom with humility and grace.

So, on November 7th last year, I was indeed prepared to lose, but unfortunately the Premier was not. He was not prepared to humbly accept the wisdom of the people. Perhaps it takes a few electoral defeats to learn humility. We are all here to serve the voters and their interests, not our party executive, not the corporations that finance our election campaigns, and definitely not our own egos. And although I had been prepared to lose that plebiscite, I had not been prepared to win the plebiscite and then have that victory nullified by an executive decision.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is fond of pointing out that everybody on the committee knew that a plebiscite by its very definition is non-binding. Yes, of course, I did know that; but I also firmly believed that this government would honour the results. I certainly would not have put in so much effort, if at the very start, the Chair of that committee had announced: As you know, plebiscites are non-binding, and the Premier fully intends to make an executive decision if he is displeased with the results.

The whole point of a plebiscite is to provide the people with the opportunity to guide government on important issues. If government does not honour that guidance then the exercise becomes political theatre, a magician's trick where you create the illusion that you are empowering the people, while never actually relinquishing any of your executive privilege.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) that's personal.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Now you may accuse me of being naive or even unsophisticated for assuming that government would honour the vote – of that, I am guilty as charged – but do not accuse me of being inconsistent in my logic or beliefs, or of being self serving.

Much of what we do as members of this Legislature is determined not by a strict set of rules, but by democratic norms. I am an advocate of ensuring that Prince Edward Island has some of the most stringent rules in the country with strong independent oversight, but I also see the importance of respecting democratic norms. We've been hearing a lot about democratic norms recently, as the current leader in the United States has built his presidency on violating these traditions. We can see from a distance the chaos that can ensue when a leader indulges his authoritarian impulses, behind the rationalization that there are no rules to stop him. The unwritten rules that govern our behaviour are often based on the assumption that we are individuals with honour and integrity, and that we will act in the public interest.

So when I said that the Premier's refusal to implement proportional representation set a very dangerous precedent for our democratic institutions, I was not suggesting that he was breaking any law; not at all. Instead, I meant that he is violating the democratic norm that governments act on the results of a plebiscite whether they like them or not.

When Premier Joe Ghiz held a plebiscite on building a fixed link, he personally voted no, but the majority of Islanders who voted were in favour, and the bridge was built. In violating the democratic norm of acting on the results of the plebiscite, the Premier erodes public trust and feeds the cynical belief that politicians are only looking out for themselves.

This betrayal is especially destructive because for the first time we invited younger Islanders, aged 16 and 17, to participate. We tried to engage them in the democratic process; we promised them that their voices would be heard; but in the end we turned their first opportunity to exercise their right to vote into a farce and reinforced any beliefs that they already had on the futility of trying to implement grassroots change.

Ms. Biggar: Check the percentage.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But the most telling aspect of my exchange with the Premier that Friday was not my cheeky suggestion that he intends to put Doug Currie back in office, but his inability to answer my original and very serious question: Does he still plan on making the second plebiscite a binding one and if so, how?

His refusal to answer whether his fantasy referendum will be binding and how he can make that consistent with the democratic principle of parliamentary sovereignty, where a current administration cannot dictate the actions of a future government, shows that he still does not have a plan. He has no idea how he is going to extract himself from this ridiculous mess that he has created for himself. So far, his strategy seems to be to remain silent in the hopes that people will forget his betrayal. Well, based on the by-election results in District 11, people are willing to neither forget nor forgive.

On the whole issue of electoral reform, government has painted itself into a corner. The Premier really has nobody to blame for this situation other than himself. From his original throne speech commitment to democratic renewal, to failing to set minimum standards for action before the plebiscite was launched, to his panicked morning-after decision to reject the will of the people, to forcing all Liberal members to vote down Motion 54, even when their constituents voted in favour of PR, to placing the Government House Leader on the Special Committee for Democratic Renewal in order to maintain the Liberal majority, the Premier must take full personal responsibility for every misstep that has led us to where we are today.

The same is also true as the Premier tries to wiggle out of commitments he made concerning campaign finance reform. I was disappointed to hear in the throne speech that government will continue to kick this issue down the road by putting forward a discussion document on campaign finance reform. It would be so much easier to simply do the right thing, which is introducing legislation that will fulfill the Premier's original commitment.

In May 2016, the Premier stood in this house and promised to table legislation that would ban corporate and union donations. But instead of following through on his promise, in December 2016 he announced that he had reconsidered the issue and would not be banning corporate and union donations. This must have been yet another one of the Premier's famous executive decisions. He made this decision in spite of the fact that a ban is clearly the future of political financing.

The federal government, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and very soon British Columbia, will have legislation to ban corporate and union donations. It's coming and we'd better do it now.

The Green Party strongly believes that these types of donations have a corrupting influence. I cannot accept that it is merely a coincidence that some of the biggest donations to the two largest political parties on PEI come from construction companies, accounting firms, legal firms, as I had referenced in my questions in Question Period today, and telecommunication companies. The one thing these donors have in common is that they are businesses that either receive; millions of dollars in government contracts, or they are regulated by government.

Yet, the Premier expects us to believe that his change of heart is because he is, and I quote: Concerned that this may limit legitimate political participation by those who have a real interest in our province and its democratic process.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I can't help but speculate that these corporations of real interest in our province and democratic processes relates more to a desire to influence government in their favour, than to encourage thriving policy discussions that will benefit all Islanders.

It is not just corporate donations that concern us. During the last election, a full 39% of political donations made to the New Democratic Party came from unions. We, in the Green Party, strongly support labour rights. Indeed, my only piece of – my only

legislative initiative for this sitting is a bill that will provide whistleblowing protection for all workers on Prince Edward Island.

However, I grow concerned when a party becomes that indebted to organized labour for its very existence. Could a NDP government, for example, enter difficult negotiations with civil servant unions knowing how dependent they are on those union donations? Could they still put the public interest ahead of their party and the unions that support it?

The Green Party believes that no matter how hard you may try to separate party financing from public policy, the interests of one can never be fully disentangled from the other. Therefore, it is better to completely remove that temptation and any appearance of impropriety.

For these reasons, the Green Party only accepts donations from individuals. We do not accept money from either corporations or unions and we believe that all parties should be required to do the same.

Mr. Trivers: What if the individual belongs to a corporation (Indistinct) corporation.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: They are fine to donate as an individual, not through their corporation.

Mr. Trivers: Same difference.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Unfortunately –

Mr. Trivers: Same difference.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Not at all.

Unfortunately, the Premier has decided that the citizens of Prince Edward Island do not deserve to be protected from the obvious conflict that arises when political parties are dependent on moneyed interests.

Needless to say, I was absolutely delighted to hear the new Leader of the Opposition state very clearly that he, too, supports a ban on corporate and union donations and I'm looking forward to working with him to ensure that Islanders get the legislation that they deserve –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – when a new *Election Expenses Act* is finally tabled –

Ms. Casey: Let's see his donation (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I know.

Mr. Trivers: Mixed member (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: You ain't seen nothing, yet.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I would also like to invite him and the Progressive Conservative Party to immediately join me in the Green Party in our refusal to accept all corporate and union donations now. We may not have a majority in the Legislature, but by putting our principles ahead of partisan gain we can show a level of moral leadership that appears to be lacking in the governing party.

Mr. Trivers: Or we could just work Islanders.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: As leaders of political parties we can choose to lead or be led. When reform is so clearly the way of the future can we accept that our elected officials are content to be followers, or even worse, obstructionists?

If given the choice of being a leader of a follower, I would like to be seen as a leader. I would like to be remembered as someone who embraced the future rather than someone who clung to the old order for fear of losing traditional privilege of advantage.

In advance of the new throne speech the Premier said, on CBC that, and I quote: the program that we laid out in 2015 is substantially complete and now we have a window when we can really add to that and build further progress of Islanders.

I personally find that quite surprising, since my review showed many gaps and promises unkept on difficult issues that government has repeatedly kicked down the road.

Many of the previous throne speech promises that have either been broken, or not yet acted upon, centre on issues of integrity and trust. Issues that directly affected MLAs or the Liberal Party's ability

to finance and win elections, whether the issue is honouring the plebiscite vote, bringing in promised campaign finance reform, eliminating member's transitional allowances, adopting the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's recommendations on improving access and transparency. There has been a disappointing record of government members putting their own interests ahead of the public interest.

Even something as simple as the Premier's 2015 promise to reduce the size of Cabinet didn't last very long. Cabinet was 11 members under premier Ghiz. It went down to nine under the current Premier, but has since crept right back up to 11, again –

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Too much (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Broken promise.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Broken promise.

Mr. MacKay: No deputy minister (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) last Tory cabinet (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Broken promise.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The Premier was elected on promises. Promises of offering a new kind of leadership, but he now seems willing to allow major policy decisions to be reversed by pollsters or the bagmen in his own party.

What happened to the promise of electoral reform? What happened to his promise to ban corporate and union donations? What happened to his promise to tighten up conflict of interest rules?

Perhaps, the explanation can be found in what the Premier said to *The Guardian*, when rationalizing his changed position on campaign finance. He said this, "When I put something out in the public domain, it's not a promise. It's more to say, 'This is proposed. Let's find out what people think about it.'"

Now, with campaign finance, I'm not sure if 'the people' meant the citizens of Prince Edward Island or his own party's insiders, or was that just another executive decision?

This is still one of the Premier's most honest and revealing statements, I believe, and one that we should all keep in mind when evaluating his commitments.

I know much of what I'm saying today might be seen as an attack on our current Premier –

Ms. Casey: Absolutely.

Ms. Mundy: Absolutely.

Ms. Biggar: No, you would never do that.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: How can the truth be construed as an attack.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) do that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know that much of what I am saying today could be construed as an attack on our current Premier and I want to make it perfectly clear that that is not my intention.

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Listen and you will –

Mr. J. Brown: Oh, here he comes –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – understand.

Ms. Biggar: Really.

Mr. J. Brown: – lily white.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The differences that I have with the Premier are based on his policy decisions. They are not personal –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) hearing any of you fellows (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Hashtag: real news.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I believe the Premier is an intelligent man and an honourable man.

Unlike many Islanders I was optimistic when he was elected. I hoped he would be able to live up to his promise of greater transparency and accountability. And like so many Islanders, I have been disappointed with the results.

Yet, the blame for this failure to implement a new regime of openness is less the fault of the Premier than the fault of the entire political system within which we work. This room can be a very difficult place to maintain one's integrity.

When I was elected I had high ideals about improving the tone of political discourse in the Legislature and helping to build multi-party alliances around serious issues and working together to improve the lives of Islanders. Yet, over the last two-and-a-half years I have realized that simply having high ideals is not good enough. I have sometimes found myself engaging in exchanges that do not highlight my better nature.

I'm extremely blessed that I have a level of independence that no other member of this House can enjoy. So far, I have been the leader and lone member for my party. I do not need to negotiate every decision with a broad caucus or a powerful back group of party supports and funders.

As a representative for a party based on six defining principles, I can turn to the party's core beliefs and seek meaningful guidance on how to act. And when all else fails, my wise and kind-hearted wife, Ann, is always ready to gently remind me when I fail to live up to my own rhetoric.

The other leaders, on the other hand, have to negotiate with powerful partisan interests within their own parties and regardless of their own good intentions, the rules reward certain behaviours. It's easy to get caught up in the game and focus entirely on winning, while forgetting the ideals that brought you to seek office in the first place. We have entered an era of hyper-partisan politics – not just here on Prince Edward Island. There was a time, perhaps mythical, when parties existed to provide politicians with a structure around which they could act in the public interest. Now, we seem to have flipped that equation over, and politicians exist solely, at least primarily, to promote and defend the interests of their own parties.

That is why in the Green Party when we talk about the need to do politics differently; the old way is not serving citizens well.

So when I stand here and criticize the actions of the Premier, it is intended more as a critique of the deeply entrenched systemic problems with which we now we practice politics. And when I may seem overwhelmed with frustration over issues like the plebiscites or campaign financing, it is because I sincerely believe that these are the fundamental reforms that we need to make for meaningful change, and I had hoped that this Premier, with all his earlier promises, was going to be a powerful ally in moving this change forward.

And I would be unfair if I did not acknowledge some of the improvements in accountability that the Premier has pursued. Although not yet passed, the Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act and the Lobbyist Registration Act are both significant steps forward.

Yet, even when this government has voluntarily brought forward improved measures for accountability, they've done it in a half-hearted way. For example, the Premier promised whistleblower protections for civil servants. Instead of introducing legislation, he created a policy and set up the Office of the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner to oversee whistleblowing and conflict of interests for senior civil servants.

In what has become a pattern for this Premier, he was unwilling to subject his government to independent outside scrutiny. Instead, he created a position within government that would report, ultimately, to him. This is not how government oversight is supposed to work. It would be like replacing the referee in a hockey game with the home team's owner.

Indeed, it is so flawed that in her special audit of the e-gaming file, the Auditor General said this: In our view, the policy falls short in providing the kind of environment that would ensure that employees of government could disclose wrongdoing without fear of reprisal, as the policy intends to do. A policy document is not law. Policies describe the objectives of a government and how it proposes to achieve

these objectives using various methods and principles. Policy does not provide the same level of protection to employees. Statutory protection is better protection and most other provincial jurisdictions have whistleblower legislation.

Government recognized that it could not flagrantly ignore these recommendations of the Auditor General, and prepared Bill 76: Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act that was tabled in May 2017 and has subsequently died on the order paper. Although I am pleased to hear that government will be reintroducing this legislation, I would be remiss if I did not point out some of the more obvious flaws in the legislation as it was originally tabled.

There are many, but the most troubling aspect of Bill 76 is that it requires a disclosure to be made within one year from the date of the alleged wrongdoing and does not allow members of the public to make complaints directly to the commissioner.

I wrote to the Premier over a month ago explaining these and other concerns, and I remain optimistic that he intends to act on my suggestions. I also wrote to him a similar letter concerning the Lobbyist Registration Act, which will also, supposedly, be reintroduced. These are both important pieces of legislation, and I see no reason why Prince Edward Island should not have accountability legislation that is amongst the strongest in Canada.

This government has not only shown a lack of leadership on the large visionary issues, but also, on the day-to-day decision-making that comes with governance. The administration has wrapped itself in the writing of studies, and reviews, and reports, and strategies; and whenever it is called upon to make a tough decision, it abdicates its responsibility pending the arrival of the next action plan.

In keeping with this approach, government has announced yet another strategy, this one on housing. Having access to safe and affordable housing is fundamental to personal well-being and I applaud any new initiatives that will improve access to secure housing. However, my heart grows heavy when I hear this government has ordered

another strategy. We need more than strategies and reports and advisory committees, we need action.

The Housing Supply Task Force mentioned in the throne speech, which sounds like a very active group of people, the Housing Supply Task Force should be Islanders with shovels and hammers ready to build homes that we know are desperately needed now, not bureaucrats with pens and clipboards drafting, yet, another study. We also need action on mental health and addictions; we need action on access to long-term care; we need action on poverty reduction; and improved child protection services; we need action in so many areas that touch the lives of so many Islanders. Yet this government seems often to believe that studying a problem is somehow often equivalent to solving that problem.

Of course, I would be less discouraged by government's insistence on continued studies and strategies, if I believed that they were being undertaken in good faith, rather than as a stalling tactic to avoid making the tough decisions.

I use, as an example, the government's much cited review of the *Child Protection Act*. Last session, whenever I reiterated the need for a child advocate – and I was barely the only person in this House to do so – the Premier blithely informed this House that he was confident that PEI did not need a child advocate because it was not mentioned in the review of the *Child Protection Act*. This is in spite of the recommendations of the Campbell-Hennessey Inquest Jury, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, both opposition parties, and the collective wisdom of almost every other province in Canada.

However, what the Premier did not say is that according to *The Guardian* article: Although the committee did hear feedback from Islanders calling for a child advocate for Prince Edward Island, review chair Patsy MacLean says the committee felt it was better to focus on the services Islanders want as part of this request.

So in other words, government distorted the consultation process in order to ensure that the review did not call for a child advocate and then used that review as evidence that

PEI does not need a child advocate. That there is a dippy-doodle for the record books.

If that is how government manipulates these processes then how can we have confidence that these reviews and strategies are being presented in good faith?

I find it intriguing that in the new throne speech, government advanced the commitment that, and again I quote: We will launch during this sitting a process to review and update the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, as if it were a new and original initiative. Well, I suppose it has been over two years since 2015, when that throne speech declared exactly the same thing, therefore our leaders can't be expected to remember everything promised, but surely they would recall in that speech in 2015 that they stated: My government will work to make government information more transparent, including a review of our freedom of information legislation. Now admittedly, they did not put a time frame on that commitment. It is these echoes of promises forgotten or never completed that makes me call this particular throne speech the 'we're going to try again and this time might even get it right' throne speech.

But on a more positive note, it's good to see significant progress on the development of the *Water Act*, a long standing initiative that this government inherited from the previous administration and I'm glad to see that government includes some of the outstanding concerns that stakeholders and experts are still calling for, such as a ban on hydraulic fracturing. But as I said during second reading just yesterday, I firmly believe that access to water should be declared a right and I'm looking forward to a continuation of our respectful and informative discussions in the Legislature during this sitting. There is potential for this initiative to be a real success if government puts the interests of Islanders and communities ahead of corporations.

The new *Water Act* also demonstrates the power of true public collaboration. There was very little agreement among stakeholders several years ago when the need for the new act became apparent, but with a thorough and meaningful consultation process, government was able to develop an act that has generated fairly extensive

agreement among all the different stakeholders – a significant achievement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: This government talks a lot about collaboration, yet last week when I asked the Premier what we, in opposition, could do to improve collaboration, his response focused entirely on collaborating with other people in the community. I found it discouraging that he does not seem to consider us partners in collaboration – the other parties in this House.

However, I will once again reach out to the government side and assure them that the Third Party caucus is still eager to work with all parties to bring to fruition previous commitments for meaningful changes that were promised during the last general election campaign –

Mr. Trivers: Good opposition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and in all three throne speeches. There are still two and a half, perhaps three years, to the current mandate, assuming that there is a federal election in 2019, so there is still time to change course and start to live up to the commitments of transparency and accountability that you made to the people of Prince Edward Island. You can honour the vote and implement meaningful campaign finance reform, improve conflict of interest rules, and make good on your promise – and the new member from Charlottetown-Parkdale and I will work with you to achieve each and every one of these goals.

The Premier often refers to PEI as ‘the mighty Island’. Indeed, he named his economic plan The Mighty Island: A Framework for Economic Growth. Often when he references the mighty Island, it is in the context of business development, population growth, encouraging entrepreneurship, and expanding export markets.

When I think about the mighty Island, I see the resilience of our communities, our wonderful interconnectedness, the extraordinary generosity of neighbour to neighbour, our thriving artistic and music scenes, and the beauty of our landscapes and seascapes.

Islanders are deeply connected to the land and the sea – many have been rooted in this land for generations – this land has sustained human life for millennia, was wrestled away from the control of absentee landlords, provided trees for the shipbuilding industry, and fertile fields for farmers. But today, Islanders are anxious because they see the land and water under constant threat and one of the primary threats is the economic development model being promoted by this government. The industrial-style agriculture that must be practiced in order to compete in global commodity markets results in larger farms and more chemical interventions, such as fertilizers and pesticides. These chemicals leach into our groundwater and destroy our rivers through anoxic events and fish kills and the land is slowly stripped of its capacity to grow crops until it becomes nothing more than an inert medium for chemicals. And as our land withers, so do many of the hundreds of rural communities that have for so long defined our province.

I am reminded of a previous experiment when government encouraged farmers to go big with the hog industry here on Prince Edward Island. Government provided incentives to farmers to move away from small-scale mixed farming and build larger operations focused on a single product so they could compete in the international commodity markets. Many moved to hog farming, building specialized barns, and placing their future prosperity on this single commodity. But then, the global price of pork plummeted and farmers found their input costs were higher than the value of their pigs. The local hog plant closed and farmers were left on their own to clean up the mess.

These attempts to be global players make the Island economy vulnerable to forces well beyond our own ability to influence, like changes in the value of the Canadian dollar, the costs of fuel and transportation, large international trading agreements such as NAFTA, and massive government subsidies in foreign jurisdictions. But it is usually the little guy – the farmer, the pork plant worker who lost his pension benefits, or the small business people who end up suffering the consequences of these miscalculations and cleaning up politicians’ messes.

I can appreciate the temptation to focus on export markets. It gives politicians the opportunity to sponsor high profile trade missions with all the attendant pomp and photo-ops. And success can bring in impressive numbers with a quick hit to the Gross Domestic Product or an infusion of foreign cash. But just as an emphasis on exports can generate an economic boom, that boom is inevitably followed by a crash. It is my experience that when this happens, an elite few garner most of the benefits of the boom, while ordinary folks lose much more in the crash. In some ways, these schemes resemble a reverse Robin Hood, with government taking from taxpayers to give to the already wealthy.

In my vision of the mighty Island, we build on what is special about this Island. It is a place where, in addition to measuring the Gross Domestic Product, we will measure the well-being of Islanders. And not just their material well-being; but their physical and mental health; their access to good food; a clean environment; and a broad range of opportunities, both large and small, that contribute to a high quality of life – that's how, minister.

In my vision of the mighty Island, government policy will strengthen the interconnectedness and self-reliance of communities by decentralizing power from the fifth floor and not only consulting communities, but inviting them to be active participants in the decision-making process.

In my vision of the mighty Island, government will work to promote small local markets, where the focus is in developing a sustainable economy and ensuring the prosperity is spread more evenly across districts and between urban and rural Islanders.

In my vision of the mighty Island, politicians will put the needs of their constituents ahead of the demands of their party. The will of the people will not be distorted through the lens of an electoral system that allows a party that receives less than 50% of the vote to have 100% of the power. Elected members will be encouraged to collaborate across party lines and seek common goals, rather than exaggerated, partisan divisions that seek to increase discord and distrust.

And most of all, government and parties will be held to account by a robust system of independent oversight.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Buckle up

Mr. Palmer: I'm happy to speak to the great vision of this government and talk about some of the successes and exciting plans for the future.

I must start out by talking about the 2,500 new jobs created this past year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Did you write that yourself?

Mr. Palmer: I did so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Jobs at places like Vector Aerospace in Summerside in the aerospace sector, jobs at places like ADL in Summerside in the food processing sector.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Jobs at New Leaf in Slemon Park in the agriculture sector, and jobs at IOS in Summerside in the IT sector.

It is great companies like these who are helping to grow our exports –

Mr. Trivers: What about jobs at Island Coastal?

Mr. Palmer: – and they bring new money into our province.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Our Island workforce is second to none –

Speaker: Order, members, order!

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Palmer: Our Island workforce is second to none, and companies like these are proving every day you can do it from here.

The trade gap on PEI is decreasing. We are exporting more and buying more locally. This means more money is staying on PEI. This allows government to invest in things like education, health care, and support for seniors, to name a few.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) announcements (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Romantic ideas of all Islanders owning a small farm and a couple of cows sound nice, but how do we invest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: In Summerside, this government is renovating Three Oaks Senior High School, investing \$22 million,

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEwen: There are no buckets there.

Mr. Palmer: There is not.

This government is investing \$6.8 million in Prince County Hospital in Summerside.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Investment of \$1 million in the Slemon Park runway has now modernized this facility.

Ms. Casey: Nice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) hospital.

Mr. Palmer: These are just a few of the investments made since my by-election last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Great MLA.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: You'll be the only one left after the next election.

Mr. Palmer: This government is investing to strengthen the population of PEI, and has already reached the goal by exceeding 150,000 residents in 2017. Our province is setting a goal of 160,000 by 2022.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Repatriation is a key pillar of growth in our province and is a great opportunity. We can grow our economy while attracting folks back to PEI. This is of particular interest to me as I was one of those Islanders who moved away.

Mr. Fox: Where were you?

Mr. Palmer: I was away for about 10 years, and I whined the whole time I was gone.

Mr. Fox: You're still whining.

Mr. Perry: And you never stopped since you got back.

Mr. Palmer: I wanted to get back home, and was lucky enough to return a number of years ago.

This is a great place to live and with focused effort, we can bring Islanders back home to work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Tax credits.

Mr. Palmer: This government will enhance a robust database of (Indistinct) workers and entrepreneurs. This rich data will allow the opportunity of local business to strengthen

their bench and identify skills to help enhance and expand their businesses.

We all know PEI has a great workforce. This is a significant competitive advantage we can leverage. I know local IT businesses in Summerside have been very successful attracting skilled Islanders back home, and their low turnover is the envy of the national IT sector.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Our Island workforce is dedicated and second-to-none. They can grow any business with good people and we certainly have good people here.

This government has set ambitious population growth targets, as I have said before, and we know our most valuable asset is our people. This government is making significant investments in infrastructure like water and wastewater. This infrastructure will allow communities to grow. In Summerside, this \$16 million has been spent on water and wastewater infrastructure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Investing in infrastructure.

Mr. Palmer: This infrastructure is not seen and is sometimes out of mind. Without these strategic infrastructure investments, we would certainly not be able to grow communities and businesses. This point is very important. Water and wastewater infrastructure is a critical component of our lives.

Mr. Trivers: Just like schools.

Mr. Palmer: We need to make sure –

Mr. Trivers: And High-speed Internet.

Mr. Palmer: – these investments are made.

Mr. Trivers: Tell us about high-speed Internet.

Mr. Palmer: The school is already done in Summerside. We're working on it now –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – \$22 million.

Mr. Trivers: \$22 million.

Mr. Palmer: This province is headed in the right strategic direction, and I am happy to be able to participate and help make Summerside and PEI even a better place to live and work.

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Great speech.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) 2025 (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: We're trying to get your poll numbers up, figured we'd send him over and help you out.

An Hon. Member: Thanks.

Speaker: Next speaking to the – I have to go back to the mover to adjourn debate.

Ms. Biggar: No. It's not adjourned.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Oh, that it be adjourned for now? Okay.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the 9th Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 9, *Water Act*, Bill No. 13, in Committee.

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

Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will call on the Deputy Speaker to come and continue on chairing the *Water Act*.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Water Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

An Hon. Member: Yes, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, we're on page 5 and we're at section 5.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Thank you.

We'll wait for him to get settled.

Jim Young Director: Jim Young, Director of Environment with communities, lands and environment.

Chair: Welcome, Mr. Young.

Hon. members, I will just remind you that the procedure is going to be that I'll read a section and then I'll open the floor for questions on that section and I'd be happy to add your name to the list; you just have to indicate to that.

We're on number five, page 5:

5. Function of environment officers
The function of an environment officer under this Act is to enforce and administer the requirements of this Act and the regulations as the Minister may authorize.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: Was there a question on that section?

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: I have the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, do you have a question on that section?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes, Chair, thank you.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacEwen: Minister: Do we have to touch the regulations for this?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, there will be a set of regulations to follow. It'll take some months to develop.

Certainly, as we were doing our, I guess, probably both rounds of consultations, there were some things brought forward that, you know would fit within regulations, so we have some things that we have been working with. We'll be going out to address the public on regulation development.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I'm interested in the feedback you got from the department on the Leader of the Opposition's suggestion today about the tri-partisan committee that would work with the Environment Environmental Advisory Council and your department to attend those meetings, but then, in the end for that committee to write the regulations.

I'm interested to hear, anybody out there watching today and probably gain some feedback. What did the senior people in the department think of that idea as far as a special committee making – helping create the regulations?

Mr. Mitchell: I did not talk to staff about what was suggested on the floor of the House since that time this afternoon.

Certainly, we have indicated though to 150,000 Islanders that we will be back in their neighbourhoods –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – to hear them, again, moving forward.

Obviously, if every hon. member of this Legislature wants to be a part of that, I applaud that. I encourage that. Certainly, I will make all means possible to have places to sit at that. I think to go out and engage passionate Islanders in this, you won't get a better result than that, hon. member.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: No, I couldn't agree more, minister. The ones that I was at during the public meetings: you're right the most passionate people are there. I'm impressed with your commitment to be at as many as you were. I would expect that this committee would be at every single one of them.

I think the difference is that after hearing that and after hearing all the information they could gather and help write the regulations. I'm not saying that it would be just this committee hearing responses. Of course, we would still go through that same public consultation process that you speak of. I think it's important and I applaud you for even doing it with the regulations, as well. At the end of the day, having that special committee write the regulations with full consultation with your department, I'm curious about that aspect.

I know you keep talking about the consultation process and everybody is welcome to go, that would still all be the same, but as far as having this special committee write the regulations in consultations with the EAC and your department.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, I would suggest that the document sitting before you –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – is pretty good evidence that the ability to write a good document is available in my department –

Mr. MacEwen: Oh it's (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – it's an available – which reflects the views of all Islanders. It's a good process. It's a process that has received

much accolade. It's a process that I will continue with. I will actually try to adopt it in all other processes within the department because it's effective. It gets great results. It engages the most important people necessary.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Not one person from the department even mentioned it you, or flipped a note to you about the suggestion from the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, I expect most people in my department are doing their day-to-day jobs to the great ability that they're able to do them. We have our required meetings when we have about what's going on in the department. As I said: this is great evidence of the work that our department is able to do –

An Hon. Member: Work, work, work.

Mr. Mitchell: – and we will continue doing the same work every day that we show up for work.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair, thank you, minister.

There's a tonne of great things in this. I know there's a few things that the public and the opposition parties would probably like to see in it, as well.

I thought it was a pretty good idea, the Leader of the Opposition had. You won't come right out and say no, but I'm curious. I'm hoping that's a good thing that you won't say no. You keep saying that the department is doing a good job, and of course, that committee would work with the department to help write these regs.

Does that mean there's a chance, or is it a no?

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, hon. member, I'll make the seats available, and everyone of the 27 hon. members, that will be a solid committee, can come here, listen and give feedback and input just like every other

Islander can. I'll make that commitment to you and each hon. member here that we'll have 27 chairs available there for every meeting. I certainly hope and encourage that I see 27 bodies in them every night at every meeting.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you. What room will we sit in to create those regulations with 27 of us? Do you have a room big enough for the 27 of us to write the regulations?

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, you know that you have the full ability to send me any kind of a note; whether it's written, whether it's in email form, whether it's an online submission on our online page that we have there today.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: I don't think you have to think that you don't have the ability today to send any information forward, or any hon. member of this Legislature, has a good ability to send, every day, information forward to me and my department.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) point, minister.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

That's wonderful. I appreciate the fact that –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: It's absolutely the best.

Mr. MacEwen: – you'll listen to our notes and to all that. But, I'm talking about when we write the regulations, when we write the actual regulations. Imagine if we had an all-party committee with the full support of your department and the AC to finish these regulations. There is no doubt this, as you keep holding this legislation up, is extremely important and it's a vastly really good piece of work.

We keep talking about: that will be in the regulations. Oh, that'll be covered in the

regulations. We don't have that study done, so that'll be in the regulations. Imagine we had an all-party committee with the full support of the amazing people that you speak about in your department, and I know many of them well, what we could accomplish.

I'm still not getting a no. Are you going to say no tonight, or is there still a chance that we could have an all-party committee that could come up with these regulations, as the Leader of the Opposition had suggested?

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, we have set the bar with this legislation. We will raise the bar –

Mr. MacEwen: Imagine if we went that much further.

Mr. Mitchell: We will raise the bar with regulations –

Mr. MacEwen: We could –

Mr. Mitchell: – with the process that we have in place. I certainly hope that you are part of the process, moving forward, that you are in the chair at the meetings; that you attend from one tip of the Island to the other so that you get a full and wholesome approach of how Islanders feel about this, and what they say is reflected. We will, you know, continue to move that forward. Hopefully, at the end of the day, we receive as many accolades as we did for this process.

Mr. MacEwen: So you're saying there's a chance.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: So, you won't absolutely say no, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: We are beginning the process on regulations tomorrow, hon. member. If you have information that you want input in, you let me know.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Minister, will you consider it yes or no?

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, I certainly, you know, I feel that the – each hon. member of this Legislature has very valuable assets that could lead to enabling a really good piece of work as far as regulation.

I will do my best to make it possible that everybody has the ability to bring forward anything that's on their mind, any good information; any assets that they feel would make it that much better.

I really think that's something that is available to you and all hon. members of this House. I think that's a pretty good measure. I know that you will take me up on that, so thank you for that in advance.

Mr. MacEwen: I'll see you at the meetings.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

In section 5, you talk about the function of the environment officers and if we refer back for a second in the definition of that environment officer, minister: How many environmental officers do we have?

Mr. Mitchell: Well –

Jim Young Director: (Indistinct) in the department –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Jim Young Director: – then, of course, (Indistinct) regulations.

Mr. Mitchell: The –

Jim Young Director: Rights, permits (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Everybody within the department has the functions of an environment officer.

We have three, four ag officers that were there. Conservation officers are in the justice and public safety. I'm not exactly sure what part you're looking for, but pretty much

everybody in the department has assigned – they're environment officer. If they see some infraction they can begin a process.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: So Chair, what power does the environmental officer have?

Mr. Mitchell: It depends on the situation –

Chair: Jim Young.

Jim Young Director: The environment officers have to be designated by the minister to enforce various pieces of legislation regulations. So, the regulations to write permits, to write approvals, to audit regulations; to access property; to make sure people are following their permits. They have to be designated as an environment officer, so a majority of people in the department are designated as environment officers.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Where do conservation officers fall into this?

Jim Young Director: Conservation officers are under Justice and Public Safety and they're designated under the EPA.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Do conservation officers under public safety have any power within this act?

Jim Young Director: Yes. They're also designated as environment officers.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

A minute ago, you alluded to the powers, or their duties, or scopes – I guess will be – not exactly them words, but they will be in the regulations.

Jim Young Director: No, sorry. They're designated by the minister to enforce, say,

air-quality regulations. We'd have a couple of people as experts and they would write permits for air quality regulations and do audits to access property. In order to access property and write permits, they have to be designated, according to the regulations and the act, as environment officers.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Within the regulations to deal with this function of environment officers, how are we going to write the regulations, or who are we going to contact to get consultation on that regarding writing regulations for the function of the environment officers?

Mr. Mitchell: I think, hon. Member, the job that each individual does is – that would determine who would respond to whatever the need is. If it was an ag offence, the ag officers go. You see this in the paper sometimes where there'll be a lot of garbage show up – some of it's mostly the COs go to that – whomever needs to be the right person for what the occurrence is, that's who goes – that's who attends.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Minister.

I'm sort of wondering: It seems we have an awful lot of duplication of services within the departments. We've got conservation officers, we've got now environment officers, we've got ag-enforcement officers. I'm sort of wondering why we wouldn't try to combine one group to be the enforcement officers in regards to all this.

Mr. Mitchell: I guess the method that's used today is a development of what is the best method for what's going on. The ag officers, they're out helping farmers get into compliance. Conservation officers, though, if there's somebody that's out hunting with guns that needs to be dealt with, that's their role. The jobs are broad, so you send the proper person to do the job that's at hand.

Chair: Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Something that concerns me is: A second ago you said that the conservation officers are out there taking care of wildlife. Well, conservation aren't out there taking care of wildlife, they're out there writing tickets on the highway for somebody doing an infraction of the *Highway Traffic Act*, they're writing tickets in regards to pesticides. Conservation officers have actually got away from the role of conservation officers, so I'm sort of wondering: Are these environment officers going to continue on this path and go outside their scopes? Who's going to make up the regulations to what they can and can't do?

Mr. Mitchell: Right now it's just as you said, if there's tickets or offences like that, that's the COs do that. The other officers – if there was a sewer-septic issue, we have people that do that. They are still deemed as environment officers – I signed off on that because they may have to do some crossover. Ag officers do their work. For the sake of those that inspect the rides at the fair that go over.

They have duties, but they're also environment officers, where they have the right to go on people's property and do the inspections that they need to do. So it's a broad scope. It's hard to narrow it into what you're suggestion, but if there's tickets and there's charges involved, it is the COs who are still are under the JPS, but have the authorities of this.

Mr. Fox: One final question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Will the environment officers have the authority to write tickets?

Mr. Mitchell: Environment officers – the COs do and they are environment officers, but the other officers within the department that go out today, they don't have the authority to write tickets either. If they were going to do an inspection on a sewer that – a septic system or even the rides or anything, they don't have authority to write tickets like the COs do.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The minister of information. Sorry.

The hon. Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Leader of the Opposition: I think you were right the first time.

Chair: Yeah. Sorry; long night.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madame Chair.

Minister, I know you have a lot of work ahead for your development of the regulations as part of the consultations. So once you get that input from Islanders, you'll be taking their suggestions in regard to those regulations.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right.

Ms. Biggar: Once those are developed, what's the next step after that? Do you go back and have consultations or be able to have a look at those?

Mr. Mitchell: We will. We'll be putting that information out ongoingly. We have identified people that will be wanting to know things on a regular basis and we'll put those online. It's a little different even than legislation and regulation. We can bring that back and forth and have a lot of discussion on it. Sometimes with legislation, when you get finished, it comes to the floor of the House. We'll make it as open and transparent for everybody to have their full say and lots of two-way conversation about: Here's what we've got on that, does that look good to you? – so that at the end of the day, we have the best possible regulations in place.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

I just want to congratulate the minister for his attending the meetings that were held – not just in his own district, but right across PEI. I would expect that, as you say – it's great that you gave the invitation to all the members here to attend all the meetings, not just the ones in their district. I think it's a great opportunity for all of those that are raising the question today to have an opportunity to be at those meetings.

When do you expect those meetings to start, Minister?

Mr. Mitchell: I expect we'll be starting early New Year with some things.

Jim Young Director: Probably spring.

Mr. Mitchell: Spring. We have some things that we're working on now. We'll probably, as things evolve, if there's anything to get out early, we'll put the information out.

Ms. Biggar: Sure.

Mr. Mitchell: We do our best not to collide or coincide with other things that are going on in different seasons for a lot of these people. They're on the land or they're on the sea.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: So we try to make sure that everybody has the best ability to get to a number of these meetings and weekends. We'll do our best to inform everybody of what's going on.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Carry that section.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My first question on section 5, function of environment officers, is whether you expect you'll have to hire more environment officers given additional workload that's added from the *Water Act* and its regulations.

Mr. Mitchell: No. There's no intention of that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Just to be clear: Given the addition oversight of water in the *Water Act* and the yet to be written regulations, you feel that the current

compliment of environment officers will be able to enforce those adequately?

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, it's basically all staff that are deemed environment officers. I signed off on a designation of environment officers plus what their regular day-to-day work is.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: You've just about the regulation consultation process as being similar to the process for public consultation on the *Water Act*, and of course you've invited all of the MLAs to be present at those, as we were with the *Water Act*.

The one thing that I called for this spring when the *Water Act* wasn't brought to the floor of the Legislature was you to release an updated version of the act for us to review, for openness and transparency so we could continue to give input. I asked again at a standing committee meeting; in fact, the standing committee actually wrote you a letter asking for it later on in the summer. This would allow us, for example, to review the *Water Act* and provide additional feedback on the changes you are making.

This is exactly the reason why we're asking to be intimately involved with writing the regulations, as opposed to just being part of this consultation process.

My question to you is: How often will you send out drafts of the regulations you're developing as changes occur for further review by the public and members of this Legislature?

Mr. Mitchell: I guess, hon. member, as often as changes are brought forward that we have to encompass as part of the regulation, when changes occur, we'll put it back out. There's more flexibility to do that with regulation than there would be with legislation.

Obviously, we are here today debating what's before us. Regulation, though, will be something that we can have a lot of more two-way conversation on, have it online, a working document online. That's what we'll be working forward, with regulation.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Just to be clear, even though you refuse to issue updated versions of the *Water Act* while you were developing it, so we couldn't review it and provide input as it went along, we had to wait til it was brought to the floor of the Legislature.

When it comes to the regulations, as you make changes you're going to do them sort of in real-time online as dissuasions occur; updated what, the day after public consultations? Every week? Can you give a timeframe on that?

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, it's unfortunate you feel denied that you didn't have an opportunity to work with the act. The act simply just got completed so as we got it finished, I'll say basically hours before we were able to table it, we tabled it as early as we could in the sitting so that we could have this wholesome debate on it. That's the purpose of the floor of the Legislature when you're doing these kinds of things.

But with regulation, we have more flexibility. We can, as we change things, put it online and we can have email lists if required or just whatever, whatever the wishes of the public are. We're trying to make this the best possible process and I think it's right before us how we do it. I know you'll be part of it. You were at some of the meetings previously when we were doing consultations, so I expect you'll be there again and you will see, like everybody else, how the thing is flowing and I'm sure you'll keep things focused on that.

Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the act.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Ms. Biggar: Sorry.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Just one question, minister; there's been quite a bit of discussion here over the last couple of days on the regulations. Once the regulations are drafted, will you take them

back to the House and let us debate the regulations?

Mr. Mitchell: Regulations don't come to the floor of the Legislature. There will be lots of opportunity for discussion on the regulations, as I just said. There'll be lots of meetings. There'll be lots of online possibilities. You can come to my office, but regulations don't come to the floor of the House.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I realize that, minister, and I guess we're asking on goodwill of being able to debate the regulations.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm offering you goodwill for open discussion on them as they're being developed. That's the way regulations are.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Forgive me, because I'm not used to how the regulations work. But, what is the reason they can't be debated in the House?

Mr. Mitchell: We have all kinds of work to do on the floor of the Legislature, all kinds. This is something that we can do outside of the rails of this Legislature, and that's where we'll do that work, outside, as openly and as effectively as possible.

There's no need to wait for this table to do that. We're going to have all kinds of time, day over day, to be able to get that work done.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

In the essence of time, I guess, we would be more willing, as opposition, possibly to give up some of our time to debate the regulations on the floor, if it was convenient.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, I won't suggest I'll wait til the Legislature opens if we're ready to move forward with

regulations. Islanders don't expect that kind of time lag if it's unnecessary. You will have full opportunity to have full discussion and I'm sure there'll be people that will offer suggestion to you of things that they think that they want to see differently, that you can support what they want.

We're not trying to hide anything. We're not trying to steamroll anything. We're trying to make this the best possible process.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you had said yesterday, I believe, that it's probably one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of this province. As opposition, we wouldn't be opposed of calling the House back to debate these regulations before they were implemented.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, it's simply not necessary. It's absolutely not necessary. We will make it as open and transparent as possible. You will have every opportunity to voice your concern, your opinion, and most importantly, your support for getting it forward and getting it done.

Mr. MacKay: I'm good for now, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Hon. members, I'm going to read the seven sections in section 6, and then I'll open the floor for debate.

Approval to commence activity

(1) No person shall commence an activity, matter or thing for which an approval is required unless the person holds the required approval.

Approval to continue activity

(2) Except as permitted by this Act or the regulations, no person shall continue an activity for which an approval is required unless the person holds the required approval.

Exception

(3) Subsections (1) and (2) do not prohibit the commencement or continuation of work that, in the opinion of the Minister or according to an order or the regulations, is work that is required or permitted to enable a person to comply with Part III.

Applications, additional information

(4) The Minister may require an applicant for an approval to submit any additional information that the Minister considers necessary.

Incomplete application

(5) Where the Minister considers an application incomplete, the application shall not be processed until the information required is submitted.

Conditions of approvals

(6) It is a condition of an approval that

(a) all material facts in respect of the application have been disclosed;

(b) the facts, representations and other information contained in the application are true, accurate and complete; and

(c) that the applicant for and holder of the approval shall permit and facilitate access to and inspection of any activity, matter or thing authorized by the approval.

Reasons for refusal

(7) Where an approval is refused, the Minister shall provide reasons within the time limit prescribed by the regulations.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking at (6) (1) No person shall commence an activity, matter or thing for which an approval is required.

Where are the activities, matters or things for which an approval is required to find?

Jim Young Director: This section basically is laying out the requirements and the

framework for creation under regulation of approvals, permits et cetera. So, it's laying out the framework of the requirements in regulation for writing approvals and permits, so it's telling people, basically, what they have to do. It's giving the authority to write these permits, create regulations around it and basically this section lays out a framework for doing that. You won't find the details here. That would be in the regulation.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: The activities, matters or things for which approvals are required –

Jim Young Director: Right.

Mr. Trivers: – will be defined in the regulations?

Jim Young Director: Correct.

Mr. Trivers: And an example of that – what we've seen this summer, people are calling for irrigation ponds, for example, to have approvals. We've said: How come you didn't put any regulations or policy in place, minister, this summer when you saw that the big ones were being – so those would be controlled irrigation ponds, as an example, would be controlled in regulations?

Mr. Mitchell: The well withdrawal levels could be controlled in regulation.

Jim Young Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – or, if down the road it looks like something we should open legislation for, I'm not opposed to doing that either. But you're right, that's where something of that nature would show up.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I wanted to refer to the questions that the Leader of the Opposition had here in Question Period today. This is an example of where perhaps the legislation here, the *Water Act* itself, should maybe list at least the key activities, matters or things for which approval should be required, as opposed to putting them in regulations; because as we know, the minister has the

power to modify regulations at any time, even if there is a public consultation to set the initial regulations.

Can you give me your opinion on that?

Mr. Mitchell: As I said, the regulations will be established by the input and the thoughts and wishes of Islanders. That's how they would be moved forward. It won't be randomly changed, hon. Member, at a whim of my decision moving forward.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My next question, moving down to 6, subsection (6), and that's talking about conditions of approval. It's a condition of approval that all material facts have been disclosed, representations are true, accurate and complete, and there's facilitation of inspection of any activity, matter or things authorized by the approval.

Another example – I've been using irrigation ponds, I'm sure that the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries appreciates that – but another example would be the facility in the east, in the Souris area, I believe it's AquaBounty facility, where there's been some controversy about sort of a – some people have called it a bait-and-switch approach, start an environmental impact assessment under a smaller project, then expand the project later on and then ask for an extension. Would these conditions of approvals really allow for tighter control of projects of that nature?

Mr. Mitchell: To the project that you speak of, as far as our EIA that the province is responsible for, it's on withdrawals, discharge and proper setbacks for buildings and things. Everything that we did, which I think what you're referring to, may be some discrepancy on some federal issues that were there. We want to ensure that you're talking about the process that the province was responsible for was fully met.

Now Jim, if you want to just touch on what his comments would be on the overall projects of other natures –

Jim Young Director: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – being affected by this wording.

Jim Young Director: I refer you back to the definition of approval on the very first page, and it defines there a licence, a certificate of approval, a certificate of qualification, a certificate of registration, consent, a permit, a variance, exemption or permission.

So that's what that frame in section 6 does. It outlines all the requirements for all those pieces of approval.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I guess my question is, would this – and I was using that project down east as an example – but would this try and, is the purpose of this conditional approval section to try and stop that approach where you can basically not disclose necessarily the full plan, just have part of it, sort of get the approval on that part of the plan, and then expand the plan later on? Is that sort of the purpose of this section?

Jim Young Director: No.

The section is to outline the actual conditions to give the broad scopes of the material facts to make sure they're all there; to give the broad strokes about the presentation and the information contained in the application is true, and we (Indistinct) confirm that, as well as the applicant, the holder and the approval of the permit facilitate access and inspection of the facility.

It's broad statements to allow us to write permits, to allow us to write approvals, and to allow us to access property in order to ensure when we write the approval or the permit that we have all the information.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm just moving on to reasons for refusal, and thank you for that. This is subsection (7): "Where an approval is refused, the Minister shall provide reasons

within the time limit prescribed by the regulations.”

It doesn't talk about any limitations on the sort of reasons that need to be provided. Some reasons just need to be provided, “shall provide reasons,” but would you expect that there are parameters on the type of the reasons that need to be provided? Will it have to refer back to either the regulations of the *Water Act* in citing why an approval might be refused?

Mr. Mitchell: I would anticipate that when they bring forward what their project is, what their plans are moving forward, and we give approval for permitting, that's what the job would be. That's how it would entail.

If what they present does not meet what our criteria is, they wouldn't get – the permit wouldn't become in place. So it's about presenting what you're looking for and then obtaining the proper permits to do the job you're doing.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm wondering I guess why it wouldn't say something like “shall provide reasons prescribed” or “reasons related to the regulations and the act” within the time limit prescribed by the regulations. You know what I'm saying?

It seems to me, maybe this gives the minister full power to choose whatever reasons they want for refusing the approval. You know what I'm saying?

Jim Young Director: Actually, it's defined. It's as described in regulations. There'd be details in every set of regulations when the minister refuses a permit, how he refuses it, what's reported on, etcetera, so the details will be there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: That's my point. Right now in this clause it looks like it's only the time limit that's being prescribed by the regulations, not the reasons. You know what I'm saying?

Jim Young Director: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: That's my concern here. Again, I'm not going to propose an amendment today, but for clarity's sake that might be a change you might want to consider in a future package; and based on the number of suggestions at least I'm bringing forward, I'd like to see a package brought forward in a timely fashion, possibly at the same time the regulations are put into effect. I would suggest maybe you bring a package of amendments forward, say in the fall sitting next year.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

7. Decision that no approval to be issued for proposed activity

(1) Where the Minister is of the opinion that a proposed activity, matter or thing should not proceed because it is not in the public interest having regard to the purpose of this Act, the Minister may, at any time, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, decide that no approval shall be issued in respect of the proposed activity, matter or thing, if notice is given to the proponent, together with reasons.

Considerations

(2) When deciding, pursuant to subsection (1), whether a proposed activity, matter or thing should not proceed, the Minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall take into consideration such matters as whether the proposed activity, matter or thing contravenes a policy of the Government or the Department, whether the location of the proposed activity, matter or thing is unacceptable and whether adverse effects that may result from the proposed activity, matter or thing are unacceptable.

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to comment that I really like this clause, and that's exactly the sort of thing that I was trying to get at when you talk about reasons – the considerations, really, for refusing in the previous subsection (7) of section 6. Just for the record, that's the sort of meat that you might want to consider adding in future amendments.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Question.

Chair: Oh, sorry. Question from the Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

In this subsection – section 7, subsection (1) – it relies on the opinion of the minister about what is in the public interest, so I'm just wondering how we determine – how is the public interest determined?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I can tell you how the public interest was determined in a couple of other things that you're going to see here, so it's a pretty good way to figure out what Islanders want, by listening to them, and then doing the right thing when something presents itself that you didn't foresee or you didn't make the provision for. This is a great opportunity to exercise this clause, so that something detrimental to our environment, detrimental to people's health; it can be prevented very quickly.

Jim Young Director: It also relates us back to the principles and rules in the act.

Mr. Mitchell: As Jim mentioned, it would reference directly back to the principles and goals of the original section (Indistinct)

Jim Young Director: Section 2.

Chair: Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

What's the rationale for the minister needing the approval of Cabinet to reject an approval?

Mr. Mitchell: I think that would be a measure –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – a good step –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Me too.

Mr. Mitchell: – so that I'm not making a decision that is not in the best interest, for reason, as minister. It is another level that looks at what's being suggested and says; you know, that's the correct measure, or look at a different measure. I think that's just another step that has already proven that it is a good way get that final approval for something that Islanders want to see.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I've talked, and I know hon. members of the oppositions have talked about limiting ministerial power and authority and how that's a problem. My concern here is that, in this case, the limitation of the minister's power may open up to political manipulation if the decisions are made behind closed doors in Cabinet. That's where we need transparency on critical decisions.

Would there be the possibility, would somebody, for example, be able to obtain documents on those discussions through FOIPP, of the decisions that were made?

Mr. Mitchell: You're asking a question, that's probably out of my scale, but I would imagine that you probably can, or not?

An Hon. Member: Pass the bill.

Leader of the Opposition: The minister of information has that.

Mr. Mitchell: Then, I don't know.

Certainly, it's a measure that's put in place to deal with an unforeseeable event as we have had occur in the last number of months. It's an opportunity to make a decision and have it verified that it's the right decision and then act upon it and get it moving.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I'm concerned about the transparency of decisions and that being preserved. That's an important – we've talked about that so many times. When those decisions are made by Cabinet as this particular clause would allow, we're then, that's exempt from FOIPP, as the minister helpfully said.

There is no way of getting that level of transparency and I'm just wondering what you think about that.

Mr. Mitchell: I think as any minister of any department certainly has to have a certain ability to react to something that is occurring. This is a clause that allows you to react, but it also allows you to get verification of what measures are going to be put in place, are the best possible measures.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

Would you be open to amending this section to the requirement to seek approval from the Lieutenant Governor in Council, rather than Cabinet?

Ms. Biggar: It's (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm sorry; rather than, oh sorry, where is it? Yeah, forget that comment. Excuse me.

Chair: Okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair?

In subsection 2 –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

It says: The minister in Cabinet shall consider whether the issue contravenes policy of government or the department. The federal government isn't listed there, but we discussed earlier yesterday that there may be situations where the province will need to

work with the federal government because of the overlapping jurisdictions. Why isn't there a requirement to consider federal government activities or policies?

Mr. Mitchell: Under this section?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes. Subsection 2.

Jim Young Director: (Indistinct) federal government under our legislation.

Mr. Mitchell: We don't put federal government requirements within our own legislation.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm fine, thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

8. Order for purposes of reserving water for future use

The Minister may by order direct that an approval to withdraw water for commercial purposes, industrial purposes or recreational purposes shall not be given if, in the opinion of the Minister, the withdrawal would interfere with

(a) the availability of water for domestic purposes; or

(b) the maintenance of sufficient water flow in a watercourse for environmental flow needs.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

9. Order respecting –

Mr. Trivers: Chair, question, if you don't mind. I know you carried the section. Would you indulge me in just a quick question?

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Again, and I brought this up before, but it mentions specifically water flow in a watercourse for environmental flow needs. I think it might be good to reference groundwater, as well.

Groundwater really is the key water source on the Island that we're trying to protect.

Again, I'm not prepared to make an amendment, but it makes it look like if there is commercial, industrial, recreational withdrawal of water, of groundwater, then, you know, in order for the purposes of reserving water for future use might not apply.

Jim Young Director: It does come from ground.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah –

Jim Young Director: Surface water is (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Most of that would be groundwater that those commercial businesses or recreational facilities or any of those would be using, so it does include groundwater usage.

Mr. Trivers: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I mean, that's my point. You specifically say that, if you're taking out too much water –

Ms. Biggar: From the ground.

Mr. Trivers: Well, withdrawal water –

Ms. Biggar: From the ground.

Mr. Trivers: – it says. It doesn't say groundwater and groundwater is specifically defined enough that it's going to interfere with the maintenance of sufficient water flow and watercourse or environmental flow. I'm just wondering why it wouldn't mention withdrawing water where it's going to interfere with the level of groundwater available in a particular aquifer, or –

Jim Young Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – is that covered somewhere else in the legislation?

Jim Young Director: Do you remember in our discussion just yesterday, we talked about environmental flow needs and the

amount of water we need to leave in the streams? That is the truth serum, you might say, for what's in our groundwater. Because the groundwater charges our streams. That's where the stream flow comes from: 60% in the wintertime of the year and 100% during the summer months. It's all groundwater flow.

If we're monitoring the environment flow, that's taking into account the well water and the withdrawals. That's why we put that in.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: 9. Order respecting approvals for water withdrawals in certain watershed

The Minister may by order direct that approvals to withdraw water from a watershed for the full amount of water that may be available according to the regulations shall not be given, in order to hold water in reserve for use in the future.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair, sorry.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

There has been a lot of talk with regards to these holding ponds for irrigation purposes. Wouldn't that actually be something that would be looking at there? In order to hold water in reserve for use in the future?

Mr. Mitchell: I think what we're talking about here, hon. member, is this budgeting that was mentioned about the Leader of the Third Party of the other day. It's about establishing what levels are there. It's about budgeting what levels could be drawn out of what watershed individually. That's more touching on that, but I'll Jim address it, as well.

Jim Young Director: That's exactly correct.

The holding ponds that people are using are instantaneous water purpose uses, you might say, for single-use issues. Whereas, what this is, is protecting water so the water is not fully allocated in the watershed. The groundwater resource is not fully allocated.

The minister has the authority, through the act, to protect for future generations and not fully allocate all the resource.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

10. Changes to approvals

(1) The Minister may, as the Minister considers necessary having regard to the purpose of this Act, amend, suspend, revoke, impose terms and conditions on, or alter any terms and conditions of, any approval issued under this Act.

Reasons required

(2) The Minister shall provide reasons for a decision referred to in subsection (1) to the applicant or approval holder.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Maybe, just give a brief overview as to why this section 10 is necessary, and maybe a couple of examples of where the minister might have to use this sort of change to approvals?

Mr. Mitchell: I'll refer to Jim for the specific examples. I'd just be signing-off on whatever the request was coming from the department that something needs to be changed (Indistinct)

Jim Young Director: This example references giving the minister clear control to amend permits, amend approvals, amend water allocations that have been put out there presently. So, when this act kicks into play and the regulations kick in and everything becomes active, we will be assessing every approval that is put out there and we'll be able to amend the permits to make sure they start following the regime that's been put in place.

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

And the hour has been called.

Mr. Mitchell: Madame 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.

Speaker: Okay, let's have some quiet, members.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Water Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Dec. 1st, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, December 1st, at 10:00 a.m.