

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning to all colleagues and to those in the gallery, those watching from home or on the Internet. We're at the end of another productive week in the House and we're pleased to be here in it this morning to welcome Rob MacDonald's class in PEI's history from Immanuel Christian School – grades 10 through 12 – great, keen bunch and I'm sure they'll learn this morning. I hope part of what they take a look at in PEI history, most Islanders do, is genealogy and if they did, they'd know that their teacher is related to me, to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture and would be a nephew of a former member of across – when the PCs were in government, Jamie Ballem and likely some other contacts that you could enlighten us on if we had the chance, Rob. There are lots of connections in this province.

This December 1st is World AIDS Day for which we wear the red ribbon – an opportunity to remember those who've died from AIDS and to offer support and solidarity to Islanders who are living with HIV – and there are many who are living productive and healthy lives with HIV.

Yesterday I had an opportunity to take part in the celebration, with the PEI public service, of the completion of the public service component of the United Way campaign – a target of \$171,000 and effectively reached. There's still contributions coming in and that represents effectively one-fifth of the total campaign for the United Way and the province and it speaks very well of our public service to support fellow Islanders in that way. I want to, in particular, recognize the canvassers and coordinators – there were 152 canvassers, a committee of 20 including 15 coordinators, and the overall chair of the public service component of the campaign this year, in addition to his several other duties, is deputy minister of fisheries,

agriculture, and regional and rural development, John Jamieson.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd also like to acknowledge Mr. MacDonald and his grade 10-12 PEI history students here today. It's wonderful to see him in the gallery.

As the Premier just alluded to, I'd also like to recognize that today is World AIDS Day and I know that there's approximately 50 individuals here on PEI that are currently advocating for better access to particular health care services. Currently they're having to travel out-of-province for these appointments and they're simply asking for the specialist to be able to come here at least once a month to have those appointments here on PEI. I think that would be a wonderful thing – a great initiative – if we'd help these individuals.

I'd also like to just remind everybody that we have a tremendous group – an army – of volunteers, as you will, out there during this Christmas season in our grocery stores and our retail outlets and, of course, I'm speaking about the Salvation Army kettle program. These individuals put a lot of time and effort in – selfless time and effort – to collect monies for those in need, so I would encourage any Islander that is able to do so to just drop a little bit of spare change or some paper into the bell.

Just in closing, I'd also like to send out best wishes to all of the players, the parents, and the volunteers that are participating this weekend in the Pownal Markan Hardwood AA/AAA Tournament. It's wonderful to see the amount of teams that are registered this year and they're actually going to be utilizing pretty much every rink all across eastern PEI.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to recognize that this is World AIDS Day, and to have us pause and think about those who have passed from Aids and those individuals and families who are living with that affliction here today.

I also want to welcome teacher Rob MacDonald and the Immanuel Christian School history class to the Legislature. I hope you enjoy your morning here.

I want to individually welcome Wayne MacKinnon, who is here for his usual Friday morning outing to Question Period. Catherine O'Brien from the water coalition and the new MLA elect for District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale, Hannah Bell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to welcome everyone in the gallery, especially obviously, the students, history class. I think I read somewhere yesterday where historian Catherine Hennessey was actually at a school talking about history yesterday or the day before.

Also, AIDS day, I can still remember being pretty young AIDS first came about the stigma that was created around it. Look where we are today. It's a good history lesson for all of us for things that come anew every day.

December 3rd, International Day of Persons with Disabilities. There is a demonstration in the Sobeys parking lot in Stratford from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday. I've said, for a long time, that the blue signs in the parking spaces that we identify for people with disabilities, I really think there should be a dedication for people with paraplegic or quadriplegic disabilities, specifically as opposed to just a sign for people with disabilities. It would likely

lessen some of the abuse on those parking spots.

Also, in my own riding, pancake breakfast with Santa, sponsored, again, by Leary's Independent Grocer and Cornwall Lions Club. They do a tremendous job in my riding on helping out all the time. It's 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Cornwall Civic Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I want to welcome Rob MacDonald and his class from Immanuel Christian School. An absolutely great school. It's growing and growing. They've added on the high school piece, now, too, so that's terrific. They're doing great things at that school, and I wish them the very best. Blessings to each one of you, for sure.

Also, I want to say hello to those in my riding; the great district of Vernon River-Stratford where the Markan tournament is being held. I know the Member from Morell-Mermaid and I met at Pownal rink last night. He's got a couple of boys that are playing in the tournament.

We had the opening of the memorial tournament last night where they recognized 35 families who have lost a son or daughter or parent. The coaches and players, it's a really moving experience for sure when they come out on the ice. It is a great tournament. It has been going on now for 21 years. There are 35 families directly affected, but it affects every person in the Pownal Minor Hockey Association, because we all know very many of them. I, too, want to wish the players all the best and lots of good sportsmanship in the tournament over the weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to welcome everybody who is visiting the gallery today. I would like to recognize December 3rd as the Feast of St. Francis Xavier. I would like to give a shout-out to all those students from Prince Edward Island who will be receiving their coveted X-ring this weekend. The X-ring is the third most recognized ring in the world behind the Super Bowl Ring and the papal ring.

To the students, who are receiving their X-ring: Welcome to the Xaverian family. Hail and health.

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. Of course, everyone in the gallery. It's great to see the students here. Hopefully, you'll stay for some debate and Question Period and possibly see the *Water Act* come to the floor again. Great to see everyone here that's interested in all the different issues, including the water on the Island.

I also wanted to give a shout-out to all those participants in the Pownal hockey tournament. My son, Alex, is playing with the Novice AA Gulf Storm. Especially, I wanted to give a shout-out to the parents, who take time-off of work sometimes, and travel a lot and spend a lot of time and money allowing our children to get out there and really compete.

Lastly, I also wanted to recognize that today is World AIDS Day. One of the things that I think that everyone would agree we should work towards is anonymous testing for HIV and, indeed, all STDs here on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's obviously a pleasure to rise in the House and certainly welcome everyone here in the gallery. In particular, I always, so much enjoy when we have the youth here in the gallery. They have an opportunity to see how parliament works right here on Prince Edward Island. I'd like to welcome them all here today. Also, like to recognize and say hello to all people from Montague-Kilmuir.

It's great to see that the Member from Souris-Elmira made it today, okay; starting to worry about tires. If that continues he'll have to take the Souris light to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Election for new tires for him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'd also like to welcome, Rob MacDonald, who, I learned for the first time today, is a relative of mine, I guess, and his class from Immanuel Christian School.

I would like to indicate that we're having a social for District 13 at the Murphy's centre, just across the way here, on Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will be bowling and other events for all ages and we might even see a visit from a fellow with red suit and jolly laugh and a big white beard –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: He doesn't have the beard.

I'd also like to acknowledge –

Mr. Myers: He doesn't wear red anymore either.

Mr. J. Brown: – World AIDS Day, and particularly to give a shout-out to Vance Ford who put his own story out there in a public way there today. It takes a lot of courage to do that, Mr. Speaker. I commend his for that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back here, today. Welcome the history class from Immanuel Christian School. I hope you enjoy listening and watching us today. It's great to have you here. Everyone else who is joining us in the gallery; welcome.

I'd like to say hello to everyone in District 4 watching online and on TV. It's a very busy weekend in the district; lots of Christmas activities. We've got Christmas in the Murrays. Check that out on Facebook. Lots of great craft fairs. We have a house tour; it's actually not in my district, a house tour put on by the Millview Women's Institute, which is on Saturday afternoon.

There is, I mentioned, yesterday, tree lighting at the Gillis Lodge. It's always really well attended and a great carol sing. After that, there is a Christmas concert at the Cambridge Hall. Lots of Christmas activities. I think it's going to be a great weekend. I hope everyone enjoys it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a privilege to rise inside the House here. I would like to say hello to everyone out in District 1 Souris-Elmira, for sure.

I, too, would like to welcome all the students in the history class here today. I hope they enjoy debating here today. Actually, history and geography were my favourite subjects in school.

Tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. it's the 37th Annual Christmas Parade in Souris. Santa Claus will be there. I got a call this morning that Santa Claus can make it and he'll be there at 2:00

p.m. with all kids. Tomorrow's parade marshals will be Gary and Tina Dingwell, the former owners of the Dingwell Funeral Home, which was operated over 100 years, in Souris.

Last evening, I got to attend a wake. And not very often, I mention wakes in my opening remarks, but this gentleman was a 92-year-old and he was married to his wife, Phyllis, for 63 years.

Gordon Roberston, a great member of his community in Eastern Kings; a great volunteer. He loved going to the Eastern Kings Community Centre, him and his wife, both, to help out. Whatever event took part in Eastern Kings, they were part of it.

What makes it— why I mention it, Gordon Robertson was one of our veterans. A great member of Souris Legion Branch No. 3. Gordon was there every year with his family. With his sons, his daughters, his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren. They respected Gordon for what he did for his country, not only for his community, but for his country.

What I'm also proud of; the Souris Legion did a big renovation this year, practically built a new legion —

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) community-built (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Community built.

Gordon got to see that. Gordon was a great member of the Souris Legion and Gordon got to see the renovations. To Gordon and his wife, Phyllis, for 63 years, all his sons, his daughters, his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren, not only from Prince Edward Island but for this country, Mr. Speaker, Gordon was a great man.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to all my colleagues this

Friday morning. Welcome to the gallery, everyone, and everyone watching at home in District 20, Kensington-Malpeque.

I just want a quick shout-out and quick reminded of our pancake breakfast is tomorrow, 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., and that's the one that I've partnered up with the Lions Club for the food bank in Kensington, so we're hoping we get a good crowd. It's certainly for a good cause and hopefully we have a great crowd show up tomorrow.

Also, I want to take this opportunity; I know my wife Alisha's home. She doesn't get the chance to watch this as much as she'd like to. She's a fabulous mother. Our twins are almost six months old, and I don't know what I'd do without her. She's a great mother and a wife and I just want to give her a shout-out today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just would like to take a moment to welcome everyone that's here with us today. It's great to see our students and everyone that takes the time to come in to participate in our legislative proceedings, and send greetings this morning out as well to all those watching from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

There are a couple of events I'd like to mention. Tomorrow in Linkletter at the community centre is their Christmas craft fair, so if you're looking for some great ideas for Christmas stop by there to support them; and on Sunday in Lot 16, the Lot 16 community will be having their house tours. So, stop by the community hall between 5 and 8 and you can pick up your tickets there. It's a great fundraiser and a great way to get in the Christmas spirit, and I would just wish everyone a great weekend.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Hon. members, I too would like to welcome everybody to the gallery today, and in particular the class from Immanuel Christian School and their teacher, Rob MacDonald. Welcome. I hope you enjoy your day.

Also, we have a young fellow over there in a grey jacket, Justin Clory, our intern student for the Legislative Assembly. This is his final day today –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: – and on behalf of all members, I would like to thank you, Justin, for being here and being part of the team, wish you all the best as you continue your schooling. I understand you're going to be a lawyer.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: I hope none of us –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Great, another one of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: – but I don't really think anybody in this Legislature will need your services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: They'll have him on the payroll by the end of the day.

Speaker: I have one more Member, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development. We'll let you finish it up today.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today and welcome all the folks in the public gallery. Little bit of a history tidbit, too: if you look to the photograph here, you might see he has a direct descendant that's now sitting in the Legislature.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: And I'll give you a little hint. They were both good with their facial hair. You might be able to pick out who that is.

Mr. R. Brown: I think that's (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: And I'd also –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: I'd also, Mr. Speaker, like to welcome some great supporters of mine, not only politically but in lots of other ways, too: my in-laws, Eric and Arlene McKenna are with us here today all the way up from Alberton, so I hope you enjoy the session today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: Now you can see, Mr. Speaker, why I was so eager to get to my feet.

I'd also like to welcome all the good people of Alberton-Roseville, as well as right across the province that are watching at home today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Statements by Members

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

Prince Edward Island Sports Hall of Fame inductee

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise to congratulate Debbie MacMurdo from Charlottetown-Lewis Point on being inducted into the Prince Edward Island Sports Hall of Fame.

Debbie MacMurdo was inducted into the Prince Edward Island Sports Hall of Fame for her dedication and leadership in the sport of figure skating.

Her contribution to the sport includes, as an athlete where she competed locally and at the Canada Games, she has been a coach, judge and official and has served as a director and committee chair at the provincial, national and international levels.

Debbie MacMurdo was involved with Skate Canada for 27 years and in 2010, she was one of the first volunteers assigned to be an on-ice supervisor at the Vancouver Olympics.

I would like to the House to join me in congratulating Debbie MacMurdo for her dedication to figure skating and her support for the development of the sport on the Island. It is individual efforts like Debbie MacMurdo's that have earned her the rightful place in the Prince Edward Island Sport Hall of Fame. Congratulations, Debbie.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Logan and Ben MacDougall

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm honoured to be standing in the House today to recognize and congratulate two young men from Summerside for their hard work at the 2017 Canada Summer Games.

The MacDougall brothers; Logan and Ben, spent two weeks of their summer in Winnipeg, Manitoba, participating in the 50th anniversary of the Canada Games.

They competed in two different sports, making the pair an especially extraordinary duo. In the first week they played with the PEI baseball team, in week two, with the PEI indoor volleyball squad. They were two of only four Island athletes who participated in two sports at this year's games.

I would also like to recognize Logan MacDougall for being chosen to carry the PEI flag during the summer games' opening ceremony. Having a Summerside community member being the face of our Island at a national scale is something for all of Summerside to be proud.

I would like to congratulate both Logan and Ben for all of their efforts leading up to, and during, this year's Canada Games.

I would also like to thank them for being fantastic examples for all our young athletes, demonstrating, that when you work hard to

make your dreams come true, that can happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Outdoor Rink in Kinkora

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to rise in the House today and update you on the Kinkora rink project. A project that was very close to the hearts of the residents of the area.

Committee members were onsite Wednesday night to pound in the stakes and make the final decisions on the exact location of this new outdoor rink. Site work began by Duffy Construction early Thursday morning. The topsoil will be stripped and the base will be prepared for a clay liner. A hydrant and lights should be installed by next week, and the committee will be able to start flooding it as soon as the weather turns colder.

Community chairperson, Isaac Jay, will create a schedule of young volunteers who will flood the ice in pairs over the period of the next three weeks while many of them are off in their Christmas vacation, breaks from university and the college.

Young children in the community are very excited about having a rink, and certainly, should look up to their older siblings and cousins who have been committed to this project.

Special thanks for Lenny Keith, who has volunteered to look after all snow removal, Kinkora councillors, Robert Duffy and Pat Duffy, who have been long supporters of this project, and members of the Kinkora and area fire department who have given this project their blessing.

It's amazing to see these young people of the community take such a leadership role, and also a positive to see a municipal council willing to invest in their youth. What a great example of a rural community spirit.

It goes without saying: rural schools and rural communities produce great young leaders who are essential to the well-being of PEI.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I know and understand the challenges PEI and the world are facing around climate change and the rising of our sea level.

Climate change and carbon tax

However, I find it difficult to agree with the current federal plan around carbon tax.

Question to the Premier: Premier, why have you been so silent on this issue for so long?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the Leader of the Opposition in saying that Islanders are, indeed, concerned about climate change; the various ways it affects us, whether it's through the weather, through erosion, through the ways that our seasons are changing.

I don't know about the silence part. Prince Edward Island is a party to the Pan-Canadian framework on clean environment and climate change. It was signed by all the provinces, territories, and the federal government in earlier December of last year and I made a statement in the House shortly after the framework was agreed to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, Islanders have always been stewards of the environment. When it comes to emissions and footprint, PEI has a tiny sliver of the total national amount.

Again, question to the Premier: Why did you fail to make the case to Ottawa about our unique situation here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker.

That's something we regularly do with the federal government and with others to recognize that Prince Edward Island does, indeed, have arguably the second lowest emissions per capita among the provinces; that we have made significant steps in renewable energy, notably in wind, but also in biomass and other ways.

Going back, even, to the 1970s, we've been leaders in this and I believe that Prince Edward Islanders want us to continue to be leaders and to do our part and to cooperate with others to ensure that we are looking after the global environment and doing our part.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, Summerside has recently put in a brand-new solar farm. The Binns government built windmills and this government has added more.

PEI green investments compared to other provinces

Premier: Have Islanders not done more than their fair share when it comes to green investments compared to other provinces?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the tenor of these questions seem to be that we should stop. The environment continues to

require stewardship, continues to present opportunities as technologies evolve, as Islanders are smart – as we recognize how the conditions are changing around us and we're proud and we believe Islanders are committed to this – that we will play our part, that we are 152,000 people in a big, global community, but it is in our own interest to be part of this, to contribute, and to look for ways, indeed the Leader of the Opposition has enumerated some, but the job is not done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is now on record that there will be no carbon tax announcement this year.

Carbon tax for PEI

Premier: Are you referring to the calendar year; the fiscal year; or, in fact, a different year?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: We are, today, the first day of December and I believe that Islanders will indeed desire to have some process by which they are made aware of any pricing mechanism that is to be brought in and I certainly don't intend to suggest –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) snakes and ladders.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that that is going to be done between now and the end of December. This is something that has got to be done in a way that people can see what it is; understand what it is; and it has been mandated, as we all know, by the federal government that there will be a carbon price and it's included in the pan-Canadian framework and we intend to achieve that with a made in PEI approach that will work for Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, the Premier told local media after the throne speech that his government has been busy in discussions with Ottawa and other provinces on how to proceed.

Discussions with Ottawa re: carbon tax

Premier: What has been the substance of these discussions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: The number one concern at this stage is that there'd be what I will call regional alignment. That is to say, the Prince Edward Island economy is integrated with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to the tune of probably half or better than half of our total economy. Our container port is in another province, our major cargo airports are in other provinces, and most of the travelers who come to Prince Edward Island are coming from other provinces and making choices about where they go.

So it's very important that as we finalize, as we get to the right solution, the made in PEI solution, that it's something that we understand is working in the regional and national context.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition

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

The Premier told local media at the start of the fall session of the House: PEI currently doesn't have a deadline from Ottawa in terms of when it has to implement a plan.

Again to the Premier: When is your carbon tax now scheduled to come into effect?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I think the first part of the question is the answer. This is something that is under consideration, under discussion.

While Prince Edward Island can be rightly proud of what we're doing and have done over now of four decades and more to do our best or to make progress, let me say, in terms of renewable energy and our carbon footprint, we are in a larger world – both as regards mitigation of carbon and as regards to the economy.

I'm very mindful of our role as a government and I believe our role as legislators on all sides of this House to get the best solution we can that will work in terms of our environmental responsibilities and the continued progress of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We do understand what this is going to be. It's going to be a tax – a tax on carbon that will generate a lot of money for your government, taken out of the pockets of Islanders.

Dollar amounts from new carbon tax

How much of this extra money do you expect to take in from the new tax and how much of that money will be given back to Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: In the statement that I made in the House in December of 2016, we indicated that a carbon price in Prince Edward Island would be fiscally neutral and that would comprise a number of initiatives, some of them in terms of revenue; some of them in terms of active mitigation; and overall, they get the best –

Mr. Myers: Fiscally neutral means you're just going to spend all the money.

Premier MacLauchlan: – balanced approach –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) give it back.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that is going to work for Prince Edward Island and Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) all the money. (Indistinct) tax and you're going to blow all the money.

Speaker: Hon. Member.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prince Edward Island has the lowest basic personal income tax exemption in Canada. A carbon tax or a carbon price – whatever you want to call it, Premier, will take more money from the least able to afford it.

Basic income tax exemption and carbon tax

Will the basic personal income tax exemption be increase to help Islanders to absorb the cost of the carbon price or carbon tax?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me pick up on this point about the basic exemption. The people who profit, or the people who will get the benefit of changes to basic exemption are not the most vulnerable Islanders –

An Hon. Member: You're right.

Premier MacLauchlan: – economically, it's the people who pay the most tax. So, I think the opposition might want to tame its appetite around the basic exemption –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: – if the concern is about poor Islanders. But let me be very clear, as we were in the statement that we made last year, that anything that happens with our carbon price will be first and foremost –

Mr. Myers: You didn't take accounting in university, did you?

Premier MacLauchlan: – sensitive to the impact on Prince Edward Islanders who are in the most vulnerable situation economically.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: You've got (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, all Islanders would benefit from a basic personal income tax exemption increase. The most vulnerable will take that money and will spend it again. It will be good for the province, it will be good for them, but, like the HST, a carbon tax will be another tax applied broadly to goods and services used by Islanders.

Lowering of HST

Will the HST be lowered with the new revenue the carbon tax will bring?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this started out as being about carbon pricing. The opposition seems to be determined to call it a tax and further, to get pretty deep into tax policy.

But let me say, there are 28,000 Prince Edward Islanders who don't pay income tax. We're concerned about those 28,000 Prince Edward Islanders first, when we get to the point of deciding what will be the revenue aspect of anything that happens in conjunction with a carbon price.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Carbon price and balanced budget

Premier: Will the money that Islanders pay in a new carbon price be used as a cushion to balance the budget?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are no cushions when it comes to the stewardship or the finances of this province, but I'm proud to say that through hard work and through the efforts of Prince Edward Islanders to grow the economy, to do well, through efforts in government to manage the affairs well, that the budget – the fiscal situation of this province is balanced.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's yet to be determined whether the budget is balanced; we'll see that come next October.

Mr. Myers: Fake balance.

Ms. Compton: Fake balance.

Mr. Speaker, vulnerable Islanders like seniors and low-income households will be hardest hit by the carbon price.

Premier: Why are those who have the least going to be the ones to pay the most with a new carbon price?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I've said in a few different ways, but let me say it again: Anything that is done in a carbon price in Prince Edward Island will be tailored to meet our circumstances. It will be defined and shaped, and it'll be agreed to and brought forward in this House in a way that is going to best meet the circumstances of Prince Edward Island. When we say fiscally neutral, we start with the proposition that it is not going to be a revenue burden on the most vulnerable Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

NB Power analysis on cost of carbon tax

One year ago, NB Power publicly released the analysis to run the cost of their utility under the Liberal carbon tax.

Question to the minister: Have you reviewed these documents?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. minister –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Whoa!

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we speak about our climate change file, there's been a significant amount of work gone on that file over the past couple of years. As alluded to by the Premier earlier, we are part of the Pan-Canadian framework. PEI has a part to play, but there's significant other work going on. Carbon pricing is just one tool in the toolbox.

Currently, we are working on our mitigation strategy and our adaptation strategy, with Dunsky consulting on the mitigation piece, with UPEI climate change on our adaptation piece, to blend together what will be a climate change action plan come next year that will take the best interest for PEI at heart.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually shocked that the minister didn't answer this.

Minister, NB Power believes the carbon tax would cost their company up to 1.3 billion more over the next decade.

Question to the minister of energy: What does this mean for PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The rates for Islanders are locked in with NB Power until the end of March 2019. We are presently in discussions on what our new agreements are going to be going forward. We, first and foremost, will keep in mind the rates in regard to that agreement. We are presently looking at other alternatives for energy in this province and how we can mitigate the costs associated with power use in Prince Edward Island, and we are continuing to do that so that anything that we put forward as part of our energy strategy will help reduce our reliance on NB Power.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, that almost sounds like to me that they know there's a rate increase coming.

Government purchases all of its off-Island power from NB Power who think the carbon tax will require substantial higher-rate increases than previously announced.

Power purchase agreement and cost to PEI ratepayers

Minister: Will these costs be passed onto PEI ratepayers in our next power purchase agreement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, the member across is incorrect –

Mr. R. Brown: Give them the facts.

Ms. Biggar: – when he says we purchase all our power from NB Power. That is totally incorrect; 25% of our power on Prince Edward Island is from wind energy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: We just installed our new cables, which has increased our capacity from 200 megawatts up to 560 megawatts. Those cables are going to allow us to produce more wind energy so that we can mitigate costs associated with retaining extra power from other sources.

I just want to, again, reiterate: We do not buy all our power from NB Power. All the wind that we produce here on Prince Edward Island is used by Islanders for their use.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, my exact words were: Government purchases all of its off-Island power from NB Power.

NB Power has identified five expensive problems stemming from a carbon tax. Furthermore, revenues from carbon pricing are to remain within the province of origin.

Question to the minister: Just how much more in your carbon tax is it going to cost Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Trivers: Listen to the questions.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the opposition is trying to get way down the path and every question that we're hearing is trying to raise the anxiety level of Prince Edward Islanders, when in fact, we believe Prince Edward Islanders are proud of what we're doing with our energy policy. They're proud of what we've done over the years –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – in terms of renewable energy and they're very appreciative of the fact and recognize the value of those electricity –

Mr. Myers: Except for District 11.

Premier MacLauchlan: – transmission cables that have been installed between Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and we are on a track – and let's be very clear about this – where Prince Edward Islanders can expect to have a more autonomous approach to electricity. It's only 40 years ago that all of our power was coming from off-Island, from bunker C.

So, we're making headway and Islanders are proud of it.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Premier brought that up because you have done nothing, sir, to make Maritime Electric –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – get off of bunker C.

NB Power has said –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – they need to hike rates accumulative 37.8% by the year 2027; much higher than their initial projection of only 14.9%.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: There are the facts.

Mr. Fox: Question to the minister: Why does your government refuse to be upfront with Islanders about your carbon tax going forward?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. LaVie: There are the facts.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite demonstrated this summer that he has a very weak understanding of the electricity pricing in this province. I made the comment when we established and electrified those cables between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island that this would give us greater leverage, or greater bargaining power in terms of power purchase, and I truly believe that and I think anyone with any sense would understand what it means. He was in the paper the next day wondering: What's the price going to be?

There's a process for establishing electricity prices in this province and the member should know very well, because I think he even appeared before IRAC, but that is a process that is ongoing.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The only price that we know as of today is that to March of 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) the ropes.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) off the ropes.
Call the house doctor.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, members. Let's have some order.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, someday if the Premier wants to sit down and talk about the costs of energy, I'll be glad to take him outside on that issue.

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Fox: The Premier told Islanders that the new power cables would lower costs for Islanders and businesses. You made that statement, Mr. Premier.

New power cables and lower costs for Islanders

What does them words – or what do those statements mean to Islanders, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Trivers: Show us the money.

Premier MacLauchlan: Very precisely, Mr. Speaker, they mean that we are in a better position to face the world and get the best price we can for our electricity, and we may even one day be in a position where we can sell more of our power because we currently do sell power to parties outside of this province, and we are in a very good position compared to just about any other jurisdiction that I can see in this country. In fact, I like to tell people that we have off-shore wind; it just happens to have land under it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the last two years we've seen increases to Maritime Electric rates by 2.3%. This April coming

up, we're going to see another 2.3%. You also, sir, put in another 1% on the HST to rate increases.

Question to the minister: This government has increased the debt of the PEI Energy Corporation substantially; over hundreds of millions of dollars.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. LaVie: Shame. That's a shame.

Debt to PEI Energy Corporation

Mr. Fox: Question to the minister: Why are you putting so much debt onto the PEI Energy Corporation?

Mr. LaVie: Shame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, when this government in 2015 came into power, we changed the electric act so that any assets going forward, bought and paid for by Islanders, would be owned by the government, not by the utility. That's the first thing we did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Then, we went to Ottawa and we got \$70 million to help pay for 142 million dollar cables.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) treasure chest.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, the energy corp is financing the \$70 million –

Mr. Myers: Nobody's money.

Ms. Biggar: – through a loan for other portions –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – of those cables. Included in that 2.3 rate is the cost of paying –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) \$200 million.

Ms. Biggar: – back that plus the cost of decommissioning the plant that's out there on Riverside Drive that produces too many emissions for Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Casey: Great minister.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Departments to go through justice re: hiring Legal Counsel

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

During the last sitting on April 11th, when I asked how contracts for outside legal services were awarded, the Premier said, and I quote: As things have been done and this has been for some time, departments or agencies determine their own relationships with outside counsel.

Yesterday, in Question Period, when asked, the Premier said: We have a director of our legal services, we have a Deputy Attorney General, we have senior civil servants who deal these matters and make judgments and give advice as to when it's necessary to get outside Legal Counsel.

A question to the Premier: Can I take it from yesterday's answer that you mean you have introduced a new policy since April that requires departments and agencies to go through the department of justice before hiring Legal Counsel?

Mr. LaVie: Let's hear from the lawyer.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have not gone to that point at this stage. This was in the context of the written question from the member that was addressed to me as Attorney General. We are in the process of gathering that information through the office of legal services and through the office of the department of justice.

It may, indeed, be that that – answering or doing the work involved in that question, we

may, indeed, move toward the kind of approach that's being described here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: But we haven't yet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Legal services contracts

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

Of course, I understand that it's often necessary to hire outside legal counsel. There are many instances when government lawyers may lack the specific expertise needed or they may be in conflict, or it's just simply we don't have enough resources to respond in the department.

My main concern is that all of this money is being spent without any oversight. Individual departments do not have the expertise to establish when it is advisable to contract outside; if the price is reasonable, or if the advice received is of high quality.

A question to the Attorney General: Don't you think that every contract for legal services should be vetted and approved by legal experts in the department of justice?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. third party leader indicated in his first question, things have been done at the department level of the agency level over the period of time. Indeed, there may be a benefit that can be gained, not because people are incapable of making a judgment. We have confidence in the agencies and the commissions that engage legal counsel and where the quality of the work that's being done for them.

I don't want to imply that even if there is a benefit in having a centralized capacity, that's because there are poor judgments being made; they're not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Tendering process for hiring lawyers

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

During my response to the throne speech last evening, I pointed out that there are many large donors to the Liberal Party who also compete for these legal contracts, but if a construction company wants a contract they have to go through a tendering process –

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – which is there, in part, to ensure that government gets the best value for money. However, when government hires lawyers there is no such process.

A question to the Premier: Why do you think that legal services should not be subject to a process that ensures that Islanders get best value for money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, when we bring back to the answer to that October 10th question I will also indicate the instances where there is, in fact, a tendering process for legal services.

That, in fact, is done where you have larger accounts. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to bring back that information.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Centralization of issuing driver licenses

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation,

Infrastructure and Energy: Your department recently announced it is centralizing the issuing of driver's licences in partnership with other Atlantic Provinces.

Minister: Can you tell the House why the province opted to go in this direction?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Atlantic Provinces were the only jurisdictions that were left in Canada that did not have a centralized service. Those discussions started back in 2005, actually, but in 2016, September, 2016, there was a tender that had been put out and it closed. There were four companies replied. There was an evaluation team from the Atlantic Provinces.

This increases our security with features that are embedded, and it also allows expansions for our other services like putting our health care in there or fishing licence. It's going to be more efficient for other services, as well. But security is also a key feature.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Impacts on Island drivers and Access PEI employees

Mr. Dumville: Minister: What will these changes mean for Island drivers and employees of Access PEI sites?

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

Mr. Myers: Won't be any new jobs; they're all in Quebec.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, we have over 108,000 drivers on Prince Edward Island, approximately, that are serviced through Access PEI.

These new services will, again, I say, enhance fraud protection for Islanders in

regard to their driver's licences identification. Again, the ability to expand it. The driver's licence photos will still be taken at Access PEI. The licensee can expect their new licence to arrive within 14 days. They can have a receipt or they can still use their other driver's licence until their new one arrives. There won't be a big change for drivers, and there will be no change in the number of staff at Access PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Stakeholders prepared for changes

Mr. Dumville: Minister: Will you be working with stakeholders such as law enforcement, air ports, LCC staff to ensure that they are prepared to deal with these changes?

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

Ms. Biggar: Actually, Mr. Speaker, we have worked with law enforcement. They were there beside us when we did our launch of this new announcement. The police enforcement agencies are quite happy with this new technology.

It provides other opportunities for them to secure – make sure those licences are secure. Staff across Prince Edward Island where other identifications are required have been informed. We are working to implement and the program, itself, will be fully implemented at all Access sites across PEI by mid-December.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Oyster Enhancement Program

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The oyster fishery is very important to my district of Tignish-Palmer Road, as well, to all of Prince Edward Island.

This summer past I heard many concerns about the shellfish association including; not delivering its oyster enhancement program and the resignation of their board of directors. In addition, there was a board elected.

With the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries inform the House about what his department has done to help the association and the oyster fishers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) dedicated deputy minister.

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

An excellent question and I know the fishery is of great importance to the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and the shellfish industry across the province.

I mean, outside of the crustaceans of oysters – of lobsters and crabs, it brings into our province about \$90 million; creates over 2,000 jobs.

We did have an issue in the past year where the board was dismantled, but we have a new board in place. We have a great president from the member's riding himself, and the whole board has put a lot of emphasis in restructuring this program.

We worked with them for a business plan and governance training and we have a dedicated staff and a super deputy minister, and myself, who will work with that board going forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is encouraging to hear and with the service that took place over this past summer, but there are still our concerns of what will happen in the future.

Will the minister put this uncertainty to rest and ensure us that this important program will continue in the future.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We are certainly dedicated to the shellfish industry. The enhancement program is still there – \$100,000 a year. They also receive about \$100,000 from Skills PEI. Just in this past year we went out and got 18,000 pecks of oysters and spread them in three different areas across the province. We have UPEI working with them to monitoring these areas to make sure that they are growing properly and we will continue to work with the shellfish industry because we need this industry to grow and to be strong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Patients in hospital waiting for long-term care

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the health minister today.

Minister: You've said that the number of medically discharged patents in hospital who should be in long-term care has been decreasing. I understand this year it's been between 70 and 100, but I understand in the winter of 2016, it was around 50 – this doesn't sound like much of a decrease to me.

Minister, what are you doing to fix this ongoing problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have seen a decline in the amount of patients that are awaiting long-term care that are in our acute care facilities. We've seen that number decline from about 89 now to currently about 74. These numbers do fluctuate from

time-to-time and that's part of the reason why we're implementing a long-term care strategy that Dr. Michael Corman is working on and we're expecting an outcome from that with some good, solid recommendations early in the New Year.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was 50 over a year ago, I don't see how that's a decrease. Patients can lose 1% of their ability every day they are in a hospital bed after being medically discharged. This means that patients could easily be going into the hospital at an assessment level from one to three or community care and then after they sit in a hospital bed for a number of weeks, they're assessed at a level for a long-term care at a four or a five.

Minister: What are you doing to fix this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Once again, Mr. Speaker, as long-term care is a challenge that many jurisdictions are facing all across the country. We've got some great long-term care facilities in this province. In fact, we've added, actually, 145 more long-term care beds into our system back in since 2014.

As we continue to meet the demands and needs and we are now doing another reassessment of what those demands and needs, and we have to make sure we get the right balance between our expenditures into long-term care, as well as home care and acute care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the speaker didn't answer the question. We've got patients that are going into hospital at a certain care level; they're there for so long they're reducing their ability. By the time they're finally assessed, or by the time a bed opens up, their ability is much worse and they're not assessed at a four or a five or for nursing care or for long-term care.

What is the minister doing to correct this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when an individual is medically discharged for an acute care facility, then they work with the long-term care component of our health care system to try to find the accessibility of a bed. We have integrated a first-available bed policy in this province for anybody that's in an acute care facility that requires long-term care. They may also require community care, so once again, we work with those particular patients to see that they are discharged and put in the most appropriate place for the level of care they require.

An Hon. Member: Good job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Assessing patients for long-term care

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm told that it's taking too long to assess these patients once they leave acute care and they're waiting in a hospital bed for long-term care.

Minister: What are we doing to make these assessments happen sooner?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it's not so much that the assessments. They are assessed, it's just that the situation would be a case where we just may not have an available long-term care bed in the location

that that particular family or individual may want to go to. That's where are – we have to go through all the different options that might exist to that family to find an appropriate spot and to provide the appropriate care.

But, we have also done some significant investments in those that are awaiting long-term care in some of our facilities. I know we've made some announcements in the past at Maplewood Manor for day programs to try to help individuals get the type of care that they require and the social interaction that would be required as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The idea, of course, is to have proper supports in place to allow these seniors to age in place and remain in their homes as long as possible. That means being able to access proper home care services. Ten months ago, the province signed an agreement with the federal government to see increased investment in mental health and home care.

Medically discharged patients waiting for placement

Question to the minister: Why aren't we seeing the results of this federal money for home care being used to target services to medically discharge patients so that they can safely return home while they wait for long-term placement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid is correct in saying that we have just recently signed an agreement with the federal government to provide more resources towards, both home care and as well as mental health. We are in the process of making those announcements in the near future, but we have to make sure that we have these initiatives that may be approved by the federal government, the federal

government health department, and we are nearing an announcement on that in the near future. But, we're not quite ready to do that just right yet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) until the polling period (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I could tell you who is ready for it, is the family members of these people that are waiting in long-term beds in hospitals. Many of them would like nothing more to have the home care support so that these family members can be at home with the supports that they're getting in hospital, but they're at home. Guess what? That opens up a bed in the hospital for someone that needs that acute care bed.

What's this in the very near future? Announce it today if it's ready. Minister: Will you announce it today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Announce it today.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we have made some significant investments in home care in the past and we, once again, feel that there's great value in home care and it hasn't been too awfully long that we've just made a recent announcement through the Minister of Family and Human Services to provide some supports for seniors in their homes. Once again, these are initiatives that are in the process and they will be announced in the very near future.

But, if you look back at the issue, it's not necessarily about providing – you've got to provide the right level of support for the right level of care. So, not in every situation will people be able to provide services in their home. Some of them do need long-term care services. Some of them need

community care services. So, we just have to make sure that we're getting it right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Getting access to home care is one solution. Another solution might be getting people back into private long-term care facilities. Obviously, giving them the licenses is one way, which we have been lobbying for for quite some time, but we know that they had this extra capacity right now because of them.

Contracting with private long-term care facilities

Have you given any thought to contracting with these private long-term care facilities to provide temporary long-term care placement until a permanent bed opens up so that we can get these people out of hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, as many are aware, we went through an issue awhile back regarding Atlantic Baptist home and we're going through a process with our community care facilities at the moment, an arbitration process that's part of a negotiated process that we've had in the past. We are expecting arbitration hearings to happen in the near future.

But during that time, yes, we have had communications with a number of the community care facilities out there, but when you look at providing a temporary service there's a whole complexity around staffing. There's a whole model of care that needs to be required. Yes, we have – the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, we did add some additional beds in that particular location to meet the needs of Islanders in the short term as we work through this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

International Day of Persons With Disabilities

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to recognize December 3rd as International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This is a day to raise awareness and understanding of persons with disabilities, and to celebrate their contributions. It also allows us to reflect on the ways we can make our communities and our province more inclusive for all Islanders.

Our government is very proud to partner with and support our community organizations that promote well-being and respect for Islanders with disabilities. We share a common goal of making life better for people living with a disability, by providing programs and services to support them.

This year our government provided \$13 million to 30 non-governmental organizations and we are grateful to have such a positive relationship with our NGO partners. I would like to thank all of our community partners, for the wonderful work that they do which makes a real difference in the lives of so many and helps create more caring communities for everyone.

I am also very pleased with the changes happening currently with our government's Disability Support Program. The changes include expanding the program to be more inclusive of all disabilities. Through the AccessAbility Advisory Council, we worked with community partners and engaged the public to help guide the changes and improvements. The program plays an important role in supporting Islanders living with disabilities to achieve full citizenship and to become active members of their communities. The expanded disability supports should be operational by spring 2018.

On International Day of Persons with Disabilities – and every day – I urge members of this Assembly and all Islanders, to learn more about the challenges that

persons with disabilities face. We all have a role to play in making Prince Edward Island a better place to live for all our residents. Every barrier we break down will help move us toward a more fully inclusive society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise and to recognize International Day of Persons with Disabilities and we all in this House understand the importance of inclusion and how it enriches the lives of every individual on the Island. The programs and services that the province offers are imperative to those people and important to those people and important to all of us because it makes us all more inclusive in the grand scheme of things and I urge the minister to continue the work that she's doing. I would like to also thank the NGO partners that are involved to enrich the lives of all Islanders. Active members of our community makes the Island a better place to live and I think that's the bottom line for every one of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to thank the minister for her statement and I'd like to specifically recognize the tireless efforts of Marcia Carroll and her team at the PEI Council of People with Disabilities. It's a province-wide NGO. They promote full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in Island society; fantastic work that they've been doing for many, many years.

I'd also like to inform the House that on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which is Sunday, December the 3rd, the Town of Stratford and Marcia's organization are hosting a gathering at

Sobeys in Stratford on the importance of designated parking spots for people with disabilities and that happens from noon until 2:00 p.m.

We should also remember that people with disabilities come in many forms and they have many faces. I'd also like to point out that the first openly autistic woman was just recently elected to public office in Enfield, Connecticut – and I think that's a pretty significant and extraordinary accomplishment.

I'd also like to point out to the minister that we've been working with a group trying to promote supported decision-making here on Prince Edward Island in order for those people who have, again, largely invisible disabilities, intellectual disabilities – to allow them to live independent and meaningful and fully productive lives here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Nursing Strategy

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last spring, our government released the first ever nursing strategy for the Province of Prince Edward Island. This historic document outlines the direction for the nursing profession for the coming years and it was created after consulting with frontline nurses, educational institutions, nursing associations and unions, and other health care providers.

Among the strategic priorities is building and strengthening recruitment and retention activities, including hiring more new graduate registered nurses into permanent full-time positions. I'm pleased to announce that in the past 11 months, we have hired 64 new graduate nurses, including 13 last month alone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Another 17 new graduates were hired into casual positions with more offers expected in coming weeks. Health PEI is currently recruiting for approximately

100 permanent and temporary nursing position vacancies.

Nurses are vital to the delivery of high quality health care and we are fortunate to have such a professional and caring team of nurses working throughout our health system. There are close to 2,000 nurses working on PEI and over the past 10 years, our government has added 34% more registered nurses and 40% more LPNs –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: – and we are diligently working to continue to advance the profession of nursing in this province.

We are committed to continuing our collaborate health care partners to fill nursing vacancies across the province implementing the priorities outlined within the nursing strategy. Some of the action items that the nursing strategy are well underway and are nearly completed include: identifying opportunities to increase the staff employment guarantee ratio; working collaboratively to identify opportunities to amend legislation and regulations that will advance the nursing profession; enhance promotion of educational opportunities for nurses; and more education in areas such as dementia and cultural diversity.

Our department, along with Health PEI, is working to create a strong and stable nursing workforce and profession that will help to provide safety, quality health care for Islanders into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know how important the nursing profession is here in PEI. If every single one of those positions that the minister just said were brand-new FTE positions, I think we'd be a lot better off.

Mr. Henderson: We just hired 13 more.

Mr. MacEwen: I have no doubt that we're replacing the people that are retiring, we're replacing the people that are leaving the

province, and it is great news to hear that we've hired those people; that there are nurses available out there. I would like the numbers of the exact numbers of brand new positions and ones that were just replacing. I think that's key.

We've seen an editorial piece in the paper this past week of 70 positions that are open across PEI; we've heard of the bed closures at the Western Hospital that the minister is very much aware of because of nursing shortages. I'm hoping we're planning around that stuff. I know that some of these leaves are unexpected, but some of them are not and given notice. The minister knows full well what it's like in rural PEI when we hear bed closures due to nursing, especially these rural hospitals. The fear goes through the communities, so we need to ensure that that won't happen again.

You know what? I do think we need to work with UPEI. The conversation needs to be had about increasing the number of seats at the nursing school, but the big thing is about how do we get all these new graduates into our schedules. We know that many of our young fathers and mothers that are nurses use flexible schedules in PEI and we need to get the new graduates in working with them so they can be mentored, as Mona O'Shea has.

Anyway, I appreciate all the hard work that the nursing profession in PEI does and I encourage this government to never let-up. I want to hear the announcements of the brand-new FTE positions. That's the key.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I, too, welcome this statement. The world is moving away from the old model of delivery of health care services where everything was funneled through the family doctor and we're moving to more collaborative approach where health care providers like nurses, and nurse practitioners, and physiotherapists, and all of the adjunctive services work together in teams to provide

proactive, preventive wellness promotion at primary health care. That's the way the world is going, so we're going to need more of these adjunctive services, so it's great to hear that that's coming.

Mentorship, of course, is incredibly valuable and experienced nurses helping the new nurses to find their feet in their new role is really important. I remember as a new dentist how important it was to be mentored by somebody else who had the experience that I did not and the wisdom. I remember, even as a new MLA, being mentored by members of this House and I truly appreciated that. I was new here, I didn't know what I was doing and there was some very kind help. I have to say, it slowed down a little bit recently, but back then I was very grateful for that.

Ms. Biggar: I have much more to learn here.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Mentorship is really important and, yeah, this is a great announcement, minister.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Winter Driving

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

December 1st, today, as the snow begins to fall and the temperatures dip, I want to take this time to remind all Islanders to use caution when driving on our Island roads this winter.

Snow, ice, darkness, and wind can all impact a driver's ability to remain in control of their vehicle. First and foremost, all drivers should adjust their driving to suit conditions. If roads are covered in snow and ice, slow down, please, and give yourself lots of extra time to get to your destination.

We recommend that Islanders install four matching winter tires, which provide twice the traction of all-season tires in snow conditions. Look for the peaked mountain and snowflake symbol to ensure that when

you're buying tires you're getting tires certified for winter driving.

As well, every car should be equipped with an emergency kit that includes a windup flashlight a shovel, an ice scraper and booster cables, as well as non-perishable food, and bottled water, a blanket and extra clothing.

As temperatures drop, black ice is also a possibility. Black ice is invisible and it causes your vehicle to slide, even if the pavement appears otherwise clear. To avoid slipping on black ice steer smoothly, not suddenly and do not hit the brakes rapidly. Instead, ease off on the gas and steer the car in the direction you want to go.

Drivers should always check the forecast before heading out, and never drive in dangerous conditions. Drivers can get updated road conditions by call 511 or visit 511.gov.pe.ca where road cameras, text reports and maps offer government's most recent information on conditions. Islanders are also reminded that everyone in a vehicle should be wearing a seatbelt.

As we continue forward into the holiday season, I would be remiss if I didn't also remind Islanders about the dangers of impaired driving. At no time is driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol okay, regardless of the occasion.

Please plan ahead. Designate a sober driver or call a cab. It's not just your life that could be impacted. No one should ever receive the sad news that a friend or a loved one has been senselessly injured or killed because of impaired driving.

By working together, I believe we can make PEI a safer place to drive in all weather conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Responding to the minister's statement, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to echo the minister's comments. Winter is here. I think we need to, also, talk about our snow plow operators, who have a very tough job in the winter in very poor conditions. They're out on the roads trying to keep our roads safe and make it possible for our emergency vehicles and our families to have access home.

We must give them the credits deserved, but we must also give them a huge amount of respect when they're on the highway, and ensure we stay back from our snow plow operators. That we don't get near them when they're trying to move snow off the highway and we give the right-of-way.

I have moved a lot of snow at the Esso garage for years and years. It's a tough job. You're trying to watch where the travelling public is, and who is coming and going and watching for pedestrians. That's what we're putting our snow plow operators into that situation.

When they are out on the highway there are people that do tend to get broke down and stuff like that. I encourage you if you are broke down on the highway during the winter that you move off to the side of the road and put your four-ways on and you exercise caution.

As the minister said: we need to make sure our winter tires are the best we can for the winter. That, you know, I recommend studded if they can. Use windshield washer fluid that is minus 50 degrees Celsius because we know we need to keep our vehicles are clear as possible.

I encourage people to clean off their windshields prior to getting out on the road. It's a dangerous habit when we jump in our cars and we don't let them warm up and our windshields are half covered. Our rear window, especially, is covered with snow and out on the road people go.

I just encourage the upmost safety this winter to ensure our highways are as safe as possible as the minister said. And that we give all the courtesy and respect we can to our snowplow operators to make sure that they can do their jobs effectively for us.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I appreciate the minister's statement. I learned to drive in Scotland about 35 years ago. I remember the day of my driving test. I was as nervous as anything. Nervous, nervous, nervous. And did the test; didn't think I did a fantastic job. The guy who was doing the exam asked me to park the car at the side of the road, so I parked there and I was sort of quaking in my boots. Before he told me whether I passed or not, he said: How do you drive?

I didn't know what he was talking (Indistinct) do you, you know, put your foot on the clutch, I didn't know what – and I was, sort of, stuttering as I am now, for words. He said: You drive to suit the conditions.

I've never forgotten that. It was probably was the intensity of the moment. But I've never forgotten got and I think that was the best advice I ever had about driving; you drive to suit the conditions. Of course, when that comes to winter driving, you just, your level of care increases.

I have never forgotten that statement. I passed it on to all my kids. Anytime I get an opportunity to tell that story, I do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a written question to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries 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.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table two documents showing the long-term indebtedness of the PEI Energy Corporation, showing an increase of \$189,266,169 million in the last six years.

Thank you.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. MacKay: One hundred and eighty-eight million dollars.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) that same (Indistinct) having problems finance (Indistinct) that's saving Islanders \$18 million –

Mr. MacKay: Province (Indistinct) finance (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Eighteen million a year in financing (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order!

Mr. R. Brown: Sorry, Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a written question to the Premier on Cabinet committees and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the new Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I beg leave

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the report of the Committee be adopted.

This report is an account of committee activities since last reporting to the Assembly. The committee has completed its review of the 2016 and the 2017 reports of the Auditor General, the Joint Audit of the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, and the report on government's involvement with the E-gaming Initiative and Financial Services Platform.

I just wanted to thank the former Chair and Vice Chair of the committee; the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the former and current hon. members, as well as the Auditor General. Thanks to, really, the Legislative Assembly Office, as well, especially Clerk Assistant, Ryan Reddin for his work in preparing this report.

I think it's important to note that this report does cover quite a lengthy period, as I noted, the 2016 and the 2017 reports of the Auditor General that were reviewed.

The committee puts forward the following recommendations:

Regarding the Special Assignment: Government Involvement with the E-gaming Initiative and Financial Services Platform Report

1) Your committee endorses all the recommendations of the Auditor General and strongly encourages Government to ensure that each and every recommendation is acted upon.

Regarding the Joint Audit of the Atlantic Lottery Corporation Report

2) Your committee endorses all the recommendations of the Auditor General and strongly encourages the Atlantic Lottery

Corporation and its shareholder governments to ensure that each and every recommendation is acted upon.

3) Your committee recommends that the Atlantic Lottery Corporation Board of Directors engage an independent, external auditor to undertake a performance audit of the Atlantic Lottery Corporation every five years.

4) Your committee recommends that the ALC – Atlantic Lottery Corporation – amend its executive bonus policy to include a measurement of the corporation's year-over-year profit growth as one of the determining factors toward bonus payment.

Regarding the report of the Auditor General to the Legislative Assembly dated March 9th, 2016, this is recommendation number 5:

5) Your committee endorses all the recommendations of the Auditor General and strongly encourages government to ensure that each and every recommendation is acted upon.

6) Your committee recommends that government undertake a review of developmental lending policies to ensure value for money is reflected in the criteria for the granting of loans, monitoring of existing loans, and, especially, in measurement of the economic outcomes brought about by lending.

Regarding the report of the Auditor General to the Legislative Assembly dated March 10th, 2017:

7) Your committee endorses all the recommendations of the Auditor General and strongly encourages government to ensure that each and every recommendation is acted upon.

8) Your committee recommends that a new long-term plan for the seniors' housing program include the incorporation of the most stringent and up-to-date accessibility standards in the construction of any new seniors' housing units carried out according to the plan.

9) Your committee recommends that government implement the Auditor General's recommendation 9.19 and provide

detailed budgetary information of significant agencies, boards and Crown corporations as part of the spring, 2018 budget review process.

Regarding the *Audit Act*, this would be recommendation number 10:

10) Your committee recommends that the *Audit Act* be amended to establish a more direct auditing mandate for the Auditor General of PEI in relation to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation.

11) Your committee recommends that the Auditor General and the Legislative Audit Committee review the *Audit Act*, perhaps in comparison with similar legislation in other jurisdictions, and discuss ways in which the act could potentially be updated or strengthened via legislative amendments.

So those are our 11 recommendations, Mr. Speaker, from your committee and the conclusion from the committee:

Your committee recommends the work done by the Office of the Auditor General in the past two years, especially considering the work toward the special assignment and joint audit of Atlantic Lottery Corporation reports that was above and beyond the usual, but in no way insignificant work of preparing annual reports to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Finally, regarding the meeting of November 8th, 2017, clarification was sought on the authority under which a judicial officer, such as the acting prothonotary, is unable to appear before a committee of the Legislature. Your committee was informed by the acting deputy minister of Justice and Public Safety that it was due to the constitutional principles of judicial independence. On the whole, the committee was very pleased by the briefing provided by the Director of Family Law and Court Services on the Office of the Public Trustee.

Your committee did not ponder the issuance of the summons for the appearance of the Public Trustee/Acting Prothonotary in this case, but is of the view that it would be within its powers to do so.

Your committee therefore reminds the Department of Justice and Public Safety, and, indeed, all branches of government, to respect and comply with the parliamentary right to seek the appearance of witnesses. Only the Assembly or the committee shall determine which witnesses shall appear and only the Assembly or the committee shall impose restraints on itself in that function.

This is respectfully submitted by myself, the Chair of Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I would also like to speak to the report as the Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Trivers: There are a number of recommendations here and the committee did deliberate, of course, in camera, on these.

The first recommendation had to do with the government's involvement with the e-gaming initiative and financial services report. I just wanted to point out that even though I wasn't the chair or a member of the committee during that time, I did attend a number of those meetings and did participate. One of the things that I found really – maybe disturbing is too strong a word – was the fact that continuously motions were made by members of the committee to bring forward witnesses – witnesses that may have been interviewed by the Auditor General, or may not have, but witnesses that the movers and, indeed, many members, if not all members of the official opposition, believe could shed more light on the e-gaming initiative and financial services platform, but these were voted down time and again, by the liberal majority on the Public Accounts committee.

I think it's also important to note that at one point, in fact, a motion was passed asking a number of witnesses to come forward to shed light on the e-gaming and financial services platform's initiatives and then at the

very next meeting of Public Accounts, that motion was actually rescinded by another motion.

Mr. LaVie: No. That's a shame. (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: So, Mr. Speaker, it really sounds –

Mr. LaVie: Shouldn't happen.

Mr. Trivers: – counter-intuitive to the purpose of the Public Accounts committee and the work of this Legislative Assembly to work on behalf of Islanders to find out what happened. So, I wanted to bring that up.

I also wanted to speak to the joint audit of the Atlantic Lottery Corporation report. Some of the information that came up there were really – there was a lot of discussion about the money that was spent for administrative purposes, for example: there was very large amounts of money spent on holding Christmas parties, for example, –

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Mr. Trivers: – for the Atlantic Lottery Corporation and that was all taken under deliberation and that's all included in the recommendations to address some of those things.

But one thing that I've noticed, and I'm sure all members in this House have, is Islanders have really taken it upon themselves to raise money to help their communities. The Atlantic Lottery Corporation is a centralized, government approach to lotteries that really places administration in government's hands and costs a lot of money to administer and, as well, really gives government the control on where to allocate funds that come in.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Carry on.

Mr. Trivers: My point here is: When communities do take the initiative to hold things like Chase the Ace fundraisers, or any other lotteries – when you've got minor hockey or minor sports groups of any kind – whether that be soccer or baseball –

Leader of the Opposition: Church groups.

Mr. Trivers: This government right now chooses to levy a 2% fee to license those initiatives.

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Mr. Trivers: I strongly believe that that 2% fee is wrong – it shouldn't be levied.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: If there are administrative costs – I believe a flat fee might be considered as opposed to a percentage fee.

An Hon. Member: What recommendation (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I don't know. I believe that, as the Member from Rustico-Emerald, I have the right to speak to this report as long as I see fit.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: If the hon. members from across would like to debate this with me, you can feel free to speak to the report as well.

Thank you.

I just wanted to continue on here.

Mr. LaVie: Continue.

Mr. Trivers: One thing, also, that I've noticed with the Public Accounts is – and the House as a whole – we spend a lot of time in this House, debating both the capital and operating budgets; and in many cases, let's just say that they're not very detailed. Getting the information about what actually is in the budget is very difficult.

I would like to suggest that, really, the point when we find out what actually happened is when the so-called blue books are released. That's where we really find out what happened, where the money was spent, whether the budget was adhered to and these sorts of things.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) when the truth comes out.

Mr. Trivers: I would like to submit that perhaps one role of the Public Accounts committee, and of course I'll raise this at Public Accounts as well, would be to look more closely at the blue books and compare those to what happened in the budgeting process –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – because that would serve as an audit of government spending as well, outside of the Auditor General. I think there's a lot of great information in those books, and I think it would serve the people of Prince Edward Island well if the Public Accounts committee did look at those.

Mr. R. Brown: Going to audit the auditor's work again.

Mr. Trivers: I would urge the government to be as open and transparent as possible in the budgeting process, to drill down into a more detailed level. I would urge them to take the binders full of information that we see them holding on their desks, especially the Minister of Finance, publish that to Islanders so they know what's going on, do it in a format –

Mr. LaVie: Good chair.

Mr. Trivers: – so it's not a big giant PDF document. Do it in a format so you can easily drill down into the information and Islanders understand where their taxpayer dollars is being spent.

Mr. LaVie: Great chair.

Mr. Trivers: This really fit well with the recommendations of the Public Accounts, talking about the fact that detailed budgetary information of significant agencies, boards and Crown corporations should really be part of the budget review process.

An Hon. Member: Repetition.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. R. Brown: That's it.

An Hon. Member: Repetition.

Mr. Trivers: I –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Lots of times.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I really –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) put Crown corps –

Mr. Trivers: I really believe that the work of the Public Accounts committee is extremely important work that the Legislative Assembly does, and I would urge all members of this Legislative Assembly, especially those in government, to put partisan politics aside.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: And really, when it comes, especially to bringing –

Mr. LaVie: Great advice.

Mr. Trivers: – witnesses forward –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – to bring information to –

Mr. LaVie: Great advice.

Mr. Trivers: – the people of Prince Edward Island regarding how their taxpayer dollars is being spent –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: – to allow them to come forward.

During this session of the Legislative Assembly we've asked many questions on the Provincial Nominee Program and I would –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – suggest that possibly coming forward, the Public Accounts committee may be called upon to hear witnesses regarding that program, and I would urge the members across –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – that are part of the Public Accounts standing committee to not vote down the call for witnesses to come forward to committee in the same way they've done with e-gaming. It's about –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – getting more information.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I would urge –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – the members from across if they would wish to debate my suggestions, to put their name on the list, rise and speak to this.

Mr. MacEwen: They won't.

Mr. LaVie: They won't.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you and I look forward to being part of the –

Mr. LaVie: He just called you out.

Mr. Trivers: – Public Accounts standing committee –

Mr. LaVie: Called you out.

Mr. Trivers: – and chairing that.

I also wanted to recognize the new vice-chair from Summerside-Wilmot. I look forward to working with the vice-chair and all members of the committee as we move forward.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Okay. There are other members who would like to speak to the report.

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to speak to this report and I will try to stay on-topic and just talk about the things that are in the report –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: – and not scatter all over the place and talk about things that have nothing to do with –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – what we were (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: I'll stick to the notes.

Mr. Myers: Did the Premier write your speech?

Mr. Palmer: I'll stick to the notes.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) wrote them.

Mr. Palmer: I'll stick to the notes.

Mr. Myers: The Premier's dog-sitter.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: I know the chair is new to our committee. I believe he just came on at the end –

Mr. LaVie: Great chair.

Mr. Palmer: – when we were doing the final pieces –

Mr. LaVie: Doing a good job.

Mr. Palmer: – while doing the final pieces of this report.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: So one of the parts that I think maybe was missed in a number of committee meetings that we had is that we talked to the Auditor General, she presented –

Mr. Trivers: I was there.

Mr. Palmer: – to us quite often.

Mr. Trivers: I was there.

Mr. Palmer: And she had said to us – well, maybe you were here the day she said: “For us to complete our work and issue the report, the work that we did was sufficient in terms of who we interviewed and the questions that we asked.”

As a forward-looking committee, which I take a lot of pride –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – in being on, we’re looking forward. We’re trying to make the province better. We have the Auditor General comes in, does a lot of work –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – looks at a lot of areas and reports back to our committee. I have confidence in the Auditor General.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: I don’t need to redo the Auditor General’s work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: And I’m really happy that we’re able to continue to do that, and I will, as I’m looking for new pieces for the Auditor General to assist us with, I’ll bring those up in committee and not just talk about them in the House and maybe it doesn’t actually make it back to committee. I think that’s where we need to start –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) could talk about it at committee (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and that’s where we should be talking about it. I’m very happy to be on the committee.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: I’m very happy with the work of the Auditor General –

Mr. Trivers: Hey, it’s an in-camera meeting.

Mr. Palmer: – and I’m glad that they can continue –

Mr. Trivers: Who knows what was said?

Mr. Palmer: – to help us –

Mr. Trivers: Who knows what was said?

Mr. Palmer: – to –

Speaker: Members!

Mr. Palmer: – look forward –

Speaker: Members!

I’ve mentioned respect in this House before. We just seem to be forgetting all about it. When somebody is speaking, be quiet. If you have something to say, wait till they’re finished.

Continue on, hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This forward-looking committee, I think, has been doing some very good work with the Auditor General, and I again have a lot of confidence in the Auditor General’s office, and very happy to continue to participate in this and look forward to future reports.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’d like to speak to this report, and while I’m not on the committee, as many of you know I attended the sessions all winter and all through the whole e-gaming process, and I felt that, like the member from Rustico, that the committee was really being blocked – or some members of the committee, particularly the ones who wanted to get to the bottom of it, which would include people on this side of the House that aren’t

Liberals, including the Leader of the Third Party.

We ask continually –

Mr. MacEwen: One Liberal did (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: One Liberal did and then didn't. There was something went on there.

Anyways, this committee – and I had once had the opportunity to chair this committee after I was first elected – and this committee had a presentation from Shawn Murphy, who was at one point the chair of the federal Public Accounts committee. He explained to the committee that I was the chair of at the time how Public Accounts works in Ottawa. It is completely non-partisan. They actually work to get to the bottom of issues regardless. No one gets protected. Government isn't trying to interfere and block witnesses. People don't get told that they can't have their witness or that their idea doesn't have any value or that it goes against some report or that they're questioning the Auditor General.

Really what happens here on Prince Edward Island – and it's quite unfortunate, it happens in all committees – and to me, this committee that should be the most powerful committee in government, isn't because of partisanship.

I think that when we go to committee – and we all sit on committees, so everybody here sits in committees – there is an opportunity to do great work, and often there is. If everyone will agree with what we are doing, then the committees are capable of doing great work.

When it becomes partisan and when it becomes sides, then nothing ever happens. It just becomes reports where they're scrubbed down, where some people don't feel like they got to the bottom of it and others feel like in this case the Auditor General did the work and we should just say: Okay, the work is done.

Mr. LaVie: Very true.

Mr. Myers: The e-gaming report, it was clear, because the Auditor General clearly stated in her report the scope limitations. The scope limitation was that she didn't

have all the information. She says in her report that she didn't have all the information. By that basis alone, the committee had the duty in my opinion to get to the bottom of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: The committee had the duty to get the information that the Auditor General felt like she wasn't provided.

Mr. LaVie: Exactly.

Mr. Myers: And while I wasn't a voting member on committee, I sat there day after day and watched the requests of the committee members get turned down to bring people in and they were always from the section of the report that the Auditor General did that day.

So the Auditor General talked about someone's involvement in it, and the committee, a committee member would say: I'd like to talk to that person. Then, all of a sudden, the big red machine would come in and shut that down and say: no, no, the auditor did her work. Why are we trying to redo her work?

No one is trying to do the auditor's work. The auditor had scope limitations. What the committee was actually trying to do was to fill the gaps from the scope limitations that the auditor had set out that she had.

Mr. MacKay: True.

Mr. Trivers: Hear! Hear!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Here's the problem with e-gaming, in particular, is that until all the questions are answered there will always be questions about it. While government feels like they can keep skating away from this issue, more and more things are going to come out. More and more things will come out. This has been dogging this government since about 2013 when this first started hitting. Teresa Wright wrote an article, I think it was the spring of 2013, I stand to be corrected, but it was a long time ago. This has been dogging this government for nearly four years now, or more.

Yet, they won't let anyone get to the bottom of it and pretend that the Auditor General was allowed to do her work when she wasn't. On top of that, because the auditor was asked by the Premier to audit this file, it was the Premier who set the scope of the audit. It wasn't the auditor who set the scope of the audit.

There are many things that have come to light since then. There are lots of documents that I had shared publicly with this House and through social media posts and whatnot of things that we have discovered. There is more, and there is more coming. There is more that haven't yet been brought to this House and there is more that haven't yet been made public, but they're there. As they trickle out this will continue to haunt this government.

I think the thing that disappoints me when it comes to committee is, like, let's face it; everyone here gets along, by in large, with the exception of a handful of people, maybe, interpersonally. I don't know, but I can't speak for how everyone gets along with everyone else, but in large, everyone gets along. And by in large everybody here is able to work together on a committee for the betterment of Prince Edward Island.

I think, and I always have, I think that those committees should never stand in the way of doing the work that needs to be done. The job of committee is to bring a report to this Legislature for government. If government doesn't take action – so if the Executive Branch of government through the Premier doesn't take action, then the committee, at least, has done their work.

The committee can, at least, say: we have done what we were prescribed to do by this Assembly. If every time the news story is: the committee was blocked today. That the member from Rustico wanted to bring someone forward and wasn't allowed. That the Leader of the Third Party asked to bring somebody forward and he wasn't allowed. That's not what we want to be known for. Why would 27 people want to be known for that?

I've said this numerous times: we have the ability to change the way people view politicians, but if we continue down the path of blocking the truth, of trying not to let a

certain member do the job that they see fit because they're outnumbered on committee; we're not doing service to the reputation of politicians. We're not doing service to the reputation of this Assembly and we're not doing anything to enhance the reputation of Prince Edward Island.

I feel that this committee needs to find a way to remove the partisanship from it. Maybe the Premier –

Mr. LaVie: The Premier wiped his hands of it.

Mr. Myers: Maybe the Premier needs to change his own membership on committee so that between the opposition parties there's an equal number of members on committee so things can't be voted down.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: I think the Leader of the Third Party and we have two over here, I think if the committee was structured in a way that the numbers were even, partisanship could never play in. Everyone would have to figure out how are we going to do this together? How are we going to work together?

The Premier talks over and over again about working together and how we're going to do things together and how he's going to collaborate and how he's going to listen to everyone, but it never ever happens. It never ever happens because it's not convenient for him to actually follow through; it's extremely convenient to talk about. It's extremely convenient to stand and talk platitudes. Islanders are sick of platitudes. They want to see it. They want to see it in action.

I hear it all the time so I can't be the only one who is hearing that they want us to see us work together. Apparently, because lopsided committees don't allow committees to operate properly, maybe the – it goes back on the shoulders of the Premier to even up the membership of committees so that the committees can always do their work.

Mr. LaVie: I support that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: I think it's the only way that we can fix this moving forward. It's so disappointing to see people come in to watch Public Accounts. To see the number of members that show up to hear the Auditor General, to ask questions about the report, get blocked to get the rest of the information.

There is lots that we don't know. There's lots that I don't know when it comes to some of the files that have come through Public Accounts from the time that I have been on it and the times that I – since I am no longer on the committee. There are numerous times when I walked away feeling like I didn't get to the bottom of it because I wasn't allowed. No one should, on committees, feel like that. No one should.

If any one of the 27 people responsible for creating legislation on Prince Edward Island and looking out for the betterment of the future of Prince Edward Island, walks away from a committee meeting here of this Assembly feeling like they weren't able to do their job; like they couldn't get to the bottom of it, then there is something wrong and only the Premier can fix it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also responding to the committee report the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's, I think, important to rise and discuss what happened in committee and to address the report. I have been on this committee since the MacLauchlan Liberal government took power. I'm very proud to be on the committee. We're told Public Accounts is important, has power to do things and to make sure that the public purse is being well looked after.

I have to say my two, the two words I would use to describe my experiences on Public Accounts have been 'disappointment' and really 'disheartenment' on the ability for the committee to do the work that we should be doing.

We did discuss, a number of times, the e-gaming report from the Auditor General. We had her in numerous times to talk about it. We brought up a number of times to have witnesses come in and speak to us because the Auditor General did admit that she didn't have the information she needed to make the decision, or comment on the decision, in the way that she wanted to.

One day, we were fairly happy to have the work done together, to have a vote to have members – to have witnesses brought in, only to be stonewalled and blocked the very next day and be disappointed and disheartened with the work of the committee because the decision was reversed.

I think that that is one of the moments that I will remember as an MLA. It was very disheartening and very disappointing to not be able to bring in the witnesses that we thought should come in. We appeared to be working together and lo and behold and, disappointment in the Premier. I mean, the Premier said: we're doing things differently. We're going to work to the betterment of the province. Do things; appeal to our higher nature. And lo and behold: stonewalled and blocked.

The Auditor General did state a number of times she didn't get the information that she needed to move forward. I feel, in a number of ways, we're just rubber stamping. Rubber stamping whatever the government wants to push through. That's a concern.

The ALC file. We worked on that, as well. We talked about ALC. I was also disappointed and disheartened with the spending, the overspending that the inflated salaries and bonuses that are being given out. I, personally, feel ALC is very important to our province for the harness racing industry and I have said a number of times that it's important that we use that model and have that model and that it's working properly, and that the money is being spent well.

I think it's very important to this province because we understand the importance of harness racing. I will push forward when we take government – I will push forward very hard to ensure that we continue to make sure ALC is operating the way it needs to operate

to ensure harness racing is vibrant in this province.

The forward thinking, the comments on forward thinking; very concerning. It's great to say we're forward thinking, but if we all remember that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it and that is something that I will continue to bring up. Forward thinking is great, but we have to look back to see how things were done and what was done wrong.

I'm glad to stand to speak to the report, but I'm very disappointed and disheartened with the ability of the committee to do the work they need to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Also to speak to the committee report, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's a great opportunity to stand and speak to the report from Public Accounts.

The, sort of, focus of most of the comments has been, at least from this side of the House, around the dysfunctionality of the committee. It's not just Public Accounts, of course; that's present on all standing committees and I know that because I sit on all standing committees.

I really appreciate the comments of the hon. member about leveling the playing field, if you like, and making the numbers of members equal on both sides on these committees. That would require a change in the House rules and that's one way of doing that. A much more effective way of dealing with this dysfunctionality, not only in our standing committees, but here in the House itself, would be to implement a voting system that is proportionate so that the members of this House reflect the popular vote of Islanders.

When the members in this House reflect that popular vote, and the rules say that standing committees have to represent the standings in this House, then we will have functionality in our standing committees because they will truly represent, not only Islanders' wishes, but there will not be a

majority of one party able to manipulate and to shut down debate. It's just one of many, many advantages that would flow from having a fair voting system.

I absolutely support –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, the hon. member.

Mr. Trivers: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate his suggestion, but we have to think outside the box here and we have to be willing to embrace the future, and we all know that electoral reform is coming. Again, one of the gear benefits of that will be we will finally have functioning standing committees here on Prince Edward Island which will serve all Islanders well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

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

I wanted to get up after hearing some of the comments in relation to this motion and just kind of give my thoughts about, not just my time having served on the committee since the past sitting, but leading up to that. I do think that this committee does great work and I think the first part of that, when you look at the committee, is the overall purpose of the committee and it is, as the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters had indicated, a committee with a different structure and a different purpose.

That starts from the fact that the chair of the committee is a member of the official opposition, and goes through to the fact that there's a vice-chair on the committee, a role that I was proud to serve in for some time, and that the committee, through the Office of the Auditor General, takes a lot of input and advice as to the way in which it should proceed.

Really, the job of the committee, and in particular through its work with the Office of the Auditor General, or at least in so far as I see it, is to look at areas, effectively, that government can improve overall so that tomorrow as we go forward, or next sitting as we come into the Legislature, we can determine where there are areas that we can make legislative differences, policy differences; see where there are things that can be done to make the lives of every-day Prince Edward Islanders better.

That would be where I would start from, and I will say two things. One is that for members of this Chamber to stand up and cast aspersions on other members indicating that they were coerced into voting a certain way or that they –

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – did something untoward in the operation of the committee –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) fact.

Mr. J. Brown: First, I find that totally inappropriate and disrespectful to myself as a member of that committee, and to the other members of that committee.

The second thing that I would point out in that regard is that it sounds like a politically-motivated statement and sour grapes, to be standing up there saying that because –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: – you lost a vote –

Mr. Myers: I suggested a solution.

Mr. J. Brown: – in at the committee over a certain subject, that the members on the opposite side or the members that voted a different way didn't see things right.

Mr. Trivers: Talk to the people of PEI.

Mr. J. Brown: That's the way democracy works. We have committees and we have different members on those committees –

Mr. Fox: That are stacked.

Mr. J. Brown: – and we have votes so that we can all have our say and do what it is that we want to do.

Mr. Fox: Stacked in your favour.

Mr. J. Brown: Those committees work well, I would say, in the context that they are supposed to work. They are formulated with a certain purpose in mind and they do that.

While we're on it and while we're talking about it, particularly given that the hon. members have opened the door to this, I will say that I was very disappointed to sit on that committee and witness how some hon. members, particularly in the official opposition, treated the Auditor General, as an example –

Mr. LaVie: Are you singling me out?

Mr. J. Brown: – with total disrespect.

Mr. LaVie: Are you singling me out?

Mr. J. Brown: I don't think I saw you at one of the meetings, hon. member, but there were certain members that on a few different occasions, I think, went way too far in casting aspersions towards the Auditor General and the work that she had done.

I certainly, as other members in here today have indicated, I have valued the work that the Auditor General did and –

Point of Order

Ms. Biggar: Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Is the opposition supposed to be turned around speaking to the media in the back gallery? If you could give me clarification, I'd appreciate that.

Mr. Myers: As a member, I can turn around and talk to whoever I want.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) pass (Indistinct)

Speaker: Hon. member, are you raising that as a Point of Order?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Speaker: Okay, I will take that under consideration.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Sorry, member.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: We're not allowed to talk.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Is that Vladimir Putin over there?

Speaker: Carry on, hon. member.

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

What I was saying was, to me – and I appreciate that, as I say, members of this House will have different views on different subjects. I think, personally, that the Auditor General –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) excuse me. Excuse me, I'm sorry.

Mr. Speaker, the member across the way made reference to me as Vladimir Putin. I would ask that the member retract that statement.

Mr. Myers: How do you know I was talking about you?

Speaker: Hon. member, did you?

Mr. Myers: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I did make that statement because I feel like the hon. member here is trying to limit my rights as a legislator, but I will withdraw them, gladly, and I still feel like she is trying to limit what I can do in here and say, as a member who represents a district, what I can and cannot do while I'm in here with the media and I would feel like it's none of her business.

Thank you.

Speaker: No, hon. member.

That was raised as a Point of Order already and I said I would take it under advisement.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Speaker: And I will, and I will rule on it.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

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

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

That's the kind of thing – the exact kind of thing that I'm referring to. Just here today, the hon. member stood on a Point of Order and there's a very personal attack made against her for doing that kind of thing.

It's one thing to sit here and say that we disagree with the decisions that each other makes, but to cast those kinds of aspersions against other hon. members, is not respectful and it's not proper. I, for one, don't like it. I think it brings us all down. It brings the work we do down. When we do that kind of thing towards the Office of the Auditor General, who put huge amounts of work into their job over the past couple of years in particular, taking on extra work and doing special audits, it brings their office down too and it creates a disrespect or a distrust on behalf of the public that's totally undeserved. All these committees are set-up to function within the rules of parliament that are in place that govern us every day and we all have the ability to work within those and do that without making personal attacks against each other.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: I think that I've seen enough going over the line that – and the thing that happens is once you start – once one person does it, it almost makes it that the other people have to do it –

Mr. Trivers: Keep it to the report.

Mr. J. Brown: – just to keep check.

I can recall a specific situation at the committee where – I think it was the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters – had

made statements that I thought were way over the line to the Auditor General and, in particular, in reference to a situation where she had sought Legal Counsel to help her out with the opinion that she had given.

That troubles me and it troubles me, both as a member of this Chamber, and as a member of a profession that takes an oath and works to uphold that with honour and to provide advice as they're asked to do. I think we need to take stock of those things. We need to put our differences aside when we get into this kind of committee work and we need to remember that Islanders are who we're here to serve and as the members have said: our partisan interests need to be left behind. Well that includes respecting the opinions of members of different parties that work in this Legislature for the people of Prince Edward Island.

The aspersions of other members acting in ways that the members feel that, because they didn't win a vote or whatever, are doing something improper – they're way out of line and I think we need to recognize that and if we are going to do things differently, we need to move past that.

Today is another example here. The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald speaking as the Chair of the committee went –

Mr. Fox: Great Chair.

Mr. J. Brown: – way off into his own tangential –

Mr. Trivers: Directly related to the report.

Mr. J. Brown: – discussion in relation to the report.

An Hon. Member: Directly.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: It's not directly related to the report. You're there to speak to the actual report.

Mr. Fox: You didn't do that up there?

Speaker: Okay, Order!

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not the Chair.

Speaker: Does anybody understand English in this House? All I ask is that you respect where you are; just respect this place.

Carry on, hon. member.

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

Again, that's the kind of thing that I'm referring to. The work of those committees is the work of the committee. The report and the committee, in a large way, speak for themselves. The Chair is to be a purveyor of that work. They're to be a regulator of what goes on at that committee and they're to respect the will of all members. We heard the Chair here today encouraging other members to vote a certain way in relation to something. Again, I have a problem with that because of the way that that paints things in relation to what's to be an unbiased committee and the ability of other members in this Chamber to do their work at that committee.

I'm not going to go on anymore about that –

Mr. Myers: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: – but I think we all need to reflect on the kind of behaviour that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is carrying on with right now and recognize what impact that has on work at the committee level and in this Chamber. I think we do all need to try and do better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Now you're going to get the truth.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

I'll remind all members, once again, when the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira is talking, listen to what he has to say.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Great advice, Mr. Speaker, because the truth will come out in Mr. Souris-Elmira.

It's a great conversation here today – great debate on our committees. Our committees do play an important role in our business. They do. I never sat on Public Accounts – no, I didn't, as the minister of education said, but I did sit in the gallery at meetings at committee. At these meetings there is very important topics that will come up and I understand government and I understand opposition and I understand that the members of the government are defending themselves, but all opposition is asking for is fairness at these committees – fairness.

What I see at these committees – the ones I sat in on – is they're government controlled. That's the way it is and it's always been that way. Can it be changed? Yes it can. There's rules and regulations to change that. This is 2017 and it should be changed. We all should have an equal voice at that table.

I'm surprised at some of the words that the minister of education was using, like sour. Nobody is sour. We're not sour. We want all the information to get to the table. We want it all at the table, and we want fairness, not sour. In order to make decisions for the people of Prince Edward Island, we all have to work together. Let's not have it lopsided at the table, let's have it all even – two members from each party all sit at the table. That can be done.

I'm a little disappointed at the last speaker, the minister of education, getting up and talking about the member from St. Georges –

Mr. Myers: I moved a lot today.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, when the chair of the day, the member from Stratford, had to bang on his gavel because the minister of education was roaring at the meeting over an argument going on. You had to be gaveled yourself, minister of education.

Mr. Myers: It's true. You did.

Mr. LaVie: You know? So don't stand up there and say you're a good guy when you had to get the gavel.

I understand, as a member, that we all have to work together. I work with the minister of fisheries and agriculture, we get stuff accomplished, I understand that. And when

the fishermen or the farmers – if they're having problems, they will come to the critic and see if he can get it resolved through the minister – and it works. That's working together.

I have a great relationship with all the ministers, but it's all about working together and when we get to these committees, this Auditor General, she needs all the information so she can do her work. She's only able to do what's given to her. So, it's true, the Auditor General can't put all the information out there because she's not getting it and the committee does block it. It's blocked. Why? Because we can't get these people into committee because it's turned down – normally by the government side because they have more votes at the table. Well let's make it even. That's what all opposition is looking for – all opposition is looking for is even at the table. Why not take that into consideration and change the rules and regulations to do so? That's working together. I don't think it's a very big ask to have even representation at the table.

I sit in other committees. Sometimes we run into the same situations. Well, let's make all our committees even. All the committees have even representation. It's not a big ask. If government says, and the minister of education stressed it; it's all about working together. Well, if you want to work together give us even representation at our committee meetings so we can get the real work done for the people of Prince Edward Island. Not a big ask. That's working together if you want to work together.

It's enjoyable to work on these committees and sit on these committees. We hear people coming in and talking to use from all across Prince Edward Island. In the last six years I have sat on a lot of committee and I heard from a lot of people across this province. Some of it right from the heart.

I have been doing it for six years now. Six years, I have been doing this and hearing from the same people: We can't get the work done because it's turned down by the committee. Why? Because the government has more representation at the table. That's why we're frustrated over here. We're not sour. Nobody is sour.

For the minister of education to use that term, sour, no, we're being opposition. We're asking for fairness. We want these committees to work. We don't want to be wasting people's time coming into these committees, and then there's a report put on the shelf. How many reports have I seen just in the last six years? Reports, reports.

The committees I sit on, sometimes there's heavy debate. There is argument back and forth. That's great. That's what the committees are for. It's all about debating. At the end of the day, when it's all voted down by the government's side of the table because there is more representation, it's not right. All opposition is asking for, all of us, if fairness on your committees.

When the minister of education gets up and scolds us over here for being out of line, remember back to your own day on the committee of Public Accounts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other hon. members who would like to speak to the committee report?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think it's only appropriate that I stand today and speak with regards to the work of Public Accounts, as I was the previous chair for a number of years.

I want to take it back a little bit further from – I actually chaired the Public Accounts committee. When I was first elected in 2011, I was quite keen and eager to sit in on Public Accounts committee meetings even though I wasn't a regular sitting member of that committee. There was some tremendous work done at that time by the the Auditor General, Colin Younker, that came to light of some very dubious transactions with regards to contracts not being tendered with regards to cheques being cut for contracts that weren't tendered, for no work that was actually done. There was an alarming amount of money, to the tune of, I believe it

was \$8.4 million over a two-year period, at that time.

Even back then, I believe, it was in 2012, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts were asking for some of the senior people from a couple of these departments that were identified to come in to just simply explain to the committee what had taken place. Although, the committee members are elected to Legislatures here on PEI, we don't have the in depth knowledge of what took place in a particular department and how some of these transactions may have taken place.

That's what the committee of the day was actually trying to find out, but unfortunately, even back then, the majority of the committee, being government members, refused to allow these senior bureaucrats, and in one case a deputy minister, to come in to testify or just to simply explain what the Auditor General had found. It could have been very simply cleared up if these people were allowed to come in and simply explain because they were the ones, they were the ones that actually were involved in these transactions. They were the ones that had their signatures on these documents. Instead of that, we would have a government minister come in and speak as a government minister will do and not really provide any answers.

I know the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I do know where he's from. He talked about Shawn Murphy, I hold in extremely high regard. I sat in on the presentation that Mr. Murphy gave with regards to how the federal Public Accounts committee works.

I have attended national conference conferences on Public Accounts in conjunction with our Auditors General all across Canada, with our federal counterparts, as well. Very, very seldom do I hear the frustrations from, at that time when I was chair, of my fellow chairs from other jurisdictions and territories across this great nations of ours, the frustrations that we felt back here on Prince Edward Island with regards to how the partisanship of the committee was overriding their true work that should have been done by the committee.

While I did, and I still feel honoured that I was – that I sat in the chair's position for as long as I did. I have to honestly tell you that it was a great frustration of mine going into meeting after meeting knowing that the work that this committee is expected to do on behalf of Islanders, it was going to be impeded because of the structure of the committee and the lack of agreeability by all members around the table to actually come together and do what is expected of the committee, and that is to find the answers.

We've talked, here, some today, as well, about the e-gaming file. While it was sent to the Auditor General, again, it was sent by the Premier and it was sent with a limited scope. We asked the Auditor General many, many questions. I don't recall ever there being any disrespectful comments to the Auditor General because, myself and the chair, I wouldn't have stood for that.

Similar to you as the Speaker of this House, I commend you for the role that you have in here and I always felt that I tried to conduct myself, as chair of Public Accounts, in the same manner that you do here. That is to keep decorum. Yes, sometimes at the conclusion of a meeting, I'd have to look at the clerk and we'd have to inspect the gavel to make sure it was going to survive the next meeting because sometimes it did get a little ruckus.

At the end of the day, all I ask is the current members of this standing committee, and all standing committees, and the chairs and the vice-chair, just to simply do the work that is expected of you. Do the work in a non-partisan manner and represent Islanders and get the answers so that as we move forward, if there were problems in the past, and I know there are members that are always saying: We're a forward looking committee. We can't be looking in the past.

I have always said: You can't look to the future if you don't understand the past. You can't understand the future if you don't know what happened in the past. I think it's incumbent on all hon. members of the Legislative Assembly that have the great honour to sit on any of our standing committees to work together and to work for all Islanders for the betterment of this Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other hon. members who would like to speak to the report?

Shall the report of the committee carry?
Carried.

The report of the committee is adopted.

Mr. Trivers: Unanimous.

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Superannuation Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Superannuation Act*, Bill No. 15, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Minister, just a brief explanation of Bill No. 15.

Mr. Roach: This legislation would update the purchase of service rules for our civil service pension plans. These amendments would make those rules less complicated for members, while protecting the financial integrity of the plan. This bill contains a number of housekeeping changes and several amendments intended to modernize the administrative practices of the act. This is a companion legislation to *An Act to Amend the Teachers' Superannuation Act*.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Teachers' Superannuation Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Teachers' Superannuation Act*, Bill No. 8, read a first time.

Speaker: Brief explanation, hon. Minister.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, this legislation would update the purchase of service rules for our teachers' pension plans. These amendments would make those rules less complicated for members, while protecting the financial integrity of the plan. This bill contains a number of housekeeping changes and several amendments intended to modernize the administrative practices of the act. It is the companion legislation to *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Superannuation Act*.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Crown Proceedings Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Crown Proceedings Act*, Bill No. 4, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, just a brief explanation please.

Premier MacLauchlan: This is updating the language of the *Crown Proceedings Act* to reflect the fact that the Canadian Free Trade Agreement is now the way we refer to what was previously known as the agreement on internal trade.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, adjourned debate on the Draft Address.

Speaker: We will carry on with the Draft Address and the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot was speaking to it.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: You actually adjourned debate on it. Carry on.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to be able to continue my response to the Speech From the Throne today.

I'm, again, impressed at the job growth, as I'd mentioned last evening, of over 2,500 jobs on PEI in this past year, but that was yesterday.

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

Mr. Palmer: Today, there's a new report from Statistics Canada that indicates 2,700 new jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Full time.

Mr. Palmer: If I talk long enough, it may get up to 3,000 new jobs. Centennial Honda in Summerside is one of those private sector businesses that have created jobs in this past year. In Summerside, Summerside Chrysler Dodge has also added more people in this past year.

Statistics Canada also reported on the unemployment rate today. Last October, in 2017, it was 10.3%; today it was reported at 8.8%.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: This year businesses in Summerside have opened – a couple of restaurants like Little Caesars and Dixie Lee have opened in Summerside to just name a few of the new establishments we have in the city. We have welders, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, all kinds of trades working in Summerside. This government is

a great supporter of private sector business growth. These additional jobs have all been created since the by-election in Summerside last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Cause and effect?

Mr. Palmer: Yep. I think so.

The by-election last year in Summerside was a great experience for me. My family were all involved and we're all still involved. I talk to my kids every day about how we can improve our community. I am here to make this a better place for my kids.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: I take this very seriously. Many of us here have been active community members before becoming members of this Assembly. We continue to serve our community, in this Assembly, and it is important work and it's very serious work. Dirty politics and name-calling should not have a place in this Assembly. I think sometimes a 10-minute misconduct penalty could certainly be called in here.

I also now clearly understand there are two sides to every story. We heard last night about campaign financing. I've also heard about campaign managers from British Columbia working elections in PEI. Who pays for that and where's that disclosed? I hear national organizations –

Mr. MacEwen: Quite an accusation.

Mr. Palmer: – fund people to work on electoral reform. Where is that disclosed?

Mr. MacEwen: He just accused the Green Party of cheating.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I heard that.

Mr. Palmer: I don't understand how these examples are reconciled against a public disclosure of campaign donations, but that's not for me to reconcile.

I want my kids to have every opportunity. I do not want my kids to have to move away to find opportunities. I was one of those kids that had to move away. I spoke about it last

night. I whined the whole time I was gone. I was lucky I didn't have to go very far away. I was in Halifax for five years and Moncton for five, but I always wanted to come back home. Finally I was able to – I had the opportunity and I came back, so I know what kids are going through when they're moving away.

I do understand some people want to move away and that's good. We don't need to force our kids to stay here. If they want to go away, that's okay, but let's not force them. This government has been working hard to stop out-migration. Now I know there's more work to do – repatriation, as I have said before, is a great opportunity to bring people back home.

I know a national sales manager that works here on PEI and flies out of the Charlottetown Airport. We can do it from here. We have great connectivity to the rest of the world and additional investments in high-speed Internet deployment will only make this better.

I know of a wonderful company in Summerside developing a world-leading medical imaging platform. Now I think it's really important for me to say that again. It's a world-leading medical imaging software company in Summerside. So, we can do it from here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: I was involved in the IT sector in the 1990s during the .com boom. Maybe that's when bradtrivers.com started. I'm not really sure.

Speaker: Hon. members, you don't mention a member's name.

Mr. Palmer: But, that was a website.

Speaker: I don't care if it was a website.

Mr. Palmer: Okay.

Speaker: You don't mention a member's name.

Mr. Palmer: Okay. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Atlantic Canadians and Islanders took a backseat to no one in the IT sector in the

1990s. We're still well respected in the world, and for that matter, the Island work ethic is the envy of the world. Companies like Vector Aerospace in Summerside is the most productive location they have worldwide. The same is true for other companies on PEI.

We all know someone, be it a son or a daughter, cousin, neighbour, who would love to move back to PEI if the opportunity was here. We can do more to encourage this and this government is focusing on this by contacting Islanders living away and asking for their information and approval to have them included in a database. I know the local chamber of commerce will be part of this success and working with the chambers will make our communities even stronger. We need to get feedback from the chamber, and I do not expect a no-response from the chamber would indicate a hearty endorsement, as others may.

I know on my street in Summerside we have a total – I counted this this morning – we have a total of 23 adults living on my street. 16 have lived off-Island and have returned home. Some of these people are bringing new money into our province. They work for IT companies off-Island. They do contract work for international companies, and they work for national companies off-Island. This brings new money into our province. This money, which can be used for the things that we all know are important, as I have talked about before; health care and education, support for seniors – the list goes on. We all know they are important, but we're bringing new money into our community. We're decreasing the trade gap. Those are very important things to grow our economy, because we know the financial demands are there.

The people on my street work very hard. There are services they want, and they want our government to provide them, and we do what we can, as much as we can with the resources that are there. I was also informed that tonight being the 1st of December, the mayor of my street was in the gallery earlier today, has informed me that tonight the Christmas lights need to go on so I have to make sure that I have that on my list when I get home.

I'm also happy with the fiscal management of this government. This government has delivered the first balanced budget in a decade.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) a decade you were in power.

Mr. Palmer: So, maybe it's because I got here.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: It could be the by-election. That could be it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) new minister of finance.

Mr. Palmer: I think that could be it. It could be because of the by-election in Summerside.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: In good economic times, we need to work hard to get our fiscal house in order. We all must be aware of the financial position of our province; just as we all do at home. We know there are demands that must be viewed through a financial lens whether we like it or not.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) \$50,000 a day (Indistinct) payments on debt.

Mr. Palmer: We are all here to make our province a better place. We know the most valuable resource – the most valuable asset on PEI is our people and I'm happy that we're investing in the workforce.

When I go back to companies like Vector Aerospace, the IT company in Summerside that creates the medical imaging software, and a number of other companies, it's because we have the people. We can do it from here. We have the people with the knowledge, with the work ethic. We know that our people on PEI are hard workers. Again, we do know that many of those

Islanders living away would love to have the opportunity to come back home.

I'll give you an example of back in early 2000s. While I was away, and again, whining every day that I wanted to move back home, I remember being at work and going up the elevator with my boss one day and I had just come from the bank and my boss asks was I at the bank and did I get my mortgage all straightened out? I said: Yes. He said: Thank goodness, we're so happy to have you locked into a mortgage now so you Island boys can't move back home like you always try to do. They know. People in the Maritimes and Atlantic Canada know the work ethic of the people that are from PEI, and they know what a valuable resource people from PEI are. They're happy when they join the workforce in other places.

The more we can bring those folks back home, the more we can grow our economy and again, the more money we will have for education, health care, support for seniors. The more we can do that, the better we are, and I know we do have a lens on that.

Mr. Trivers: Self employment, income tax credit.

Mr. Palmer: Self employment is very important. Lots of self employed people will bring new revenue back into the province. That's a great opportunity for businesses here to cash cheques from people from Moose Jaw or from New York. We need that money to come back to PEI. It helps pay for our roads. It helps pay for all the things that we know are so important in PEI.

Mr. Trivers: Repatriation is key.

Mr. Palmer: Repatriation is the key. I've heard it said before –

Mr. Trivers: Me too.

Mr. Palmer: – how good repatriation is and how important it is to the growth of our community because those are the people that they know what it's like in PEI. They want to be back home in PEI. They remember the good times in PEI; their family is in PEI and they want to come back here to help us grow our economy.

I am happy this government is investing in our workforce. I am very proud of the EI program for students attending college and university.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: This is a tremendous program to encourage our youth. This program is available to students attending university off-Island as well. This is not just for local college or university. I know a few students from Summerside who have started to collect EI while attending school, and they are thrilled.

I know one young man, attending school off-Island; he's able to significantly reduce his debt now that EI is available to him. He recently purchased a laptop to assist with his studies. I ran into him when he was visiting at home last weekend. The opportunities that are available to the youth so we can help reduce their debt. So they can continue their education. So they can gain the skills and the education through either college or university, again, whether it's here or away.

Mr. Trivers: Four-month cycle co-op program. Minister of education (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: There are lots of opportunities, there are lots of models at universities and colleges for the students to go through and pick up valuable skills.

Young Islanders are our future. We know we need that – we know we need the population, the young population to stay here; grow, create employment, pay taxes. We need revenues in our province. We all understand that. We look through a financial lens when we make decisions. We know these – we know there are a lot of important things in our province. We wish we could do them all.

The more revenue we have, the more jobs we have, the more new money coming into the province will give us more opportunity to be able to do more of those things. It is a balancing act of working inside of our means and that speaks to the balanced budget.

Mr. Trivers: Tell us about import replacement.

Mr. Palmer: I can tell you about import replacement. Import replacement is an economic theory –

Leader of the Opposition: He must have wrote this speech (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: A good idea's a good idea.

Mr. Palmer: That's right; a good idea's a good idea.

Import replacement is an economic theory that we look inside of our economy and we look at items, we look at things which we currently have to import. So, then we look at those opportunities and figure out, how do we do it from here? How do we stop importing those and we start to do it from here? We can do it from here. We can then, we become good at it and we can start to export, which brings new money back into our province. The cycle continues.

As we are looking at theories like import replacement, the strategy of import replacement.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: The strategy of import replacement. We can begin to develop clusters in our community.

If we can find, we'll use an example close to Summerside. Cavendish Farms is a large consumer of power. Can we, as a province, help to find alternative energy sources for companies like Cavendish Farms?

Food manufacturing is the sixth largest energy consumer in North America. It's here, in our province. That is an asset. Are there ways for us to work with leading companies and work towards import replacement. See if we can find new ways to create energy for companies –

Mr. Trivers: Clean energy.

Mr. Palmer: Clean energy –

Leader of the Opposition: Trucking natural gas across the bridge.

Mr. Palmer: Then, companies can then grow around other companies.

For example, at Cavendish Farms again, in the food manufacturing business, and as I said: large consumer of energy. They have lots – there are businesses around PEI that become better and better because they're working for large companies like Cavendish Farms. Our welders, our farm machinery producers. That's not an accident. They're good at things here on PEI because we need those. Those import opportunities, import replacement opportunities are here.

The more we can work on those and focus on those and go through a list of those and find ways that we can do it here to decrease that trade gap. It's very important. Those can be huge wins for us, but we need to spend the time on it. It doesn't happen by itself. We need to do that work. We're doing the work.

There are financial opportunities now with a balanced budget that maybe we can invest into some different things. The opportunity to replace some of those imports. And to keep some of our young folks home, or to get some of Islanders to move back home are tremendous opportunities.

I expect we have lots of Islanders living away that have skill sets that we could use towards creating new technologies, creating new opportunities. The skill set of some of those people could even bring jobs back here to PEI.

I remember, again, back in the dotcom booms days, there was a gentleman from PEI that was working in California. Working for a very large company. The problem they had, in those days, was churn. Employees were leaving and they were going to work somewhere else. They'd go – they'd start in the morning and they'd go to an interview at lunchtime and they'd go and have another job by the end of the day. That was a constant pressure for those companies to try to make money.

One of those key software engineers proposed to the company: hey, I can move back to PEI. We have a terrific skilled workforce and I know seven of my friends that would all come and work in this division and they're not going to quit. They're not going to quit.

They were able to convince this very large multinational company to move on of their research and development committees back, or organizations, to PEI. They're working here on PEI. That has continued to grow. I think that business grew from six or seven or eight to, at one point, there were 80 people working there. I do know of the 80 people, I think, in the high 70s moved back to the PEI from somewhere else.

You can tell where that company was because you could drive by and you could see where their headquarters were because that was the office that had all the Harley motorcycles there. That had all the fancy cars there. They were being paid by a company in California and they were cashing cheques on PEI.

Those employees of this large company there were here on PEI, they went to university here. That, back in the day, they came out of university with huge debt. It took them years and years to pay for those; to repay that debt.

With great opportunities, they had to work for large multinational companies in their field they were trained for had allowed them the revenue stream that they could repay their debt.

Now, students from PEI can now collect EI while they're going to university. It would be a tremendous advantage for those people.

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, December 5th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, December 5th, at 2:00 p.m.