

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, everyone. Pleasure to rise and recognize those colleagues in the House and the visitors in the gallery and folks watching from home or on the Internet and, in particular, those from York-Oyster Bed.

On Saturday night last week, the community of York had its light-up annual event and well worth a drive to see a beautiful committee and you could keep going through to Pleasant Grove to Victor and Lucy Clow's and probably go to Grand Tracadie and make the loop.

I want to recognize, in the gallery today, representatives of our tourism industry in this province – great contributors to our progress and prosperity and, in particular, five individuals: Kevin Mouflier, of TIAPEI; Sandi Lowther; Louise Arsenault; John-Anthony Langdale; and Ian Cheverie. And we should all note that Ian Cheverie is wearing an emblem on each of his lapels that is internationally prestigious (**Indistinct**). He just received it on Monday night of this week. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, Sunday, December 10th, is International Human Rights Day to commemorate the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, of course, a particular moment of pride for Canadians and the role that our province played in achieving that declaration and in its continual respect and working to have it respected around the world.

I started out this morning at an event out at the cultural centre at the École François-Buote and the community event with the students, and parents, and the community members, including a major effort by Radio-Canada, and contributions to the food bank, and our own reporter here François Pierre Dufault made the commitment that he would

shave his beard if the donations reached not much more than they were when I was there, so I would expect the next time we see François Pierre Dufault here in the Assembly, we'll be down to one bearded member in our outside the rail.

Final thing, we may have good reason to have this on our mind before Monday – to remind all Islanders about the importance of winter tires.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As always, it's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the Legislative Assembly to bring greetings, particularly to those that maybe joining in over the television or the Internet and of course, to welcome individuals to the gallery. It's great to see a lot of individuals here from the tourism industry that I had the pleasure of working with over the many years that I worked in the industry as well – 27 of the best years of my life.

I'd also like to send out some birthday greetings today. There's a young gentleman that's turned 16 in Stratford-Kinlock today – Julian Kitson. Another great young man from Stratford and I'm sure the roads will be extremely safe with him out there as well because I know he's a great young man and very responsible. Also, Alec Blue from down in District 4, a good friend of mine, is having a birthday today; and our very own JoAnne Holden is celebrating a birthday today; and last but not least, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is reaching a milestone today here as well. He's yet another year older. Wiser? We're not sure, but older, yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: More wise than old.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to bring to the attention a very

special event that takes place in Stratford-Kinlock every year around this time, it's the Knights of Columbus, their annual Christmas seniors' tea and carol sing. It is taking place at Our Lady of the Assumption hall this Sunday, December the 10th, weather permitting because I understand the parting gift from the meteorologist on CBC Radio, Brennan, has left us with, potentially, a little gift coming Sunday, so be advised and be aware that we could have a little bit of a bump in our weather system this weekend.

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'd like to welcome everybody back and, particularly, the folks in the gallery this morning – some of our regulars, Eddie Lund and, of course, the MLA elect for District 11, Hannah Bell – Kevin Moufflier and all of the representatives of the tourism industry on PEI. Welcome here this morning.

In particular, this morning, I'd like to mention two friends of mine: Wilma and Dale Small who used to be residents of Kelly's Cross-Cumberland, District 17 and we can't say they moved on to greener pastures, because there's no greener district, of course, than District 17, but they moved into town and Dale and Wilma now live in Charlottetown, but remain good friends.

Wilma was an elementary school teacher for 35 years and her father was actually a Cabinet minister in one of the governments of Alec Campbell. Dale is a longtime, born and bred, Islander and he was a gentleman who's enabled and managed PEI's mussel industry – not, of course, a huge player in our economic prosperity here and he did that right from its very inception. He's also a writer and he contributes regularly to the *Red Magazine* and he recently wrote his first book and it's called *Bad, Bad Boys: Small Tales of Big Adventures*".

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, they are.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Contrary to popular belief, it's not about the Government House Leader and his brothers. No.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's a lovely, locally-produced book and it's full of really delightfully gritty and very funny stories and I would recommend it to anybody.

Dale is also the founder of Vision PEI, a group that is concerned about better politics on this Island, and economic prosperity, and environmental responsibility. I know Dale in many guises; he's a rabble-rouser, for sure. He's a fair golfer, but mostly he's just a delightful curmudgeon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is nice to welcome everybody here today. Dale and Wilma, the tourism representatives – much appreciate all your hard work. I was lucky to work with Kevin in a couple of projects in a previous career as well.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to wish happy birthday to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. I kind of thought he was getting a bit younger looking, but I was talking to the guys on the Cardigan Old-Timers Hockey Team and they can assure me that he is not getting any younger at all.

Mr. Myers: That's for sure.

Mr. MacEwen: Quite slow, apparently.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a warm thank you to the minister of the home and school association. They do wonderful things out there. Today, one of their members, Heather Mullen, is volunteering in the school to do a wonderful art project with the grade 6 class there –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEwen: – I think we need a lot of that in school. I know it is tough in these tight times to get that into the curriculum, but it is important and we do have a lot of volunteers and a lot of the teachers work this into the curriculum as well. I think it's an important project and I'm glad that she's doing that.

Speaking of the minister at school, I understand the minister of education sent out Parker Grimmer to Mount Stewart School yesterday. I'm assuming after that rain, he's seen the damage that's being done to the school out there. We have a wonderful Christmas concert coming up next Wednesday night and I am sure that the minister and Parker will have things fixed up or at least scheduled to go before that concert takes place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald and, of course, everyone in the gallery, especially the representatives from the tourism association: Kevin Moufliier, the CEO of course, and the rest of you.

But a couple of my constituents are here in the gallery today. It's a pleasure to have you here: John-Anthony Langdale, who's a good friend of mine and a longtime proponent and active member within tourism on the Island, longtime owner with Rustico Resort, golf pro. In fact, we play a little bit of old-timers hockey together and I try and slow down John-Anthony a little bit now and again. I wanted to wish him the best of luck on his new adventure, entering a new career coming up in January in real estate. I don't know, the Member from Kensington-Malpeque, better watch out, there may be a little competition there.

I also wanted to welcome Sandi Lowther, it's great to see you. Again, another person, who has worked tirelessly over the years in tourism in many, many respects, of course

Fairways Cottages is one of your mainstays. It's just a fantastic place. Thank you for being here today, it's great to see you. I'm sure we'll see you both over the holidays.

Also, wanted to recognize Hannah Bell, it's good to see you here, today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It certainly is a pleasure to rise to welcome all into the public gallery today. It's great to see the folks with tourism in today to visit.

Of course, Eddie Lund is back. My good friend Wayne MacMillan is here. I'd also like to make a special recognition to another friend of mine, Sandi Lowther, who is in the Legislature today.

Sandi, former resident of Sherwood; Sandi and my wife, Bonnie were next door neighbours on Heather Avenue there for a number of years. It's great to have Sandi here today. Her husband, Scott, is also a really good friend of mine. I'll suggest to Sandi that her and Scott spend some time together tonight, because Scott will probably be out trying to keep the lights on tomorrow night by the sounds of the weather that is coming.

I'd also like to say hello to all Sherwood residents that may be viewing in today. It's great to see a lot of them this morning at my visit at the Mount, so hopefully everybody there has a great weekend.

I would also like to wish my grandson, Emmett Mitchell, a happy first birthday. He's celebrating tomorrow in Halifax. I think they'll have a house full of people in for that. He is celebrating his first. I think the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, is much older than that, or seems to be some days. It's great that he's having a good birthday, today, as well.

With that, I know it's going to be a busy weekend in the Charlottetown area and I

hope everybody is prepared if they're out celebrating at a Christmas party tomorrow night, that they are prepared for the weather that is coming.

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'll be making a significant announcement later on after Question Period, but I'd just, as tourism minister, I wanted to welcome Sandi Lowther, Kevin Mouflie, Louise and Ian, and who did I forget? John-Anthony.

To know and see these people in action over the course of not one year, two years, but 10 to 20 years and see what they contribute to the economy of Prince Edward Island and the tourism industry is pretty phenomenal.

I'm certainly proud to be the tourism minister today, and likely any day, but we want to thank you for coming in today and we'll have a better announcement later.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm happy to rise to welcome John-Anthony Langdale, here, as well today, he's a friend of mine. I haven't seen him too much at the gym lately, more because I haven't been there, and he hasn't, I'm sure. I'm happy to see him here nonetheless.

I'd like to wish a happy birthday, as well, to the hon. member across. It's a good thing, I think, that he's sitting next to the fire chief because I hear there'd be a fair few candles on the cake –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: I have enough breathe to blow them out, though.

Mr. J. Brown: Happy Birthday to JoAnne Holden, as well. I'd like to welcome Dale Small here and to Vision PEI, I'm happy to have a smile on. I see Dale has got one on. I know Vision PEI is not always happy with that and sometimes would even like to throw us all in the fire, but I'll keep on smiling today and I hope Dale will, too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like, too, to welcome all those that are here in the gallery, as well as, those that are watching back in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness.

I especially want to acknowledge Kevin Mouflie and the tourism industry. I know the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism takes great pride in the numbers of overnight stays and things that are going on in the tourist industry, but I do remind him from time to time that I think a lot of that has to do with who was the minister of tourism in 2014 when there was a sizeable investment into the tourism industry with the great people involved in tourism in doing that. It was a catalyst to where we're at today.

I want to acknowledge a constituent that's in the gallery with the tourism industry association, is Louise Arseneault. Louise is a resident of the famous Howlan Road. I grew up with Louise, and I think she's here, actually, not only cheering on her MLA, but she, probably, taking a keen eye on the hard work that the Clerk does in the Legislature here, as that would be her brother.

I also want to acknowledge Dale Small. Dale and I go back a ways, too, back when Dale was involved with the shellfish industry. He was in charge of leasing, of which, I was a humble servant working drawing up shellfish leases and Dale was the manager there. I know Dale, really has a good knowledge of the shellfish industry for Prince Edward Island.

Also, while I'm on my feet, I do want to acknowledge the West Point fire department was formed 50 years ago and it will be celebrating and acknowledging 50 years of service to the West Point area. They're going to have a presentation on Sunday, if the weather is permitting, I'm hoping at the West Point Habourside Centre and I hope to be there to make that presentation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and welcome to everyone in the gallery; everyone from the tourism industry and thank you for all the hard work that you do for the Island.

It's a busy weekend, again, in District 4. Memorial United Church has a craft fair tonight and again tomorrow. The highlight of the craft fair, for me, and a number of people is the Mistletoe Café. You can come down and have a lobster roll, which is a great treat this time of year. It's down on Cape Bear Road and open this evening and again tomorrow.

We're hoping, maybe, on Sunday, if the weather is good, that we'll go get our Christmas tree down at Warren and Sandra MacLean's on the Pleasant Valley Road in Iris. He loves to visit with people; come down and pick your tree out. He'll cut it in the woods for you if you're in a hurry. He's already got some cut. He loves to visit with people. Come and hot chocolate, and they're great supporters of mine, and wonderful community members.

I'd also like to wish my seatmate here a happy birthday. I hope he gets caught up in his advent calendar this weekend –

Mr. Myers: I will.

Ms. Compton: – Happy Birthday to JoAnne Holden –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: – and also a happy birthday to Alec Blue, a great member of our community.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Only eight days behind (Indistinct)

Statements by Members

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

The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to draw attention to a program that I feel is very important. The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, also known as ASIST, is a two-day suicide intervention workshop presented by certified trainers. It is designed to increase caregivers' knowledge, comfort level and confidence in responding to a person at risk of suicide.

It was developed by LivingWorks Education and it is the most widely used, acclaimed and researched training of its kind in the world. The Canadian Mental Health Association, PEI Division, hosts two-day ASIST Workshops throughout the year at Murchison Centre in Charlottetown.

I had the privilege of attending this training with the MLA from Tignish-Palmer Road in October. It gave me a better understanding of how to appropriately respond to situations of suicide, and I feel as though I am a better-equipped citizen because of it. I learned how to recognize opportunities for help, how to reach out to someone and offer support, and how to link a person-at-risk with the appropriate resources.

Members in this Legislature have indicated their support for mental health, and as a visible commitment to the importance of mental health, I again, and I use the word 'again' because I challenged members of this Legislature before, so I challenge all members of this Legislature to sign up and

take this training. It will benefit you and all of those around you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Communities in Bloom, Tignish

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to stand in the Legislative Assembly to congratulate the community of Tignish on a national Communities in Bloom award.

Communities in Bloom is a Canadian non-profit organization that is committed to fostering local pride, environmental responsibility, and outdoor enhancement through community involvement and the challenge of a national competition.

This past September at the 23rd Edition of the Communities in Bloom National & International Awards Ceremonies in Ottawa, the town of Tignish was awarded gold in a Class of Champions Small Communities Category. That is a remarkable accomplishment for the town of Tignish.

A gold rating requires a score of 90% or higher. Tignish scored 908 out of 1,000 marks for tidiness, environmental awareness, heritage conservation, urban forestry, landscape and floral displays.

Tignish was specifically recognized for their tremendous youth involvement from the Tignish Elementary School for the planting of Vimy oak trees by grade 6 students. In addition to the excitement of winning this year, a national gold medal, qualifies Tignish to compete at the international level next year.

I'm looking forward to seeing how our town will continue to improve and bloom in coming years. I would like to thank all of the community members in Tignish, who helped achieve this award and for all the hard work everyone put in to maintaining and enhancing the natural beauty of Tignish.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Generation XX 20th Anniversary

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in this Legislative Assembly today to congratulate Generation XX, which is celebrating their 20th anniversary this year.

Generation XX had rather humble beginnings, but the founders of this facility were determined they wanted some place for the children of the Summerside area to be able to hang out and be safe.

Today, this youth facility provides, not only, a safe haven for youth, but it offers programs that help to empower them to make positive life choices and enables them to maximize their skills and potential.

The centre provides an after-school program, a drop-in program that runs six days a week and provides free hot meals; telephone and Internet access. Members learn cooking, cleaning, how to perform general home repairs, painting and general yard work. They also learn gardening and harvest fruits and vegetables in a community garden setting.

This centre has a summer recreation program, which allows 30 community families access to quality and affordable child care over the summer months. It's interesting to note that children are not allowed to use any electronic devices, cell phones or handheld gaming systems while enrolled in this program.

They also offer community interactive program where youth are encouraged to volunteer in their community and participate in community events.

These are just a few of the valuable programs and experiences that are offered through Generation XX. This facility has received numerous awards, including the International Fellowship Award for Youth Engagement.

These kinds of facilities impact positively, not only to the youth who participate in these programs, but the community as well.

Generation XX should be proud of the great work it has done to help children develop life skills that will support them throughout their lives.

Most of all, youth learn respect for themselves and for others. They start to see the potential in themselves, they gain self esteem and confidence.

I'm sure all members in this House will join me as I wish Generation XX the best in their continuing efforts and congratulate them on their 20 years of service to this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced how they plan cannabis to be distributed when it is legalized in just under seven months.

At a Premier's conference in Edmonton, this summer, the Premier of Prince Edward Island said the Atlantic Provinces were working to create a regional plan for cannabis distribution.

Regional plan for cannabis unsuccessful

Question to the Premier: Why were those efforts to create a regional plan unsuccessful?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I would have said in Edmonton is that we were looking for regional alignment in terms of how the four provinces approach cannabis distribution, legalization, moving forward with the timelines established by the federal government.

The believe it's the case that there is

substantial alignment and there will be a meeting Sunday night and Monday with the four premiers in Halifax. I believe that will be confirmed there, but everything seems to be moving in the direction envisaged this summer.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

At the time the Premier said the following: There is a very strong case for there to be a harmonized approach on things such as age and distribution and pricing for the four provinces.

Now, we see the four Atlantic Provinces have now gone in different directions on cannabis distribution. PEI and New Brunswick, through government-owned and operated retail stores, Nova Scotia, through the liquor stores, and we see that Newfoundland is going through the private sector.

Distribution models in four provinces

Question to the Premier: Four provinces are following three different distribution models. How is that a harmonized approach?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I would contend that we do, in fact, have alignment. We're all at the age of 19. The approach through distribution is through, essentially, the public sector, certainly in the case of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, our closest provinces. I remind the member opposite, and I think they'd be reminding me if there was some contention made that each of the provinces lacks the sovereignty to develop their own process with alignment with the other provinces. I believe that's what we're achieving and we'll continue to strive for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Looking at where the four Atlantic Provinces are going, it seems that, really, the only truly harmonized approach is the minimum age of 19. Keeping our roads safe is, of course, a very important element of legalizing cannabis and a concern, a grave concern, for law enforcement.

Road safety rules for Atlantic Provinces

Question to the Premier: Will there be a harmonized approach to road safety rules among the Atlantic Provinces, or is it going to be every province for themselves?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me pursue the point about alignment. The point from Prince Edward Island's point of view having alignment with the other provinces, is not to have an approach where people from Prince Edward Island leave the province to go and engage in whatever the regime is in the neighboring province. I would contend, in what we've done to date, that is exactly what we've achieved and that we should continue to pursue and there is, indeed, a harmonized approach to road safety – or certainly a collaborative approach to road safety among the four provinces – and that we'll continue working with law enforcement partners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The federal government has said that people will be allowed up to four plants, grown at

home, for personal use, but the provinces can set their lower amount.

Number of cannabis plants for personal use

Question to the Premier: How many plants of cannabis will be allowed to be grown at home for personal use by Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we said yesterday in our announcement, this was the beginning of the framework of how we are going to approach this legislation – to approach what the federal government have had presented to all the provinces in their decision. There's a lot of decisions that haven't been made yet and we haven't determined that yet, but certainly that'll be looked upon over the next coming months and we'll have that in place by the time our legislation is brought forward in the spring sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has had years to get ready for this, actually. And, in fact, the finance minister ran an online survey for a month as part of his public consultation.

Public meetings as part of consultation

A question to the finance minister: Why were there no public meetings as part of your consultation in this process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know we haven't been looking at this for years. We had to wait, initially, to hear from the federal government and we've got the

information we needed from them – there's still more coming. We felt that the online survey was a great way to reach out to all Islanders. We've certainly had responses, verbal; we've had responses, emails; and we track all of that information, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was a federal election promise years ago, so yes, this government has had time, and if they weren't planning, they certainly should have been planning for this. This is a major shift in public policy and I can't begin to believe for a second that you guys hadn't been thinking about this for a couple of years.

Public policy and online survey

Why, for such a big shift in public policy, did we decide to do an online survey for a month about something like this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure the Member from Morell-Mermaid that when the federal government made that announcement, that not only were we thinking about it already, but all Islanders and all Canadians have been thinking about it. There's a gap there between thinking about it and when the federal government formalizes it. It still had to go through federal legislation, bills had to be passed, and until such time as we saw what the federal legislation was going to look like, we had to wait to see that before we put our legislation into place.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct). Too bad you didn't have any friends in Ottawa.

Mr. Roach: And we did. We've received responses from approximately 3,000

Islanders. And in a survey, Mr. Speaker, that's a great response.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Meetings on cannabis legalization

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The finance minister talked about emails he had – people he talked to – did he go and meet with anybody on cannabis legalization?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did not have any formal meetings with anyone on this. We had two departments within government take the lead on this with respect to public safety through justice and health, and that was our primary focus in this and to gather that information, and we felt that the most appropriate tool out there, which is a big proponent that's pushed by the opposition constantly, was to do an online survey.

That way, our residents feel freer and there's anonymity there. They don't feel any pressure. They're not in any kind of a public setting. They can say what they wish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I couldn't disagree more. We did see two public meetings; one from a private member that was well attended, a lot of engaged people wanting to know more, wanting to put their ideas forward. The MP for Charlottetown held a meeting; well attended; a lot of people there. But, this government decided to not have any public

consultation. The minister hasn't even met with anybody about cannabis. How could you not meet with anybody and then go ahead and put this plan in place?

How is that even possible?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Apparently, it is possible. I've met with lots of people and I've talked to lawyers. I've talked to fishermen. I've talked to farmers. I've heard a lot of concerns about this and the number one concern was that this is legislation that's put down by the federal government and we have to respond to it.

The timeline on this, yes it's tough for the provinces. All provinces would have wished to have this pushed out further, but we have to move forward on this. We have to ensure that we have a safe product for our youth to go to, to take them away from going to the criminal element and to make sure that the product that they're receiving is free from other substances.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Tabling information from meetings on cannabis legalization

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now we're getting somewhere. Originally, we didn't meet with anybody but now we met with lots of people. Originally, the minister said that two departments were meeting with all kinds of people, too.

We've got lobbyist legislation that's coming to the floor of this House this sitting. I'm curious: Will the minister please table all the people he's met with, all the people that government has met with and the subject matter of those meetings with all departments? Will the minister commit to

bringing all that information back so we can see who is trying to take advantage of government in this idea?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, in response to that, the people that I met with – there's not one person who has asked me for anything other than ask me: Are you going to be able to do it safely? Are you going to have education on this?

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Are you going to protect our children and our youth that want to buy this substance? There has been none of what that –

Mr. Myers: You're not selling to children, are you?

Mr. Roach: – member is suggesting across the floor.

Mr. Myers: Why are you selling to youth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Meetings on cannabis legalization (further)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The finance minister talked about two departments that are leading the charge on this. I can only assume that that's health and justice, but interestingly enough it's the finance minister that's the point person on this. Guess what we're looking for here. It's all about the money if it's with the finance minister.

I didn't get an answer: Will the minister table all the people that he's met with, this government has met with, that have talked about cannabis and the subject matter of those meetings?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He doesn't have to assume those departments. I said those two departments, clearly, I think about my second answer.

When we went on the online survey, that's so people can freely give us their suggestions and their suggestions were accounted for. It was a great survey. Approximately 3,000 people participated, and I'm sure that every member in this House has had conversation on both sides of the House and I'm sure they've heard from parents, they've heard from concerned citizens as to how this is going to be rolled out.

I would suggest that almost every member in this House has heard about this and been asked questions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Tabling information from meetings on cannabis legalization (further)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the minister goes back to an online survey. That's our public consultation on this major shift in public policy. Yes, all of the members in here have been talking about it nonstop. The community has been talking about it nonstop, and the only chance they've had to talk about it is filling out an online survey. It's ridiculous; we should have public consultation on this.

Will the Premier commit today to tabling all the people that this government has met with, representatives, all the emails that the minister said, and all the subject matter of those meetings on cannabis legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) bringing in a lobbyist act.

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, let the minister answer.

Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Tell us how you're going to sell drugs to youth again.

Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also relied on our partners at the federal government level. MPs have had a public consultation here. They had a major taskforce, the federal government did, that went across all the provinces across this country when they were thinking about putting their legislation forward. They had a tremendous amount of information that they've received and we paid attention to what came out of those taskforce recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Number of cannabis retail locations across PEI

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Seven months is not a long time. Cannabis will be legal here in Prince Edward Island in less than seven months, and no doubt the liquor commission has been busy. They've got to have a plan about the business plan and moving forward.

Question to the finance minister: How many locations will there be for retail cannabis

sales and when will the tenders go out on those businesses?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Trivers: Get some facts here.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to that, I don't think there's a firm number of the exact number of stores, but we will be having locations across the province and I would hope that –

Mr. Trivers: No plan.

Mr. Roach: – considering that we want to get this moving and have everything in place by, I would say by the first of July, the end of June, I expect that requests for proposals, tenders, will be going out on the construction of the stores and the locations we have identified when that takes place.

Mr. Trivers: No plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Start-up costs for cannabis retail locations

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Launching a retail cannabis distribution network won't come for free.

Question to the finance minister: What are the projected start-up costs for the liquor commission to establish a retail cannabis network?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our people over at the liquor control commission have been working on that as we speak. We have identified a general set of plans of what the location will look like and we will be going out looking for the cost, obviously, for square footage on those

locations, and then we'll determine where those locations are going to go.

That's ongoing as progression and again, what we announced yesterday was just the initial framework of what this is going to look like. Islanders have been asking so we wanted to get to the people in Prince Edward Island about the key points about the safety –

Mr. Trivers: Going in the wrong direction.

Mr. Roach: – of this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

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

Length of time to recover costs on cannabis retail locations

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand it's the beginning of a framework, but not a lot of time. We talk about start-up costs. There doesn't seem to be an answer there. In the cannabis business plan by the liquor control commission, what do they anticipate it's going to cost, not only to start up, but how long is it going to take to recover the cost that they put out?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Do you have a plan? (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know we've looked at some of those initial – I mean it's early yet. We have to determine what the user capacity is going to be and I expect it will be sometime before we'll see a recovery of the costs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Revenue generated from cannabis retail locations

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, when you have a business plan you forecast how much you're going to make at this. Can you tell me what the legalization of cannabis is going to generate for this province annually?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Give us an estimate.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member from Belfast-Murray River seems quite concerned about the cost. The framework that we laid out yesterday, it's not about the cost. It's about the people who are going to consume.

Mr. Trivers: Did you do a business plan?

Mr. Roach: It's about having a place for those individuals to go safely rather than going to the criminal element –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) told them to go home is what he said.

Mr. LaVie: Age 19?

Speaker: Are we okay to continue, hon. members?

An Hon. Member: Okay.

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We don't anticipate, with this model, any amount of product that we expect may come forward. We don't – this is not going to be a profit-making venture. I would see some years down the road before –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – we can even get to the level playing field.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand, the province has been forced into this by the federal government, but there must have been a study and analysis done by government on the model that you chose.

Liquor commission's cannabis business plan

Will you table the liquor commission's cannabis business plan and any cost-benefit done on having a government-owned retail model versus a private sector retail model?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be clear. When the task force that the federal government used, the recommendation that came from that task force was not to use private sector model; the federal government task force, that went across the country recommended that it be government-operated facilities.

We have made the choice that we're going to listen to that task force. The information that they received we'll utilize that. Certainly, the work that we're going have to do over the next several months will continue.

I expect that things will move a lot quicker as soon as we get into the new year; get our RFPs out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In a media interview this morning the finance minister noted that the short timeline to get ready before cannabis will be legal. At the cannabis town hall, the government declined to attend this fall, Charlottetown MP Sean Casey didn't think much of the argument saying: It should have been surprise to nobody.

It was the subject of an election campaign two years ago. It's something that's been in the forum of legislation now for several months. I honestly don't have a lot of sympathy for the premiers who have indicated that we don't have enough time.

MP Sean Casey assessment

Question to the finance minister: Do you agree with MP Sean Casey's assessments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) there it is.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) now.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that everyone is entitled to their opinion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

The 2015 Liberal campaign platform promised revisions to the *Conflict of Interest Act*. The party promised to clarify the term personal benefit and to enforce and enhance post-employment restrictions on Cabinet ministers and senior officials.

Although, there are, indeed, new restrictions on senior officials, for which I commend you, you have not yet enhanced restrictions on Cabinet ministers. This is another instance of government approaching reform half-heartedly, and protecting their own insiders.

Campaign platform re: *Conflict of Interest Act*

A question to the Premier: It's been two-and-a-half years since you were elected Premier. When do you intend to keep this promise?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Third Party indicated, we moved within weeks of the 2015 election to extend conflict of interest regime to senior officials and to deputy ministers and appointed a commissioner of ethics and integrity. Those, indeed, were steps that were taken right away to act on that promise and to continue to study and learn about any further measures that are needed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

We can study and learn from the 2015 annual report given by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. He made a number of recommendations to improve the act by clarifying the language around personal benefit and enhancing the post-employment restrictions on Cabinet ministers, which is still not being done.

Implementing of Conflict of Interest Commissioner's recommendations

A question to the Premier: These are the same promises that you made in the Liberal Party platform, so when do you intend to implement all of the commissioner's recommendations?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members on all sides of the House will recognize, we are moving forward with a number of measures on openness and transparency and better government. We were on the floor last night with a

whistleblower initiative, which is a big step for this province. As some have suggested there is a lobbyist registration law, bill, that will be introduced soon.

If you look at the measures that have been taken, we are moving very actively, in all of these areas. Whether there's room for enhancement on the conflict, we may get to that because we have been very busy and we were here last night; spent the whole of two hours on the measures that are directed to openness and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Indeed, we did spend two hours last night debating a very important bill. But this government has had over two years to implement the Conflict of Interest Commissioner's recommendations.

He made many additional recommendations to allow members of the public, for example, to seek the opinion of the commissioner; clarifying private interest and requiring the act to be reviewed every five years.

These will all improve something that this government loves to talk about: transparency and accountability. But sometimes does not actually implement things practically.

A question to the Premier: You've had over two years to review these recommendations, will you be introducing legislation to implement all of the commissioner's recommendations in the spring, 2018, legislative sitting, or will I have to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Third Party, I'm sure, is well

aware; that he has the ability to introduce a private member's bill and has indeed.

This is something that we are well aware of; the commissioner's recommendations. We are acting on, I would say, it's on the order of eight to 10 fronts that we have acted on in greater openness and transparency. The commissioner's recommendations are in under active consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. New school enrollments show that more students than ever are learning French language in our schools. The French immersion population has reached over 5,000 students for the first time in the history of our province and the student population in La commission scolaire de langue française has grown by almost 10% to 944 students.

My boys, Ryan and Dean, who are now 27 and 24 respectively, were success graduates of the impressive and early immersion program at Spring Park School.

During the school, public school review, a new French immersion program was established at West Kent and we all know the hard work that is required to set-up a program successfully like teachers and proper supports.

Update of immersion program at West Kent School

Minister: Can you give us an update on the progress so far on the immersion program at West Kent?

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

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

Thank you, hon. member, for the question.

This program has progressed quite nicely, and it's something that I'm proud to say came out of the school review process and a lot of hard work by constituents of mine.

There are currently, 153 students that are attending French immersion at West Kent. Seventy-four students are signed up for French immersion in the combination of Spring Park and West Kent, which is up over previous years.

I'm proud to say that French immersion is offered to 383 students now between those three schools, which is an increase over past years, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When our children were ready to enter the school system, as parents, we made the choice and felt that it was important that both our boys were able to communicate in Canada's two official languages.

Quality of French language education program

Minister: What are we doing to ensure the high quality of our growing French language education programs, so that all Island children can converse in two official languages?

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

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

Thank you, again, hon. member for the question.

I was a late French immersion student myself, and I do have some understanding of the value that one can receive out of a French immersion education. I'm proud to say that we're working with our partners in providing French language education across all 62 schools that we have here on Prince Edward Island –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) no consistency in the immersion program (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – and we have –

Mr. Trivers: No consistency.

Mr. J. Brown: – new school opening up in Eastern Kings, along with a community centre. We've just –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – committed in our Capital Budget to a high school program out at *École-sur-Mer*. We have a crowd in Montague that is actively considering French language education there, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

French teachers for growing demand

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, many jurisdictions are struggling to recruit and retain French teachers, who are in high-demand across the country. With the increased enrollment in French language education on Prince Edward Island, what are you doing to ensure that we have enough French teachers to keep up with the growing demand?

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

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

Teachers are one of the most important facets of our education, and that includes our French language education and we're very fortunate here on Prince Edward Island to have a great program at UPEI in French language education. That has provided for a great partnership that has enabled us to recruit the numbers that we need to make our programs run. Unfortunately, we do not have any vacancies at the current time, but we are working on a program to recruit and

retain new, young teachers that are coming out, whether it be from UPEI or other schools and we work to ensure that our substitute teachers that are coming out have as much work as we can possibly give them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Cash not accepted at fixed link over night

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

It has come to our attention that the fixed link is no longer accepting cash between the hours of 10:00 p.m. at night and 6:00 a.m. in the morning. This greatly disturbs me because we have a currency act here in Canada that says: Legal tender is the dollar and it should be accepted by every business.

What is the minister going to do about this to make sure that this policy is reversed and legal tender, meaning the dollar, will be accepted at the fixed link?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly access to the bridge is very important. We were advised that there is a temporary –

Some Hon. Members: Pilot.

Ms. Biggar: A pilot, sorry. I couldn't think of the word – a pilot program going on right now with Strait Crossing in regard to those hours, but we have been told that there are no plans at this time to make it a permanent model.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Speaker: – your first supplementary –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. R. Brown: So excited about this. I want to get it (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Oh no. It really disturbs me, Mr. Speaker.

This bridge is, in essence, owned by the people of Canada. Now, I know that Strait Crossing runs it for 35 years and then it's passed over to the people of Canada. This is a federal government asset. This is an asset of the people of Canada and we have a constitutional right to get off this Island and to get on this Island. We have a constitutional right to this.

I believe this is a wrong policy because I'm thinking of somebody that has to go to medical services in Saint John or Halifax and they can't afford to stay overnight in a hotel in Halifax or in Saint John, and maybe they can't afford a credit card and their only means of getting to that side – to their appointment – is to use the fixed link and to pay cash because they have no credit cards.

How does somebody show up at 5:00 a.m. in the morning, have to go to a medical appointment, and they have no credit card. How do they get across the fixed link, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I absolutely agree with the hon. member. There is a contract between Strait Crossing and the federal government, but that does not supersede the right to any Islander to be able to have accessible access to leaving the Island, and that includes using all forms of payment mode. I want to ensure all the members here and Islanders that I will be following up to ensure that the federal government and Strait Crossing association are aware that we expect that all Islanders will have financial accessibility for access to the bridge.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for her efforts on this part, but I think that every member of this Legislature should be writing their MPs or writing the federal minister to ensure to protect their constituents because after all, this bridge is owned by the people of Canada and it is the federal government's responsibility to allow access to that bridge. The more I think about it, Percy Downe may be right: It's time to make it free.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to assure everyone that as minister of transportation, I will be writing a letter –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Biggar: – to the federal minister of transportation and Strait Crossing to ensure that they are aware that we expect full financial accessibility for all Islanders using that bridge.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Due diligence prior to acquiring land parcels

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of transportation: What is the due diligence done by government prior to acquiring any parcel of land on PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From time to time we do have to acquire land for construction purposes. Depending on that piece of land, we first set out to negotiate with the individual if it's private land to negotiate price, to come to an agreement on the purchase of that property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Upkeep on government land

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to see the government has some kind of outlook on that.

Back to the minister of transportation: What is the government's policy for maintaining and upkeeping any land that the province owns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, I believe the percentage of land owned by the province or by the Crown is approximately 5% of all land on Prince Edward Island. The rest of the land is owned by Islanders, as it should be. We are striving to protect land and any land that we own, most of it is purchased for construction purposes, so if the member has something specific he'd like to ask, I'd be happy to try and answer that question.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Maintaining environment on government lands

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: How often do government monitor parcels they are preserving and maintaining the quality of the environment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, there is a *Natural Areas Protection Act* which falls, actually, under the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. Anytime there is sensitive land that needs to be preserved, there is a process through the communities, land and environment to ensure that that land is protected. I know that that's a whole process that takes place through that department and eventually it comes into my department to sign off on that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Adverse effects of shoreline erosion and tidal surges on SCI yard

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've now learned that part of this might fall under the lands protection act under the minister of environment. The SCI yard in Borden-Carleton owned by IIDI is suffering from adverse effects of shoreline erosion and tidal surges.

Question to the minister of development: Are you aware of this delicate situation?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No. I haven't been briefed in any circumstances such as the hon. Member is talking about, but I can assure you that

we're in contact on a regular basis with the mayor and council of Borden-Carleton.

With everything that's happening in Borden-Carleton as of late in regards to the step program that they just finished and their ongoing development research that they're doing now for the town, it hasn't come up, but we'd be more than willing to have a conversation about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, this is following a patter with this government. They have no plan and they don't look at what they're purchasing or what they're going to do with it. There is a significant loss of top-cover which has exposed industrial waste – materials such as rebar, concrete that were buried through the bridge construction project. These materials are now surfacing and protruding from the banks onto the shores of PEI.

Minister: When can the local residents expect government to properly clean up this property?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: It's very ironic, Mr. Speaker, not too long ago the hon. member wanted me to open the gates and let everybody into the SCI yard and do as they require with no liability or safety concerns whatsoever. Coming from a former peace officer that would have been the first one to say: put the padlock on there and monitor that gate.

If we get a formal request from the town of Borden, or Borden-Carleton, we would certainly go out and take a look at it, in compliance with the other departments that would be involved in this process, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think the minister should try to blame the residents of Borden-Carleton in the area; they like to go down there and enjoy the scenery and the beaches the fish.

All this gravel and industrial waste material is now dropping down the banks onto the beaches and the shoreline below.

Question to the minister: When will you properly clean up the SCI yard and rehabilitate this land?

Mr. LaVie: One day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've had a great relationship with the town of Borden-Carleton, an open communication. In fact, I'm meeting with them next week. We've had all kinds of interest in the SCI yard. I'll be first and foremost to say that the opposition when we started, all they wanted to do is clean the yard up. Now, that they've seen some proposals and people coming forward with some real opportunistic initiatives in that area, whether it be campgrounds, and we saw one in the paper the other day, through the STEP program, through the federal government. Now, we're starting to see they changed their tune and say: Oh, gee, maybe this –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – SCI yard could be beneficial to our town.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) seeing the light.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) jump on board now.

Mr. J. Brown: Good MLA.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's not change gears here and get into some other area –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Fox: – we're talking about the environment here. We're talking about –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – protecting the environment. Local residents have serious concerns about this gravel and other waste materials that are damaging and suffocating the local clam beds.

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Mr. Trivers: Shame.

Mr. Fox: There is proof that this is also causing early winter kill.

Will the minister of fisheries, question to the minister of fisheries: Will your department investigate this matter and report back to the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The key word in the hon. member's mention was proof. If the hon. member would like to table something that alleges proof –

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – through a scientific manner, then, so be it. I mean, we're over here. We're environmentally cautious of

everything that we do and everything that happened on PEI. We'll be first and foremost to act on our responsibility as such with all the department that are invested in this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your final question.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're getting the minister of fisheries here won't answer a question, and we got no commitment from the minister of IIDI.

Question right to the Premier: This government needs to take immediate action and protect our beaches and our shorelines and address these matters. Will you order, today, Mr. Premier, a site cleanup and have fisheries staff on the shore today to look this environmental problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I'm very glad to answer any or all questions, especially with regards to the fisheries and agriculture. And, the industries are of so much importance to our province –

Mr. Trivers: Make sure you answer the question.

Mr. McIsaac: – we see the dollars that are brought in by those industries, helping us to balance our budgets as such. We have a terrific staff that look after all the shorelines, the beds, mussel beds, oysters, whatever it might be, our staff is on top of this issue and all issues such as this because we want our industry to continue to be strong and go forward and help the economy of this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

AED Registry

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Up to 40,000 cardiac arrests occur in Canada each year, or one every 13 minutes. Sudden cardiac arrest can strike anyone, anywhere, anytime and it can happen without warning and there are often no symptoms.

Defibrillation, when combined with CPR within the first few minutes, can more than double a cardiac arrest victim's chance of survival. A portable electronic Automatic External Defibrillator, or as better known as AED, evaluates a victim's heart rhythm, determines if shock is needed, and delivers an electric shock through the chest to the heart.

This past summer our government was pleased to announce that we would be supporting an AED registry for the Province of Prince Edward Island. With this registry, our new emergency medical dispatch protocol, 911 dispatchers will be able to direct the caller to the nearest publicly accessible defibrillator, and provide instructions on how to use it until paramedics arrive.

However, the database will only be truly effective if it provides a comprehensive map of all accessible AEDs across the province. So today, I am pleased to say that we have the system up and running and we are now asking Islanders, private businesses and community facilities to register their AEDs. Joining the defibrillator registry is voluntary and free, and can be done in less than five minutes online or over the phone.

Also in February, we'll be hosting information sessions for anyone who has questions about the new registry. We've made significant investments in emergency health services in recent years to ensure Islanders receive timely access to life-saving care, including a computer-assisted Dispatch system, rapid response units, and our new emergency medical dispatch protocol.

Despite the steady rise in callers to 911, the average ambulance response time for Prince Edward Island is very strong, at seven minutes and 15 seconds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Currently our response times range from four- and-a-half minutes in Souris to roughly 11 minutes in Alberton.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: This is a significant improvement, especially when you compare it to 2011, when the average response time was at best in urban areas was approximately nine minutes. As I said, seven minutes and 15 seconds is a very good time, but we know we can always strive to do better.

Integrating a provincial AED Registry into our emergency health services is another tool that will strengthen response times and in an emergency provide better the chances of saving the life of someone who experiences a sudden cardiac arrest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was writing down all kinds of nice, kind things to say here until the minister got up and started talking about ambulance response times at seven minutes and 15 seconds. I'm pretty sure the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road might have to say something about that. I'm pretty sure the member from the east here, the eastern caucus over here might have something to say about that.

Mr. LaVie: Questions Tuesday morning.

Mr. Henderson: Is this four minutes (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Questions (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: I'd like to see the statistics that don't drop the bottom 10%. That's the

statistic I'd like to see tabled in this House, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: We do need improvement on response times, absolutely, especially out in our rural areas.

The AEDs in our communities are fantastic. There's been more education coming on it. It's getting better and better.

Two things: One, people need to be reminded about the batteries and the pads in these systems. They do have expiry dates and they do need to be replaced, so we know there are a lot of programs out there that will place these AEDs into rinks or private businesses that might have been paid for, but we do need to make sure that they're up to date as well, especially if they're going on a registry list.

The registry list is fantastic, but that's more or less business hours we're talking about. I think there was a letter to the editor recently – or in Europe they have a private registry list as well, so that if someone had an AED in their home in a community and it was up to date, they could also register; maybe like a Google Maps type of thing. I think that is especially important, especially in rural PEI where the ambulance response times are not seven minutes.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: He'd make a great minister of health.

Mr. MacEwen: That's important because then someone can look that up and say: Do you know what? So and so on that street has an AED and to respond – maybe they're a medical first responder, or maybe they're a nurse or something like that.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) minister of health.

Mr. MacEwen: I think that's important.

The key is the public education on this and I would encourage the minister to look at also the registry for the private people in PEI as well, and I would encourage the minister to be very careful when he gets up in the House and starts talking about a seven

minute response time for ambulances, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Putting aside the embedded parallel statement on ambulance response times, and I appreciate the comments from the Member from Morell-Mermaid; this truly is a good announcement and AEDs – they're an extraordinary piece of technology. I still find it miraculous that anybody – you don't have to have any medical training, whatsoever, to use one of these things. They're just so brilliant.

I think this registry is a really big step towards ensuring that all Islanders can have better access and can be successfully resuscitated. It's knowing where these things are is one thing, but having them in good working condition is another, as the member said.

It's just a few years ago there was a young 16-year-old, actually, hockey player in Bathurst who died. There was an AED in the hockey rink, and there was such a long delay between him – you don't expect a 16-year-old to have cardiac arrest, but that's exactly what it was and these things may be there, but we need to know they're there and people need to know, again – they're pretty intuitive, but we need to know that they are there to help us.

The other thing I find moving about the issue of AEDs is it uses high-tech, cutting edge technology and it marries it to the traditional values of Prince Edward Island, of our strongly-knit communities and of neighbours helping neighbours. I love that. I'm really happy to hear that this registry is up and running, as the minister said, and I commend government for doing this. I commend all the individuals who already have registered and all those who will register in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Public Trust-Farm & Food Care

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

Islanders are becoming increasingly interested in how their food gets from farm to table. As Canada's Food Island, the food industry is a key contributor to Prince Edward Island's economy.

In 2016, our total cash farm receipts totaled over \$487 million. We support several events that celebrate and educate Islanders on agriculture, such as Old Home Week and Farm Day. As I'm sure the Members of the Legislative Assembly remember, last month we were pleased to announce the creation of the Community Food Security and Food Education Program, to create partnerships and networks that work toward community food security.

Now, we are pleased to announce the launch of Farm & Food Care in Prince Edward Island. Farm & Food Care is a coalition of farmers, agriculture and food partners and government working together to provide credible information on food and farming. The organization will be active in education, promotion, education, program development and consumer outreach and promotion.

Some of its planned activities include hosting farm tours and breakfast on the farm programs, assisting with distribution of the nationally-acclaimed *The Real Dirt on Farming* publication and more.

Prince Edward Island is the third Canadian province to launch the organization, along with the provinces of Saskatchewan and Ontario. We are pleased to join this good organization, and our department will invest \$100,000 in Farm & Food Care over the next year. It is also important that consumers have the utmost trust in Prince Edward Island's food system when making food choices.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries supports public trust through many programs and initiatives. We have environmental programs like the Agriculture Stewardship Program and Alternative Land Use Services Program to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, reduce climate change, and improve wildlife habitat. We have the Assurance Systems Program to address risks in food safety, animal welfare, plant health and emergency management.

In closing I would like to invite all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me after this sitting at Sobeys on University and Allen Street intersection for the official launch of Farm & Food Care. That's at 2:00 p.m. in the produce section.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anytime we have an announcement like this, it's a great announcement. I know our farmers are great stewards of the land. They are great workers and it's great to see a committee of all resources coming together and sitting at the table and coming up with these ideas; educating people where their food comes from, how it's grown and actually to even cook it in some of their programs. It's great to see government pushing this initiative for our farmers, to help out our farmers.

When you're having lunch today or supper this evening, thank a farmer, because when you sit down at a table to eat, I'm sure there is something on the table, on the plate that does come from a farmer.

I know I came from a fishing community and a fishing family, a fishing and farming community. I know back when I was a young fellow we always had fish and potatoes, fish and potatoes, fish and potatoes – which is good, because I love fish and potatoes and that's what grows our economy here on PEI.

So I want to thank the farmers, and I want to thank the government and his committee for

bringing this initiative together. I know I have a prior commitment at 2:00 p.m. Actually, it's before two, but I won't be able to make it out at 2:00 p.m. to your announcement.

I'm sure there'll be a crowd there for your announcement, because it is a good initiative to show, especially our kids, where the food comes from. Because most kids just go to the table when the supper's cooked and they eat it and they're out the door, so it's great to educate the kids, especially where our food comes from.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I welcome this announcement, and it's really important that we solidify and improve on the already high levels of faith and trust that Islanders have in their food here.

I think it's, however, really important, and the minister mentioned that there are two other provinces, Ontario and Saskatchewan, that are already doing this. In Saskatchewan – I'm not so sure about the Ontario program – but in the Saskatchewan food and farm care program, they don't only emphasize the high end, the large scale export part of this, they're also looking at the local, small scale dealing with issues like food insecurity of local people in Saskatchewan, and they're also concerned about environmental aspects of this, that this is more than just a public relations exercise to improve exports, but it's to do with the health of our communities and the health of our soil and air and water.

There are many aspects of the Saskatchewan farm and health care program that I hope we adopt here on Prince Edward Island as well. Particularly in the local context here, I'd love to see institutional buying being promoted more strongly by this government, connecting our local farmers with our hospitals and our schools and accessing all of the amazing local producers that we have here, whether they be homestead farms, organic farmers, CSAs, all of these amazing

local products that are available widely to all Islanders.

I think we under-utilize that; because first and foremost, the trust, the faith that we have in our food comes from a direct relationship with the farmer. If you go into the farmer's market and you speak with your farmer, with she or he face to face, there is no greater way to build trust than to do that.

So while I welcome this, and I understand that it's important that we support all farming large or small, I do hope that we don't forget about the small and the local and the food insecurity issues we have here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

One Million Overnight Stays

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last few years, the tourism industry on Prince Edward Island has set record after record; 2017 will be the fourth straight record year of the industry.

To top that accomplishment off, for the first time in the Island's history, industry in 2017 officially surpassed one million overnight stays.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: And we still have three weeks to go, Mr. Speaker.

The credit for this tremendous success goes to the accommodation owners, the campground owners, the attraction operators, the restaurants and the food providers, the cultural community and the thousands of workers; and of course, everyday Islanders who do so much to make our province the envy of so many in the tourism industry.

There are a few of those people here with us today, and I cannot fully express the gratitude I feel for your hard work, dedication and commitment to the success of

the tourism industry on Prince Edward Island.

The importance of tourism to the provincial economy and to the livelihood of thousands of Islanders cannot be overstated. It provides over 7,000 jobs and close to half a billion dollars in direct revenue.

Although one million overnight stays is an historic milestone, this is no time to rest on our laurels. As strong as our industry is, it is still susceptible to factors outside of our control, like weather, the exchange rate, gas prices, and a weak national or international economy.

It is vital that industry and government continue to collaborate on new ideas, new markets, new products and new ways of attracting visitors to Prince Edward Island. If we do this, it will help sustain the momentum and ensure our industry stays strong, even when external factors are working against us.

Together with industry, we are developing new, authentic Island experiences, expanding our culinary offerings, cultivating new and emerging markets, and we are taking steps to ensure the industry is managed appropriately.

I look forward to continued strong relationships and close collaboration to ensure our tourism industry remains mighty, much like our province, well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Really, this is a fantastic statement from the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. I echo his words as well.

The tourism operators and the people who work in tourism, whether you're cleaning cottages or whether you're out rolling the greens on a golf course or whether you're preparing food in the backroom of a kitchen, they're the ones who are making this

happen. It's really the hard work and the good planning of these entrepreneurs over decades that have led Prince Edward Island to this point. So, really a congratulations to them. A million overnight stays in one year; that is incredible.

Of course, the tax revenue that they generate, that is brought into this government, is so important to all Islanders to making our Island a great place to live, and so I want to thank them for that.

In fact, you almost could think of the tourism product on Prince Edward Island as being an export in some ways, because it really is bringing off-Island dollars right here to PEI and it's a good way to think of it. This government talks about our trade imbalance, imports versus exports, and tourism is an area that's not classified as an export because people are consuming a product or service on the Island, but in many ways they really help reduce that trade deficit, and I think they deserve the credit for that.

As well, being Canada's Food Island, that is a great initiative as well. The restaurants and the tourism operations on this island really go a long way in promoting Island food, and so in that way as well, they contribute to the exports of many types of food products from our Island, whether that be seafood, potatoes and others, so they deserve a lot of credit as well for that. Our tourism operators do so much.

They make a great effort, especially in the restaurants on our Island, to buy local food in support of each other. There are partnerships between our tourism operators. I see it all the time in District 18 Rustico-Emerald. I know a couple of folks in the gallery involved with partnering with their fellow operators and entrepreneurs. Their efforts to buy local keep money on our Island and really support local Island farmers and producers when it comes to food; and when it comes to construction, those sort of things, they're supporting local.

So I would like to see this government – and the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and I have had this discussion many times, and the Minister of Health and Wellness as well – I would like government to make a bigger effort to buy local as well,

in particular, when it comes to items like the provincial protein tender.

Once again this year, the provincial protein tender came out and it has direct references to off-Island companies as being preferred vendors; and if our tourism operators can make the effort, I think government can put forward the effort as well.

They're just fantastic; they're flexible, they're persistent. As the tourism industry changes we see an influx, for example, in house rentals, using tools like Airbnb, while our tourism operators are adjusting to that and they're making it happen.

I don't think it can be overstated, the amount of revenue they generate for the government as well, when it comes to taxes. For example, our restaurants, when people come and dine there, HST is collected by the government but if a person comes and stays in a cottage and doesn't go to a restaurant but buys food and prepares it in house, there is no HST on this food. So that's yet another way that our restaurants are contributing to our government.

The question is: What role should government play in supporting the tourism industry? As the minister mentioned \$500 million in revenue, so if you just take the provincial portion of the HST on that, that's 50 million.

Of course, the budget for tourism PEI is 14 million. But I would suggest; let the tourism operators keep more of their tax dollars that they're generating –

Mr. LaVie: Another good minister.

Mr. Trivers: – and let private industry look after things because they know what they're doing. They're doing a fantastic job of marketing Prince Edward Island.

The other things is –

Mr. LaVie: Call the hour.

Mr. Trivers: – let's –

Speaker: Hon. member (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: One more point I would like to make, Mr. Speaker –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: No, no.

Mr. Trivers: – and this is about infrastructure. When it comes to high-speed Internet and our roads, this is what tourism operators need. I can talk about Rustico Resort, in particular. There's a school that could have had a tower put on that to provide high-speed Internet, permissions weren't granted. To this date, I believe, that that particular business doesn't have reliable high-speed Internet.

It's great you're thinking long-term for Internet backbone, but we need to do something right now, and we can do something right now to help our tourism operators and all Islanders.

Millboro Road, The Island Honey Wine Company; here's a road that has a great business on it. Let's pave that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll wind up with that, but it's a great announcement and congratulations to our tourism industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: You took your time.

Mr. Myers: I have to be somewhere at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. R. Brown: That's the State of the Union (Indistinct)

Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

I just want to draw your attention to, I just want to make this point now, it's an opportune time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: We'll give you the time.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) rules.

Speaker: The opposition has equal time to the presentation, to the statement. If a statement is a minute-and-a-half –

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

Speaker: – the opposition has a minute-and-a-half –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) at least 10 minutes.

Speaker: The Third Party has half that time. Just a friendly reminder –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) five minutes (Indistinct)

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

If I have half of the hon. member's time, I can carry us right through to the next tourist season –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I also have to express slight disappointment that the Member from Rustico-Emerald didn't use the opportunity to burst into song again, on a parody on the *If I had a Million Dollars* of the Barenaked – if I had a million tourists –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I could, but I'm not going to. I only get half the time.

Of course, this is a great announcement. When tourism does well, all of those small communities, I represent a rural district and there are so many industries, and so many communities, so many small family businesses that rely entirely, if not largely, on the success of our tourism industry.

A million, I almost said dollars, a million overnight stays is a significant milestone to reach; clearly good for our economy, vital for our communities and also for so many Island businesses.

I'm going to stop there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) can't (Indistinct) our tourism industry.

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

Provincial Funding for Projects in West Prince

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Later this afternoon, I will announce provincial funding for several projects in West Prince aimed at attracting more visitors and increasing overnight stays to the area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: This funding will support a number of projects that will make the area more appealing to visitors.

It is vital that government partner with organizations like North Cape Coastal Tourism Area Partnership to showcase the beautiful North Cape Coastal Drive, enhance product offerings and help ensure that potential visitors are aware of everything that the region has to offer.

Our goal is to drive more visitors to stay overnight in the area to benefit accommodations, attractions, restaurants, artisans, and the regional economy as a whole.

We have, and will continue to make strategic investments in West Prince aimed at supporting the tourism industry in the area. For example, we partner with the community and the federal government on the creation and construction of the Stompin' Tom Centre in Skinners Pond.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: We've partnered with the Tyne Valley Oyster Festival to support the rock the boat concert –

Mr. LaVie: Looking after your own.

Mr. Murphy: We support Fall Flavours events throughout the area. We work closely with the Acadian and Aboriginal communities to ensure everything they have to offer is top-of-mind with potential visitors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, we are an Island innovative, hard working entrepreneurs, who know how to work together to make big things happen on Prince Edward Island. It's one of the things that makes us the mighty Island.

West Prince is no exception and I'm proud of what West Prince has to offer and am encouraged by the growth we have seen in the region in 2017. As the hon. minister of tourism just informed us, this year we hit a significant milestone in tourism. I'm proud of all the West Prince operators, who helped make our province a great place to visit to stay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be brief. Yesterday, or earlier in the week, the member talked about the eastern part of Prince Edward Island, so today we're going to talk about the western part of Prince Edward Island.

It's certainly a beautiful part of Prince Edward Island. I'm happy the government is making investment up there. I know they gave away the golf course to a different entity, who is going to operate it now, and hopefully after all the giveaway and loss of money that government has on that, that works to be a centerpiece of the tourism region up there.

For anybody who hasn't spent any time in the west, it's a beautiful part of Prince Edward Island. There's a beautiful drive that goes all the way around there. Nice scenery; great people, great places to eat. It certainly is a gem when it comes to our tourism industry on Prince Edward Island, and there are great hardworking people up there, so I hope for all the best.

The interesting part, I did take from it, that the minister is going up there to make announcements today that he's giving away money when he talked the east, he just

talked about the great businesses, so I don't know if we're not worthy in investing in down there, or there's not opportunity to invest –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – down there –

Ms. Compton: – on our own.

Mr. Myers: – but I certainly encourage the minister: come on out east, I'll give him a tour around and I'm sure we can find some places where he can spend some money down there, too.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, shall keep my comments brief. Of course, it dovetails beautifully with the last minister's announcement. How lucky are we to live in a place where so many people want to come and visit.

The initiatives that you're doing in, in this case, Prince County, are really enhancing the pull of this Island. People don't come here to eat Big Macs and shop at Best Buy. That's not why they come to PEI. They come here for authentic Island experiences. I think the minister previously used exactly that phrase. As long as we can maintain that distinctiveness that makes Prince Edward Island the special, beautiful, unique, gorgeous place that is it, and why we all live here, then these sorts of tourism initiatives are going to thrive.

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: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table eight photographs of Amherst Cove area showing

industrial waste, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

An Hon. Member: He was asking for petitions.

Speaker: No, I asked for petitions.

Mr. Fox: Oh! I didn't have my hearing aid in.

Speaker: Just hang on to it, if there's no petitions, we'll move to the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's try this again.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table eight photographs of Amherst Cove area showing industrial waste, 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.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a very extensive report from the Canadian Commission of Canada and it's based on e-mental health here in Canada titled: Transforming the Mental Health System Using Technology: a Briefing Document.

I'm tabling this today just with reference to the very important motion that we had on yesterday: Better mental health resource training for Islanders providing peer and self-help. The minister had said that we didn't have any evidence-based research in our motion. I want to assure the minister that, certainly, on this side of the House and with that I will be tabling this document.

Ms. Casey: Do you have a seconder?

Speaker: Yeah, do you –

Leader of the Opposition: 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.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Lobbyists Registration Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Clerk: *Lobbyists Registration Act*, Bill No. 24, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, could you give us an explanation as to what Bill No. 24 is?

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill establishes the framework for registration of persons engaged in lobbying public office holders. It provides for the appointment of a registrar and the establishment and operation of the registry. It sets out three types of lobbyists and stipulates the content of the returns that lobbyists must file; it defines public office holders and the activities considered to be lobbying; and it also has definitions including the persons and organizations not considered to be lobbyists. This framework has been designed to align with, and be consistent with, those of other Atlantic provinces and it's anticipated that it will come into force once regulations have been developed to support the administration of the act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Communities, Land and Environment, that the 10th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 10, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, Bill No.7, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the said bill of the day be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot if you would please come and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Palmer): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*.

Do you want to bring anyone on the floor?

Mr. Mitchell: Sure, permission to bring staff on?

Chair: Could we have permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

Good Morning. Could you state your name for the record please?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Thank you.

Samantha Murphy, Manager of Municipal Affairs.

Chair: Thank you.

Now I'll ask the minister for an overview of this, please?

Mr. Mitchell: Last fall the *Municipal Government Act* received Royal Assent in the Legislative Assembly, but was not proclaimed at that time. Several amendments are required now to modify processes and timelines with respect to upcoming municipal elections. A number of other amendments are also being proposed to clarify legislative requirements and correct inconsistencies with respect to legislative language.

These amendments will clarify requirements and timelines regarding certain aspects of the election process to support the transition to an all-day election process for all municipalities. It's also intended that these changes will ease the administrative and financial burden associated with preparing, conducting, and concluding elections for all municipalities, but mostly, especially, for the smaller municipalities that may be challenged by the transition to more modern and democratic election processes.

We have responded to feedback and we have worked with advice from Elections PEI on how to streamline these provisions and, therefore, we are here today to present those to you. Obviously, this act will be proclaimed by the end of this year.

Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Does the committee have any general questions?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you mentioned that this package of amendments is due to feedback upon further review of the act. One of the main concerns we had with the act is the ability of the

minister to go in and create new municipalities without input from the unincorporated areas. We made an amendment back when the act was initially on the floor. I was wondering if you've given any more consideration to that and then, perhaps, entertaining that sort of change to the act. I can read the amendment that we did.

We wanted to say that, in section 15(1): A proposal to establish a new municipality may be initiated by (a) the Legislative Assembly by passing of a motion; the council of a municipality; or a group of at least 30 per cent of the persons who meet the requirements of subsection and whose names appear on the accompanying petition.

Did you give any further thought to really taking the power of the minister to create a new municipality out and let the Legislative Assembly do it by passing of a motion?

Mr. Mitchell: Well obviously, hon. member, we're 12 months fast forward to where we were last year. It's no secret, of course, that there are several communities on Prince Edward Island already at a grassroots community level – are working towards larger regions. I've always said that is the best method. I encourage that. I attend meetings. We accept phone calls. We have face-to-face meetings on a near-daily basis with people that want to do things differently with the municipalities.

We see today in *The Guardian*, a great story where two existing municipalities are coming together to be able to better serve their residents; to be able to better meet the requirements of the new *Municipal Government Act*. This is not being driven by me, this is not being driven by the department, it's being driven by the communities, by the municipal leaders of those communities, by the residents in those communities.

I think, hon. member, that's exactly where it should be – not on the floor of this Legislature, determining how municipalities should look. I said that 12 months ago, and I think there's even more evidence that indicates that is the right process.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I think you're missing the point. The act does allow you to initiate the creation of new municipalities the way it is written right now. That's why we want to make the change so that if government wants to initiate the creation of new municipalities, it comes to the floor of the Legislature as a motion to be debated. Of course, you can take the approach you are taking, but also in the act, the minister has the power to create new municipalities and that's where we said we want the Legislative Assembly to be involved. We want it to be brought as a motion so it can be debated on the floor of the Legislature.

I think you're missing my point, but to answer to the point you did bring up, we are seeing problems right now with the process you're using because unincorporated areas do feel like they're not part of the process and we've seen that in Three Rivers. Right now they're in the process of holding their own plebiscite because they feel like they're not being included early enough in the process. Are you making any changes to the act to improve that and address these concerns that are coming out?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, hon. member, to the case that you are referencing, the Three Rivers area, obviously there were seven existing municipalities that were looking to come together, and areas that are serviced by those municipalities within their fire districts.

The steering committee – and it's logical sense and I'm sure you will agree, when you have a time to think about it, the municipalities that exist today, the councils are elected by the residents. The unincorporated areas do not have a municipal council that was elected, but they did have –

Mr. Trivers: They have an MLA.

Mr. Mitchell: – representation on the steering committee that was decided at a public meeting but not through a full electoral process. Therefore, the process has to unfold where the existing municipalities decide within, first of all, their residence; second of all, within their councils do they want to move forward. That, as I said earlier

on the floor of the Legislature, three of the now existing six have decided – they've held opinion polls, they've decided through the residents that that's something they want to pursue with.

Now, the councils have to meet to decide as a council that's what they want to move forward with because they are the elected representation of those people that live in those areas, those municipalities. Three more have to decide what method they are, and then at that point in time, we will work with the unincorporated areas to determine: Okay, we want you to feel that your voice was heard effectively, what measures should that be, and then begin that process.

Do I, as minister, want to ensure that everybody is comfortable and pleased with the process? Absolutely, I do. But, when we get to the part of the process where the work needs to be done, that's where it will be. As I said earlier, if any of the municipalities that exist today decide: We're out, this is not for us. Then, this thing would end at that point in time. When we get to the point where those unincorporated areas want to feel comfortable that they had their voice and concerns heard, and that's exactly what I want, that we established a method to do that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the process does appear to be a little bit flawed and you're sort of putting the cart before the horse. You're doing all the work with the steering group, with members on the steering committee that have to sign confidentiality agreements. It's a closed-door process, and you're saying you're going to do all the work. You're going to go through all the work to get things to a point where you're ready to include the unincorporated areas, but then if they say they don't want to be part of it you're going to shut down the process.

Why don't you speak to them upfront? Like what is happening right now with the existing municipalities is they're holding their own plebiscites to make sure they want to go ahead with this. That's democracy in action.

The only one who has elected representatives of the unincorporated areas are the MLAs and of course that's why we've asked you for the ability, the supports to hold plebiscites in those unincorporated areas. Let's find out before you go through all that work. Of course, there's a lot of stress to the areas and the people and uncertainty, so if you have that consultation up front, then I think it would be a much better process.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, that process was forthcoming.

Indeed, every municipality and the unincorporated areas had representation so it was well known that this was the path of looking at a bigger, better region. I know you all believe in better, obviously, so therefore, it was determined that this is the way to go forward. Then, the next part is you do a feasibility study. Does it make sense? Is this the right fit? Is this the right group? Are these the right people? Then you do that part. When you have that completed – and that's not something that's done overnight, I'll guarantee you that. It's a lot of work to establish where you are financially as a municipality and what would the new region look like? What is the population numbers? What are the areas of services that are going to be needed, including fire, including maintenance services for street lights, for walkways and sidewalks and all that?

This is not a short process. This takes time, and as we saw, it evolved over a length of time. The next stage is you take that and you present it to the councils, the elected councils which was done. Then, the next stage is you present it those that live in the unincorporated areas.

I've got to commend the steering committee; they did a massive amount of work. The presentation that I saw, and I know the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters was in the room at both times, they presented a full outlook and picture of what it will look like for this region if this comes together.

I indicated that is as important as anything to me, that everybody gets to see this presentation; gets to hear this presentation, gets to go away and think about the presentation and make a really good

decision of: Is that a future that I want to be part of? Is that a future that I want for my children and their children? Then, make that educated decision of: Yes I'm in, or no, I'm not. Not to just go to a ballot box and mark something when you don't have the full picture. This is part of that process, and we're moving along with the process.

The next part will be three existing municipalities will decide what they're doing, and the next thing will be to determine how the unincorporated area and residents that were in this gallery the other day, have a comfortable feeling about how their voice was heard.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I think you've hit the nail on the head. The steering committee is critical to the process you've chosen and the municipalities have representatives on the steering committee that are chosen democratically because they have a democratically-elected representation for the municipalities. They have councils. They have chairs of the councils that are able to choose representatives to be part of that steering committee, but the unincorporated areas don't the way it's set up right now.

Mr. Mitchell: But they did. They had full representation on the steering committee.

Mr. Trivers: How were those representatives chosen?

Mr. Mitchell: At a public meeting.

Mr. Trivers: See, and this is the problem.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Mitchell: It's not a problem, that's exactly the process how it should unfold.

Mr. Trivers: The people who are elected to represent the unincorporated areas, the only ones are the MLAs of the province –

Mr. Mitchell: No, they had (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – and they should have the input as to –

Mr. Mitchell: There were four members on the steering committee from the unincorporated areas elected at public meetings by the residents that came to the meeting.

Mr. Trivers: See –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I disagree with your approach.

I think you're bypassing the democratic process.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah you are.

Mr. Trivers: What you should be doing is coming to the MLAs who are the elected representatives of everyone there through an official democratic process. You have a public meeting and you have a 10% or a 5% turnout and they choose people to put on their steering committee, that's choosing the critical path for that unincorporated area. That is not right. The MLAs speak for those people and they need to be involved, and that is the point we're trying to make.

Mr. Mitchell: Obviously, each and every one of you believes in better. That was a phrase you were very involved in recently.

This is about better regions, about stronger futures.

Mr. Myers: No, it's not.

Mr. Mitchell: If you believe what you're saying, then you would be part of informing the unincorporated residents about the virtues, the reasons, the good outcomes, rather than encouraging –

Mr. Myers: I thought you weren't driving it. Now you're driving (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: I'm the minister. Am I supportive on what's going on in Three Rivers? I absolutely am. I will not hide or disguise that. I fully support because I know in order for municipalities to be sustaining in the future, things like this have to happen. I am in support of the work that's going on

down there. I would appreciate it if you were supportive of the work that's going on down there.

Mr. Mitchell: Minister, this is not a matter of whether –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

This is not a matter of whether we support any given set of proposed amalgamations and annexations. This is about the process and whether it's democratic and whether the unincorporated areas, any given area, have proper representation that has an official democratic underpinning. The unincorporated areas, the only elected officials they have are the MLAs in this province, that's why we proposed our amendment when this act was on the floor last time and that's why we're still talking about this flawed process.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member –

Mr. Trivers: The unincorporated areas do not have democratic representation on the steering committee. (Indistinct) the process that got the representatives there doesn't follow the rest of the democratic process like the municipalities do, and that's the problem. That's the criticism and that's why I was hoping *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act* here that you're bringing forward might address those and I'm disappointed it doesn't.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, this process is not completed yet, so I have no idea how you can say this is not a democratic process. This has been a very democratic process and will continue to be moving forward.

The people of the unincorporated area will have their opportunity to have their say. I want them to be comfortable with what moves forward. I absolutely do. Therefore, the process is not done, so how can you say it's not been democratic? It's been completely democratic and will continue to be democratic til the end.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, we're hearing from people. We're listening to the people –

Mr. Mitchell: I hope you do listen to the people.

Mr. Trivers: – and if you choose not to listen to us, and not listen to the people: that's up to you. I'm raising it here for the record.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, I am meeting constantly with people from your district, your district that all feel this is something that we have to move forward with in order to have sustainable futures for our communities, our children, our Island. I'm listening to people from your neighbourhoods today and I hope each and every –

Mr. Myers: I'm listening to mine –

Mr. Mitchell: – you are –

Mr. Myers: – too. Are you telling me that I'm not listening mine?

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You tell – no, you tell me that when I go down to the grocery store –

Chair: Hon. member!

Mr. Myers: – and the people that are talking to me are lying to me?

Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Myers: Give me a break! You don't speak for –

Chair: Hon. member!

Mr. Myers: – the people of my district!

Chair: Hon. member. Come through the Chair, please.

Mr. Myers: It's ridiculous. It's ridiculous when I hear you say –

Chair: Hon. member will you –

Mr. Myers: – that –

Chair: – come through the Chair, please?

Mr. Myers: I will, really Chair, I have question then.

Chair: You're on the list.

The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road –

Mr. Myers: If you want to make this a big fight (Indistinct)

Mr. Perry: My question is: This amendment that we're discussing today is just on how councillors are elected, is that correct?

Mr. Mitchell: The changes –

Mr. Perry: This bill, this particular bill –

Mr. Mitchell: – to the bill are related to the municipal elections that are coming up in the fall.

Mr. Perry: Okay, and that's all this bill –

Mr. Mitchell: That's what the changes are here, specifically –

Mr. Perry: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: – with a few others. I'll let Sam do the technical.

Mr. Perry: But primarily it's elections, is it right?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Yes.

Mr. Perry: Okay.

In your discussions throughout the Island with communities, what were some of the concerns that incorporated communities had with the change?

Samantha Murphy Manager: The majority of the changes relate to the length of time for a nomination period, which would also have an impact on the length of time for an election office to be open.

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Samantha Murphy Manager: And then the amount of time needed to count ballots and undertake a recount at the end of the process.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

Primarily, it's a cost to the municipality that they're concerned with?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Cost and capacity and the amount of time that you'd need to have officials in place.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

How are councillors presently elected?

Samantha Murphy Manager: With cities and towns, presently, they're elected through the standard all-day election process with advanced polls.

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Samantha Murphy Manager: At the community level, it's a special election meeting with nominations from the floor, and a very brief special election meeting that might last five minutes depending on the number of nominations brought forward.

Mr. Perry: So, can you –

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

Can you just tell the House how this change will be better for these smaller incorporated communities?

Mr. Mitchell: You go ahead.

Samantha Murphy Manager: The *Municipal Government Act* as presented last year already included procedures for all-day elections and advanced polls so that any member who wished to present, any resident who wished to present as a candidate had ample time to present, and to ensure that

anyone who wished to vote had enough time to vote.

That procedure was already put in place with the original bill. The amendment addresses the amount of time for nominations. We had the nominations beginning in September. This moves it into October. It's a more reasonable timeframe.

When we started working on the regulations we realized that some of the processes could be shortened to keep everything more efficient.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Also, hon. member, for the smaller municipalities that, in the past, you know, have had uncontested –

Mr. Perry: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – elections. That still would be the same. There would be no full election day process, if that was the case where they were uncontested.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Chair.

That was my next question, so you answered it.

Thanks.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I wasn't going to get involved in this debate until I sat here and listened to you basically call the people in the unincorporated area stupid –

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member –

Mr. Myers: – no, they – do I have the floor, Chair?

Chair: You have the floor.

Mr. Myers: That they weren't smart enough to make an informed decision on amalgamation. That they couldn't have a vote because they didn't know enough. What really strikes me funny is that the

communities that have had a vote have had the chair of the committee who's trying to push this through speak of the virtues of amalgamation and then let people vote right away.

I don't think, for a second, I don't think for a second that trying to skew the results of a vote by bringing the person in who wants it prior to the vote. That would be like letting the Premier speak during an election and no one else, and then voting. That's basically what you're doing out there.

Then, to come to the House and have the audacity to say: I'm one of them. So, I live in an unincorporated area outside of Cardigan. I don't want amalgamation. Are you saying that I'm not smart enough to make an informed decision?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Not at all, hon. member.

All I'm saying is, this has been a democratic process and we continue to be. What I like and as I said in conversations with you: I want everybody to be informed. I want everybody to be communicated. I want everybody to see, you know, what this means.

The method of doing that is just as important as whatever, you know, whatever kind of vote there is. You and I have had this conversation before. That's all I mean.

I do. I have been receiving calls from all areas of Prince Edward Island from people that say: I think this is the right path. How can I get involved? Where should I do? That's all I'm saying. I'm certainly not indicated anything towards where you stand on this.

I do know there are two conversations. That's great. That is democracy. I've said that on the floor of this Legislature already this – last week. All I'm looking for is for the process to continue so that three more municipalities can determine where they want to go with it. If they decide they're wanting to move forward, then it moves to the next process where unincorporated folks will have the opportunity to have their say, indicate their wishes, but, at the same time,

hear, or get to see what the presentation, or the virtues are, as you said.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

If you read the financial statements that were presented around, and I wasn't going to get into this. I wasn't actually ever going to get into this, but I'm angry now.

Mr. Mitchell: It's funny, you're into it.

Mr. Myers: No. I have never pushed against this. I've only pushed for vote. I've never pushed against it. I haven't been out in the street pushing against it, but I'm going to. I'm going to start pushing against this because you basically called me stupid. You said I was too stupid to make an informed decision on this, and I'm not.

The rink in Montague, on their financial statements show that it's going to be a revenue generator; loses \$50,000 every year. It's not a revenue generator. How can I possibly make an informed decision when the facts aren't even the correct facts?

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, there is a considerable amount of work that went into that presentation through the consultant, through the work of the steering committee, through the work of others within the community that have been strongly working on the process.

I certainly don't dispute their facts. If you dispute their facts, then I would suggest that you get a hold of the chair of the steering committee. Set-up a meeting with yourself, the consultant that was a part, and to say where – compare your numbers to their numbers. That's not my role. But if you do dispute that, that is what I would suggest you do.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Back to my point about how the other communities voted. The fact that the communities voted right after getting a presentation from the chair of steering

committee telling them how great this was going to be, in my opinion, doesn't serve democracy well, at all.

Add that to the fact that you have made no effort at all to give a mechanism for the unincorporated areas to have a vote, which I am going to do to. We are in the planning processes now and will have an announcement here shortly when we're going to – I expect you to honour their wishes, too. They're going to come out with a very, very strong voice and you will see.

My issue is, is that, number one, I don't think I should have to do this, this is, really falls into your jurisdiction. I think there should be – the more I hear from people, who live in incorporated areas and who are at some of these votes, the more I think that there needs to be a vote at the whole region together that's run in a professional manner. That's not, basically, some old school teamster-style meeting where they, basically, is what it appears to be; some sort of a teamster-style meeting where they tell you: Here's why you need to vote for us, now, go vote for us. That's what they did. I have letters from people stating those exact things, who attended those meetings. I am appalled that that's the case.

Do you know what drove it home for me, was in the *Eastern Graphic* this week, another one of the jurisdictions has announced that they're going to have a public meeting, and they're going to have a vote on the Three Rivers amalgamation. Right in it, it says prior to the meeting it's going to have a presentation by the chair of the steering committee. And you're in here boasting about democracy and telling me that I'm too stupid to make my own decision? Boy, I'm telling you, one thing I wouldn't do. One thing I wouldn't do is challenge me to challenge you on this issue because that's exactly what you did. You're going to find out what a mistake you just made.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, you know, as the minister I needn't predict or control the outcome of what's going to happen in Three Rivers. I certainly support it. I certainly support the work that the steering committee has done. I saw the presentation. I thought it

was a really good presentation of how the future of that community could look. But I don't run it. It's being run by the communities, I'll say, the grassroots of the communities on a vision moving forward. I do not predict, or I do not control the outcome of how this will be determined. If the residents of the community think it's not for them, so be it. I'm not trying to control the outcome in any way, shape or form.

What I simply am encouraging the community to do is to get out, to inform, to educate, and to communicate with the residents of all of that 7,770 population area to tell them exactly why you're doing this, exactly what it means, and at the end of the day, the outcome will be what the outcome will be. I'm certainly not directing anything. I'm certainly not controlling anything, but at the end of the day, I want everybody to feel that they had their say in the way they wanted to have their say.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I just want to draw out a picture here. I'm in a unique situation. If you look at District 19, I have Summerside – I represent part of it and then, of course, I have Bedeque, then I have Kinkora, I have Borden-Carleton, I also have half of Crapaud. I just want to let you honestly know that since the bill came to the floor a year ago – whenever it was – I have never yet met one person in the area that was for it or tried to lobby towards it except for one individual, Bruce MacDougall.

He was the only individual that said: This is a good thing for rural PEI. But across the whole District 19, not one person in those unincorporated areas, or even in the incorporated areas of Kinkora, Borden-Carleton, Crapaud and them – actually said: Jamie, this is a good thing and we need to get the unincorporated areas on board.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: I had the opportunity, and I was very pleased, to be able to go to the meeting in Albany that night and you were on the stage and I was at the back of the room and I was having conversations at the back of the room with many in the room who said to me – and there's no reason for them to say it to me if they didn't really believe it, but – that the process that we were there for that meeting for was wrong. I kind of agree that I don't like the process where they get a letter in the mail saying: You're going to be part of this municipality and that's the way it is. I said to them at the back of the room: But there are other things in works. And they said: You know what? I'd be interested in hearing that in a presentation form about what it would mean to us. So I was encouraged by that at the back of the room that night.

I'm not contradicting what you're saying, but I think if the process was – and I'm going to refer back to the three – if the process was the same as that process, I think many people would be very interested in hearing about it to see what it would mean in the future to look at it openly, in a different way than there at that meeting that night and maybe, at the end of the day, they'd think a little different. Like I said, I'm not trying to predict any outcomes, but I'm trying to aid municipalities to become better sustainable, to become stronger, better, bigger – I guess for the lack of other terms to say – and to work with them on that.

But certainly, I think the way the process is going down east with a full presentation of: Here we are today; this is what we're moving to. It's viable, it's sound, and it's sustainable. Come have a look at it. If we went through that process there, then maybe others that may be interested in taking a look, anyway. That's all I would suggest.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Those are fair comments.

Thank you very much.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Just one question: Minister, is it up to the municipalities to talk to the unincorporated areas?

Mr. Mitchell: Is it up to the municipalities?

Mr. LaVie: To talk to the unincorporated areas to get them on board?

Mr. Mitchell: We've been suggesting neighbors talk to neighbours. Who knows those areas better than those that live there? Who knows people better than those that have lived there for a long time and know each other to say: What are our commonalities? And I've said it before, where do we go to school? Where do we go to the rink? Where do we go to church? Where do we buy our groceries?

Those are areas of commonality that I think are important when you're building a sustainable municipality or a sustainable community in the future. That's what we've been suggesting all along: Talk to your neighbours to see where are the areas of commonalities, what you envision for the future, and begin those talks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

So what you're saying is it's up to the municipalities to talk to the unincorporated areas to get them on board to pay more taxes and they've got to sell this.

Mr. Mitchell: There are areas of PEI right now where work is being done to look at populations, look at maps to see what makes sense. Some of them involve unincorporated areas, some of them are having good discussions, obviously, as I said. The process that's going down east is a good process. That process could fit anywhere. It's not an easy task, obviously. If it was, it would have been done 30 years ago. We wouldn't be talking about it today. So these are things that are just opening up conversation, begin discussion, talk about where we are and where we think we should be – where we'd like to be. That's how it just gets rolling. The rest of it just can come naturally, but it will take time.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: But to say that the unincorporated areas use the rinks, use the churches, use the roads – I go to church in Charlottetown; I go to the rinks in Charlottetown; I drive the roads in Charlottetown, but we're not all one community here. So, how do these municipalities go out and settle this? How do they sell it to the unincorporated areas?

Mr. Mitchell: I'll refer back to the Three Rivers presentation that I saw.

The way the structure was going to be, some municipalities were reducing their taxes, some were increasing, but if you looked at the unincorporated areas, it was five cents per hundred, so basically, just for simple terms, if your property was assessed at \$100,000, it would be \$50 a year. It's not like – I know people, some are saying: It's thousands and thousands of dollars. It's \$50 a year for that example down there. Now, each example could be slightly different, so I certainly wouldn't want to reference your area because I don't have the full context of it, but down east it was five cents in an unincorporated area per hundred, so that's \$50 per 100,000.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

No, it's easy for us to say: It's only \$50. It's only \$50, but there's a lot of people out there who are not only \$50 and I'm probably paying 27% and the unincorporated area's probably paying nine cents and even if you doubled them up to 18, that's doubling his taxes. That's doubling it. So –

Mr. Mitchell: Therefore, there has to be a good reason.

Mr. LaVie: – \$50 is a lot of money to somebody that hasn't got \$50.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right. So there has to be a good reason for that –

Mr. LaVie: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: – individual to say: I'm in –

Mr. LaVie: Exactly.

Mr. Mitchell: – or I'm out. And I'm fine either way. It's just a matter of listening to what's being presented and say –

Mr. LaVie: Just one more.

Mr. Mitchell: – You know what? That makes good sense to me. I can appreciate that. \$50 is reasonable per year – I'm in, or it's not – I'm out. That's what I want people to have to see the full picture of what it could look like. That's all I'm suggesting.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Yes. I understand that, but to double his taxes, you've got to give him something for it. You've got to give him something back.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right.

Mr. LaVie: We're driving on the roads. I'm using your rinks in here. Or they're using it in my municipality. You're doubling their taxes. What are they getting for their taxes?

Mr. Mitchell: So that's where the sustainability piece comes in. If the community that you're doing that now – if you're driving into a community to use the rink, or use the ball field, or go to the store – if that community declines, declines, declines, declines then it doesn't exist. So now what are you going to do, right? So it's about thinking 30 years out the road and in your case, it's Souris. Well, will everything in Souris be there in 30 years if something doesn't change? I don't have the answer to that.

Mr. LaVie: Kick the MLAs out.

Mr. Mitchell: That's why the consultant – they do that long-term vision to determine: This is what can be here if you're part of this. This is what it's going to look like if it doesn't happen.

That's where the person has to say: I want to be able to go to the hospital 15 minutes away from my home. I want to be able to go get groceries 10 minutes away from my home. If that community doesn't exist in 20 years time, they're driving to Charlottetown,

or they're driving to the next bigger – Summerside, or wherever the next big municipality is to get those services.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

So, say if we did – all the outside communities came together with Souris – I'll use Souris because I'm from there –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: – will let up our tax bases? Will that give the municipality more because the tax now from the government is based on your population, right?

Mr. Mitchell: That's right.

Mr. LaVie: So, will this double it?

Mr. Mitchell: Like I said, I don't have the numbers for what – you would have to do a feasibility study to break all of that down. Again, if you go back to the other one –

Mr. LaVie: Shouldn't you do that first?

Mr. Mitchell: That's right. That's where you decide, you know –

Mr. LaVie: People should know –

Mr. Mitchell: – (Indistinct) something. First of all, you say: We want to do something. We agree it's not sustainable if we don't do something. Then, you determine: Who should we talk to here –

Mr. LaVie: One more and I'm out.

Mr. Mitchell: – and we can help you, you know, to figure out a map of: this would be a good area. Obviously, we suggest 4,000. You suggest \$200 million in assessment. Maps can, kind of, be designed to do that. Or, in the case down east, they went almost twice the size of that, which was great, as well.

Once you determine that. Then, you go out and have – establish a steering committee and then you begin that process. When the presentation is done you will probably need to use a consultant. I'm sure there's usually

not experience (Indistinct) to do that. You'll do that. Then, you take that back to your folks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Just one more and I'm done; more of a statement, than a question.

This is where I see the problem when I talk to people, and they let me know is, that questions like this can't be answered. That's why the unincorporated areas are struggling with it is because they can't get their questions answered, exactly like I'm doing here today. It's if and maybe. They want answers. It probably would be an easier process if we had answers for the unincorporated people, too.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. member, until you do that work, it's really hard to have those answers, which is evident from down – the had to do the work to get the answers.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My question is one, I guess, section 3 and section 4(2), this *Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*.

These are talking about date changes to the electoral process, as well as, criteria that disqualify a person from being a councillor within the – specifically the resort municipality of Stanley Bridge, Hope River, Bayview, Cavendish and North Rustico.

Were these changes requested by the resort municipality?

Samantha Murphy Manager: They weren't requested by the municipality, but they're aware of the changes. It largely comes into how the regulations set out the timeframe. We didn't need to specify it anymore in the act, in terms of the dates, because they have a different timing for their election. It doesn't remove any of the

framework that is already in place for the resort municipality.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

As long as they're aware because the changes do, as you mentioned, move the dates and they move them to times when outside the season of when, typically, the resort municipality has most of its residents.

As long as you've done that consultation, I'm okay.

My next question is for section 10 of this act. 10(1), I'm just a little confused about that. If you could just explain what section 10(1) is all about?

Mr. Mitchell: Addition of words.

Samantha Murphy Manager: Do you want me to (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, you might as well.

Samantha Murphy Manager: When we first drafted the bill we were going to place a lot of the details of the conduct of the election in the regulations. At the end of the day, we had too short a timeframe for counting ballots and doing the judicial review. We did not have a process for actually requesting that recount to take place. So we've added more detail and just clarified the process.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: In that 53(1) specifically, was it someone that made that request from the federation of municipalities, or is this something you guys noticed when you were reviewing the bill, again?

Samantha Murphy Manager: It was in consultation with Elections PEI.

Mr. Trivers: With Elections PEI?

All right, thank you, that's it, Chair.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the 12th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 12, *Planning Statues Amendment Act*, Bill No. 21, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): *Planning Statutes Amendment Act*, Bill No. 21, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to Chair the Committee of the Whole House.

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

Mr. MacKay: An overview, Chair.

Chair: An overview?

Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you. We'll just wait they get set-up and introduced.

Good afternoon, could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Samantha Murphy, Manager of Municipal Affairs.

Chair: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, could you care to give a — you've been requested to give an overview.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, and I'll keep it very brief.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: There are several amendments that are required on this act.

They include; enabling the application of provincial land use policies across PEI, and providing for long-term agreements and charges for new developments.

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

There are also revisions to correct some minor typographical errors and omissions that were in the existing act.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, can you, if I heard it right, what do you mean by charges?

Mr. Mitchell: Do you want to go ahead? I'll let Sam answer that.

Chair: Could you just introduce yourself each time you speak?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Sure.

Under the *Planning Act* currently municipalities in the province, depending on who the planning authority would be, has the authority to identify charges that would be the responsibility of a developer. Generally, that's the roads in subdivision, or services, if there's a sewer or water utility.

The other aspect of development, especially throughout the rest of the country, is to allow for off-site development charges. If highway needs to be expanded. A new intersection needs to be placed. If a water or sewer system needs to be expanded to increase the capacity, as a result of a developer's initiative, with the proper framework in place, then those charges could also be assigned to the subdivision. It would be part of a developer's project.

These changes allow for a framework where the cost per unit would be identified ahead of time so that there's a very fair and professional way of establishing what the cost might be of additional road capacity, expanded sewer lagoon, whatever the infrastructure would be so that when

someone is coming in to apply for approval, they understand the cost that would be allocated to them.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: How does this change affect the current developer? Current developer now to what this –

Samantha Murphy Manager: It would only be on a go forward basis for the provincial component, regulations would be required and in a municipality, they would be required to undertake a background study and then put in place a bylaw that would establish those costs. No one who's currently underway would be affected.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

When you're referring to a municipality – we're talking towns?

Samantha Murphy Manager: It would be any municipality who currently, or in the future, has responsibility for land use planning and it would only be for capital costs. So if they don't own the roads, then it might not be their charge to charge.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just trying to get my head around this a little more, so forgive me. If a municipality in rural areas – when the streets are owned by the province – the water and sewer is owned by a resident, so this really wouldn't affect any –

Samantha Murphy Manager: Generally, it would only be where there's more substantive infrastructure in place and largely, it's used where the developments are significant. If you're adding a large number of units, and the population is going to change dramatically, and there's going to be a cost to the existing residents or taxpayers, you'd be addressing it. So, for the

most part, the smallest municipalities wouldn't need to use this.

Mr. MacKay: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I wanted to clarify along the lines of questioning from the Member from Kensington-Malpeque. So the definition of development is changing, is that correct? It's now – there's five specific site alterations that are included: altering the grade of the land, removing vegetation from the land, excavating the land, depositor or stockpiling soil or other material, and establishing a parking long. Would this cover off, first of all, things like removal – first of all, holding ponds or removal of vegetation that's separating fields?

Samantha Murphy Manager: It does now extend to include those sorts of developments or activities. Whether or not a permit would be required would be established in the regulations or bylaws. So, permit or control is not automatically required, it's just included in the types of activities that are covered in the definition.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

This is a concern that has been raised to me by many of my constituents that alterations to the land, just like the ones you speak here, are not covered right now. I wanted to be very clear, though: Does this apply to unincorporated areas as well as incorporated areas?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Yes, the *Planning Act* applies throughout the province, it's just who would be the authority having the responsibility of issuing permits and making decisions.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So once the *Planning Act* – these amendments are passed and the regulations are in place, then will someone

need a permit to create a holding pond or remove vegetation that's separating fields?

Mr. Mitchell: Go ahead.

Samantha Murphy Manager: That would be the next policy discussion in terms of what the regulations might look like and how and when that type of activity would be regulated.

Mr. Mitchell: This is where that would be dealt with – what you're talking about (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Is that the purpose of this amendment, really, to cover off hedgerows and holding ponds and things of that nature?

Mr. Mitchell: Go ahead.

Samantha Murphy Manager: No, the original intent was just to bring the definition of development just in line with modern expectations for development. It wasn't specifically tied to any particular activity.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Has anyone approached you, Minister, about concerns with the removal of hedgerows and the ability to create holding ponds without any permits – other than us, of course.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes. Obviously opposition has been very vocal on that. I've met with members from the NFU that have had concerns on that. I've had others that have brought things to me, so if, indeed, there was something moving forward, it would be through this act where you would get these new changes that would allow something to be worked on there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I just want to thank you for bringing those regulations in and, of course, the regulations will be done with consultation with Islanders and I'm sure you will take into account those requests and

concerns about removal of hedgerows and holding ponds when you're making those regulations.

If you'd like input from the official opposition, please feel free to engage us. In fact, I even request you do engage us when you're creating those regulations.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm sure you'll be part of the process.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'm just wondering what the overall status is on the work that's underway to modernize the *Planning Act* – where we are. I know that's a big question.

Mr. Mitchell: That's a lot of work, but we're moving along.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I know.

Mr. Mitchell: Sam will bring you up to date on that, hon. Member.

Samantha Murphy Manager: We've got several different streams of work underway on this – on the update to the *Planning Act*. There's the ongoing work on land use policies that would apply province-wide. Through the amendment that went through last December, but is not yet proclaimed, we've spent a considerable amount of time working on the regulations, largely related to municipal official plans and bylaws and the content and the process for that and hope to be able to bring those for consultation in the new year. So, we've been working on it, but a lot of it is background work that has to be ready before we get engaged externally.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

So the amendment here, are they directed primarily at municipalities, or unincorporated areas, or both? And I apologize if I'm duplicating questions that have already been asked.

Mr. Mitchell: It is both, but Sam can break that down a bit for you.

Samantha Murphy Manager: Thank you.

The definitions apply to everybody. The amendments to section 7, which provide for regulations about the land use policies, apply everywhere and speak to the implementation process for land use policies once they're ready. The amendments to section 8 affect the authority of the province to enact regulations, so that would be the areas where the province is a planning authority, so unincorporated –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Unincorporated.

Samantha Murphy Manager: – (Indistinct) for the fish plants. Under section 20 of the *Planning Act*, municipalities can access that same list of authorities so it then carries through to municipalities with official plans.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Do we have an estimate as to when we're going to see Island-wide land-use planning in place, in terms of time?

Mr. Mitchell: That's a –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know. Big questions, minister.

Mr. Mitchell: Keep on an explanation of: We're getting there.

Samantha Murphy Manager: We are working on it. We have had the Task Force on Land Use Policy and a draft prepared that has been circulated for comments with municipalities and the PEI Federation of Agriculture, previously, working on integrating the other aspects of work that's underway, including the energy strategy, climate change strategy, all the other aspects that affect land and as time and resources permit.

Mr. Mitchell: As you can certainly understand, a tonne of work has been done. A tonne of work yet to do, but we're moving forward – trying not to wear the staff out completely, but they are doing phenomenal

work on it. We'll get it as quickly as we can, moving forward. A lot of things are dovetailing each other, so there are processes, of course, and we'll get them moved down the road.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate that Minister and Samantha. I know you've had a lot of big legislative work going through your particular office recently and I'm fully aware of the complexity of all of the moving parts when it comes to land use planning, but just to sort of try to pin you down a little bit, are we looking at less than five years? More than five years? Just as an educated guess.

Mr. Mitchell: I think we should be a long way down in five years, yeah. I'll say that. Yeah, I think we could be in a good spot in around five year's time.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I have other questions, but I'm fine for now, thanks.

Chair: I have nobody else on the list.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Again, I apologize, I was out of the House for an interview, so I'm not sure how far through the bill you have got.

Chair: We're not reading it line by line. The request was just for the minister to give an overview –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: – and he did that and so the questions have just come from his explanation.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

You know what? I apologize, Chair. I should have reviewed my questions before I sat down –

Chair: It's okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – I have not done that. I'm –

Chair: You're good?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – fine. Yeah.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the title.

Chair: *Planning Statutes Amendment Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Planning Statutes Amendment Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 17, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, Bill No. 9, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, Bill No. 9, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll call on the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot to Chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Palmer): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*.

Minister, would you like to bring a stranger to the floor?

Mr. Roach: I would like to bring strangers to the floor.

Chair: Strangers, okay.

Good afternoon, could you identify yourself for the record, please?

George Mason Director: George Mason, Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: Beth Gaudet, Provincial Tax Commissioner.

Chair: Thank you.

Would the committee like an overview of the bill?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Sure, thank you, Chair.

This legislation would create a municipal tax credit, which would replace the current grant system.

We have had extensive consultations with the municipalities and they say this model

will help them better predict their revenues in the future. I must say that cooperation that we've had between municipalities and the federation of municipalities on this one; it was very much a collaborative effort. We were able to work through this over the past year to provide a sustainable future for them where they could predict as they grow what their taxes would be as the taxes come in, and as their community grows.

The bill provides a formula to calculate those credits, which would be paid from the provincial real property tax collected each calendar year. The amendments would allow credits to be defined in regulations. This legislation also includes; housekeeping amendments, which are required to support the administration process around the sale of mobile homes to satisfy tax arrears.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

One question: This grant is based on the population?

Mr. Roach: It's based on population and assessment of the assets in the community.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

If a community amalgamates and doubles its population, does the grant double?

Mr. Roach: It's based on the tax assessment, so whatever those tax assessments would be if another community decided to come in, the formula would, kind of, fit with that so-called new community.

Mr. LaVie: It goes by assessment.

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: Not population.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Roach: As the population, to your question, as the population, say, were to increase, then you would have more people building homes in the community, and your assessments would go up.

Mr. LaVie: It's based on assessments –

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Sorry, Chair.

It's based on assessments, not population?

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: Okay, that's good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I think you said the other day, that no municipalities would receive less funding. That's correct?

Mr. Roach: That's correct.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

That's fantastic to hear for our rural smaller municipalities and I appreciate the effort in that. I know it was probably, I wouldn't say a stumbling block, but an issue over the past while.

As I have stated many times before: this issue has gone on way too long. Back when, before I was an MLA, and I actually worked in the office, we met with the mayors and chairs of the biggest municipalities on PEI and they were frustrated back then with your predecessor, as well, about the lack of movement on things.

I know most of them – majority of them are very happy now, but I don't think it's wrong to say that there's – if we had have had this model years ago, or the original model, which I think are similar, there is lost revenue for some of our growing communities.

Has the province done any calculations on the lost revenues? We'll start with Stratford, for example? If we had of had this system years ago, the lost potential that a community like Stratford would have had with its growing population?

Mr. Roach: No, we haven't. To that point, and certainly in conversation with Stratford, and I believe the mayor of Stratford said it the other day. He said: We're looking forward; not backward.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Was there ever any talk, in the negotiations, about back-pay, for a lack of a better term?

Mr. Roach: No, not that I'm aware of.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I'm good for now, Chair. That's good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair, and thank you, minister.

As the Member from Morell-Mermaid has stated: this is a long time coming and it's great to see that an agreement was reached –

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: – it was a great statement you made the other day; ministerial statement.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to clarify a couple of things for the record. Why is it only the taxable non-commercial property tax assessment as opposed to including commercial property assessments, as well?

George Mason Director: I think you could, actually, use any assessment as long as you were consistent. This all starts with money. It starts with the street maintenance and policing costs of municipalities. Then, we divide that, or it's divided by the taxable

non-commercial assessment. Then, it's applied to the taxable non-commercial assessment.

It could have been done differently. It could have been divided by the total assessment, and then multiplied by the total assessment and you would come up with a similar result.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Maybe I'm just a little thick here. I'm just not quite understanding it: Why did you choose non-commercial then, instead of total?

George Mason Director: I don't know that we chose it. That has been the way it has been, historically, for decades at this point in time.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm thinking of areas in my district, for example, where there are a lot of small businesses. In many cases, there are large chunks of property that are owned by corporations.

If those are incorporated, a lot of these are in unincorporated, but if they are incorporated would that – the values of those properties, the assessed value, not be excluded from this formula, then?

George Mason Director: That's correct.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'd like to raise that as a concern.

I'm coming in here without having been involved in these negotiations, extensive negotiations, over many years, that you've had with municipalities. That's why I'm looking for an explanation.

Can you talk about those concerns? Are they unfounded?

Mr. Roach: If I could just, for a clarification point. I'm just trying to figure out what your question is here.

Mr. R. Brown: He is, too.

Mr. Roach: And assist George on how to respond to that. I think what he's looking for is if we took the – added the commercial on, and then went to the next piece of the formula, when you said earlier, it would likely come out of the same.

Maybe, if you could just explain that a little bit? I think that's where he's trying to get to.

George Mason Director: I think I understand that, too. It's a little hard to explain.

I'll try again. In the sense that this credits and all the commercial stuff, it all starts with how much it costs the community to provide a service. In this particular case, we looked, primarily, at policing and road construction costs.

If we're looking at Rustico, and your cost, pick a number out of the air, were \$100,000 and I then, calculate this credit by dividing it by your taxable non-commercial assessment, right? I get a rate. Then, when I apply it, I multiply it by your assessment as it grows over time; the same assessment.

I could have, technically, done the same thing by dividing that \$100,000 by the total assessment, including non-commercial and commercial Rustico, and then I have to multiply it by the commercial and non-commercial assessment of Rustico, and I come to the same end result.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Roach: If I could just add to that.

We had spent considerable time with the communities, with the representatives from the communities. They formed a big part of what this formula is today. They had a tremendous amount of input into what this formula is today.

I guess I'll just reiterate that they felt that this was extremely fair. It was a better way of, certainly, it's a lot better way of doing business.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Just to be clear: the total taxable non-commercial assessment, that's the assessment of the value of non-commercial property, is that correct?

George Mason Director: Essentially, residential property right?

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: Taxable residential.

Mr. Trivers: So –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm having a hard time understanding your explanation, I must admit because it – I mean, when I look at this formula here: a) is what we just talked about: The total taxable non-commercial assessment; that's the property value. And then, you get a rate by dividing by 100. Then f) is this mysterious municipal tax credit factor that's going to be defined in the regulations.

It seems to me that if you had an area that was mostly commercial property, they're not going to get the proper tax credit based on the value of that land? I –

George Mason Director: No, I –

Mr. Trivers: Is there something I'm missing here?

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

George Mason Director: I'll try it slightly differently. I'm not sure if I'm not saying the same thing.

In terms of going and using the total assessment, which is what you wish to do?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

George Mason Director: You would come up with a different rate in your regulations. It would be a lower rate, right? So you'd be taking a lower rate –

Mr. Trivers: So –

George Mason Director: – applying it by a higher number –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm –

Mr. Roach: Could you let him finish?

Mr. Trivers: That doesn't make sense, yet.

Mr. Roach: But would you let him finish?

Mr. Trivers: All right.

Mr. Roach: I think he's (Indistinct)

George Mason Director: Actually, I was kind of finished.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, so this is a) so instead of the total taxable assessment on commercial plus non-commercial would be a), right? So that would actually be a larger value is it included the commercial and non-commercial property?

George Mason Director: That's right.

Mr. Trivers: So the rate would actually be higher?

George Mason Director: When you calculated the rate, it would be lower.

Mr. Trivers: It's over 100 –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: – so it might move from 60% to 80%, let's say.

George Mason Director: It's not a percent, it's a (Indistinct) it's a cents per dollar assessment or whatever, yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Seems to me, looking at the formula – maybe this is just some fundamentally – I'm just having a bad day with my math here, or something, but if a) is higher –

Mr. Roach: I would agree with that.

Mr. Trivers: – then it should result in a municipal tax credit being greater.

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: Not if f) is lower.

George Mason Director: But f) would be lower because it's calculated based on that higher a). Like f) comes from which commercial tax rate, or which tax rate you select.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

My problem is, is that I'm getting an F here.

Mr. Roach: Yes, agreed.

Mr. Trivers: The value – the problem is with the value of f) and the municipal tax credit factor.

Just for the record, I think it's important to understand since we're passing this legislation here on the floor as MLAs, I would like just a brief explanation of what the municipal tax credit factor is and how it's calculated. I know it's going to be in the regulations, but.

George Mason Director: It's a whole table. Do you want a picture of – a copy of it?

Mr. Trivers: Do you know, minister?

Mr. Roach: I know how it's figured out and it's fair for every community across Prince Edward Island.

If you did that for your community, you'd be doing the same thing for every community. Essentially, you would come up with the same amount of money coming back.

George Mason Director: You could table that page in the agreement, which is now a public document, anyway, if you wanted to, which would give you both the –

Mr. Roach: We'll table that.

George Mason Director: – (Indistinct) in how it's calculated.

Mr. Roach: We'll table that for you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I guess it's too complicated to put into words here on the floor of the Assembly, but I will definitely look at that tabled, and as the minister said: there has been good engagement and consultation. I'll just trust the work that has been done there.

All right, thank you, Chair.

Ms. Casey: Carry the bill.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I promise I will ask no questions with numerators and denominators in the question.

I'd like you to break down, if you can, the funding levels and how they will change for the various levels at cities, the towns and the rural areas.

George Mason Director: How much detail did you have in mind?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'll tell you why –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair, apologies.

I represent a largely rural area and the concern was that: Is this new formula fair to everybody? Are the rural areas getting their fair share of the stick, basically?

George Mason Director: Right at this point in time, with the credits that are drafted, sorry, the regulations that are drafted, which are credits, they will not actually apply to the smaller areas. So, it will not have an effect on anybody by the 12 municipalities.

However, minister has announced, and it has otherwise been announced that the planning tax credit, the updated equalization and the top-up, which is essentially a no-loser fund would be applied to all of the other municipalities on PEI.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, George, you just mentioned there about the 12 municipalities. Can you just explain the distinction between them and the other 61?

George Mason Director: The 12 municipalities offer services, the biggest ones being streets and policing on their own. All of the other municipalities have street and police services provided by the province at no cost to them.

So, the focus was on getting these 12 municipalities sorted out because they're big service providers. And then, the small communities, which only offer planning services and their only other benefit would normally be equalization, would have an extension of the same agreement.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The announcement mentioned, and you've described it a little bit this morning, this afternoon, no, this morning, no, this afternoon, excuse me – the top-up formula to ensure that no municipality is worse off than they were before.

I see that that comes to an end after five years. What's the plan after the five years?

Mr. Roach: I think the plan, after five years, is that we wanted to ensure that, as we went through this process that there would be an opportunity to come back to the table to sort things out that may happen during that period of time.

George Mason Director: If I may?

Mr. Roach: Yeah, go ahead. You can add to that, please.

George Mason Director: Because the funding is growing over the period of time, most of that top-up disappears. The need for most of that top-up disappears over that period. If there is a new funding agreement, then there are new decisions to be made five years from now.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know this has taken a long time to get here. I should have prefaced this by thanking you. I'm happy that this is here. I know there has been an enormous amount of work put into us, here, being here today debating this legislation. I very much appreciate that.

I know the federation, of course, was the main people, who you would have gone to and they represent, of course, all the municipalities, small and large, except there are some smaller municipalities who are not members of the federation.

I'm wondering whether you spoke specifically to – I know you spoke to the federation, but did you speak to some of the smaller municipalities who are not part of the federation?

George Mason Director: Personally, I wouldn't have spoken to any of the municipalities other than these 12. All of the others, which is 69 or 59, excuse me, are treated the same way whether they're members of the federations or not. That's all I can really offer.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I do know that the federation speaks for the vast majority, not just in terms of number, but definitely in terms of population of people, who live in incorporated areas.

I'm wondering, those smaller municipalities, who choose, for whatever reason, not to be part of the federation, whether anybody reached out to them to, firstly, seek their input, or secondly, to explain to them what the ramifications of this new formula are?

Mr. Roach: I think what took place there was, we certainly rely on the federation of municipalities, that's why that we had that clause in there, hon. member, was to ensure that any communities that maybe didn't feel they were part of the federation of municipalities, we made sure that when this was written that they would be treated as if they were and they would lose no funding.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Moving on to another aspect of, I know the mechanism is to have a tax credit rather than a grant, but from the point of view of the municipality, what does that change from a grant to a tax credit actually entail? What's the difference there?

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: The grant was paid outside of taxation. Right now, taxation provides for the collection and the payment of all municipal taxes across the province. We bring the money in and we reimburse it out to the municipalities. We will be adding the tax credit component to that monthly payment that goes out to municipality to ensure that any new construction or assessment changes through the year are reflected in the money and that all is reconciled at the end of each calendar year as per property tax.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Could you explain how the funds will actually be dispersed from the province to the municipalities?

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: We take the a-beginning-of-the-year-assessment value and we calculate it based on the formula, and we will be providing a monthly electronic payment in conjunction with the property tax that we already provide them.

Then, through the year there will be assessment, property assessment changes based on new construction, so we will also have an end-of-year-assessment role. We'll do a reconciliation to change to reconcile those tax credit dollars.

It will be done, as the agreement says, in the same form and the same manner that we already pay the municipalities their share of the property tax; their component of property tax.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Most of us have experience with tax credits when it comes to income tax. Typically, with an income tax, and individual can claim tax credits the following fiscal year. Are these tax credits based on the – is it based on the current –

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: It's based on the current year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The current fiscal year. Okay.

Beth Gaudet Tax Commissioner: There's no application required. We'll simply be paying them those funds automatically.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm good –

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – thank you, Chair.

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

Mr. R. Brown: I'll only take one second.

One of the big reasons I ran in 1997, yeah. Was to fix this. It took 20 years. Thank you very much, minister. The Liberal caucus worked hard on it. I think all members have. It's a good piece of legislation for the towns and cities.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Shall the bill carry?

Mr. Roach: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Thanks for the extension, boys.

Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Real Property Tax Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, December 12th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, December 12th, at 2:00 p.m.