

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An honour to rise and welcome colleagues here in the Assembly and those joining us in the gallery. I want to make a special welcome to the five, I'll say, students, who are with us on the bench opposite; welcome you and hope that you'll take a lot of your visit here and our session today.

Yesterday, I was with the other Atlantic premiers in Halifax. We had a substantive agenda, notably around the economy and jobs and Atlantic Growth Strategy; issues on which we can make headway. We started out on Sunday evening actually in the Province House in Halifax. It was an opportunity to get on the floor of the legislature there and realize what spacious quarters we have, at least, in terms of how we sit relative to each other. There's not that much – not nearly as much room to move around in the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly as is the case here in our own. That was an interesting observation to bring back because we sometimes think that we have got a pretty intimate set-up here.

The other point is to recognize that today, in my district, will be the Christmas concert for the LM Montgomery school. They have already gotten started with the afternoon performance. They'll be at it again this evening at 6:30 p.m. I know that for parents and grandparents and teachers, and most of all, for the students, it's a very special evening. I wish them all well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I suppose, I would consider this a public service announcement.

Due to some technical difficulties today, right now, the audience, the viewing audience may experience a variation from

the normal viewing activities as our touch screen monitor that points the camera is not working very well.

Our technical staff –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Free for all.

Speaker: – is going to try their best to rectify this as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: Must be hooked up to rural Internet.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much –

Ms. Biggar: Save your energy.

Leader of the Opposition: – Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be here, or there or wherever. I would just like to thank a group in Stratford that put on a wonderful event this past Sunday. It was the Knights of Columbus at Our Lady of Assumption Parish. They had their annual Christmas, seniors' Christmas tea and sing-along. It was certainly a wonderful event, and attended by many, both within my district and many people, as well, that came out from other districts across PEI. Thank you very much for this group for providing this wonderful service to our seniors.

I would also like to extend my most sincere condolences to Tara and Evan Barwise on the passing of John Barwise this past weekend. I know there are several members in this Legislative Assembly, along with myself, that considered John to be a great friend. Really a giant among many men, and I'd have to refer to John as really a friendly giant. The world is a much better place for having had John in it. I just want to let Tara, his wife, and son, Evan, know that John will be greatly missed.

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 first like to welcome to the gallery, the members of Renewable Transportation Prince Edward Island, led by Chris Randall, and with him, Jason Chen, Hansinee, Thea and Shruthi. Nice to see you here today, thank you for coming.

I also, today, would like to pay tribute to a good friend and an Island icon, who died on the weekend. I'm talking about Betty Howatt, whom, I'm sure, many people in this House knew.

Betty was a lover of Prince Edward Island. She was a lover of nature. She was also a force of nature in herself. I got to know Betty, actually, even before we moved here. We came here for summer holidays and we used to go to her farm to pick berries with our children. They were captivated by Betty, as many people were also her regular stint on CBC where she would do Tales from Willowshade Farm.

I also got to know her as a patient in my dental office. Those who knew Betty, would be aware of how voluble she is. Even with a couple of hands and a drill stuck in her mouth, it was hard to keep Betty quiet. She was still offering her opinions during the treatment.

I loved Betty's directness. You never had to sort of read between the lines with Betty. You knew exactly where she stood on things and she would tell you what she thought.

I learned a lot from Betty through my friendship. I learned a lot about this Island. She probably taught me more than any other single person about what it means to be an Islander. I learned a lot about sustainable agriculture. I learned a lot about myself. I admired so much her ability to be direct with people and to say it as it is and I was woefully vague in my old age when I tried to present myself or my opinions and Betty would always: Peter? Peter, what are you talking about? What are you trying to say? She was wonderful at cutting through to the core of something.

She was just a formidable woman and she was much loved and much admired by many people and she will be much missed. I had the privilege of having a lovely chat with her husband, Everett, last night in Crapaud. He's 96, but my goodness, he's still very much sharp and with us. I'd like the House to join me in sending our condolences to Everett and the family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to be here for another week in the Legislature. I want to take this opportunity and give my condolences to the family of Wayne Bernard. Wayne has been an Island icon – you see his picture everywhere. He's formally from French River – spent a lot of time there as a kid. Actually, he's my godfather. He's a grandfather of Sam Ferguson, who everybody in this Assembly knows Sam and my condolences go to Sam and his family. Everybody that knows Wayne knows that he always had a smile on his face and he spent a lot of years in Avonlea Village and I think even in the tourist information guide. His face, with his overalls on, and his hat on, next to a horse is still being advertised today, so my condolences to the Bernard family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to rise and welcome all the folks in the public gallery, as well as all the people that are home watching in Alberton-Roseville and right across the province.

I just want to commend and say a great thank you to the Alberton Fire Department. They were delivering a very special person around the town of Alberton on Sunday evening – a guy with a white beard and a red

suit. And I had three seven-year-olds at my house that were really thrilled to see him. They do this for as many years as I've had kids anyway – I can't remember exactly when it started, but it's a great thing that they do in the community and it's very much appreciated.

Thank you, Alberton firefighters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back in the House here for another week. It's getting pretty close to Christmas. I know last night, for anybody who was in around the Charlottetown area yesterday evening around suppertime, the roads were really poor as I travelled home and there was a lot of people coming in to shop and there was a lot of people – as there is every evening going back out to the east home for the night – and I just want to say to everyone that though the travelling was really tricky, everyone was extremely patient and it's important that we continue to be now that we're in the winter season. Be patient when the roads are bad. Be patient when the plows are on the road and make sure that everyone gets home safely and you don't impact somebody else's ability to also be safe.

Also, I want to thank all the people who have reached out to me over the past week or so since I first introduced the food waste act to the floor of the Legislature here. I have received nothing but positive response, save an article on CBC that I read here this afternoon that displeased me much. I will – not Kerry's. It wasn't Kerry.

Mr. R. Brown: You're not allowed to speak to him.

Mr. Myers: Kerry's been good to me. It wasn't Kerry, but this is an important opportunity for Islanders. I think that the discussion is going to be a really good discussion as we move on. Whenever we start having some public consultation, I encourage members here to also attend to

hear what people are saying. This is, by no means, partisan. Believe it or not, a Progressive Conservative can bring forward progressive ideas and show that they care about people as much as anyone else, much to the chagrin; perhaps, of whoever wrote that at CBC.

Either way, I'm going to continue to do the job that I think is important for Islanders and will ignore all the noise of some talking head from Toronto who wants to get in the middle of things here on Prince Edward Island.

Finally, I was very fortunate last night. I had the opportunity to travel up to Souris. I play on an old timers' hockey team so we were up there last night to play old timers and I just want to say what a beautiful town, what a great job, a great rink. There has been lots of money obviously put into that town.

Mr. LaVie: Great MLA.

Mr. Myers: I think they must have a great MLA –

Mr. LaVie: They do.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – so I want to congratulate the MLA from Souris-Elmira for the great work he's doing up there for the town of Souris.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to rise and welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, especially Shirley Dickieson. I know she likes to tune in right from Hunter River. I wanted to also recognize Renewable Transportation PEI visiting our gallery here today. They're doing some great work, trying to get renewable transportation on Prince Edward Island and I've met Chris Randall before. I don't know the other members, but I would like to meet them at some point. I wanted to recognize my constituent Noah Ellis, who is also part of the group that couldn't be here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise again today and welcome all those viewing at home in District 22 Summerside-St. Eleanors.

I want to give a special shout-out to Summerside's golden girl Heather Moyses who once again crushed another goal and can add another to her many accolades. Yesterday, she launched her first novel entitled *Redefining 'Realistic': Shift your perspective. Seize your potential. Own your story*. It's available at the Bookmark and Indigo in Charlottetown, Coles in Summerside and Murphy's Kensington, Summerside, Parkdale and Stratford; also available on amazon.ca. Congratulations, Heather. We are so very proud of you in Summerside.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

The Free Store

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and to give everyone an update on a unique initiative happening in Summerside called The Free Store.

The store first opened in December of last year in the Summerside National Bank building as a place where people could pick up something they needed without having to pay for it. The store operates through the collection of donations and allows those who are struggling financially the ability to afford something they need, without worrying about whether or not they have the money to pay for it.

Due to the sale of the National Bank Building in July, The Free Store was forced to find a new home. I was pleased to have the opportunity to work with Belinda and her volunteers to help find a new location for the store. The Free Store has relocated to 109 Water Street. The store is open every second Saturday of the month from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and every third Tuesday of the month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. I would encourage anyone who is able to drop off any donations they have on any Tuesday evening from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

I thank Belinda Woods, and all the volunteers who are involved in this initiative for all of their hard work and efforts in keeping the store running, and giving back to those in the community who need it most. It is the efforts like these that make our community a better place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Sterling Hickox Donates 1965 Cadillac

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is this time of the year that acts of kindness are shown by caring citizens. Today, I would like to salute Sterling Hickox from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, a man with a kind heart.

Sterling is 84-years-old and was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago. It is times like these that you evaluate your life. Mr. Hickox has always cared about children, especially those facing difficulty in their lives. Sterling had a successful career as a grip working for major studios in Los Angeles like Universal, MGM, and 20th Century Fox.

One of Sterling Hickox's most prized possessions is his 1965 Cadillac convertible, a symbol of a successful career. The Cadillac is in mint condition. It has the original 429 engine, and the exterior is the original sandalwood colour. This generous man has donated his prized possession to the Children's Wish Foundation, PEI Chapter.

He is excited to see wishes granted to children through this donation. So, if there's anyone out there listening and would like to see this generous man grant wishes to children, I would encourage them to contact the Children's Wish Foundation, PEI Chapter, at 1-800-267-9474 and purchase this mint-condition 1965 Cadillac.

I would like to have this House join me in thanking Sterling Hickox for his generous donation, and I hope that health-wise he's having the very best day possible.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Stratford Area Lions Club

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to the Stratford Area Lions Club and to express appreciation for their many years of service to the residents of, not only, Stratford, but Prince Edward Island as a whole.

This club, is perhaps, best known for their annual lobster sale in May, and their apple pie sale in the fall, proceeds of which go to support various charitable organizations, including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Islanders come from all over the province to purchase the hundreds of homemade pies made from scratch by members of this club. It's a lot of work, but I can say that they are the best pies that I've ever tasted. They also sell 10 lb. bags of apples.

Just recently the club hosted their annual seniors' Christmas social, which welcomes well over 100 guests at the town of Stratford. Attending this event is always one of the highlights of the year for me.

In addition to the annual pie sale and lobster sale, the club also hosts many fundraisers, ceilidhs and concerts, which help various organizations, families and individuals.

One of their main recipients of their fundraising initiatives goes towards supporting the school breakfast programs in the area. On Canada Day, members put in a

very long day. They start off bright and early at the town hall with the traditional pancake breakfast, and then move down to Tea Hill Park to host a complimentary BBQ during the official celebrations.

The Lions Club is also well known for their kick-off to Stratford's Winter Carnival, which also includes a pancake breakfast. Each year they attract upwards of 700 people for that event.

The town of Stratford is a better place because of the hard work of the Lions Club members and many organizations and individuals, both young and old, have benefitted from their giving spirit.

Where anyone needs a helping hand in the community the Stratford and Area Lions Club can be found.

I am proud to salute the generosity and compassion of this helping organization and the tremendous volunteers that make up its membership.

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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Islanders expect that the Premier and government will stand up for them on issues that impact our province.

Premier Campbell was prepared to rock the cradle with the first Trudeau government over the development plan. The late premier Ghiz went head-to-head with the Mulroney government over the fixed link and Slemon Part. Premier Binns wasn't afraid to mix it up with Chretien's government over cuts to health transfers and Employment Insurance.

Proposed federal tax changes

Question to the Premier: Why are you so reluctant to assert our gift of jurisdiction

when it comes to standing up for Island small businesses over the proposed federal tax changes?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I wrote directly to Finance Minister Morneau in late September and wrote to the Chambers of Commerce earlier in the month. In fact, that letter was also relayed to the federal government expressing direct concern. In particular, the issue that we underlined in that correspondence had to do with succession of farming and fishing businesses where they're passing within the family.

I'm pleased to say, and we met with the first ministers in October, that the federal government indeed changed that policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We're certainly still hearing from a lot of small business operators here on Prince Edward Island that are still extremely concerned about these proposed tax changes by the federal government.

This Premier loves to lecture about our provincial powers, yet, he has not once actually stood up to his Liberal masters in Ottawa. Some examples; lobster carapace size, tuna and halibut quotas, health transfer dollars, marijuana, carbon tax, and, of course, last summer's out-of-service ferry, and now, these upcoming small business tax changes.

Premier again: Why do you always go silent rather than standing up and speaking out on behalf of our province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that the outcome of the ferry tie-up and the advocacy that was done around that and the collaboration and active advocacy with the federal government was a 20-plus-year solution. The longest that we've ever seen, indeed, to the point where people –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – throughout Prince Edward Island have the confidence that they can now make decisions and know that they're going to have a ferry service that's reliable for the longest period that's ever been the case and we're happy that that's the case.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) eastern PEI (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, the only advocate that seemed to be making any noise here on PEI at all with regards to the out-of-service ferry was the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, every other government across Canada has objected to at least one policy move by this federal government, yet this Premier refuses to speak out in opposition to anything being done by this federal government.

Government refusal to stand up for PEI

Premier: What is behind your refusal to stand up for the people of Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's funny, I was recalling over the weekend the first trip I made to Ottawa after becoming Premier was in one of the worst snowstorms we ever saw, but that was nothing compared – once we did break through that to get to Ottawa and find out that the furniture was pushed up against the door in trying to deal with the Harper government.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: Since that time, we had a breakthrough on collector roads –

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: We had a breakthrough on the transmission cables. Mr. Speaker, we have; in the period of three construction seasons, two years working with the federal government, achieved –

Mr. Myers: Great for the MacLauchlan family.

Premier MacLauchlan: – \$300 million –

Mr. Myers: \$300 million.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in infrastructure investments and we couldn't even get them to answer the door of the phone before.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Liberal times are good times.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Tax changes for small businesses

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

As we all know, in less than three weeks, Bill Morneau's tax changes for small business will take effect.

Question to the Premier: Has your government received any detailed information as to which changes are going forward since the last public comment by the federal finance minister?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Finance was in Ottawa yesterday and on Sunday evening for meetings and I expect that likely was discussed and he will be happy when he's back to offer some detail on that. But I can assure the House that our concerns were relayed and those were reflected in the changes that have already been announced – including the reduced taxes across the board for small businesses. Mr. Speaker, we will get further detail from the Minister of Finance.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In the face of significant backlash across this country to these proposed small business tax changes, the federal government said it would revisit some of the more controversial and impactful changes.

Question to the Premier: Why do both levels of government expect business owners to adapt to these changes in less than three weeks?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me say: I think we can all acknowledge, and I certainly will, that one of the lessons from the changes to the taxation on small businesses or private corporations – better called – is that it takes some runway and, indeed, there is a period of working together with the productive sector and with the business community and I believe that the federal government would acknowledge that and I certainly would. Over this period, there have been some changes. There have been some back and forth and as we consider what we learn as a government,

which is really my responsibility from that, I believe it is necessary to be in full engagement and to give an opportunity for the business community to adjust to changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Commitment of support in delay of tax changes

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

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business feels, and has stated publically, that the current timetable is far too rushed. Less than three weeks is not enough time for small businesses to get prepared for these changes. In fact, the CFIB has written all provinces urging them to call on the federal government to delay bringing in these changes until January the 1st, 2019.

Question to the Premier: Will you stand with our small business community and commit your support to delaying these changes?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that I wrote, in late September, to the minister of finance and at that time, I expressed concern about the clarity and understanding of the changes and of the tax regime and of the impact that that can have on the business environment or on the ability to grow.

In particular, I said: any confusion or unintended consequences of the changes could have a significant dampening effect on the future growth of our economy. I believe, that there has been a great deal of clarity and a great deal of stepping back from the measures that were on the table at that time and, in fact, I did at that time ask and suggest that more time be taken.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Few issues resonate with Islanders more than protecting our water and our land resources. Moving ahead with the *Water Act* is commendable, but the less than cooperative approach to improving it is not.

All-party committee and Water Act regulations (further)

Question to the environment minister: What is your objection to having an all-party legislative committee partner with Islanders to develop the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly I am very proud and pleased with our modern and comprehensive legislation piece on the *Water Act* that is currently on the table being debated under second reading. That act was developed with major consultations with Islanders from tip-to-tip, all across PEI; from other NGO groups that had a vested interest. We, as a department, went out, talked, listened, continued to work with them on changes over the last –

Mr. LaVie: Answer.

Mr. Mitchell: – few months to get it to what it is today – something that we can move forward with, be proud of, and it'll be protective of our water quantity and quality on PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Water Act* itself is really an enabling piece of legislation, where most of the details and rules will be dealt with in the regulations. That's where the meat of this law will be found.

Question to the environment minister: Why wouldn't the collaborative spirit used to develop the water act be continued with the development of the act's all important regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Indeed the collaborative approach that we've used to develop the act will continue on as we build the regulations moving forward. We are so pleased with how the act came to be. Just last week in Nova Scotia, other NGO groups were asking the Nova Scotia government to use the same process that Prince Edward Island used for the *Water Act*. It's a leading edge type of consultation as far as something of this nature in Canada, I'd say – in Atlantic Canada for certain. We are very proud of what it is there.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: We will continue to work collaboratively with all Islanders moving forward, as we go across the Island, once again, to build regulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Preserving of water resources and well contractors

Question to the environment minister: In developing the *Water Act*, did you talk with any of the contractors who drill wells to see what feedback they had on preserving our water resources? And if so, what well contractors?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During our consultations, we had hundreds and hundreds of presentations from all walks of Island life. Certainly, it became very clear that Islanders are very passionate about their water quantities and quality on Prince Edward Island. They want to know where withdrawals are occurring. They want to know who was using it. That is what we committed to. That permitting will be put in place for anything that's over residential use and all of those uses will be put online for all Islanders to see.

Mr. LaVie: Who'd you talk to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I would think that the first person that would have been consulted would have been the contractors that drilled the wells to see what their witnessing as these wells go in. Normally, opposition wouldn't press the government for all-party cooperation on developing regulations, but this issue is too important to get wrong. Our water resource belongs to all of us – today, tomorrow, and beyond.

Amount of water used in province annually

Question to the environment minister: Excluding private dwellings, how much water is currently used in the province annually? Litres, gallons, cubic meters, any measurement would be fine.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, all withdrawals that we are tracking are online for public to see. That was a commitment that we made early on when I became minister and we've continued –

Mr. LaVie: So, you don't know. You don't know.

Mr. Mitchell: – to post all parts of pieces that we can within the department to put them online for all Islanders to see. As we move forward, we will be very cooperative and collaborative with all Islanders to bring forward what we can be proud of for a good, solid piece of regulations to ensure that our water quality/quantity is protected for a long, long time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That's great.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Google knows.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Sustainable level for annual water use

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the environment minister: What is a sustainable level for water use annually on Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that became quite evident and quite clear as we went out to talk to Islanders about it is they feel that water is a basic need that Islanders need to have protected. We agree with that as a department, and we have worked very collaboratively to ensure that we will be able to put permitting in place so that we –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – know where all water usages, all withdrawals are being held on Prince Edward Island, who is holding them so that it is paints a very clear picture of what water we have, what water is being used what are our recharge levels, so that Islanders can have a very good confidence on our water supply.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Provincial golf course water use in 2017

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question, again, to the environment minister: How much water was used on provincially-owned golf courses in 2017?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have the specific detail of who is using exactly what water, but I do know that all levels that we are recording are posted online. The hon. member can go on there at any time and get a full picture of what we have in place at the moment, but keeping in mind that as we move forward with the new act and as we move forward with the regulations that we will build over the coming months, it will be a very clear picture of what water we have, what water we are using, and how we will put measures in to protect them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Amount of water pumped for irrigation in 2017

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question, again, to the environment minister: If everything is online I'm curious on this one, how much water was pumped out of Island rivers for irrigation in 2017?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) online too?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Again, Mr. Speaker, all levels that we have basically are recorded and put online, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Scientific research on deep-water wells and conservation

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2014, our caucus filled a freedom of information request for all of the scientific research done by government on deep-water wells and water conservation. We were told no such research existed.

Question to the environment minister: How much scientific research has been done by this government since 2014 on deep-water wells and water conservation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, Dr. Mike van den Heuvel from Canadian Rivers Institute is working with us on some research that will be required, as over the summer seasons all indicate that most of our watershed groups help to take various parts of recordings that we need to have throughout the province. So, a fair amount of research is going on in PEI in regards to our water uses, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the environment minister: Will you table all of the scientific research commissioned by your department on deep-water wells and water conservation over the last 10 years?

Mr. LaVie: I'm guessing not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: He will, he will.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll go back to the department and see if I can get some records of exactly the pieces that are there, and anything that I can table I certainly will provide to this Legislature.

An Hon. Member: There you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Irrigation ponds and criteria to determine number of ponds

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, this is why details matter. Islanders are concerned for the water and they deserve to see scientific proof that there will be water for a lifetime there for them and it shouldn't be that hard to find with the legislation put on the floor right now. You'd think this would have all been researched and looked at prior.

Question to the environment minister: How many irrigation ponds were allowed in a specific geographical area? What criteria is used to arrive at that number?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Good question.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Within the department we have several of what I'll call water experts that are on staff. They take their work very seriously. They have a really good method of approach when it comes to dealing with their scientific pieces and I know that they have a lot that they are working on. They have a lot that they –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Mr. Mitchell: – know they will continue working on when regulations get completed. I certainly will, anything that they have available; bring back to this House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Number of irrigation ponds allowed in a five kilometre radius

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Without clear guidance from Islanders, these details will fall between the cracks.

Question to the environment minister: How many irrigation ponds will your closed-door *Water Act* regulations allow within, say, a five kilometre radius of each other?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had an opportunity to speak on this about two weeks ago, any well that is feeding a pond, an irrigation pond or holding pond, as we move forward with the new act and get it into place, those levels will be recorded. They will be metered and they will be put online like every other piece of information regarding wells on Prince Edward Island over the level of five gallons per minute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Moratorium on high-capacity wells

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One clear, direct question for the environment minister: Can the minister think of any reason why the moratorium on high-capacity wells wouldn't be continued when your Cabinet goes behind closed doors to finalize the *Water Act* regulations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was going across Prince Edward Island having these collaborative talks with Islanders, I indicated then as I indicated just last week on the floor of the Legislature: The moratorium on agricultural high-capacity wells will remain in place. Until such time, there's more science, more research is completed, and that will be some months down the road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Sustainable transportation systems

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

Right now, rural Islanders have a larger carbon footprint than urban dwellers, principally due to our use of fossil fuels for transportation and commuting. Indeed, on Prince Edward Island over 40% of our total greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation. In our increasingly environmentally-conscious society, electric vehicles would give rural development a boost by making rural life much more sustainable.

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What is your department doing to encourage sustainable transportation systems specifically in rural Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As was noted, transportation makes up 42% of our greenhouse gas emissions on Prince Edward Island. What we are doing is we actually, as part of our energy strategy, put together a transportation committee to review transportation across Prince Edward

Island. We're working with the automobile industry. We are working with our climate change strategy with the other minister's department –

Mr. Trivers: What does that mean? Lots of talk.

Ms. Biggar: – and continuing to review those opportunities.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Federal funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure

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

One of the factors needed to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles is effective and widespread charging infrastructure. We're not bad on that front. We could be better, but we're not bad. But, if we're going to transition to electric vehicles on a large scale, we're going to need to significantly expand this charging infrastructure. There were federal funds available for this last year, but Prince Edward Island did not apply for them.

Question to the minister: Why did your department not access this federal money, and will you be applying in the next round for funding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Well actually, Mr. Speaker, we did apply for that. I would like to correct the member, and we are continuing to work at opportunities to get funding for our infrastructure. But, I would like to point out that we are doing a lot around our transit.

We have invested in 10 new buses in Charlottetown. We recently invested –

Mr. Myers: Worked great for Cardigan.

Ms. Biggar: – Transportation West.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We've invested in the County Line Transportation system between Charlottetown and Summerside.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We've invested in Pat and the Elephant for transportation, and we will continue to look at funding opportunities to increase and improve our infrastructure around charging stations across Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Maybe somebody from your department should have a phone call with the people in New Brunswick because they accessed half a million dollars in order to put charging stations all the way along the Trans-Canada Highway in New Brunswick, so you may have applied but clearly you are unsuccessful –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – with a combination of our world leading wind energy, our small size and therefore limited commuting distances, PEI is better suited than almost any other jurisdiction to make the transition to electric vehicles. All we need is the political courage to set ambitious long-term goals.

PEI commitment to phase out fossil fuels

Will this government commit to a long-term goal of making Prince Edward Island the first province to completely phase out fossil fuels in transportation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that New Brunswick has moved towards electrifying for charging stations. Again, I

will point out that we have, and are, applying for funding in order to do that

In order to have electric vehicles on Prince Edward Island you have to be able to leave the Island, as well. It's important that other provinces also are electrified.

We are continuing, as part of our –

Mr. LaVie: Make sure you have the cash.

Ms. Biggar: – energy strategy to develop programs that will increase infrastructure across Prince Edward Island.

We had a great conversation and an opportunity, I'm hoping in the future, I reached out to the renewable energy group that's here today. They reached out to me, as minister, to meet with them. We did reach out to them to set-up a meeting, but we haven't heard back from them, yet. I look forward to that meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Minister, many students incur huge financial debt while trying to obtain their education. In order to lessen the burden, many rely on bursaries and scholarships.

Qualifications for George Coles Bursary

Minister: Can you tell me the qualifications that are required to receive the George Coles Bursary?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, hon. member.

Hon. member, the –

Mr. Myers: If you go by –

Mr. Gallant: – some of the bursaries that are available for post-secondary universities and institutions are the George Coles

Bursary. University students are entitled to \$2,200 and Collège de L'île and Holland College are entitled to anywhere from \$1,200 to \$2,200. Students must be PEI residents and attending fulltime tuition at these institutions.

Under the current rules, students are ineligible for the George Coles if they are receiving financial support, such as Employment Insurance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister just mentioned that if a student is receiving EI they're not eligible to receive the George Coles Bursary.

Removing restriction on bursary

I believe this bursary should be available for every student as it was designed.

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Mr. Perry: Minister: Would your department consider removing this restriction?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you –

Mr. LaVie: Robbing the students again.

Mr. Gallant: – Mr. Speaker –

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

Mr. Gallant: Yes, this is correct hon. member. Students accessing Career Connect programs currently are ineligible for the George Coles Bursary –

Mr. LaVie: Shame!

Mr. Gallant: – they were informed –

Mr. LaVie: Shame!

Mr. Gallant: – whenever they applied for Career Connect. However, I agree with the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that all first-year students should be equally eligible for the George Cole Bursary. These eligibility requirements are being looked at as we speak.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister for having your department look into that.

I do understand that there is a process to having this decision made. Will you commit today that you and your department will make these changes as soon as possible?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, my department, as I indicated, are working on this right now. I do commit that we will work to change so Island students are eligible for this if they have a source of income.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Last year there was four pieces of legislation that were brought through this Legislature that protected children here on Prince Edward Island. I think that was one of the best sessions I have ever seen in the Legislature in the cooperation there.

One of the decisions of those questions and pieces of legislation that was brought through last year was the child's lawyer. I've had a number of concerns from residents, some of my residents, in terms of

the child lawyer and I referred them to the child lawyer and I'm getting good responses back.

Update on children's lawyer

I'd like for the Premier to update this House on what is the child lawyer doing, and how good is it going?

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) used (Indistinct) questions

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Not even a question.

Ms. Compton: Too cute (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, there was a question asked by the hon. member –

Mr. Trivers: Sort of.

Speaker: – and I think, I believe, the Premier is prepared to answer the question. If you want to listen to him just remember, and I'll briefly mention about interrupting anybody when they're answering a question. Try and hear him out.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question.

I'm happy to tell the hon. member and the House that, since the children's lawyer started in her work, and it was a very success appointment, there have been 45 referrals to her by members or others in the public. That she would currently have on the order of 12 active files and another 12 or so under consideration.

The main thing to understand about the children's lawyer is that she is a frontline worker. She is giving on-the-ground service with direct advocacy in court. That's her job; to help with investigations or with clinical advocacy. I believe she is doing a very good job, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, your first supplementary question.

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

That's great news: 45 children are being serviced under the child lawyer. Forty-five children are being protected under the child lawyer and I think that's great. It looks like the child lawyer is working extremely hard.

Mr. Premier: If the child lawyer needs some more resources, will the resources be there for the child lawyer in order to expand and help more children on Prince Edward Island?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me first say that the children's lawyer works together with other parts of the service that is offered to children, who are coming before the courts or otherwise in vulnerable situations, notably with the people in the Family Law center, which is a great team there that's dealing with everything from alternative dispute resolution to assisting people who are – have got support from family members that they're supporting to be getting.

What's really great about the children's lawyer is that she does work in this collaborative environment, at the same time, she is an officer of the court and she is independent. Should it be the case that there's a need for further resources because of the success of this program, those resources will be available.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Selling of beer in supermarket

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: Can you explain how Kevin Murphy can sell beer inside a

supermarket, but your own government can't?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not really in a very good position to explain that. I'm not the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission. I'm sure –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – he would be happy to provide an answer to that question and that may be something that he can help us with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Kevin Murphy applied for, and has apparently received approval for a microbrewery at a local supermarket.

Fast tracking of microbrewery application

Premier, again: As of December 1st, the application was not completed, but the site was open on Friday.

Question now to the Premier again: Why was Mr. Murphy's application fast tracked through government so quickly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to look into that and either I, or the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission, could inform the House –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – further –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, you know.

Premier MacLauchlan: – it may be that the situation could be understood more fully than the point that was made.

As far as I know, there was no fast tracking, but we'd be –

Mr. Fox: Had to have been.

Premier MacLauchlan: – happy to come back and let the House know about that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The logos were up at the kiosk prior to any of the paperwork even being considered. As everyone knows, brewing is a multi-step process however this site only contains two small pieces of equipment; two identical fermenters, which is only one step of the brewing process.

Question to the Premier: How is this a licenced microbrewery if it only contains equipment for just one step of the brewing process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would be happy to look into this and either I, or another minister, will come back and inform the House. It's obvious that the –

Mr. LaVie: They don't want to answer.

Premier MacLauchlan: – member opposite is a lot better informed on this –

Mr. LaVie: Pass the buck.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and of the brewing process, but we'll be sure that the House is well-informed on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Microbreweries to brew on site

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So quite often we're more informed over here, so it's nothing irregular today to be more informed. Government regulations require Island microbrewery licence holders to actually brew at their microbrewery location.

Question to the Premier: How was Kevin Murphy approved for a microbrewery licence, inside a grocery store, when he isn't actually brewing a single drop on site?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, when I look into this, one of the first questions I'll have is whether, in fact, there has been an approval granted for the activities that the hon. member is describing, but that will be the first question I'll look into and we may find that he's, perhaps, not as well informed as he thinks he is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Lost your clappers.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I think we will find out and we will find out that the Premier always pulls strings for his buddy, Kevin, but back to the questions of today.

This brewing process, it takes several weeks, yet Kevin Murphy has hundreds of cans of beer from his other companies already on the shelves. There's also six taps installed with six different beers which none of which are brewed on site.

Question to the Premier: How can Kevin Murphy be selling beer at a fake microbrewery location that isn't even producing an ounce of beer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the same question, but in any event, what I've said is that I will undertake to look into this and get back to the House with an answer – an answer that will come either from me or from the minister responsible for liquor control commission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fast-tracking microbrewery setup

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's clear that Kevin was desperate to get his beer on the shelves prior to the holiday rush and this government was all too happy just to fast track that process so he could actually do it, even though the site isn't actually brewing any beer. So even though the site doesn't actually brew any beer, that just allowed him to truck all his beer in and put them on the shelves.

Question to the Premier: What do you have to say for your government's process in this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'll say what I've said in response to the previous questions, but I will say one thing that the member is asking about the government's process – I can assure him that I have had no part in any process that involves this initiative. But, I will go back and look into this and find out what we can and I'm sure the House will be glad to be as well-informed as we can be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Issuing licenses to brew beer on site

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's funny now. It wasn't that awful long ago that the Premier stood in this House and he was singing the praises of Kevin and saying he was his neighbor and whatnot. Now, suddenly, he's trying to distance himself from Kevin. The *Liquor Control Act* regulations state: A licence is only issued if the commission is satisfied the premises, equipment, and facilities of the microbrewery are of a high standard.

Question to the Premier: How was the liquor commission satisfied enough to issue a licence when the site does not contain the necessary equipment to actually brew beer?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I did, indeed, rise and offer congratulations to Kevin Murphy on winning two awards at the chamber of commerce excellence awards and I stand by that, but everyone in this province who's proposing to operate a business that's in a regulated sector will be expected to comply with the law and that's exactly what I'll be looking into, as I said, when I look into this and we have some information to bring back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So earlier in this session it was the Premier that was singing the praises of Kevin Murphy. He called him a business leader and he talked about his generosity. Just like the Premier and his \$25,000 tax receipt gift that comes from out of his salary, Kevin also uses taxpayer's money to fuel his generosity.

Question to the Premier: Why do rules never apply to your friends?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll probably find various points in the records of this House when I refer to the rule of law, and by that we mean that the law applies to everyone equally and, indeed, that's our job as government, is to ensure that that is the case. It's also a role that I don't mind playing, that when a citizen is maligned in this House to stand up and speak up for him.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

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

Suspending of license or enforce law

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government continually picks winners and losers. You only have to look at the front page of *The Guardian* today to see that you guys are basically bathing Kevin Murphy in money. You couldn't throw enough money at Kevin Murphy, and you're using ACOA to do it. You guys are. You look at the loans. Look at the loans alone, that's on paper that you have given Kevin Murphy.

Question to the Premier: Will you suspend this license or at least enforce the law to make Kevin Murphy actually brew beer on that site?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I said I'll look into this or ask that it be looked into, and that either I or the minister responsible for the liquor control commission will report to the House, and I think that's as much as I could reasonably be

expected to say today and we will indeed be acting on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Level playing field for all local breweries

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over here on this side, we continually hear from Islanders who are disappointed by this government and the way they treat their friends special and everybody else is a second-class citizen. There are many breweries here on Prince Edward Island and we know where they are. They're all over Prince Edward Island, yet the one brewery, the Premier's buddy who he talked about in the House and talked about what a great business person he is and how generous he was; his buddy opens up a brewery, a fake brewery in a super market here in Charlottetown to sell beer that none of the other people can do that; none of the other breweries can do that.

Question to the Premier: Once and for all, will you level the playing field and let every brewer on Prince Edward Island have the same opportunity that your buddy Kevin has?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the development in the whole brewing sector, I'll call it, in this province whether it's in Moth Lane Brewer or the newly-opened Copper Bottom Brewery in Montague, or Barnone Brewery in Rose Valley and many points in between. I know there are others that are – I hear, not because they're my friends or because I'm running the liquor control commission, but that this is an area that Prince Edward Islanders are proud to see it and they're patronizing our brewers in this province, and we're proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: As far as I'm concerned, everybody who has got a business and an initiative and a product to offer to the people of this province and is doing a good job of it, is my friend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

Mr. Myers: Don't jump out the window.

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

Mr. Myers: I know things are bad.

Mr. J. Brown: Not all as bad as you make them out to be.

Mr. Myers: Polls didn't drop that much.

Human Rights Day Celebration

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I took part in a very moving Human Rights Day celebration.

Based on the theme Celebrating a Journey of Reconciliation, the event showcased the incredible progress young Islanders are making to understand the Mi'kmaq culture and to practice reconciliation. It featured presentations by students from five schools including: Morell Regional where Global Studies students created an original video, *The Unknown Truth*, which depicted the history of Residential Schools and how Island families were impacted; Montague Regional where students learned the traditional art of porcupine quilling with Mi'kmaq elder and residential school survivor, Marlene Thomas; *Ecole Francois-Buote*, where students did a presentation on the 60s Scoop which depicted Aboriginal children being scooped up and sent away for adoption; John J Sark Memorial School, where students designed, built and played a traditional drum.

The program also featured an awesome rendition by the Stratford Elementary Honour Choir of John Lennon's song *Imagine*, and little Basel Al Rashdan who

told the story of how he imagines taking the Canadian Oath of Citizenship next year.

Canadians are deeply committed to the healing of our history's wounds by acknowledging the cultural reality and contribution of Canada's First Nations. I'm very proud of the leadership our students and staff are taking to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by integrating Aboriginal content and Indigenous perspectives across our curriculum. And by engaging with the Mi'kmaq community and local artists to help students learn through creative and cultural expression.

Yesterday, we saw the fruits of their efforts and it was very encouraging. Working together, our teachers, artists and community leaders are creating very rich learning opportunities and deep levels of student engagement in human rights and the story of our Indigenous people.

Their work demonstrates the strides we are beginning to make as a society to build capacity for inter-cultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

We are proud of the tremendous progress our students are making and the fine example they are setting for us all as we work towards reconciliation.

I must say I was extremely proud of the staff in my department that enabled this and came up with the great ideas that we saw presented yesterday. We're really taken by the students and move forward in a way that we were given great assurance would become part of the next generation and the next generation of thinking. I think we should all be proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is the staff of the province, certainly not just the minister's.

The Morell high video was something else yesterday. The leadership class that's there, the global issues class under Mr. Wilson, is doing a fantastic job. Not only did they prepare this video on reconciliation, but they also have talked about mental health activities and raised a lot of money for that cause, as well.

One of our own Pages, Jacob MacDonald, was part of that group, as well. I've talked to a number of them, and they're doing a fantastic job.

Not only, the Morell high school is getting into reconciliation, but there's so much good work going on in Mount Stewart Consolidated right now, around reconciliation. Of course, many of the First Nations students from Scotchfort go to the school in Mount Stewart. I have to give so much credit to the First Nation leaders that help out the school. Principal Kendrick that's there, and many of the parent volunteers. They do a lot of stuff around reconciliation in that school.

I was able to take a three-day, a three half-day course on Mi'kmaq culture this fall as the Morell reserve is part of Abegweit First Nation, as well. I was happy that many of the officials from the department of education were there. I think that's a really good thing. I know in speaking to some of the staff that were there, and teachers, as well; struggle is not the word, but they're looking at ways to integrate this into their curriculum; a reconciliation.

Now, is it much easier to do it in Mount Stewart where there is an active First Nation's population and community there? No doubt. I think it's important they shouldn't be scared to identify and bring that into the curriculum. I was so happy that they were there and I couldn't encourage the minister to do that quickly enough; to keep bringing that in because it's an aspect of our culture that we need to identify and we need to talk about in all schools, and not just in the schools where First Nations are in.

That course, there were three different days and one of the days was on reconciliation. I learned a lot that day, as well. I know a number a number of the staff members.

Kudos to all that great work that they're doing and I'm happy that they recognized that yesterday on that human rights day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It was a great pleasure and privilege to be there yesterday. I appreciated the minister's remarks to the large crowd that was gathered there.

I found it a very remarkable celebration. The thing that moved me most of all was the fact that we have moved from a time, not very long ago, where there was a government-led concerted effort to erase native culture from Canada, to a place where Island children, settler children, were learning native songs, building native drums, doing native crafts and singing the national anthem in Mi'kmaq. It was just an incredibly transformational thing. I found that very moving; very beautiful actually.

Following on from the remarks of the Member from Morell-Mermaid, you could clearly see the value of this in every single child who participated, whether they were singing or dancing or hitting a drum or whatever they were doing, and their deep understanding of Aboriginal culture. Something that they would – you can only learn through firsthand. When you see that, when you see the elders from the native community coming into the schools and teaching Island children, non-native Island children, what pride there is, what value there is in Aboriginal cultures, I think the value of that is indescribable.

I, too, would love to see this as a mandatory part of the curriculum. I think it would be an incredibly valuable thing. When you saw the children talking about the Sixties Scoop, when you saw high school children and that incredible movie that they made about the intergenerational harm, which is echoing through native cultures today from the residential schools, it was very moving. Again, it was an absolute privilege to be there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Community Service Bursary

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government wants all Prince Edward Island students to find a career path that helps to ensure they have a bright future right here on Prince Edward Island. One key to achieving that goal is a post-secondary education.

As part of our commitment to ensuring our students have affordable access to post-secondary education, we provide over \$3 million in student financial assistance programs.

The new Career Connect program also reduces the cost of post-secondary education for eligible Island students. In addition, earlier this year the Community Service Bursary was expanded.

The Community Service Bursary allows Island high school students to receive a post-secondary bursary in recognition for their volunteer work. This year the Community Service Bursary was expanded to include grade 10 students. Government also increased the maximum bursary available from \$500 to \$750.

Expanding the Community Service Bursary helps students pay for college or university. It also encourages young people to volunteer earlier and more often in their communities, which is good for everyone.

Helping our young Islanders with post-secondary education leads to a more skilled workforce, which helps grow our economy and strengthen our communities. I would also add that the Community Service Bursary expansion was a recommendation from the Youth Futures Council.

A council member stated: The Youth Futures Council was thrilled to see that our recommendations were being heard and valued. Action on this and other youth initiatives provide young Islanders with

incredible opportunities to frame their future and show what they can accomplish by working together.

About 200 students participate in this program annually by volunteering with registered community organizations. This amounts to about \$300,000 provided to Island students over the last three years.

I encourage any community organizations that are not yet registered with the Community Service Bursary to contact my department to learn more about how their student volunteers can benefit from post-secondary bursaries.

One of the reasons Prince Edward Island is mighty is because Islanders, by nature and tradition, are ambitious, innovative and hard working.

These bursaries are another way we are helping our young people believe that they can truly make anything possible right here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for that announcement. Really, it did happen earlier this year that the Community Service Bursary is expanded to grade 10, so grades 10 through 12 can earn up to \$750 to help them with their post-secondary education.

It's absolutely fantastic. This is the sort of community-based program that the government should be bringing forward. It makes a lot of common sense. It's young people getting out, being active, taking action and then being rewarded for that action, not only helping in their communities, but building the future of our province. The Community Service Bursary program is one I've had direct experience with as a minor soccer and minor hockey coach. We have people that are coming out and helping us and they're fantastic.

You might say that it's a really, a progressive way to be fiscally conservative when you look at –

Mr. R. Brown: Liberal idea.

Mr. Trivers: – what's happening right – it's a Progressive Conservative –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Trivers: – idea really, it is. It makes a lot of common sense –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – I mean, it's not giving people money and saying: here you go. Go to school. It's saying: you go out. You volunteer. You help your community and you'll be rewarded. It's a win all the way around.

Congratulations on this program, and I'd like to see more programs like that going forward in the future.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Of course, we all know the long tradition on Prince Edward Island of neighbours helping neighbours, and that sense of community connectedness is, I think, as strong here as it is anywhere. In fact, in many other parts of the world there's been a dilution of that social cohesion and I think that's caused some deeply-damaging problems, both to individuals and to society generally, so this is a wonderful thing; promoting children to volunteer in their community.

I suppose there may have been a time back in the day when some Islanders would have laughed at the idea that we should encourage volunteers and by paying people to do it, but I prefer to look at this as a very inexpensive way to encourage volunteerism and maintain this glue that keeps our community as strong and caring and loving as it is.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition from Renewable Transportation PEI and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, who is not present –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Are people okay with me continuing or – by the hon. Government House Leader, that the petition be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Mr. Speaker, this petition states: Global climate change presents an extraordinary and present danger to life in this province, this country and the planet. It is the obligation of elected officials who are charged with protecting the citizens that they are elected to govern to take substantial and timely action to mitigate this threat.

Should decision-makers fail, life on Prince Edward Island will be drastically different and economic hardship would become a reality. Therefore, it is the request of the signatories inscribed on this petition that the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island take strong and immediate action to mitigate the danger of global climate change. The creation of a personal electric vehicle incentive program and continued education efforts have the potential to make a significant impact in mitigating the transportation sector's contribution to climate change.

There are 174 signatures on this petition and the petition prays for the Legislative Assembly to look into the benefits of establishing an electric vehicle incentive program, as has been done in many other provinces and countries.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I present here with a message from Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, which said message is signed by Her Honour.

Speaker: Hon. members, I will ask the Clerk to read the message from Her Honour.

Please stand.

Clerk: Hon. Francis (Buck Watts), MLA Speaker of the Legislative Assembly 127 Richmond Street, Charlottetown Prince Edward Island

Dear, Hon. Mr. Speaker,

Her Honour, the Honourable Antoinette Perry, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Prince Edward Island, hereby transmits the Supplementary Estimates of Expenditure of the Province of Prince Edward Island in Support of the *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2017* that were required to carry out the public services of the Province for the fiscal years ending March 31, 2017 and March 31, 2018.

In accordance with the provisions of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the Prince Edward Island Terms of Union, 1873, and the *Financial Administration Act*, Her Honour recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Commended by,

Paul Ledwell
Clerk of Executive Council
and Secretary to Cabinet

Honourable Antoinette Perry
Lieutenant Governor

At Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
8th December, 2017

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I present herewith the Supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Province of Prince Edward Island in support of the *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2017* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that consideration of the Supplementary Estimates in Committee of the Whole House be added to the Orders of the Day until such time as they are dispatched.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Prince Edward Island review of unfounded sexual assault cases data and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, 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

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Adjourn Debate on the Draft Address.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot who adjourned debate on the Draft Address to continue.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A week or so ago I talked about the 2,700 new jobs that were created on PEI last year. I talked about repatriation and efforts to get our Islanders back home. I talked about population growth and working with small

businesses and recognize their entrepreneurial spirit, risk-taking and contribution to our community. Those are the leaders who volunteer their time in our communities, who make donations, who are always there to help make our community a better place.

I know there is more work to do, and I am proud to participate to make Summerside an even better place for my kids. I am proud this government has worked to grow our economy. The government has supported growth in exports. Great companies like ADL, with over 400 employees, ships a tractor trailer load worth of cheese off-Island each day. I know there are others in this House who do not agree with exporting. I have been surprised on a number of occasions when the Leader of the Third Party has declared his concerns with exporting from PEI.

Vector Aerospace exports millions of dollars of service work each year. Trout River Industries exports a great number of live-bottom trailers from PEI every year.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Mr. Palmer: RadNet in Summerside created software for the US market.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Palmer: There's more work to do, but what would our province look like if we did not encourage exports, as others suggest? Where would the money come from?

These exports account for millions and millions of dollars. These businesses and employees pay taxes so we can maintain our roads, build our schools, pay our nurses and teachers and pay for our manors. We need to grow our economy to pay for things we all know are important.

I can look around Summerside and see the benefits of investments made by this government. There is a new subdivision being developed in the east part of Summerside. There must be 25 new homes in there, and it wouldn't be possible without the continued investment in water and wastewater. There's a university student in Summerside that I know going to Memorial who just bought a new laptop now that he

collects EI while in school, which is because of support from this government.

Vector Aerospace –

Mr. LaVie: Read the fine print.

Mr. Palmer: – continues to grow –

Mr. LaVie: Tell him the fine print (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and bring new money into this province because of investments by this government in an engine test-sell in Slemon Park.

An Hon. Member: Read the fine print.

Mr. Palmer: Three Oaks Senior High School is being renovated to provide a better learning environment for our kids. This is possible because of a \$22 million investment by this government.

Women in Summerside can get prenatal care and support at the women's wellness centre because of investments by this government.

This government is working hard to improve the lives of all Islanders.

Mr. LaVie: Talk about your Internet.

Mr. Palmer: We know there's more work to do and I'm thrilled to support the direction of this government in this Speech From the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First off, I'd like to present my congratulations to Lieutenant Governor Antoinette Perry. She's doing a great job. I've been out to two or three occasions with her and the latest one being Sunday at Canada 150 National Skating Day at the Eastlink Centre and she's doing a wonderful job for our province.

I'd like to kind of go back a little bit in history and talk a little bit about this room. This is now our Assembly, but this used to be the Pope Room and this was our committee room. Mr. Speaker, as you would remember, you and I sat in this room the past couple of years and the fishery – the fishing industry was not a rosy situation. You and I were sitting in this room and we were probably along with the Member from Souris-Elmira and we were kind of scratching our heads. I remember the hon. Jim Bagnall was here at the time too. Prices were –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Prices were two to three dollars a pound. It hardly paid for the gas. The fishers were really, really hurting.

Mr. LaVie: Careful what you say.

Mr. Dumville: And you, as a former fisher –

Mr. LaVie: Careful.

Mr. Dumville: – you understand just how serious that was and also, you have a son in the fishery and it was probably equally hard on you, knowing your son was in this kind of a fishery when it was on the downturn.

Everybody knows that you were a wonderful fisherman over the years, but I guess I'm going to have to out you a little bit. A lot of people here probably don't realize that you have a super licence – that you were a tugboat captain and you pushed the big boats around in Saint John, New Brunswick for a few years so –

Mr. LaVie: Pushed little boats around, too.

Mr. Dumville: He pushed the big boats around, too.

Mr. LaVie: Around (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: He can look after himself.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: Anyway, at the time, as a government, what are we going to do? We have to form a bridge for better times. And what happened? The government at the time

consolidated loans and provided low interest loans to the fishery. We also provided a trap buyback program to get them through the hard times until the good times returned.

Mr. LaVie: No you didn't, the fishermen did. The fishermen did that.

Mr. Dumville: And Mr. Speaker, better times did come. Agriculture, fisheries, and tourism –

Mr. LaVie: You took the crab licence from them.

Mr. Dumville: – are now performing well.

Mr. LaVie: You took the crab licence from them

Mr. Dumville: Farm receipts today are over half a billion dollars.

Mr. LaVie: Mackerel fishery shut down. Tuna fishery shut down.

Mr. Dumville: Fishery landings are over a quarter of a billion dollars, tourism over \$40 million.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, the economy was turning. Okay, what do we have to do next? Well, I attended, in October of 2016, I attended a meeting at the Murchison Centre – it was a financial update. Being in business for over 30 years, I couldn't believe that meeting, Mr. Premier. There was a prosperity document, graphs on every aspect of employment, and I was some pleased with the Premier; finally, a Premier that understood enough to put financial structure in place. The per capita GDP, compared to national; real GDP growth; Prince Edward Island international exports; 2015 PEI exports by industry; total labour income growth; PEI total labour income; Prince Edward Island leader in Canadian business confidence; net interprovincial migration by age –

An Hon. Member: Great.

Mr. Dumville: – consumer confidence index and age pyramid; province headed in the right direction and 66% agree; total immigration to PEI; forecast for PEI in GDP

growth; fossil fuels; wind – Point Lepreau – the electricity mix getting to balance; kilowatts of CO₂; national debt to GDP; performance 2016 – and this Premier laid in a structured program –

Mr. LaVie: Go back to the fishermen.

Mr. Dumville: – for the economic health –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: – of this province.

Mr. LaVie: We understood that.

An Hon. Member: Just like Bob Barker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: It is a mighty Island when you put a program like this in place. That's structure and I was really proud of the Premier when I seen that document.

Mr. LaVie: We're getting (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: Contrary to PHD editorial, where there was talk about contrary that the GDP is an economic –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: GDP is an economic structure, Mr. Speaker; it is not a gauge of social policy. This is an economic plank put together to make sure that the economy is firing on all cylinders and that it is a gauge and it's to our success and where we are economically as a province.

Now if you want to talk an economic plank there's the Catastrophic Drug Program, diabetic strips, Seniors Safe @ Home Program, energy home repair, energy efficiency programs, EDA employment programs –

Mr. LaVie: Fill in the details.

Mr. Dumville: – job initiative programs, Community Development Program, Seniors Independence Program, SkillsPEI employment, women's wellness centre. So, these are all economic – these affect the economy. This is social policy, not using GDP. GDP is important because we have to sell more exports than imports.

Now, the next part of this whole thing is the ability to have a federal partner to participate and maximize the opportunities available to our province. This is the result of personal relationships and the respect that the Premier has for our province and our Premier.

The Premier always stated: It is a unique situation to be on a runway for these benefits, but you must take the opportunity to take off to make these opportunities a reality.

A balanced budget, a necessity to something to invest in our future. Our prosperity as a province has never been greater. A society is judged how it cares for its citizens, especially its seniors and its youth.

This province is in a position in health care, both physical and mental, and an abundance of social and housing initiatives. In regards to mental health services, there will be a mental health campus. I challenge our MLAs to take an assist applied suicide intervention skills training. We are on the frontline. I want to thank the MLA from Tignish-Palmer Road who took this two day training course with myself and, again, challenge all MLAs to consider taking this training.

New protection of our Island families in dispute resolution and a children's lawyer for the protection of those that need a voice.

This session; 10 new bills and amended will be brought forward in this session making the lives of Islanders better. It was three parts; a turning economy, a well-structured plan by our Premier, we have a booming economy is number one, a structured plan and strong personal relationships with our federal partners. The future of Prince Edward Island has never been better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's a privilege to rise and respond to the Speech From the Throne. From the perspective of my Department Workforce and Advanced Learning, we want to expand on the elements of government's plan that touch on supporting young Islanders growing our population and creating jobs for all Islanders.

Our population, as mentioned, the story of our population is a positive one. We have grown and diversified. Prince Edward Island has grown to more than 152,000 residents for the first time in history in July of 2017. We have met and exceeded government's population target.

PEI has led the Atlantic Provinces since 2007 in population growth and we are six months into a five-year population action plan designed to recruit, retain and repatriate with a focus on rural Prince Edward Island.

The plan confirms our commitment to building a resilient, diverse and sustainable population. We are well on our way to building a resilient, diverse population, as I had indicated before, and we will reach our targets of 160,000 people by the year end of 2022. Still there is more to do.

In the coming year we will take further steps to maximize retention rates for new immigrants, to improve our repatriation efforts and recruit more immigrants to all parts of our province.

As far as young Islanders, in our most recent population numbers there was an important detail that deserves highlighting. We are making progress reversing the trend of an aging population. Our median age is getting younger. The last time the Island's median age decreased was in 1967. This is important because we need to ensure we have young workers to enter the economy as our older workers retire. We all need to learn to lean into the effects ensuring young Islanders can thrive right here on PEI.

We are creating an environment of opportunity and enterprise. We must ensure our people have the best possible opportunities to live, work and thrive right here on Prince Edward Island.

The new Career Connect, which we referred to earlier today, is helping young Islanders

pay for their post-secondary education. We assist Island students with \$30 million in combined federal and provincial loan, grants and bursaries. We have invested over \$364 million in post-secondary institutions over the past five years. We will escalate our efforts to encourage more young Islanders to pursue opportunities here and to return home, and to support the retention of international students.

The Youth Futures Council is hard at work sharing ideas on topics that affect young Islanders. Since YDay 2016, the following actions have been taken; creation of a Career Connect program, expansion of the Community Service Bursary, creation of the Ellevate program, an internship for young females pursuing a career in entrepreneurship, and expansion of the Graduate Mentorship Program.

Over 150 people were in attendance of this year's YDay 2017, to discuss new opportunities for PEI's youth. I look forward to hearing more new ideas and I look forward to continuing to build on the momentum of our successful partnerships with industry on youth programs like Team Seafood, Team Trucking and Team Construction.

We are committed to creating jobs for Islanders and creating economic opportunities for Islanders and we are seeing this opportunity in our province. We are up over 2,700 full-time jobs year-over-year and we lead Atlantic Canada in GDP growth at 2.3%.

Thousands of Islanders are connected with training, job opportunities annually through SkillsPEI and to other job programs. Through workpei.ca we help match employers and job seekers with over 400 listings, right now, so I encourage everyone to register. We will continue to expand the workpei.ca website to better achieve the goal of matching jobs.

Our economy has been very good this summer and as was mentioned last week, we had over a million overnight stays in our accommodations. That is a big accomplishment –

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Mr. Gallant: – for Prince Edward Island.

We talk about our mighty Island the Premier mentions our mighty Island, that we are in a passing lane. I will refer to some businesses that were already referred to here today, like; MacDougall steel and Royal Star fisheries, and Vector and ADL. Without these businesses and their expansion and our consumer confidence, our economy wouldn't be growing the way it is. It's kudos to them. Kudos to everyone that has helped make that happen.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to close my remarks, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the throne speech.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm pleased to rise and reply to this year's Speech From the Throne. In the past I've responded to previous throne speeches, since first being elected as the MLA for Stratford-Kinlock back in 2011. However, this is a little different as it will mark the first time that I have replied to the throne speech in my new capacity as the official leader of the opposition.

Over the last six years, I have spoken about many of the outstanding local issues we face in our growing community of Stratford. The large class sizes and overcrowding in our Stratford area schools, the need for a waste treatment solution for our growing community, that's both environmentally and fiscally responsible and sustainable, needed improvements for public safety at high-traffic locations in our community, ongoing infrastructure improvements in our community.

Many of these require close collaboration and cooperation between all levels of government, be they municipal, provincial and federal. I'm pleased that by developing a good working relationship with all levels of government has helped us make some progress on several of these files. Although

some progress has been made, there certainly remains more to do on these important files. I will continue to work with all levels of government to achieve that progress.

At the end of the day there is only one taxpayer supporting all levels of government with their hard-earned tax dollars so it's important that we keep that perspective in mind. That's the perspective I brought to this job when I first elected and I feel that it's an approach that has served our community well. That also will be the approach that I take going forward to advocate on behalf of our community for the issues that matter to the people of Stratford and all of Prince Edward Island.

After having listened to a few throne speeches during my time here in the Legislative Assembly I've learned not to take the content in the throne speech as literally as may I would have as a private citizen. What I have found is that, sometimes, the promises contained in the throne speeches are a bit like that first snowfall; it's pretty to look at, but often it's gone as soon as it arrives.

I don't want to be overly critical in my remarks, so instead, I will concentrate on some of the issues that I feel that we need to better address as a province. First and foremost on that list would be the crisis that we face when it comes to our mental health services in our province.

There isn't a community that hasn't been impacted by the need for better access to mental health services. Our mental health crisis has touched families and communities from North Cape to East Point. Our mental health crisis does not discriminate by age, gender, geography or income. We need to do more to meet this ongoing challenge and to do right by some of our most vulnerable Islanders and by the dedicated frontline workers, who are doing all they can to help Islanders struggling with mental health issues in a difficult work environment.

Another issue that we need to focus improvement on, is to improve public transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, we have no shortage of examples in recent years as to why we need

to have improvements within transparency and accountability.

As the official opposition, we have advocated for a lobbyists registry, a strengthened conflict of interest laws, whistleblower protection, more resources and autonomy for the Auditor General, a more responsive freedom of information and protection of privacy law, an end to the mindless partisan obstruction at the Public Accounts committee.

I would note that after years of urging by the opposition, we have finally seen some small, tentative steps taken by this government, but more bold action is certainly required. We will continue to champion these issues because public accountability and transparency matters, and so does independent public oversight.

That's why this Assembly must address the need to establish an independent child advocate for Prince Edward Island. It has been called on by members of this Assembly, by community advocates, and perhaps most importantly, by the jurors of the coroner's inquest. As an Assembly, I strongly feel that we need to respond to the needs of Islanders and do everything that we can to protect Island children by establishing an independent child advocate.

If I take a moment and I just flip through the latest Speech From the Throne, I just want to comment on a couple of particular areas that the government seems to be focused on. Page six, for instance, in the sub-context on the side, it says: We will continue to work with our small businesses and recognize their entrepreneurial spirit, risk-taking and contributions to our communities. We'll invest strategically in new businesses and development.

We've heard a lot lately with regards to small businesses, or I should say, rather, we've heard a lot from small businesses as of late and there is great concern over proposed tax changes coming from the federal government. Most individuals that you speak to are equally frustrated with the provincial government and their reluctance to really stand up and make a bold statement to the federal government with regards to these proposed changes that are coming. They're coming within three weeks, and we

still have no details forthcoming on these changes that are going to have an extreme impact on our small business, on our entrepreneurs here on PEI and, essentially, our economy. If you talk to health care professionals, you'll hear from many doctors that are already looking at potentially leaving this province to go elsewhere to practice because of these changes.

On page eight, there's some discussion about enhancing the broadband services across the province. We've heard this promise over and over again by this government. We've seen tens of millions of dollars poured into these promises and unfortunately, many of these millions of dollars only went to benefit one company who doesn't even really have a head office structured here on Prince Edward Island or in Charlottetown anymore. Interestingly enough, if you drive down Belvedere Avenue you'll see where the head office used to be located. It's now vacant and there are signs there saying: For lease.

Another interesting aspect that I find somewhat troubling is, again, the millions of dollars that Bell Aliant has received from this government, whether it be for the telephone contract, the Internet contract, but when you drive around and you start seeing a lot of the fleet here on PEI from Bell Aliant, even though this company received millions of dollars from this provincial government, which essentially is taxpayers' dollars, when you look at the license plate on the majority of these vehicles they're not even registered here on PEI. They're not even paying their registration fees for the majority of their vehicles here in PEI; they're registered in New Brunswick.

Again, there was talk about \$30 million to put a broadband backbone infrastructure from one end of the Island to the other. That was already done once in the past by a different government, and that was simply given away to the company that I just referenced so then –

Mr. MacDonald: By the Binns' government (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, that's right. The Binns' government put that in place and the Ghiz government –

Mr. MacDonald: 4.3 million (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: – gave it away.

When we started looking through the Capital Budget looking for this \$30 million investment, it simply wasn't there. There was no clarity as to why it wasn't there until opposition started asking the questions and then finally we were told it's in the energy corp. Well, the energy corp under this government, I believe, just in a short amount of years has increased the debt on that Crown corp by somewhere in the range of –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: – about \$179 million and again, that is a cost burdened by the taxpayer of PEI.

We heard, again on page eight, about clean energy and the sustainable environment. As an example: My government's energy strategy focuses on moving us to a greater electrification to reduce our carbon emissions, enhanced efficiency as a way to save on energy expenses per household and an expanded role for more PEI-based solutions particularly through additional renewable energy. I'm all for renewable energy and I think it's a great statement, but what I hear from a lot of my residents and constituents from one tip of the Island to the other is tax fairness.

For many years now, there's been a move of foot to get people off carbon fuels and heating their homes to electricity. The contractors and builders rolled up their sleeves and worked towards that direction as well, but when it comes to tax fairness there is no tax fairness. If you're heating with electricity or propane or wood pellets, you're paying a higher tax bracket or tax than Islanders heating with a carbon fuel. We've talked about it before, and I still firmly believe that when it comes to heating your home here on PEI, we need to have tax fairness.

We know in a very short timeframe we're going to have a carbon tax on PEI. Now, the government can call it a tax price as much as they want, or a carbon price as much as they want, but in the end don't be fooled. It's yet another tax. It's yet the government with their hand in your pocket and again, we have

no details on how that's going to impact Islanders and it's just right around the corner.

The government talks about open government and active democracy on page 13. There's a mention here: that government will request the creation of a map that clearly lays out the geographic boundaries inherent in the mixed member proportional model considered in the 2016 plebiscite; the plebiscite that this government refused to acknowledge the results.

I guess one of my questions would be: If this government is going to request a map that clearly lays out the geographic boundaries, where is that request? What's been done?

We hear from seniors over and over again from one end of the Island to the other. We know we have an aging population. This government is finally moving forward with the manor replacement in Tyne Valley and Montague, but the very unfortunate thing that we see time and time again, whether it was the Prince Edward Home or any of the other manors that they constructed to replace the old facilities, is they're essentially building the buildings with the same amount of beds that the old facilities had. We know that we have an aging demographic. We know that there's more and more demand every day for these beds.

There's upwards of 100 seniors any given day occupying acute care beds in our hospitals, and these individuals deserve to be treated with dignity. They deserve to have a secure facility to call home and an acute care bed, especially if you're suffering from a form of dementia or Alzheimer's, the last place you should be in is in an acute care bed in a primary care facility.

I could go on much longer, but I know that there are many other members who also wish to respond to the throne speech, so I will conclude my remarks by thanking the Assembly for its time and thanking the people of Stratford-Kinlock for the trust that they have placed in me to represent them in this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and respond to the Speech From the Throne. When I look at the Speech From the Throne here at the opening of the third session of the 65th General Assembly. That's when it was presented, my initial thoughts were: I've heard a lot of this before. My second thoughts were: there are a lot of general ideas in here, but there's not a lot of specifics, and there's not a lot of action. Even in things like the *Municipal Government Act* which were already debated on this floor, we're not seeing action, and we're not sure what the actual long term plan is of this government.

I wanted to speak to the Speech From the Throne from the perspective of making progress; and Madam Speaker – I see we have a Madam Speaker, great to see you – Madam Speaker, I want to speak to this from the position of progress because I am a progressive. I'm also a conservative, and as a Progressive Conservative what I like to see are common sense ideas that are brought forward, acted on in a timely fashion and put into action. Honestly, this is what's missing from the Speech from the Throne.

As a Progressive Conservative, I just wanted to make sure that this is perfectly clear for anyone who may be reading the Hansard and all the Members here in the House today. The mission of the Prince Edward Island Progressive Conservative Party is to form a fiscally responsible, socially progressive government that promotes individual achievement and personal responsibility, is accountable to its citizens, listens to its people and embraces innovation while preserving the best of our unique heritage and diverse cultures and learning from the past.

This is what drives me, and when I speak in this House and when I'm out there working for my constituents, this is the mission that I am on as a Prince Edward Island Progressive Conservative.

Along those lines, what I wanted to do was bring a list of just some suggestions that I think we need to take more immediate

action on to make progress and do it in a fiscally responsible way to help Islanders.

I want to start off with infrastructure on Prince Edward Island. On Prince Edward Island, we talk a lot about community and how strong Island communities are, how much time and effort volunteers put into communities. What I'd like to see is infrastructure that supports communities across the Island, and let's start with our roads. There's been a focus on main arteries and the minister of transportation may be focusing on those because that's where federal tax dollars are, which is fiscally prudent, but at the same time, when you fix a main artery that is in better condition than a side road, it stymies the development on that side road and it doesn't allow it to happen.

Ms. Biggar: Do you not know what collectors are?

Mr. Trivers: So, when you're working on collectors and you don't actually look after the roads that the collectors lead to, you can't have economic development in that area.

When we looked at Trout River Road that's a perfect example in my district; the Rattenbury Road was paved right beside the Trout River Road, and the requests that were coming in to me for the last couple of years – and I know they were sent to the minister of transportation, sometimes in very direct ways through the press as well – where we want to see the paved portion of Trout River Road fixed. Instead, Rattenbury Road was paved directly adjacent to that area and that road today is still full of potholes and the residents, frankly, are not happy.

If we want to see economic development – and Trout River Road is an example where there has been a lot of building and economic development. So, the second example I want to use –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – we need to focus on our roads. We need to spend the money. It was good to see in the Capital Budget we're up to \$8 million, I believe it is now or a little bit over that, on roads, but we need to spend that money. We need to develop the roads so

that we can develop our economy and we can grow the population in rural areas.

The second thing I want to talk about is high-speed Internet. What we're seeing is a long-term plan from the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism to put in an Internet backbone. As the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, we did have a government-owned Internet backbone and that was given away by the Ghiz administration –

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Trivers: – of this government.

An Hon. Member: The Tories did.

Mr. Trivers: It's great to have a long-term plan and I actually support the long-term goal of having a government-owned Internet backbone, but in the meantime, what are residents of Prince Edward Island supposed to do, primarily in rural areas, to access high-speed Internet? How can you expect people to move to and live in areas where you don't have reliable high-speed Internet.

That's the second thing. Immediate action has to be taken. There is a way to take that action. We are seeing some limited penetration from Xplornet, which is good, Madam Speaker. It's not reaching all areas and there are caps on data. The verdict is out on whether that will solve our problem, but we have local Internet service providers that would love to provide wireless access across the Island. I'm suggesting that this government work with them and, perhaps, even just give them a low-interest loan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's good to see you –

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

Mr. Trivers: What I'd like to see is immediate action taken so that it's not two years down the road, it's not three years down the road, it's not five years down the road when I can finally get high-speed Internet; I can get it so that the population and economy of Prince Edward Island can grow immediately. Let's take immediate action and make that happen. It can be done.

It can be done in a fiscally responsible way, so let's do it.

The other thing I want to talk about is looking at speed radar signs. Road safety is a problem in every single community in my district. I hear about it from every single community. Some of them have managed to get these speed radar signs so that that tracks your speed when you're coming into a community. There is absolutely no reason, given the cost of the signs, why we cannot have a speed radar sign in every community where we have a speed limit that is constantly being broken. It's not expensive. It's action that can be taken now. I call upon this government to take that action now to place speed radar signs in every community that asks for them.

The next thing I wanted to talk about was on the health care side of things. What can we do to prevent illness before it happens. This is something that I believe is really, really a huge omission from the Speech From the Throne, and that's looking at long-term prevention of illness.

The biggest thing I believe we can do, and we can do it immediately, is introduce school food programs. The Home and School Federation here on Prince Edward Island has done a lot of work in this area. They have a proposal on the table; it's very simple. You just have to listen to the people of Prince Edward Island, the Home and School Federation; work with them and implement a school food program.

If people have access – students have access to food and healthy food that's sourced locally, they will learn how to eat healthy, they will be healthier going forward and will have less illness as adults. Plus, if we do source it locally it will help our local economy. It's an immediate step. Please, I urge this government. Take that step. Invest in our future and put in school food programs – that's not just breakfast. It's not just for people who don't have food, but it includes lunch and healthy food for all.

There can always be an option for students who can afford it, and the parents who can afford it to pay for their lunches. I believe in people. I believe that people who can afford, the vast majority of them will want to pay for that food. I see, looking 10 years down

the road much less, much, much less chance of health problems and health illness, of illness, pardon me, in the province.

The next thing I want to talk about on the health front is the enormous amount of time and resources that is wasted by people who are travelling to get health care and they're sitting and waiting. There is absolutely no reason why we can't address this problem. There are many things that we can do.

The one I'm going to talk about today is this idea of e-medicine. Some people call it telehealth, but everybody thinks that's a 1-800 number you call up and get advice. What I'm talking about, when I see e-medicine, and I brought this up in the 2011 election when I first ran, is using video conferencing, so high-definition video conferencing, along with tools that allow you take vital signs and actually examine a patient remotely. This technology exists and is being used today. You put that technology into locations across PEI and then it doesn't matter where the doctor or nurse practitioner or health professional is. They can remotely examine a patient.

You hear about it all the time. You're a parent. You have a child. They have some sort of perceived illness. It may be they need to go to a doctor and maybe they don't. As a parent, you're always going to err of caution. You take time off work. You spend gas money. You take the child out of school, if they're in school. You take a whole bunch of steps that use up a lot of resources and you go and you wait. In most cases, and very often, the parent realizes that the odds are the child is not seriously ill, but they know they want to get them looked at. They end up using resources that could be used in real emergency situations.

If we had e-medicine and the ability to do that remote triage, and some of the systems that go around that like queuing applications then we can advantage of that. We really need to really look at e-medicine and the advantages that can have and savings that will have here.

That's something that can be done immediately. The Minister of Health and Wellness has said repeatedly many times when he's talking about solutions: it's not about the money. Frankly, this is going to

save, not just on the health side, it's also going to save in lost productivity.

The other thing I wanted to talk about on the health side, and this is something that I won't belabor the point, but really it has to do with people who want to give care within their own homes and providing the supports to them.

This is financial supports. These are drop-in programs supports so they take the person they're giving care to and they can have respite care themselves. Also, home visits from health professionals. I strongly believe that, not only would it be better for the people receiving care, we could save money. I have talked about this before, so I won't belabor the point but this is something that I believe can happen almost immediately. We need to see some action.

Another thing that needs to happen immediately and it's something that has been talked about in this House a lot and the Minister of Health and Wellness knows this, is licensing long-term care beds. There's private facilities that have these beds available. Let's put a contract in place even if they're only needed for the short-term. Let's license them. Let's get people out of hospital. Let's make it happen. Let's take action right now.

The other thing that I wanted to mention where we need to take action and stop creating strategies, or not stop, you can continue to create strategies, but take action now to address problems in the short-term – is in the area of poverty and addressing the poverty problem.

When I look at the Stats Canada data in Prince Edward Island, we see that we have the lowest average weekly wage in Canada. We have 39% of people who are working on Prince Edward Island are earning less than \$25,000. What's happening is this government is saying: we're making progress on growing our economy, but the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and we need to address that.

I believe one way that we could do this in a fiscally responsible way; replacing Employment Insurance and social assistance as a universal basic income. This is something every member in this House has

agreed on. This is something the Minister of Family and Human Services would love to see, as well.

So for the life of me, I don't know why we're not pushing harder to get federal help and even without federal help, I don't know why we're not doing it – even if it's a small pilot project. Let's make this happen. Enough talk already; let's take some action; universal basic income.

There's a few more points I wanted to make here. The other one was on the tourism side of things. In District 18 Rustico-Emerald we have a lot of tourism operators. It stretches – the Cavendish Beach tourism association, for example, is there and we have a lot of restaurants, as well as cottages, and hotels, and motels, and home rentals, et cetera.

One thing that I've heard from restaurants is they pay \$30 per server for a beverage server program for online certification. So basically, you sign in, you pay your \$30 – and I believe it goes to Holland College – you take this online course and you get your certification and it has to be redone every five years too, even though, interestingly enough, the liquor inspectors don't ever have to renew, of course, their certification. So every five years, every server has to be recertified and, of course, any new servers coming in have to be certified at \$30 in an online program. If you want to help tourism – there was a big to-do – which, rightly so – a million overnight stays on Prince Edward Island this year. Tourism is bringing in so much revenue for this government and into our economy, why don't we simply, as a government, provide beverage server certification free-of-charge? How about that as an immediate action to take – right now? It's already an online program. Let's do that.

Leader of the Opposition: Great idea.

Mr. Trivers: The other thing I wanted to talk about, since we're talking about helping businesses, is the idea of the tax credit and this is something I've talked about many times before. Grants are fine; the problem is you're trying to pick and choose winners and it opens it up, at least to the perception, of patronage. Let's stop with the grants and let's go and look at tax credits, so the people who are working hard to be successful and are making progress, they're the ones that

are going to be able to keep more of their money so they can continue to be successful. In particular, I believe there's a huge opportunity in self-employed individuals because that's an area of the economy where we're underserved in this Island.

I just wanted to talk about one more area, and this is related to tourism as well. I believe this government is already engaged here, but I wanted to encourage them to do more and there's two sides to this. The minister of transportation would know this well, I believe.

There are issues with trespassing on private lands by all-terrain vehicles. We've heard that time and time again across the province. It's hard on crops. So, what's the solution? You can try to put in rules to ban all-terrain vehicles, but I don't believe that's a solution, because that involves a lot of cost for policing, et cetera. I believe what we need to do is have safe trails and let the ATV federations police the industry themselves. There's a whole list of asks from the PEI ATV Federation and they aren't even asking for money at this point, although I believe they would like to see some money from the licensing and registration of ATVs that happen on a yearly basis – that goes to help them with their cost, but they're working hard to develop trails and they just want the cooperation of government because there are areas on Prince Edward Island where there aren't private lands where they can build trails and they have to use parts of government infrastructure and municipal infrastructure.

They want ATVers to be able to go and use and access the great tourism facilities on Prince Edward Island. We need to look really hard at that. ATVs are not just a seasonal item. They can, and they do, run year-round. With snowmobiles, for example, if there's not enough snow, they can't get off the ground, but ATVs will run year-round. There's a huge benefit on the side of safety and there's a huge benefit on the side of economic development.

So, please, just urge this government to take action and make this happen as soon as possible, cooperate with the ATV federation and continue with the great work they're doing.

Mr. LaVie: Have a plan.

Mr. Trivers: In closing, I just wanted to say that I am a Progressive Conservative and my mission and my values are about being socially progressive – they're promoting personal responsibility and being fiscally responsible. I see a future on this Island where the vast majority of our energy, if not all, is locally produced, clean, renewable energy. I see infrastructure that supports all communities across PEI. I see a Prince Edward Island where no one has to live in poverty.

There are several actions that I've outlined here that are just a handful that I came up with that this government can take action on immediately, so I urge this government to take action and I feel that this Speech From the Throne is too much about talk, not enough about action. I challenge this government to take action in the remaining amount of their mandate to see if they can implement some of the things I talked about here. Let's work together – that's the term we hear all the time. I hope you're listening. I hope you do implement these things and then, truly, with action, we can have a Speech From the Throne –

Mr. LaVie: Not listening.

Mr. Trivers: – that means something.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take a long time, but I am going to take the opportunity to talk about the government's record because in the Draft Address, government took the opportunity to talk about their record and there's some things in here that probably aren't quite as clear as they should be and there's certainly some things that are omitted from here.

Everywhere I go, I hear about how poor this government is. It's a daily occurrence. It doesn't matter if I'm at the rink, or at the store, or out on the street here, I hear how disappointed people are with the Premier, how they thought that he was going to do

great things for the Island, and that he is just like any other Liberal premier that has ever come along and he looks after his own friends and that he has been quite a disappointment. I tend to agree that that is the case.

Good government is more than being able to talk about what our GDP is here on Prince Edward Island and how good that is. We all know that, being a small province, our GDP is easily changed by a good year on the wharves or a good year in the potato fields. Those industries are crucial to our future here as Prince Edward Island like they always, always have been.

While the Premier likes to give a speech on how great the GDP is here on Prince Edward Island, he seems to regularly forget that it's the very fact that there's people out there fishing and farming that are growing that GDP and making it big for him to be able to talk about.

The progress on the agenda component – government talks about the economy is stronger than it's ever been. While it's a statement that government would like to take credit for; outside of the mass immigration cycle that the government has created, where people are coming and going and aren't sticking around and government's taking their deposit money and spending it as their own, outside of that, the real economic activity on Prince Edward Island here is what it always has been, like I've already mentioned, in our primary industries.

Government should tread cautiously when they talk about the optimistic future of our economy because they seem to forget, and they seem to like to take credit for the great businesses that they have been investing money in. When, in fact, all that money that they have to invest is being created by the tax base here on Prince Edward Island, which hasn't been fabricated by government giveaways.

Government talks about the number of fulltime jobs. We know that those numbers are fluctuating from month to month. Those job numbers have never been steady. They go up and down. Like the member before me said: It's common knowledge that we have the lowest wages in Canada. That's

something that government here fails to address continually or wants to ignore because they don't think it's important.

It leads to some of the other things that the member previous to me spoke about when he talked about the poverty here on Prince Edward Island and a real poverty reduction strategy. I know that since I have been around I've seen at least one, maybe even two iterations of a poverty reduction strategy that really didn't do anything at all. I think it's important to really take that on and bring forward a meaningful piece of work that we could all get behind. I don't think there's anybody in here who is against a poverty reduction here on Prince Edward Island.

Government talks about our population growth. Let's face it. The population growth, the 160 by 2022. That's going to happen whether government does anything or not. That number, we will reach that number, government is not making us reach that number. We're going to reach that number on our own. It's high time government stops talking about how they're growing our population when they're really not.

It's hard to count the immigrant cycle the way that this government is operating the PNP program. I think immigration is great. I have said that in this House several times before. We need people to move in. We need people in the small communities. The government cycle of just letting them stay here long enough to fulfill the requirements so they move to Vancouver and Toronto, simply isn't growing our economy. Government, effectively, is doing nothing to grow our economy. We will reach the government target whether we do anything or not. That's one thing that government never seems to want to say.

Talk about balancing the budget. Government has been firing around so much money here lately, I don't know if the budget is balanced or not. There's so much debt hidden in Crown corporations that, I don't know how you could ever say that the budget is truly balanced here. I think that we're in the worst financial shape that we've ever been in, in this province if you include all the debt that's hidden in the Crown corps, particularly, the energy corporation.

We really should be worried about our future.

Government has never talked about debt. This government has never talked about a debt reduction strategy. They've talked about balancing the budget and GDP and little else when it comes to the meaningful things for a future here on Prince Edward Island. I've always said: Our children are going to be saddled by the debt of this government over the last 10 years.

It's a funny thing that I picked up in here, too and it goes back to the member from Rustico when he talked about poverty. Government says that there are 3,000 fewer Islanders now paying income tax here on Prince Edward Island because of their tax relief. Arguably, that is right. But arguably that means that there are 3,000 more people than before that are making that little money that they don't pay taxes. That is not something to brag about. I know the Premier mentioned it here during Question Period earlier this session, he talked about the number of people not paying taxes here on Prince Edward Island.

That's not something to be proud of. The number actually means that those people don't make enough money to pay taxes. They don't have the income to pay taxes. That means government is failing. That doesn't mean government is succeeding. If government was succeeding that number would be zero because everybody would be making enough money that they had to pay income taxes. That means that as more people get added to that more people are living in poverty and that's something that government shouldn't be bragging about; driving people into poverty like they have.

Want to also make note that the talk about the cable, I'll thank, in this House, again, Gail Shea, for the work that she did to ensure the future of energy here on Prince Edward Island; as, when her time in the federal government, this was a done deal before the last election. This was a done deal signed with the previous iteration of you fellows over there. I want to thank Gail Shea for the great work that she did. I can only hope that one of our four MPs is capable of working for Prince Edward Island just like Gail Shea did in her time in government. I haven't seen it yet, but I'm certainly,

certainly hopeful that that would be the case

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) the residents of Charlottetown that don't get their EI (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Good point. Sean Casey promised that, and went to Charlottetown and immediately zipped his lip. Has nothing to say about it now. Has nothing to say: no, you're right. The education minister is right. Sean Casey went to Ottawa and suddenly became silent. He doesn't want to talk about anything anymore. Thank you for the education minister for bringing this up and giving me the opportunity to talk about this in the House today.

He also promised that he was going to deliver door-to-door delivery back to Islanders with their mail. That didn't happen. That disappeared. Never heard of that again. Boy oh boy oh boy, people are getting smart to the way Liberals work at election time –

Mr. LaVie: You're not chirping now.

Mr. Myers: Liberals promised you the sun and the moon and the day they get the Xs on the ballot, it's all over.

Unfortunately, when Sean Casey went to Ottawa he forgot that he was elected by the people of Charlottetown. I want to thank the education minister for helping me point that out –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – here today.

One of the things that is almost laughable that it's in here – I'm going to read it verbatim because I find it quite comical that it's in here. "We have taken ambitious steps toward greater government transparency and accountability..." Whoa.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I don't who actually had the job of typing that part in. I don't know. I would be embarrassed to say: yeah, they gave me that part to type in. It's the only part of the book they make me type in. Because it's so laughable it doesn't even belong in it.

We have all seen what happened here with Public Accounts. We have all seen the amount of transparency that this government is willing to put forward. Just last week when it came to the legalization of marijuana, questions were asked to the finance minister as to who was lobbying him. Who made calls to him? Who talked to him? And he wouldn't provide any of that information. Transparency and accountability. Boy oh boy, it must mean something different when you're sitting over there than it does when you're sitting over here. All of us, including the member from Summerside know what transparency means and it's not what you guys are offering.

Tax changes. I want to talk about tax changes. It was a topic in Question Period today. Tax changes, the tax changes that are coming forward outside of the one that the Premier claims that he fought for that he didn't fight for because it was impossible for them to ever implement it anyway so they had to back down on it, everybody knows that that was the case. The only reason they backed down on that is they had no way of actually implementing it. No way that it was ever going to work like that. It was something that was cooked up by some bureaucrat in Ottawa and he sold it to Trudeau and Morneau because they didn't know any better. They didn't know any better.

There are other tax policies that need to be changed. The CFIB is out right now calling on all finance ministers to band together and go to Ottawa and to push back and say: No. This isn't going to happen and we're not going to accept it. I think that would be a strong, strong voice for Canada if our finance ministers got together and did that.

I, too, like the Leader of the Opposition, I, too, remember when Island premiers would go to Ottawa and fight for Islanders. I, too, remember what it was like to feel like we had real leadership in Ottawa.

The Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, he went to Ottawa. He was fighting for Ottawa. He's fighting for changes for right here when it comes to the EI changes. Premier, there wasn't a single story since he has been elected, not a single story, of him fighting for Islanders. I want to thank the

Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, while I may not always agree with you, it's good to see that somebody over there is willing to go to Ottawa and stand up for Islanders because that's what Islanders expect.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: That's what Islanders expect from a government.

An Hon. Member: That's why he got the big pin.

Mr. Myers: We're going to move back off of the federal issues, unless the minister of education would like me to talk more about it –

Mr. R. Brown: No, I think he could.

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

We'll go onto education then. What's missing from this. Everyone knows what happened last winter. It was an assault on communities in Prince Edward Island and it was led by this government. I believe that this government severely misjudged the quality of the fight left in the people in rural Prince Edward Island when they came out and started their assault on small communities.

When I'm down around places like Georgetown in the summer, there are so many tourists; they're walking the streets, they're taking part in the shops, they're eating at the restaurants. They're enjoying the beauty that – I know a lot of us probably take for granted from seeing it so often. Small communities shouldn't be viewed as a burden to government. Small communities should be something that this government should be viewing as one of our unique components of Island life that should be celebrated, not viewed as a burden like this government tends to do. I think there's an opportunity to showcase the smallness of Prince Edward Island. It's an opportunity to showcase why we're so great. It's important to keep these facilities in rural communities, including, but not limited to, schools. And I think government should do much more to support the efforts of rural communities because there are people out there doing a great job, making a go of it, right across

Prince Edward Island, making their communities work for them.

The last point I'm going to talk on is, again, on communities. I am proud of where I come from. I'm proud of where I grew up. For those of you who don't know, I grew up on the Bangor Road –

Mr. LaVie: Did you grow up?

Mr. Myers: Not very far in it – I grew up in Martinvale. When I was a kid, there wasn't a car came down the road all day – it's just not the way it was back then. You wouldn't see a car – you'd hear it coming for miles because there were so few cars on the road back then. If we were going get to someplace – if we got to Cardigan, that was a big deal. If we got to Montague, it was an even bigger deal. If we got to Charlottetown, it was Old Home Week because that's the way it worked. We just didn't get to travel all over the place. And we were really happy growing up where we were. I'm extremely proud of the person I am and I'm extremely proud of where I grew up. The people that I know that I grew up with, the people that live there now, are extremely, extremely well fitted for our community; they're smart, they're engaged, they're active.

That's why I take exception when the minister of environment, last week on the floor during debate, decides he's going to take a run at the people who I represent – embarrassingly so, actually that he would say that they were too uninformed to have a vote. If you look up the word uninformed, it's not a very flattering depiction of who I represent. I would say, quite confidently, that the people who live in the Three Rivers area are quite competent and capable of deciding their own future, regardless how they would vote on a plebiscite. Just because people may disagree with the option that the minister's pushing and that government's pushing, doesn't mean at all that they're uninformed. Why is it that liberals seem to think you're uninformed when you don't agree with them? What is it about that? I don't mind people disagreeing with me. I like to debate. It's what changes people's minds.

I've said in this House countless times before that I've had debates with people where after the fact I was like: they made

some good points and they're probably on to something and over a course of time of thinking about it, changed the direction of how I actually thought about issues. We shouldn't be scared of that. We shouldn't be scared of what people have to say – or none of us are going to be here forever – none of us can stay elected in here forever.

Ms. Biggar: Except for Ronnie MacKinley.

Mr. Myers: Except for Ronnie MacKinley and even he left. Even he eventually left. People will eventually leave here. It's okay that when you get here that you don't know everything. It's okay that as each day goes past, you allow yourself to grow as an MLA. It's actually more than okay, I think it's important. So for me, it's important to know what people think, even if it's not what I agree with.

I know I'm running out of time. I've got a minute or two here left. I'm going to say that I have never been out in my community pushing against the Three Rivers amalgamation process – never. I went to public meetings. I was at a public meeting in Montague and I was at a public meeting in Poole's Corner and at both meetings, the chair of the steering committee for Three Rivers pointed out to unincorporated people when they asked questions, that the only way they were going to get a vote was to go through their MLA, which is me. So I'm standing there and I'm thinking: it's me and the Minister of Finance are the only ones that are affected by this and we know he's going to do whatever government wants him to do and I'm going to do what's right by the people.

On the second night of it happening, I said: Okay, if you want to draw me into this, then I'll gladly jump into this. And that night I said: we'll have a plebiscite. So the people who live in the Three Rivers amalgamated area will have a plebiscite. I actually think whenever we meet to finalize it that we should pitch it to have a plebiscite for the whole region. Not one, where the chair of the steering committee gives a presentation prior to the vote and says: here's all the great things if you amalgamate – one where the ballot box opens and people come in. We don't try to sway them. We don't tell them their business. We say it's no different than an election. Either you know enough to

vote, or you don't. You're still going in and marking an 'X'. It's okay at election time if people don't know who the supposed best candidate is because they're not voting Liberal, but they seem to be uninformed – they're uninformed whenever it comes to voting on a plebiscite on their own future.

Serious flaw in the minister's logic and last week took the cake for me. It absolutely took the cake to be insulted personally; to have my family insulted; to have my friends insulted; to have my intelligence insulted; to have my mom's intelligence insulted – my mom, who isn't in favour of amalgamation. Is my mom too uninformed to know what's best for her? Is my dad, who's 71 years old and ran a construction company in Charlottetown here for 45 years, too uninformed to make his own decision? Boy, you've got a lot of nerve saying something like that. You've got a lot of nerve misrepresenting the intelligence of the people in District 2. You have a lot of nerve misrepresenting the intelligence of the people that I represent and because of that, from here forward, I will do everything in my power to fight against this minister and show him that we're not uninformed, we're not unintelligent, and we have a lot more power than he thinks we do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in response to the Speech From the Throne and first to recognize Her Honour Lieutenant Governor Antoinette Perry – first opportunity to deliver a speech, not long after being installed as the Lieutenant Governor. It was a terrific performance and we look forward to years of continued contribution to our community and leadership in that important role.

The title of the address: People, Prosperity, Progress: Working Together for All Islanders, captures where we are in our mandate, where we are as a province, the opportunities that we have to continue to grow and to move forward.

Starting with people: to know that we have achieved a population, indeed exceeded a population, of 152,000 people – Islanders – by the end of June 2017, ahead of schedule. To know that the elements are in place for that population to continue to grow and thrive and do well in all parts of our province is a very big thing for all of us who have the honour to sit in this Assembly, to serve in whatever capacity, to be part of our government, and for everyone who is currently a Prince Edward Islander and those who aspire to be Prince Edward Islanders.

In that same 12-month period, our province had the fastest population growth in the country, 1.7%, compared to an overall 1.2% for Canada. That's a big thing for Prince Edward Island to be outpacing the country. It's been mentioned before, but it's worth mentioning again, that in 2016-2017, we saw the median age of the population of our province decline for the first time since 1968. If we want to ask ourselves if we're making progress or what we can measure, the fact that we're getting younger by that extent – from 43.7-43.5 years; we were the only province in the country that had that extent of a decline and, indeed, there were only two other provinces, Ontario and Manitoba, that had a decline at all. Indeed, in that same period, and this is very significant, Prince Edward Island had more births than deaths – the only one of the Atlantic Provinces to do so.

What that us is that this is a time of optimism and confidence in our province, and among Prince Edward Islanders and people are starting new ventures. They're getting involved in community-based initiatives. They're taking pride in who we are as a province and as a people, and how we can continue to achieve and to contribute, and to grow and to prosper and to invent new ways to be great as a province.

Over the past three to four months, I've seen a lot of this province from McLeod's ledge – I don't know how many other members would have been on McLeod's ledge during that time or in the west at the Stompin' Tom centre, a great example of something new that's been started this year; had great success. Further east, a lot further east, they moved the Cape Bear light – relocated it to respond to the changes in our climate and the erosion of our coast, and a little bit

further, almost a walk from the Cape Bear light, I found my new glasses; a great company there with now four or five employees and putting their product out on the runways of the world.

That's the kind of thing that's going on from one end of our province to the other in the rural areas, in the urban areas, in all of the counties and it's a great thing to see.

What we're also seeing is how this has been brought about through repatriation. We're making progress there. For years we went with a net out-migration of Prince Edward Islanders. In the last two quarters, we've had a net positive migration of Canadians to our province, and in the two years, 2015 and 2016, we actually saw more than that – 50% reduction in the track record that we had in those other previous years. That's a sense that people are connected to Prince Edward Island and people want to be connected to Prince Edward Island, see this as a place where something is happening and they want to be in on it.

I agree with what I've heard other members saying including members opposite; this is our opportunity to show the world that we can do this in all parts of our province, and that's why we're taking many of the steps that we are in our public policy, in our legislation, in our work together with the community and indeed, in the private community itself is showing as they continue to do well. That's evident in a greater degree or as a greater degree anywhere in our First Nations population, which indeed grew faster during the period that we're talking about than any other part of our population and our First Nations community, our Mi'kmaq community, are taking on new initiatives. They're developing new enterprises. They're working closely together and really going forward. I think that's so important as we see all parts of our population and all parts of our province do well.

I want to make a note, and I think it's very significant, of the strategic investments in infrastructure that are taking place in our province. We've spoken about the transmission cables; huge. Good for two to three generations tripling our capacity; \$142 million, major cooperation with the federal government; \$90 million in water and

wastewater and we've talked a lot about water during this session and what we've been able to do in 19 different municipalities to ensure that Islanders will have healthy, clean, and plentiful water for generations. Again, it's out of sight, but this is a platform for people to be healthy, to do well, to grow families, to grow businesses, and to see our province build on that platform.

We're doing it in roads and bridges. Over three years, \$122 million in roads and bridges throughout our province and we're improving rural roads. We're building up those collector roads. We're building corridor to corridor infrastructure, and that's all in keeping with what we're doing and what Islanders can see the opportunity to do as we move forward.

Broadband has been spoken about. That's critical as we look at the kinds of things that can happen and things that are don't foresee today in all parts of our province. We've invested in the runways at both Charlottetown and at Summerside at Slemon Park. There will be a very big commitment and investment in the Nova Scotia-PEI ferry. I stood beside the hon. Lawrence MacAulay the day that breakthrough was announced at Belfast and the reporter said to us: So what does this mean? I said: It gives people a timeframe that they know what their situation is, that's predictable, that's reliable. I said: I wouldn't be surprised if some people would go home today and decided to start a family. Lawrence laughed at that, but I can tell you it's a way of understanding where we are as a province and in fact, it's been reflected in our population.

We are at a point when people can act with confidence, with optimism, with the kind of commitments to their future, to their communities, to their families and to our province that is something we haven't seen for a long time. If you look at what we're getting done in strategic infrastructure and the investments that have been made through direct and positive collaboration, obviously with some advocacy, with the federal government; investments that have been made in the last three years would be equivalent to, or superior to, the investments that were made over 15 years at the days of the comprehensive development plan, and that's what we're seeing (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: We're outpacing the other Atlantic Provinces and indeed, we've outpaced for the last five years, Canada when it comes to the growth and the success and the prosperity that we're producing. That's not all about prosperity because it's a number – it's because what we can do with it – if you look at what we've been able to do in the whole area of assisting Islanders, whatever their situation and in particular those who are the most vulnerable.

The generic drug program is a very significant investment and a way to offer security, confidence about their health; that they're not going to be put at risk if they have to fill a prescription. Lower taxes; there are indeed 3,000 Islanders who are paying lower taxes now than they would have paid in 2014 and that's because we've raised the credits and the benefits for the child tax benefits and for people with low income to this extent. It was \$10,000 in 2014 and in 2017 it's \$13,800 – a 38% increase in the ways in which Islanders are not taxed, and that's why they're not paying taxes.

In health, we've seen the biggest increased investment in memory with \$35 million, almost 6%, and we're able to do things which benefit Prince Edward Islanders on the capital side. We've passed our Capital Budget. We've got that major investment in the new mental health campus. We've seen it at the women's wellness centre. We've seen it in our other health facilities, and in the outreach and the work that's being done to offer health care throughout the province in our communities, and I think that's a very big part of what we're able to do because our province is doing so well and, frankly, because we've managed our affairs and have brought in a balanced budget.

There's talk about debt. Our debt to GDP ratio is declining and will continue to decline, and that's the thing that people watch and it's a remarkable thing to be able to make the investments that we're making in assets, in capital facilities that are going to go to the benefit of Prince Edward Islanders and allow us to continue to do well and at the same time have that debt to GDP ratio decline.

We're doing the same thing in education and in schools, and we're making historic breakthroughs. It's really a time of structural renewal and really preparing a path for the future in legislation. We're in this session with the *Water Act*. Previously we had the *Municipal Government Act*. That was the first time since 1948 that we had a renewal – a totally new *Municipal Government Act* and the *Water Act* will be our first ever.

We're reviewing our policing; first time in 40 years. A new *Education Act*, the first time in 40 years. What we're doing with municipal funding that was announced last week; a breakthrough and seemed to be by the municipalities enabling them to plan their path forward. We said when we ran in 2015 that there would be predictable, stable funding for the municipalities and we've now achieved that. When you look at the total picture, we are now in a time of a premium for our province, for Prince Edward Islanders, for our communities, for our economy, for people who are looking to get ahead. Indeed, that's what we're going to see in the municipal area, that the communities can grow. They can plan. They'll know where they stand. They'll know that they've got the infrastructure to do well.

If you look at what we're doing in energy to rebuild on our renewable energy where Prince Edward Island has shown leadership for four decades, and now with the transmission cables and further generation and the work that's being done – it's a time, really, when we can move forward and when Islanders can see that we're doing well and, frankly, it's to demonstrate our leadership in this region, in the country and to the world.

We're seeing it in culture. We had unveiled a five-year cultural action plan where many people have an opportunity to create, to grow, to collaborate and to put our province on the map.

We're seeing it in our knowledge-based industries; in aerospace, in bioscience and information technology. We're seeing it in food as Canada's Food Island. We're seeing it in our exports and how they're growing.

Tourism: fourth consecutive year of record year in tourism because people want to come to Prince Edward Island, and they

know that they're getting good value. Of course, that's to the credit of everybody, who takes part in that industry from owners to operators to the workers.

Our workers have done well. We have been increasing the minimum wage because that reflects the growth that we've seen in the economy. It's something that we don't always think of as an export, but tourism and out-of-province students are a very important source of contributing to our economy; taking part in our province. And many of them come back. Many of them decide to stay. That's another way in which we continue to grow and do well.

We are at a time of a premium. The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council says: Prince Edward Island is on a tear. They're not saying the same thing about the other provinces, not to take anything away from them. I have said: We're in the passing lane. We can all say, and we can say with pride that we're a mighty Island. We are drawing on our strength. We take pride in the fact that we're small and that we can invent and create things here.

As legislators, or as a government, we have an opportunity to continue to build the solid blocks that will enable Prince Edward Islanders and our province and our communities to continue to do well.

I thank you for your leadership and guidance and stewardship and sometimes firm hand; always firm hand, but sometimes the way you have to give us a little tap to make sure we're all doing the best and being the best we can be.

I want to thank colleagues here on all sides of the Legislature for the way that we're working together and we'll continue to do so to do the best we can for our citizens so that they continue to do the best that they can.

We all thank our voters and our citizens, who contribute and work together in uncountable ways to make Prince Edward Island a great place. I want to thank my constituents in District 9 York-Oyster Bed for their support and friendship, and for the good work that they're doing to grow and do to well. It's a great area that, in fact, when we went to do the last electoral reform, electoral boundaries, had the second fastest

or second greatest growth of the districts in the province after Stratford. It says a lot about what's going on in that district, and how enterprising, industrious and proud the people are.

I look around these benches and see what our members are doing and what our ministers are doing and what our colleagues opposite are doing. It's worked. That, in fact, is what is really the theme of our throne speech, and when we talk about people, it's about the people. We are making progress and we are achieving prosperity. I think it's so important to Prince Edward Islanders, that they, as they are building confidence, as we see great ways in which they are creating and doing things and will, in the future, do things that we can't stand here and wouldn't have any business to stand here today and to predict, but to know that we're all working together to make Prince Edward Island the greatest, mightiest Island it can be.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time. I thank colleagues for their time. I look forward to continuing to work together with our colleagues here in this House to ensure that we live up to the promise of the throne speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: If there are no other hon. members, who wish to speak to the Speech From the Throne, I will go to the mover to close debate.

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

I want to thank all my honourable friends in the House here that have responded to the Speech From the Throne.

I call the question.

Mr. MacKay: Standing vote, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: We can ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

Speaker: We have to go through a process first. Okay, so we'll go through the process, then we'll have a recorded division.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the address in reply be engrossed and presented to Her Majesty by the Whole House.

I'm going to have to take a House leader course.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Yeah, okay.

Ms. Biggar: Sometimes you can't control (Indistinct)

Speaker: There is going to be a recorded division because it was asked for. I will ask the Clerk to read the motion now before the House.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): It has been moved by the hon. Member from Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the following motion:

Resolved that the following Message be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, to offer the humble thanks of this House for the gracious speech which she had been pleased to make at the opening of the present session.

To Her Honour
the Hon. Antionette Perry
Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward
Island

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island at this time in session assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Honour for the gracious speech with which Your Honour had been pleased to open the present Session.

Speaker: The question is on that that motion, hon. members.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Speaker: Now, we have to have the standing vote.

All those voting against the motion –

Mr. Myers: We have people out here.

Mr. R. Brown: They've asked for a standing vote?

Speaker: Yeah, they asked for –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, sorry.

Speaker: – a standing vote.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay.

Are the Whips –

Mr. Palmer: Government is ready for the vote.

Mr. R. Brown: You'll have to doing that tomorrow, too, Peter (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker (Indistinct) shall the bells rings again from the time that you called for the vote? The bells, I think, ran a little bit early. Should they ring again so we have time to get our members?

An Hon. Member: They're all here (Indistinct)

Speaker: If your hon. members are all here –

Mr. MacEwen: No, that's correct, Mr. Speaker, but I'm guessing – I'm wondering; I went outside the Chamber to find our members and then on the TV out there, I heard that you were calling for the vote, and I didn't hear the bells originally. You were telling the Sergeant-at-Arms that the bell had rung early, so I'm just wondering, for clarification, for the process?

Speaker: I didn't realize that you weren't back in.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay.

Speaker: Hon. members, there is going to be a standing vote. This is, according to the directions for the procedures for concluding the throne speech, this is not normal to do this. It's either 'ayes' or 'nays' so that's why this is –

Mr. MacEwen: Understood.

Speaker: – we're going through a different procedure here, so you'll have to bear with me.

Mr. MacEwen: Excellent. No problem.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition –

Speaker: Sorry –

Mr. MacEwen: – is ready for the vote.

Speaker: You're ready for the vote?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Speaker: All those not supporting the motion, please stand.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): The hon. Leader of the Third Party, the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: All those voting in favour of the motion, please stand.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): The hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier and Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Speaker: Okay, so the motion is passed.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the address and reply be engrossed and presented to Her Honour by the Whole House.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the same Committee which prepared the Address in Reply be a Committee of this House to wait upon Her Honour to know her pleasure as to when she will be pleased to receive the House and its address.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McIsaac: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

This House will recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Recognition of Guests

Speaker: You may be seated.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to just take a moment to recognize some key people again in the gallery here tonight. Jason Woodbury, Mona O'Shea and also Bill MacKinnon and regional director from New Brunswick, Debra Grimaldi.

Thank you.

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

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

I want to recognize everybody in the gallery. I want to recognize Bill MacKinnon. Bill and I have known each other for many, many years on city council and that. He's always done a great job for his membership and I want to congratulate him here.

And you know what? It's a great evening here in the Legislature, because if you ever were going to take a heart attack, there wouldn't be any better place (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Do we know where the defibrillator is?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: It's going to be registered shortly.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: When I first came to the House, that's the first thing I did was ask where the defibrillator was.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery, especially welcome to Jason Woodbury and the firemen from the Miscouche fire department, my home in Miscouche, and thank you for all being here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: So before I do take a heart attack I'll call on the –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, right.

Speaker: – the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Indistinct) a heart attack.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 21st order of the day now be read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 21, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*, Bill No. 102, ordered for third reading.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a third time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*, Bill No. 102, read a third time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill now do pass.

Speaker: Hon. members, this is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to with amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

All those in favour, signify by saying 'yea'.

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Contrary?

The bill is passed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to notice given, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intitled *Public*

Intervener Act and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): *Public Intervener Act*, Bill No. 104, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, could you give us a brief explanation about what this bill is?

Mr. Fox: This is a bill to do with bringing a public intervener into the legislation of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would like to call Motion No. 12 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Motion No. 12.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the following motion:

WHEREAS the Prince Edward Island government has a commitment towards the reduction of this province's carbon footprint;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Islanders are seeking alternative methods of heat sources for their homes due to the high costs of oil and in efforts to reduce their own carbon footprint;

AND WHEREAS the provincial portion of PEI's HST is currently applied to all sources of heat except for home heating oil;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Islanders who heat their homes with heat pumps, electric boilers, electricity, wood pellets, solar heat and other sources feel they are being discriminated against by this government policy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to broaden the tax exemption to include all sources of home heating products and systems.

Speaker: The mover of this motion, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, our opposition is bringing forth a motion urging this government to exempt all forms of home heating from the HST.

This government's decision to exempt heating oil from HST is appreciated, although the price has been steadily rising as we come into the winter season. Weather forecasters are predicting a very cold winter this year with lots and lots of snow.

It is not cheap for Islanders to heat their homes, even with the exemption in place. Many Islanders are still forced to head to the tanks with their Jerry Cans in tow because they simply can't afford to pay for the delivery of a large quantity of oil.

We have heard all kinds of terrible stories about Islanders who live each year in unbearable conditions because of the cost of their fuel. Many spend the winter freezing with cold because they have to turn the thermostat down.

Prince Edward Island is heavily dependent on fossil fuel for fuel-based energy. Imported oil accounts for about 75% of Prince Edward Island's total energy supply. That comes at a total cost of more than \$500 million annually. That's a lot of carbon producing energy.

During a presentation to our Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy, the minister warned at that time that despite the current drop in the price of fossil fuels, "we know that in the long term these costs will continue to rise." She also argued that the "continued use of fossil fuels threatens to undermine the social, economic, and environmental well-being of this province and its people."

What I found particularly interesting was that she also stressed that the "use of fossil

fuels is having serious adverse consequences for climate change and other environmental issues." I think most of us can find the irony in her words. This government's HST policy serves, if anything, as an incentive to use oil products to heat their homes.

The minister at the time urged the province to move away from utilizing fossil fuels as a form of energy. "That is why renewable energy, clean and green, is not only an option for the future, it is the only option for the future."

This is what she said, and I think we need to quote her again: "That is why renewable energy, clean and green, is not only an option for the future, it is the only option for the future."

If the only option for the future of our province is to move away from oil and fossil fuels, why does government continue to discriminate against Islanders who are trying to find cheaper and more efficient forms of energy to heat their homes?

Why not provide the incentive that will ensure Islanders find cleaner and greener heating sources instead of punishing those who utilize other heating sources?

The federal government will soon be initiating a carbon tax that will drive up the price of electricity in our province. NB Power is suggesting it might have to increase the price of energy it sells to our province by 37.8% by 2027. The government has yet to tell us what the impact of the carbon tax will have on our electricity rates.

The carbon tax is also expected to increase the price of gasoline by 12 cents a litre and by 14 cents a litre on stove oil. For Islanders who are the lowest paid in Canada, these kinds of tax increases are going to hurt.

This government has been saying a little more about the impact of carbon tax and I can understand why. They don't want Islanders to know what is in store for them. More taxes on gas and oil, when they are already paying some of the highest costs in the country.

The carbon tax means that Islanders more than ever need to find alternatives for

heating their homes. If they cannot afford the cost of oil and gas now, I can't imagine how they will survive later.

Government needs to provide incentive for using alternative forms of home heating sources and provide the same tax break as it apply to heating oil.

I have yet to hear the minister talk about inequality, although she has talked about everything else but. We have carbon reduction targets. How does this government's energy policy on HST support the target? It doesn't.

On Prince Edward Island, oil heats 81% of Island homes. Surely that is not a figure we should be proud of. I would gather that the other 19% of Islanders no doubt resent the fact that they are being taxed unfairly for utilizing other heat sources. This government assured Islanders that it would look at providing tax fairness to Islanders who use heating sources that are not oil.

They balanced their budgets. Well, they're supposed to have balanced their budget or say they have. When do they plan to follow through on their commitment? Or, is it like most of our promises this government makes, it will never be fulfilled. Your government knows that this policy is unfair. You know it is not progressive, nor is it encouraging Islanders to move towards energy efficiency and use other green initiatives.

I would ask for support in your motion and urge government to take immediate action to address this tax inequality.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It really is my pleasure today to rise and second this motion. It really seeks to level the playing field when it comes to taxation on sources of heat for Islanders' homes. Mr. Speaker, it's time to treat all Islanders fairly when it comes to heating their homes. The current HST policy flies in the face of our

residents who are trying to do what they can to reduce their carbon footprint. Islanders are environmentally conscious. They are aware of the implications of global warming and climate change. Many have seen the impact on their own properties and the extreme weather conditions that our province is experiencing.

It's easy to see what the future may hold if we ignore this issue. We all have a role to play to help combat this global crisis, but this government is not listening. Our requests are falling on deaf ears. All we want is tax fairness for all Islanders.

The PEI Real Estate Association has urged the province to exempt all forms of home heating sources from the HST, not just oil. They suggest that over the past decade, home builders have been switching to more efficient and environmentally-friendly heat sources like heat pumps and electric boilers. They stated that people who buy those homes are being punished by government policy. Islanders who are using heat pumps or wood pellets, for example, feel they are really being penalized by government. It begs the question: Does this government want to lower its carbon footprint?

The high price of oil drove many Islanders and apartment owners to move towards electric-based heat. Now they are being punished for having made that move. Government's HST tax policy is seriously flawed. We now have a two-tiered HST when it comes to heating homes in this province, one that is contrary to initiatives aimed at reducing the effects of climate change. The federal government is pushing a carbon tax, based on their concern for climate change. Although the method is somewhat questionable, the government's HST policy is contrary to the federal government's carbon initiative. Now surely our Prince Edward Island government sees this.

As the mover of this motion indicated, I too am interested in the minister of energy's presentation to the standing presentation to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy. In her presentation, she told us that government's energy strategy was based on three fundamental principles: Security of supply, responsibility in sourcing, and fairly priced.

At least one of these policies is being violated by this government's HST exemption on oil as a heating source. The minister also told us that government would work with all Islanders to engage them to use energy more efficiently, to implement conservation measures to save money, and to take other steps that reduce their environmental footprint. In my opinion, providing incentives to burn oil is not the way to go in trying to reduce the carbon footprint of Islanders. If the energy minister truly means what she says, then government needs to take action. Government needs to take action. No more talk – action. They need to make sure that alternative sources of energy receive the same tax benefits as home heating oil.

As the minister of energy – Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women – she needs to walk the talk and follow her own stated policies. She needs to be advocating against a policy that encourages the use of oil to heat Island homes.

Mr. LaVie: He got you.

Mr. Trivers: Why is our energy minister failing Islanders?

Mr. LaVie: Not listening.

Mr. Trivers: Why is this government supporting a policy that increases the carbon footprint of Islanders?

Mr. LaVie: No plan.

Mr. Trivers: This tax burden on Islanders who are trying to be environmentally responsible is very, simply, wrong. It's wrong. It's time for government to acknowledge its mistake and ensure that all home heating fuel is HST exempt.

There appears to be a high level of hypocrisy amongst the members of the current government when it comes to their concerns about energy conservation and global warming. Opposition is simply asking for government to be open to policy change and to allow all forms of home heating sources to receive the tax benefit that, right now, only oil does. I, myself, have a

geothermal heating system that my wife and I implemented in 2005.

We did that with the expectation that government would be moving to policy that supported environmentally-conscience changes by consumers. That's why we did it, but since then, all we've seen is soaring electricity costs and an incentive for people to use oil to heat their homes, instead of electricity. That's why this motion is so important. That's why I ask that all members of this Legislative Assembly – all members, government members, official opposition members, members of the third party, I ask that all of you seriously consider supporting this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Sure, I'll take the podium. Thanks.

I am pleased to take part in this debate and explain why HST is exempt from heating oil. I'll begin with the most basic reason why heating oil is exempt from HST. Heating oil was identified as the number one priority for HST exemption based on the fact that the majority of low and moderate-income families heat their homes with oil.

As a background to this, under the former GST/PST, heating oil, wood, wood pellets, electricity and propane were exempt from PST but were subject to the 5% GST. The HST model was announced in April, 2012, and included an exemption for the provincial portion of HST on heating oil. Under the federal-provincial agreement on Harmonized Sales Tax, Prince Edward Island is allowed to make a limited number of exemptions.

The provincial government does have the flexibility to provide exemptions. The exemptions are valued at up to 5% of the sales tax base. We have made exemptions on several products including; children's clothing, footwear, books and home heating oil.

The exemptions currently in place have used up all of the 5% we are allowed under the agreement. There is simply no room to exempt other products or services at this time. The opposition, some days, the opposition may learn that you have to make decisions. I, for one, are not going to take the exemption off children's clothing and footwear, books. I'm not going to do that. That would be unfair to low-income families on Prince Edward Island if we were to take the HST exemption –

Mr. Trivers: You could negotiate with the –

Mr. R. Brown: – off of oil –

Mr. Trivers: – federal government.

Mr. R. Brown: And if they –

Mr. Trivers: Negotiate (Indistinct) percent.

Mr. R. Brown: – want to take –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – the HST –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – off children's clothing, that's their decision. It's not mine and it's not I'm going –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) can't believe that they're doing that.

Mr. R. Brown: – make.

If we were to exempt electricity, for example, we would be far in excess of the level of 5% on the sales tax base. Even exempting other less used products such as –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – wood pellets and propane would put us far over the limit as we are allowed under the Harmonized Sales Tax agreement.

As you know the Harmonized Sales Tax agreement is a federal agreement between all provinces in Canada –

Mr. Trivers: A broken promise to begin with –

Mr. R. Brown: – and –

Mr. Trivers: – it wasn't brought in revenue neutral.

Mr. R. Brown: – I think there may be –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay. I'm getting sick and tired of this interrupting and I don't want any interruptions from anybody. When somebody is speaking be quiet.

Carry on.

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

If we were to exempt electricity, for example, we would be far in excess of the limit of 5% of the sales tax base. Every exemption – even exempting other less used products, such as; wood, wood pellets and propane would put us over the limit we are allowed under the Harmonized Sales Tax agreement. There would also be administrative challenges if we were to exempt these products from the provincial portion of the HST.

I recognize that people, who heat their homes with sources other than oil may feel they are being treated unfairly in that they have to pay 15% HST, while those, who heat with oil only pay the federal portion of 5%. However, I would like to point out that heating suppliers do have the opportunity to adjust their costs due the availability of input tax credits. That means net-tax increases would be less than 10%.

At the same time, through energy efficiency PEI, we do offer incentives for people to switch to other heating sources besides oil and to undertake measures to improve energy efficiency and conservation. All Islanders are eligible for these incentives. As a result, we have seen a recent drop in the source – in oil as a source of heating oil here on Prince Edward Island and an increase in other methods such as heat pumps. I'd say that by doing such, we are lowering our carbon footprint, and because of oil.

The drivers for conservation are not simply financial in matter. Many people switch to

other sources for environmental reasons. They take pride in reducing their carbon footprint and employ a number of strategies, including increasing insulation as a way to both, save money and to protect the environment.

I, myself, have converted from oil to propane because of the nature of a lower carbon footprint. I think a lot of Islanders should look at their source and to see what they can do to get off oil. Under the provincial new energy strategy, new conservation measures are being undertaken. It is said that the cheapest form of energy is the energy we don't use.

That is why the provincial government strongly supports energy conservation. In addition to providing incentives, the National Building Code is being adopted province-wide to support energy conservation.

I spoke earlier on the exemptions on children's clothing and footwear and books. This fiscal year, the government has provided close to \$1.5 million in point-of-sale rebates on children's clothing alone. We've provided close to \$400,000 on rebates to children's footwear. We've provided rebates of more than \$1 million on books. In short, Islanders, who purchase these products have received a point-of-sale rebate of close to \$3 million.

Again, in support of our young children, in support of education, we feel it's extremely important to put our money in these areas because the future of Prince Edward Island is in our children. The more we can provide low-income families with an opportunity for cheaper clothing for their children; cheaper books, it only goes to improve the future of Prince Edward Island.

On top of that point, the point-of-sale rebates on home heating oil in the current fiscal year are approximately \$12.5 million. This is especially on the benefit to lower to moderate-income Islanders, which is one of the main reasons we have introduced the rebate system on home heating oil in the first place.

As I said earlier, and as the promoter of the resolution said: 81% of Islanders heat their home with oil –

Mr. Trivers: A problem we're trying to solve.

Mr. R. Brown: Eighty-one percent.

In summary, exempting heating oil from the HST provides significant benefits to low and medium-income Islanders. There are other ways to support and encourage people to use other sources of home heating. In any case, the agreement we have with the federal government on the Harmonized Sales Tax does not allow us to exempt these products and services above and beyond those already exempted.

I also want to reiterate that every couple of years, the federal government does open up the agreement, does open up negotiations for the HST and that hasn't come about, yet. I think it is an opportunity the next time it rolls around. HST is a national program. There is a national agreement in place. All provinces have agreed to the perimeters of the HST agreement.

I'll not be supporting the motion because, in good conscience, I cannot take away the rebate on clothing –

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Mr. R. Brown: – for children, books and school supplies, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe this resolution has been debated before in this Legislature but I'm glad we have another opportunity to talk about all the good things that our government has done and continues to do to help Islanders reduce their carbon footprint and energy costs.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I would like to thank the Opposition for recognizing Government's commitment towards this work.

As I've said before in this Legislature and at committee: the cheapest form of energy is the energy we never have to use.

efficiencyPEI, formally the office of energy efficiency, was established to help Islanders reduce their energy costs and become more energy efficient.

Mr. Trivers: How's the update on that?

Ms. Biggar: Our incentives have helped Islanders move towards more efficient energy use and towards more environmentally friendly forms of energy. There are several programs that we do offer.

If you're building a new home or planning upgrades to your existing home, efficiencyPEI can give you general advice on what energy saving updates you should be considering.

If you own a home or a business and you would like to have an energy evaluation to see where you can save energy, efficiencyPEI offers financial assistance through programs such as; the Commercial Energy Audit Program and Home Energy Audit Program.

If you are considering upgrading your existing home's insulation, furnace or boiler, windows or doors, adding a heat pump, or any other efficiency upgrade, efficiencyPEI has programs to help there, too. They include; a Heat Pump Rebate program, Equipment Upgrade Rebate program, and the Envelope Upgrade Rebate program.

We are helping low-income Islanders through the Home Energy Low-Income Program with free air sealing, caulking, weather stripping, sealing gaskets et cetera. Other features of that program include installation of a programmable thermostat, a low-flow showerhead, a voucher for a free furnace cleaning, and Energy Star LED light bulbs. These simple measures can make a big impact on the amount of heat loss in your home, saving you money. Installing a programmable thermostat can save up to \$250 per year in heating costs and air sealing can save as much as \$650 per year in

heating costs. Recently, we increased the household income limit for eligibility to \$50,000.

Since the program started, we've delivered the free weatherization program to 3,900 low-income Islanders. Also, understanding the needs of low-income Islanders to access these programs, we have also made it possible to have efficiencyPEI rebates paid directly to the contractor. EfficiencyPEI has also recently partnered with the City of Charlottetown on two projects to support residents and businesses.

Through the Low-Income Financial and Technical program, also known as LIFT, we are providing Charlottetown residents with the opportunity to have a comprehensive residential water audit completed free of charge. The audit will help the homeowner find any leaks and will also determine if they qualify for a voucher for a low-flow toilet replacement. The program also includes the installation of in-home water saving devices, such as: a low-flow showerhead and a low-flow aerator for bathroom sinks.

The City of Charlottetown has partnered with efficiencyPEI to officially launch and expand the Certified Sustainable Business certification program as well. This program is open to all Charlottetown businesses to participate in on a voluntary basis. It is comprised of a checklist of sustainable practices that are reasonably attainable and worth striving for as they provide cost saving opportunities for the operation.

If a business meets the required number of checklist items and points to be deemed a Charlottetown Certified Sustainable Business, it will receive a framed certificate and a window and door decal marking their status to display in the workplace for all to see.

Certified Sustainable Businesses will also benefit through promotional opportunities as well as ongoing training opportunities through efficiencyPEI. Making the changes recommended through the certification program can lower a business's operating costs, minimize its impact on the environment, and maximize its positive impact on the community.

The provincial government sees great value in being aligned with the business community with regard to our sustainability and climate change goals. Buildings are responsible for 18% of PEI's greenhouse gas emissions and this program will allow us to begin expanding our energy efficiency goals to include local businesses. If we can help business cut costs, that money can be put back into the business perhaps to hire more employees or to expand.

I was pleased earlier this fall to announce that Prince Edward Island is the first Canadian jurisdiction to provide residents free access to a new online tool that will help lower their energy bills. EfficiencyPEI worked diligently to make this a reality. The MyEnergyXpert platform can help homes and businesses reduce their energy usage, save money, and shrink their carbon footprint. Users will input basic information about their homes and businesses into the program, and MyEnergyXpert will allow Islanders to perform home energy audits using their desktop, tablet or mobile device; provide customized recommendations; and help users find applicable programs and rebates available through efficiencyPEI.

The introduction of MyEnergyXpert will help Islanders make positive changes with regards to energy efficiency and support our province's energy and climate change goals. EfficiencyPEI does great work and they are currently working on the development of a comprehensive suite of new programs. Since opening in 2008, efficiencyPEI has provided over \$7 million in grants to 8,000 residential clients; \$9.4 million in loans to 1,775 residential clients; and over 500 businesses with programs and services to help reduce energy consumption. They have helped reduce CO₂ emissions by 25,000 tonnes; reduced home heating fuel used by about 1.1%; have generated over \$50 million in building renovation expenditures; and have helped Islanders save over \$9 million on their energy bills.

We will continue to build on the recommendations of our energy strategy to implement programs which will help Islanders find alternatives to fossil fuel heat.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First off, we shouldn't even be debating this motion; an election promise back in October 2011 by your government that HST wasn't going to come into effect. You campaigned on that. You all went to the door and told people that HST wasn't coming into effect and now we're here debating a motion on HST on heating sources, over a promise that you didn't fulfill.

When Charlottetown-Victoria Park talks about the harmonized tax agreement through the federal government, once again, it was a tax that wasn't even supposed to come into effect here on Prince Edward Island. Three months later, after you were elected, your government put this into effect. Heating is a necessity for all Islanders. Any necessity should not be taxed. I'll give you credit. Your government has done some great work with helping towards poverty, but there's so much more you can do. I'm not going to sit here and completely say you haven't done anything because you certainly made some inroads, but there's so much more.

Oil tanks; so back here about seven, eight, 10 years ago, seniors had to replace all of their oil tanks. Not only seniors, all Islanders. The code went up, the tanks were no longer any good. There were 2,000 oil tanks that had to be replaced in Prince Edward Island. Those tanks went out and were replaced. Now, in this very short period of time, we're talking seven, eight, 10 years later, they have to be replaced again. Seniors struggled at the time to scrape up \$2,000 to put oil tanks in, and now the new changes of law – they're wanting fiberglass tanks now. That's what the insurance companies – so seniors are struggling to pay for an oil tank, let alone HST and electricity right now.

Everybody used to use wood heat. It was a cheaper source of heat and that's what a lot of people went to. Insurance companies have tightened up so much now that it's near impossible to get insurance for a wood stove. The oil is one thing. Now, a lot of houses can't be insured with wood and a lot of people have gone to electricity. It's still

quite a bit of money, but for \$4,000 people are putting in heat pumps which goes a long way instead of replacing a \$2,000 oil tank.

One thing I noticed, and it seems to be more common every winter – I was at a gas station a couple of winters ago and I watched a fellow in a green Ford truck, I'll never forget it, walk over with two Jerry Cans in his hand and he filled it. I asked the gas attendant: What is he doing? He said: He's getting furnace oil. I said: In Jerry Cans? He said: Yeah, that's a very common occurrence now. I think I'm pretty well safe in saying that anybody in this House probably doesn't go cold at night so I couldn't imagine having to fill furnace oil in Jerry Cans to go home and get a couple days' heat. He said he sees this more and more every year.

You campaigned and you said – right now we supposedly have a balanced budget. You've talked about how good the economy's doing. Well, if the economy's doing so well and we do have a balanced budget, why not help those people in need and take this HST off a necessity that people need?

In a small province, we're taxed to death. So just look at this: There's income tax, there's HST, there's gas tax, there's land tax, there's land transfer tax, now we've got a carbon tax coming. Islanders are lucky to keep 30 cents of that dollar in their pocket and they're trying to survive on it? Anybody that can survive on 30 cents on the dollar should be the people running this country because they can live within their means.

We can get up and say and twist it and however you want to do it. At the end of the day, Islanders are struggling. It doesn't sound like a lot, maybe, to everybody, but \$20-\$40 per person a month, that might help a senior with medication, it might help seniors with food, it might send a kid to school not hungry, so I urge government to find a solution to eliminate HST from all heating sources for the betterment of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We live in Canada and in the winter it gets cold and as we talked about earlier this afternoon, the fact that government – the Premier – has admitted how many people here on Prince Edward Island don't pay taxes, that's basically – that and more who are struggling to heat their homes in the winter. The addition of HST is something that adds a lot to a problem that doesn't even need to be there.

Just to reply to the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park in his response about whether or not we would have him take off the exemption on children's clothes, there's two things. Number one: As you well know, children's clothes is based on the size, not the age. So you could have a ten year old that's in adult shoes and you have to pay HST, so you've offered no protection already to people who have children and that's something that I've always thought needs to be looked at so that you make sure that you're covering off children.

So you're already not doing it, in my opinion, to the best of your ability. The other is this: You guys can exempt anything you want. Just because there's a federal component that can be exempted, it doesn't mean you can't administer more exemptions yourself. It just means that you don't get as much money and that you have to pay a component of it to Ottawa. It doesn't mean that you can't exempt it. So it's really up to you. To say that it's not, as you would know, isn't 100% the whole story.

I, like the member from Kensington, I don't really understand why we would be debating this. I remember the election in 2011 where it was promised that you guys wouldn't bring in HST and then it wasn't a whole lot longer after that you brought it in. So then we come around to another election cycle, and you guys promised that you wouldn't raise it. Then the election cycle ended and you raised it. At some point you have to get back.

I know not everybody likes to hear it, and not everybody likes to be criticized for the work that they do, but sometimes you have

to hear it. These are Islanders that you're talking about that are about to hit a winter and none of us have any idea if it's going to be the temperature it is out there today, or minus 40. We don't know. We can't predict the weather. We don't know how hard it's going to be on Islanders. I don't know why you can't see your way to reducing this part.

The Premier talks about a balanced budget, and while I've always said to be fiscally responsible is very important, I think there's a component of this that you're missing and the component is that you can't be fiscally responsible at the expense of people who need help the most. It's almost what you're saying. You're saying: I can't support this because I can't take the hit, as a government, so the people can't have.

I also watched, earlier this session, the minister of tourism, he came up with money out of his PNP deposits that were defaulted on to give the education minister so the education minister could hire temporary relief in teachers for a year, which is fine. The money is there. One could argue that the reason it's there is that you're not running the program adequately. I would be one of those people that would say that, but none the less, the money is there. How come you guys can't dip into that money and offer tax relief to people on home heating using that fund? There's money there. There has to be a will of government to do it.

Over the years, I've always preached balanced budgets and fiscal house in order and being fiscally responsible. Never once did I say through taxation. Never once did I say balance the budget through taxation, balance the budget by raising taxes. What I actually said was you have to get your own house in order. There has to be checks and balances. You have to stop wasting money. I've said several times you have to stop wasting money. If you want to give back to Islanders, now is a good opportunity because you're taxing us to death, you have all sorts of pots of money that you can dip into that – your PNP fund, you could do this with, or quite frankly, you could find cost savings within your own organization. There has to be a willingness there to do it and it has to be leader-driven. The Premier has to show Islanders the way. Premier has to say: I want this. I'm going to find a way to make it happen. I understand there are Islanders

out there that are hurting. I understand that adding HST on top of the additional costs of heat for the winter is putting people in a position that isn't good. It's hurting people and it's hurting people at the core of their existence. There are basic necessities of life and heat is one of them when you live in Canada. You need heat.

I've said in this House before, the thought of people waking up in the middle of January without heat – I know we've all woke up in the morning and it's cold in the house because we didn't know that the temperature was going to drop overnight and we wake up and we're like – can you imagine that's every morning of the winter? Every morning of your winter because you can't put heating in – or because a Jerry Can is what? \$60-\$70 to fill right now? You still have to have \$60 or \$70 to fill it for three to five days' oil, probably is what you're getting – maybe a little bit longer, I don't really know, but it's not a long period of time. You still have to have that money.

I know HST isn't going to offer enough savings to take it the whole distance. Every little time you can help Islanders heat their home, every little bit that you can do to make sure that parents have money in their pockets to buy food for their children, or every chance you have that a child doesn't have to wake up freezing cold in the morning because it's not 1902, is one step in the right direction of doing right by all Islanders.

I know it's been debated in this House several times that the spread between the haves and the have-nots is getting so large in North America that it's scary. I know when the Leader of the Third Party talked about the basic income, everybody in this House supported it because everybody seemed to understand at that time that there is a need out there and we're not necessarily meeting it under current government policy. It's okay to look at your policy and say: Ah, we're probably doing this wrong, or we were probably too worried about the bottom line – for what?

One announcement a year where you can say: I balanced the budget in the spring. You can't eat a balanced budget; a balanced budget doesn't heat the house unless you took the book home, you might get 20

minutes of heat out of burning the budget. That's it. A balanced budget doesn't heat the home. And while I always said it was important, is it more important than somebody feeding their children? Is it more important than a child waking up in a house that's minus 20? That's the question. And that's why I support this motion, because to me it's not.

You have to be fiscally responsible, but you have to take it from the places where you can find savings. You can't take it from a group of people that you seem to be trying to hold down. It can't just be: You can't have because we can't give to people. There has to be something more than that and over the past six years, it's the thing that's always left me scratching my head.

Why is it that you can't find savings when it comes to some of your million-dollar projects or building a \$50 million highway, yet you cannot take HST off home heating?

To me it doesn't make any sense. I've continually been frustrated by it. I find it frustrating to hear the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, who knows better – he knows he knows better – saying that he doesn't support this motion. He knows that we need to offer help. There has to be help.

And this, this isn't the only piece of help, but this is a start. Why aren't we working towards more social policy in here? When I look at the bills that have passed in the past six years, how many make for better social programs on Prince Edward Island? How many make for a better life for people who are the have nots in Prince Edward Island? Not very many.

I've passed an awful lot of bills in here; I watched bills passed here that dealt with money and big ticket items and that type of thing, but very few times have I seen something on the floor that is beneficial. There's some. I'm not saying it never happens; but how come government can't create a better social policy so that we're looking out for everyone?

I hear government talking about how great the economy's doing. I hear government talking about, that business is booming. Yet we have the lowest wages in Canada, and if

you took the percentages of the Premier's number of people who aren't paying income tax, we'd probably have the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line in all of Canada. We need to fix that.

There's money when you need money. There's money when you need to announce a school in the middle of a by-election. Money just falls out of the sky then. But what if somebody hasn't eaten or somebody's house is cold? Sorry, we're against that policy because of HST on children's clothing. Come on, folks. I don't think that's why anybody came here. It's certainly not why I came here.

People that are doing well are always going to do well. They don't need any extra help. We don't need to bend over backwards for people that are already doing well. They're not necessarily doing well because of government; they're doing well because they're into something that they make money at.

They can threaten that they won't stay here or they can threaten that – we know that's not true. Some of those threats from big corporations have been going on here for 25 years and where are they? Still doing exactly what they've been doing for 25 years. We don't need to make special rules for them. We don't need to make special rules for them at all. Let's start taking care of the people who need taken care of here on the Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Some of what I'm going to say here this evening has already been stated by other members, but I really feel that some of these points that were made are very important points and they need to be reiterated.

I'm of the firm belief that we live in a geographical area that – heating your home, heating your business, but in particular

heating your home for your family – isn't a luxury. If we did not live in climate that didn't get cold in the fall and the winter and sometimes the spring – that we didn't have to provide heat for our existence, then yeah, we might be talking about something different, but we do live in such a climate. It's not a luxury; it's a necessity and therefore I feel very strongly that all forms of heating of homes here on Prince Edward Island should not be taxed. I don't want to say they should be exempt from being taxed; they just simply should not be taxed.

There was a move of foot back a number of years ago to get people off fossil fuels and to switch over to electricity and I applaud that. I think that was a wise decision at the time because we do want to get away from the reliance on fossil fuels. But the people that are being penalized now, quite a lot – a high percentage of the incidents are low-income Islanders because those are the individuals that are living in rental properties. The owner of those properties – the landlords, as you will – did convert, in many cases, from oil – fossil fuels – to electricity because there were programs out there to make it financially attractive for them to do so. Now we have individuals – Islanders, as you will – living in these rental properties that are having to pay additional taxes on their electricity to heat their abodes and I simply think that is wrong.

I've been contacted as recently as yesterday by one of my own constituents in Stratford with regards to the amount of tax that this individual paid on their propane bill because they heat their home and hot water with propane. He's looking at his bill and then he's talking to his neighbor next door who heats with oil and he cannot understand – he can't not fathom why he is being penalized, that he's being taxed while his neighbor's not.

There was a questionnaire sent out by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business during the 2015 provincial election in which all the leaders were asked about the possibility of raising taxes over the next four year term.

The premier at the time was then quoted as saying: The Liberal Party is committed to fiscal prudence. One of the key principles of fiscal prudence is respecting taxpayers.

There are no plans to raise taxes, fees, and levies.

And then this news article goes on to say: Last week, however, the premier told the Legislature he had never promised to raise taxes, thus the matter was raised. The premier argued the saying 'you have no plans to raise taxes' is not the same as a promise not to raise them. That's a pretty confusing statement when you can twist it around like that.

We just have to look at some of our neighboring provinces and what they're doing. The Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park talks about the 5% base on the HST agreement. We have a neighboring province of ours that has a HST in place and we have the exact same percentage of HST.

Currently, Nova Scotia has rebates on children's clothing; they have rebates on children's footwear; they have rebates on diapers; they have rebates on feminine hygiene products; they also have rebates on books.

What's interesting about Nova Scotia is they also have a rebate on all types of heating fuel. The rebate applies to all sources – residential use energy including: home heating fuel, natural gas, propane, firewood, wood pellets, coal, kerosene, and electricity. The rebate actually began back in 2006.

I guess one of my first questions would be, and I know this isn't Question Period, but I talked about it this afternoon during Question Period with regards to this government not standing up to the federal government. If our neighboring province, Nova Scotia, can negotiate a deal like that with HST – which I don't feel that we should have to negotiate because again, I reiterate, that we should not have to negotiate paying for a necessity – if Nova Scotia can come up with an agreement like that, then why can't our province? Where were our negotiators at the time? Were they negotiating for an exit strategy to go to another job?

It's been said here tonight already, with regards to individuals going to service stations with Jerry Cans. I've seen it in Stratford. We look at Feasible Fuels, which is a great company that was born out of

necessity because the bigger oil companies wouldn't deliver oil, unless you were on a budget plan or unless you were getting a full tank of fuel. Feasible Fuels, basically will go and deliver oil to your home for as little as a \$200 amount. Now, it is on a cash or credit card-basis delivery. You know, if you have a company like that, and they're growing. Every year they have more vehicles on the road and more drivers. The Premier has talked about growing the economy and increasing the number of jobs here on PEI. We're doing that on the backs of low-income Islanders.

I think the minister responsible for the environment should be very concerned about this, too because the more you have people transporting home heating fuel in Jerry Cans in their private vehicles and filling their tanks at home, the higher a chance you have for oil spills. These aren't huge oil spills that potentially, we hear about from when a truck comes in and, maybe, there was a malfunction with the tank or maybe there was a malfunction with the filter inside the home connected to the tank and you hear of hundreds and hundreds of litres being spilled, but every litre of oil, every half a litre of oil that's spilled by accident is still an oil spill.

I think if we knew about half of what was going on out there within our environment, we'd be pretty concerned about it. I really think, as well, that if we had a program in place or tax fairness in place, that we wouldn't be seeing this use of the Jerry Cans to the extent we see.

We had another member in the Legislative Assembly here earlier this evening get up, talking about everything but what we're trying to talk about here tonight. They talked about low-flow toilets. They talked about low-flow showers, and things like that. Yes, some of these programs that this individual spoke about are wonderful programs, but they have nothing, absolutely nothing to do with heating your home and the taxes that we're paying; all Islanders are paying if you're not heating with oil.

We've discussed this issue many times in the Legislative Assembly and I think it's high time that we do what's right and provide tax fairness to all Islanders. If the government's not prepared to do that, I think

they really need to come out and justify the reason being why they're not doing that.

The government also has a program – it's not the original program; it has been in place for quite a while. It's the low-income heating program. This program provides \$120,000 a year in cooperation with the petroleum association of PEI through the Salvation Army. It's a wonderful program. I don't discount that. But \$120,000, we know already that that goes very, very limitless as far as providing all the needs that we have on Prince Edward Island because of the taxes.

Again, I would ask all members in this Legislative Assembly to support this motion. I'll go further than that, if the government of the day really feels that it's not within their means because of the agreement with the HST, I think it's high time that this government actually, you know, put on their big boy boots, went to Ottawa and fight, fought for tax fairness for all Islanders.

We have talked about this over and over again with regards to the failure of this government to actually stand up for all Islanders. We have talked about the Catastrophic Drug Plan. We've talked about the Generic Drug Plan. We have talked about some of the good measures that this government has brought in, but what we don't talk about is when is the last time this government has actually added high-cost drugs to the drug formulary? You know? It's coming on four years now.

We have HST on all forms of heating sources with the exception of home heating oil. We have the lowest basic personal tax exemption in all of Canada. We now have a carbon tax, not a carbon price, but a carbon tax coming in just a few short weeks, which we really have no details on yet.

As the Member from Kensington-Malpeque spoke to earlier, Islanders are lucky if they actually have control of 30 cents of their dollar left after all the taxes are paid. I would tend to agree with him. I think that, perhaps, we should look at some of these people that can actually balance their household books living off of 30% of what they take in. I think this government could learn from them.

I'll close with that and I just want to, again, reiterate that I feel that it's very important that all members of this Legislative Assembly put yourselves in the shoes of low-income Islanders, especially those that are having to heat their homes and their abodes with electricity and other forms of heating that is not exempt, such as home heating fuel.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I want to thank the official opposition for bringing forward this motion on a very important topic. The conditional clauses of the motion are really pointing us in two directions.

Firstly, to reduce our collective carbon footprint, and secondly to do that in a way that encourages individual Islanders to make the right choices when it comes to heating their homes; both very admirable ideas and things that we need to be thinking about here on Prince Edward Island.

When we think about energy; however, there are three layers that we have to think about. Starting at the top, the most important one, and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, said this – that the conservation is number one. The energy that you do not use is the most important thing. That's at the top of the tree, is that we need to reduce the amount of energy that we use. In houses that means putting in good windows, particularly in the old housing stock that we have here on Prince Edward Island and the public buildings that we have. Making sure that they are as tight as they can be and insulated properly so that we don't use energy. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that the energy we do use, we have to use it as efficiently as possible. That means things like LED bulbs, but when it comes to heating your home that means using high-efficiency furnaces, which are now available. And particularly, if we are talking, and I'll get to talk a little bit

later about the relative merits of heating systems, but the air-to-air heat pumps that we have now available to us through electricity as three times as efficient as a baseboard heater. Using the energy that we use the most efficiently as we possibly can is the second thing.

The third thing is getting that energy from clean sources. It's almost – it's not the least important thing, but it's not the most important thing. When it comes to sourcing our energy, of course, as the Leader of the Opposition said: We're living on the cusp of carbon pricing, and none of us knows, in this province, at least, what that's going to mean. We can be pretty confident that the cost of fossil fuels is relative to other energy sources, is going to go up.

In order to prepare for that we need to think long-term. We need to be prepared for that so that Islanders, who depend on fossil fuels, are not disproportionately hurt by this. A number of members have talked about the potential problem that cost of heating your home, an absolute necessity, as many members have said, is not problematic for low and middle-income Islanders as it is for many today.

I know when Wes Sheridan brought in the HST exemption on heating oil, he claimed that 95% of Islanders heated with oil. Clearly, that was an overstatement. I have heard today 81% from a couple of members. I wonder whether that's an old number because everywhere I go I see houses that have air-to-air heat pumps attached to them. I wonder whether 81% of homes have oil furnaces and oil tanks. For example, my wife and I live in a house with an oil tank. We never use it. I don't know if we're counted in that 81% or not. I couldn't tell you. I think the number that use heating oil, is actually, probably, much less than that.

We're very keen to demonize heating oil, but we should recognize that in a high-efficiency furnace, heating oil is actually not the worst form of fuel that you can use. It's slightly less efficient in terms of kilojoules, of carbon dioxide output per kilojoule than propane or liquid natural gas. It's way, way better than wood. It's way, way better than coal.

However, we can't just look at the kilojoules per carbon dioxide, we have to look at the social and economic aspect of using renewable fuels like wood; provides jobs for Islanders, potentially, and it's a local resource. There's more to it than strictly carbon output per kilojoule. Oil does not need to be demonized. It's not the worst thing in the world. But we need to get away from that because these days, there are so much better options.

What we're really talking about here is avoiding climate catastrophe. That's what we're talking about. You don't need to look part California, this very day as we sit here, massive tracts of California are burning. The thought is that that might be the new norm for certain places in this world. We have no idea what catastrophic results of climate change will be. We know that things are going to get bad. Indeed, last week, there was a report that said that all the studies that have been done on climate change, the ones that are most accurate are the ones that say things are going to get worse quicker.

There's a whole spectrum of studies on what may happen with climate change. If we look back at the ones that predicted where we will be today, the ones that thought things would be worse are the right ones. We have to be aware that things are getting bad, and things are getting bad very quickly. That's really at the heart of what this whole motion is about. It's about reducing our carbon footprint in order to make our contribution to try and stop climate catastrophe coming our way.

I got into politics 25 years ago because I had children and I wanted to be able to look them in the eye, now that they're adults, I can, I believe, look them in the eye and say: I did everything I possibly could to maintain a livable world for you. I feel I still have work to do. I think we all have work to do. But surely, governing, is, if nothing else, it's succession-planning. We should be taking decisions now that will look after the long-term.

I know we work in four-year cycles here in politics, and that's not conducive to making good long-term decisions. I think we should be thinking about our children. In native cultures they think about seven generations. They go far further than that. I think we

need to get used to making decisions in the long-term.

Governing is difficult; I get that. It's very easy to sit on the other side of the floor here and throw arrows and barbs at what you're doing over there, but governing is difficult. But it's also irresponsible for us not to plan for the future. When I look at all of the problems that we are handing over to future generations – I see Jesse Hitchcock sitting here in the gallery, who travelled the province, this summer, with an electric vehicle. A very small gesture, but an important one –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – symbolic gesture. Yes, you do it, everyday, hon. member.

It's irresponsible for us not to look at the problems that our children will be inheriting. Those are economic problems. They are social problems. Today, this evening, we are talking about environmental problems.

This province has an enormous debt that my children and your children and their children will be paying off. Of course, we can balance that budget by reducing the money that we spend on schools and hospitals and maintaining our infrastructure, whether that be roads or bridges, but that creates a social deficit that they will then have to take care of.

If we don't take care of climate change, then the cost for that, nobody knows what that will be. But we must take care of it. It's not that there is no cost in doing nothing. There is enormous cost in doing nothing. We have to move now. We have to move quickly.

On Prince Edward Island we have great opportunities because of our smallness. We can do things here. We can be bold. We could be world leaders and I believe we should be world leaders. I spoke, this afternoon, my questions to the minister were on the electrification of our transportation system here on Prince Edward Island; not something that we can do overnight. But we are small. We have a great wind regime here. We don't have long commuting distances. We are the ideal place to completely electrify our transportation

system if we had the vision and courage of government who is willing to do that.

HST is, of course, at the centre of the motion. When we gave up our right to charge PST and GST and harmonized it, we gave up a lot of our financial sovereignty here on Prince Edward Island. We were able, prior to that day, to do whatever we wanted, relatively speaking, with our tax system. We could choose to incentivize certain things. We could tax heavily other things to encourage certain behaviours or discourage certain behaviours.

When we signed up for the HST we lost that financial sovereignty, that ability to encourage Islanders to do certain things. I know it's been mentioned here tonight that there is a certain flexibility. There is a portion of the HST where we can choose not to charge the PST. The previous government has chosen that heating oil is where we will do that.

One can question whether that was the best use of that small percentage. I think it's unfair to conflate that with children's clothing and footwear. They are entirely different things. Governing is about making difficult decisions. I think we can, quite easily, maintain the exemption on children's clothing and expand it to other things without having to suggest that this motion is pushing us not to do that.

We have gone from an approach that was – let me backup. The problem that I have with this motion is it is untargeted. It does not say that clean energy is where we should be reducing the taxes. It's saying that we should reduce taxes on everything, so it's an untargeted approach.

We're going from a place where we were targeting the wrong thing, which is heating fuel. I know I said earlier that we can't demonize heating fuel, but there are better options than that. We have gone from targeting the wrong thing with this motion to being untargeted. We can do much better than that. What we need is approach that targets the right thing and the right thing is clean green energy. We all know that we can produce enough electricity here on Prince Edward Island through our wind regime and through expanded solar and geothermal. The

hon. member over there said: That is where we should be encouraging Islanders.

You encourage people by removing the taxes. That's one way that you can incentivize behaviours. Government could choose to reduce the PST portion on solar, on wind, on geothermal, on all of these clean green energies and make a real difference here on Prince Edward Island. We have to do this. This has been said, and I always have to say this: This has to be done with regard to low-income Islanders. It's all very well if we're going to talk about putting the taxes back on heating fuels and when the carbon tax comes, inevitably there will be an increase in the price of heating fuels. We have to protect low-income Islanders from that. You cannot just go out and buy yourself – trash your furnace and your – the oil tank that you paid \$2,000 for a few years ago. There has to be provision there to make sure that low-income Islanders are not hurt by this.

You know what? We can go further. We should have net metering. We should have feed-in tariffs. We should have a smart grid. We should create a decentralized distributed grid where homeowners are able to produce their own electricity and feed into the grid.

PEI could be so far ahead on this if we had a government with courage and vision. Solar panels will last 40-plus years. For sure, there is a capital input cost in that, but there are no moving parts. Once you've paid off the capital, the energy that comes from that is free.

If we had a government that could find ways to finance capital expenditures to expand solar here on Prince Edward Island and encourage homeowners to produce their own electricity; feed that into the grid. We could be – we could have a situation where, 20 years from now, energy on Prince Edward Island is free. We could do that, but it would take vision. It would take courage, and it would be a bold thing to do.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I love some things about this motion. I wish it were more targeted. I think PEI can and should be a world leader. Why take little steps when we could take bold leaps that are safe and prudent to do

now? We are not doing things that are not being done in other parts of the world. There are many other jurisdictions who are way ahead of us on this and PEI is such a perfect place to be a world leader on this.

I love the motion, but I wish we could have gone further with it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: I'll take the podium too, please, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great opportunity to rise and speak to this motion as well. Actually, I hadn't really intended on rising until it was brought up about social policies and social policies regarding low-income Islanders and how this government is supporting low-income Islanders.

I want to start off right away by reiterating our government's commitment to introducing new social policies, new programs, a poverty reduction strategy, a provincial housing strategy –

Mr. Trivers: Universal basic income.

Ms. Mundy: Well you know what? I'm actually going to talk about that, hon. member, so I'm glad that you brought that up –

Mr. Trivers: Good.

Ms. Mundy: – today as well.

So, I'm very excited and I'm very honoured to get up here tonight. Just to remind the House of the programs that our government, in the short two and a half years that we have been governing, that we have implemented to help low-income Islanders.

This past Friday, the deadline and applications closed for our poverty reduction advisory council and our housing supply taskforce. Early indicators from that Engage PEI process show that Islanders are engaged

and they want to help, and they're excited. That warms my heart because it shows that Islanders know that government cannot do it alone, and they're stepping up to the plate and they want to have a hand in it. They want to have a say in it.

Poverty is something – and everything I'm going to say here tonight is nothing new. It's things that are said every day – day-in and day-out in this House. It's programs and policies that every member in this House knows about, and they should be putting out there to their community and to their constituents and to the people that are struggling in their communities because poverty is complex.

The question surrounding how to reduce poverty and define poverty has been debated for hundreds of years. We talk about lack of income, but that is only one variable. It's also a condition about lack of choice and lack of freedom.

Every member in here wants to live a life of purpose, and every Islander wants to live a life of purpose but where do we start? There is a raging debate on how to lift people out of poverty. Some say the system is broken, can't be fixed. Others say we just need more aid. Great example of that is basic income guarantee that the hon. member mentioned.

Again, today in Quebec, they launched their own basic income guarantee pilot project; this one far greater sample size – 84,000, and they are going to focus on those with intellectual and physical disabilities. Their pilot project is going to increase the social assistance benefits for those persons who have physical and intellectual disabilities by \$73 a month. I might add that this year alone, and last year, we increased our personal comfort allowance by \$40 and over the last four years we increased our food allowance. We are over \$2 million that we've invested in it. Their goal is to increase their social assistance rates by \$440 by 2023, in six years.

Now, that's pretty hefty when you consider that Ontario's basic income guarantee pilot project targeted 4,000 people in a population of 12 million over three years. We'll take another country, say for example Finland. They only targeted 2,000 people and what they're giving them is €560 a year, which

equates to about \$782 Canadian a year and that's a two-year pilot project. You know what? These are basic income guarantee pilot projects and I say: Which one are we talking about on Prince Edward Island? We have proponents that say basic income guarantee, but there are so many different pilot projects out there, what one are we talking about? I've listed just three here alone.

Mr. Trivers: Our own one.

Mr. LaVie: Make our own.

Ms. Mundy: I've just listed three alone, and when we talk about it on Prince Edward Island we can't even get anti-poverty groups on Prince Edward Island to agree.

Mr. Trivers: Lead the way.

Ms. Mundy: Poverty –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – is complex, and the route we are choosing is to engage Prince Edward Islanders and have that conversation about how we can address poverty on Prince Edward Island and our poverty reduction strategy will do just that, and the first out the door was engaging with Islanders on a poverty reduction committee and we're having those conversations now, and they're passionate.

We're going to listen to one another and we're going to listen to those that are living in poverty as well. As I've said before, emotions are contagious and if you want to bring a fundamental change in people's behaviour and belief, you need to create a community around them where those new beliefs can be practiced, expressed and nurtured. This is where innovation and invention happens, and that's what we're going to do.

We're having those conversations. We're bringing those people to the table and this is the foundation of our poverty reduction strategy, and this is the time that we are going to start looking for new solutions, Island solutions, but it is going to take a commitment from all of us to refuse the assumptions and get out of our ideological boxes, and we're going to have to start

listening to one another instead of pointing fingers.

I am very proud of the many initiatives our government has implemented and the improvements that we have made to reduce poverty on Prince Edward Island. One of them I'm going to talk about and one of them is so very close to my heart, is the grandparents and caregiver provider program. That program we announced back on November 11th. Too much fanfare, we went back to Summerside where the program first – or the idea first came about where we were first, I guess, advised or the stories were shared of those Summerside grandparents that were meeting on a monthly basis to just help one another and support one another.

Shortly after that first meeting, on November 19th, 2015, I brought forward a motion, Motion No. 60, which was calling on government to bring forth supports for those grandparents that were acting as primary caregivers for their grandchildren.

Mr. Trivers: Taking HST off electricity –

Ms. Mundy: When I brought it in that night, all those grandparents were sitting here in the room.

Mr. Trivers: You're on the wrong motion.

Ms. Mundy: Not one member of this House spoke to that motion other than the Minister of Health and Wellness, who seconded the motion. That motion at the time didn't have a fancy headline attached to it. It was about low-income grandparents who were raising their grandchildren. There was no fanfare around it.

Mr. Trivers: Violation (Indistinct) HST.

Ms. Mundy: It was just grandparents struggling.

No. We're talking about social programs. You guys brought it up.

Mr. LaVie: We're talking about the HST on electricity.

Ms. Mundy: You brought it up, hon. member. You brought it up, so I'm going to address it.

So here was a program we brought in to help low-income Islanders – grandparents who are struggling to raise their grandchildren – nobody spoke to it. On November 10th, when we released it to the public, we put out a press release and we said: A new grandparents and caregivers program helps families who provide out-of-home care for children for safety reasons, giving them \$700 per month per child, as well as child care, children’s dental, and drug coverage.

Mr. LaVie: No HST?

Mr. Trivers: No HST.

Ms. Mundy: Government is acting on requests from grandparents for help in providing safe living arrangements for children and *Child Protection Act* recommendations.

Mr. Trivers: They gave you the wrong notes.

Ms. Mundy: When a parent is unable to –

Speaker: Order!

Hon. Members, I asked you before, and I thought I asked you rather politely, not to interfere when somebody is speaking. I find it hard to believe that you can’t get the gist of what I mean when I say: don’t interrupt when somebody is speaking. How hard is that to understand? It shouldn’t be.

What you’re saying is: she’s not speaking to the motion at all. She’s not speaking directly to the motion, but what she’s speaking about does have some relevancy to what we’re talking about. It does. And there was more than the hon. minister who spoke about other things too, other than that, but they were relevant to the motion.

Mr. Trivers: I agree with that.

Speaker: So, I’ll just ask you to let the hon. minister carry on, listen to what she has to say, you might not agree with it, but at least listen to what she has to say.

Carry on, Minister.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, just to continue on: When a parent is unable to safely care for a child, living with a familiar person is the best for the child and reduces trauma, which is our top priority. We listen to grandparents and Islanders and today we were announcing the first phase of the program focused on the most urgent concerns. It went on to talk about that we had identified 54 children in Prince Edward Island who are living in 47 homes with family members – someone close to them. Thirty-nine of those were grandparent-led homes. We also said we’d continue to work on the next phase to address the other concerns. I wanted to thank the grandparents who shared their personal stories with us.

So here we introduced a program – a social policy program – in the best interest of the children – that we’re going to help grandparents and other caregivers with financial support; with social worker support; with dental; with medical; and we had identified 54 children that we could help. But, we were criticized. We were criticized and continually criticized for helping those most in need and who needed immediate help. We were well-aware that there were more and we said there would be a second phase of the program. A second phase of the program that would help identify other Islanders who are struggling and needed help. Guess what? When we made the announcement, we got attention and people started calling. We’ve been identifying Islanders that we can help. Currently, we have over 100 Islanders that we’ve said: You know what? We’ll get to you. We’re glad you called. Please have patience with us, we’ll get to you. And we will, as the second phase of the program.

Government is developing programs that are helping Islanders, but when we put them out there, we get criticized. We get criticized. I could have waited, as minister; I could have waited and said: You know what? No. Wait until we get the whole program put together. Wait until we have identified every Islander out there who has stepped up and is caring for a child. We’ll wait – it takes another six months, six years, but I had waited over two years, pushing my department everyday to come up with a program that would help these Islanders, and we get criticized. We get criticized.

I'm proud to say that as of today we have 54 children and their caregivers that are now getting assistance. They are getting \$700 per month, per child. We are helping them with their dental; we are helping them with their medical –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: – and I am so pleased – I'm so very pleased – that we have identified over 100 more and we will work through them as part of the second phase of this program and I'm glad we didn't wait.

There's many other programs around social policy and helping low-income Islanders. The Be Aware & Get Your Share – another collaboration between our government, and the federal government, and local community groups – local community volunteers who are stepping up and holding volunteer tax clinics, where low-income Islanders can go in and have their taxes done for free. The number of clinics last year over this year have doubled since we started this program and we're estimating over 300 Islanders are getting their share that weren't getting their share before this program.

The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism tells the great story of the woman that he met in Tim Hortons who had heard about the program, didn't understand it, the minister explained it to her. She went to a volunteer tax clinic, got her taxes done, she received a cheque for \$3000, and now she will be getting monthly cheques from the federal government that she was not entitled to before – or felt she wasn't entitled to before.

Mr. Trivers: Doesn't pay HST on electricity.

Ms. Mundy: We're talking about low-income Islanders – is what I'm talking about – and programs that this government has initiated to help low-income Islanders.

Leader of the Opposition: Speak to the motion.

Ms. Mundy: Another program that's helping low-income Islanders would be the comprehensive and thorough review we did of our child care subsidy program. We invested over \$300,000 into that program,

after doing a comprehensive review, after talking to child care centres, after talking to the association, after talking to Islanders, and now over 1,600 Island children are benefitting from that program. We've increased the rates for before and after school child care, we've increased the rates for private sitters, and that's a great thing because in the rural areas, there might not be a licensed child care centre. So now these parents can go out and they can access their own private sitters and we've increased the rates for that and we've increased the monthly subsidy as well. And also, now those hardworking Island parents only have to submit their paperwork once a year. That's a big help for both the families, and for the child care centres.

The Canada child benefit, which was another great, great benefit – an increase that our federal partners initiated – we don't include that as income now when we calculate our income for our child care subsidy program. So that's tax-free money. They don't have to include that as income. That's money in their pockets. And I'm hearing everyday from low-income Islanders that might not have had a chance to get out and work before.

Sam Guerette, when she heard about the changes and the CBC article, she couldn't believe that we had listened.

An Hon. Member: Adjourn debate.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity.

I'd like to adjourn debate.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, it has to be moved and seconded. You moved, seconded by somebody that you adjourned debate on the motion.

Ms. Mundy: Okay, sorry.

I move that we adjourn the debate, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point. Seconded, yeah?

Thank you.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I move that Motion No. 30 be now called.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Motion 30:
The hon. Leader of the Third Party moves,
seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-
Palmer Road, the following Motion:

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island is the
only Canadian province without an
ombudsperson;

AND WHEREAS this House considered in
1999 a bill to establish a provincial
ombudsperson;

AND WHEREAS an ombuds office would
help this government meet its goal of
increasing accountability and transparency;

AND WHEREAS the ombudsperson for the
province of Nova Scotia also has a child and
youth advocacy mandate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that
the Legislative Assembly urge Government
to create an ombuds office for Prince
Edward Island;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER
RESOLVED** that Government consider
including child and youth advocacy in the
mandate of an ombudsperson.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third
Party.

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

Prince Edward Island is the only province in
Canada without an ombudsperson, and it has
held that distinction since 2002. This is not,
as the Government House Leader will
remember, the first time that the creation of
an ombuds office has been raised in this
House. Nearly 20 years ago, the former
leader of the third party, Herb Dickieson,
raised the idea and in 1999 introduced a bill
which was defeated by the Binns' government.
When the current Liberal government was first
elected in 2007, it did so with a promise to
create an

ombudsperson and I would argue that there
is still a need for such an office; better late
than never, I would say.

A typical ombudsperson could provide a
variety of services to Islanders: Mediating
complaints against government,
investigating systemic issues and
recommending improvements, and
occasionally providing advocacy. The role
would be an independent office, similar to
the Auditor General or Conflict of Interest
Commissioner, but focused on the fairness
of decisions and policies within government.

We need an independent and impartial office
to investigate concerns of Islanders. Herb
Dickieson, when he was here, argued that an
ombudsperson would help ensure laws are
properly administered, that they would
reduce patronage, and ensure procedural
fairness. MLAs have some power to do this,
of course, but we are often not perceived,
rightly or wrongly, as being entirely
impartial. An ombuds office would give
Islanders confidence that their concerns are
being appropriately dealt with, increasing
trust in government.

I do not see an ombudsperson as an
adversary of the public service, not at all. I
believe that every civil servant sincerely
wants to provide high-quality service and
perform to the best of their abilities. We are
all on the same page in our desire to
contribute to the well-being of all Islanders.
But, public servants often have to work in
environments where policies are sometimes
unclear, where public expectations are very
high and when resources are limited. Within
this environment, an ombudsperson can be a
valued partner whose oversight and
recommendations will help and not hinder
the work of the civil service. I have a lot of
faith in the abilities, integrity and
professionalism of our public service and it
can not only withstand the scrutiny of
independent oversight, it can flourish in a
more open and transparent environment that
focuses on the shared goals of excellence
and the well-being of all Islanders.

For example, an independent oversight
mechanism would provide civil servants
with the knowledge that when there is a
dispute, it would be assessed fairly and
impartially by an outside party. They will
know that the ombudsperson can

recommend new policies and approaches if there are improvements to be made. This will help prevent disputes in the future. But most importantly, if the employee acted in good faith and within the parameters of policy and his or her authority, that will be fairly assessed and the public will have confidence in the ombudsperson's impartial judgments.

Indeed, the greatest benefit of independent oversight is that it inspires public confidence in the work of government. Just as we do not accept unaudited financial statements from government, but insist on independent oversight through the office of the Auditor General, we should expect and demand similar oversight of all government policies and decisions. There was a time when it was acceptable for police services, for example, to investigate themselves, but now the public expects independent oversight. That doesn't mean that we do not have faith in our police services or that we do not support them in the incredibly difficult job they do. It merely means that citizens expect a high level of transparency and feel that it can be best achieved through independent oversight.

We currently have several offices that provide some related services here on Prince Edward Island, but an ombudsperson would fill a niche that is currently largely unserved. The Auditor General reviews the province's finances. The Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner deals with government records. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner handles conflict of interest allegations between MLAs; and hopefully we will soon have a public interest disclosure commissioner to deal with allegations of wrongdoing. An ombudsperson has a broader mandate than any of these to investigate government's decisions and actions, and to resolve complaints.

Some may argue that the duties of an ombudsperson are sufficiently covered by these other offices and so therefore we don't need one at all. I would counter that by asking: Why, despite having all these other offices, does every other province in Canada have an ombudsperson as well? What do we have in PEI that they all are missing, and that they need an ombudsperson to fill? Why can't MLAs do the job?

Well, in our system of government, elected representatives play in part a political role. For better or worse, one side governs while the other opposes and scrutinizes and hold to account. Just as opposition members are apt to criticize, government members have an incentive to defend the actions of government. An ombudsperson, by contrast, can investigate citizens' concerns independently of politics.

In the case of e-gaming, we clearly saw that the Public Accounts committee does not have the independence needed to investigate issues that are close to government. An ombudsperson would take partisanship out of the matter and open up government, make it more transparent, and help keep ministers and high-level officials accountable. These are all stated priorities of this government, albeit ones that have taken a bit of a beating of late. I offer this motion as a way to help government get back on track to these valuable and important goals.

An ombudsperson can more effectively deal with issues quietly and impartially, without having to resort to publicly shaming government into acting. I think this would make for more effective and transparent governance. An ombudsperson could provide Prince Edward Island with a much-needed child and youth advocate, the subject of the second motion that we did sadly get to this evening. As we have already discussed at length in this Legislature, Prince Edward Island is the only province without an independent advocate, and every day we see further evidence of the harms that can befall families when there is no independent party who can effectively address concerns about the well-being of children.

The Premier has suggested that his focus is on improving frontline services for children, and I agree heartily with the need for improved frontline services and I do support the many new and innovative programs that have been deployed in the family law centre. However, as I have said many times in this House, I am puzzled by government's insistence that this is an either/or proposition; that we must choose between direct services or independent oversight. Why can we not have both?

This motion suggests that when creating an ombud's office for PEI, we also take the opportunity to explore combining the office of the ombudsperson and the child and youth advocate, exactly as they do in Nova Scotia.

A combined office could provide a number of advantages. It could offer administrative cost savings, and provide Islanders with a single integrated office to which they can bring their concerns.

It would allow Prince Edward Island to achieve the level of independent oversight that other provinces already enjoy with the creation of one new independent office of the Legislature. Most importantly, with a combined office, this government can finally fulfill a campaign promise that they made a decade ago, and PEI can finally obtain the child advocate that has been recommended repeatedly to government.

I thank the Speaker for providing me with the opportunity to address the House on this important issue and I call on all members of this Legislature to support my motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to take the opportunity to speak to some of the initiatives that the Leader of the Third Party spoke about. But, let me say that, by way of a general orientation as to a response to the motion, I believe there are two points to be made. They both have to do with the nature and the scale of our province, Prince Edward Island.

One has to do with the role of the MLA in our province. The members of the Legislature, each of us, has the privilege to represent approximately 5,700 constituents, citizens, and to have, on the order of, 3,700 voters. If you compare that, is the essential argument here, or the first argument, is that we should be like every other province. If you compare the size of a provincial constituency in Prince Edward Island to those in, say, Ontario, there would be voters

in each of the constituencies in Ontario that would approximate the total number of voters in our province.

We have an opportunity and a privilege as members of this Legislature to take a part in representative democracy and to deal directly, and we hear, everyday, when issues arise that members on – in all sides of the House, it's not member – matter of whether you're in government or in another – in opposition. We deal directly with our neighbours and with people who have issues in the community. Some of them, dealing very directly with whether our members or our constituents have been dealt with fairly inappropriately by government.

I had one come to my door; stepped inside and stayed a while on Saturday on an issue very likely that could be brought to an ombudsperson or the office of an ombud, if we had one, but I believe that that matter is being dealt with. Indeed, one of the core issues is whether fairness was exercised, or whether the appropriate, I'm going to say, bedside manner was used by the public servant in question.

Last Monday night, mid-evening, a constituent came to my door on a matter that was of immediate concern to her. It was followed up in the course of the week. It's not that any of us solves everything all at once. But, my point is that as MLAs and with the configuration and the scale of our Legislature and our province, I would contend that a lot of the issues that go to an ombudsperson in, say, Ontario, get dealt with more quickly and with the appropriate sensitivity in both direction. It would be my expectation and experience that the public servants are interested to learn about issues of concern and will be responsive. That is the first part that really goes to why we may not, in a province of our size, an Assembly of our size, with 27 constituencies, we may not have everything that exists in other provinces, but we may have other ways to get the job done.

The second part would be to speak to the steps that we have taken. We have always said there's more to do. It's not so much a question of either or, but of first-things-first, I'll say. Sometimes, that's about frontlines services. Sometimes it's about measures that we are taking and have committed to take

and are pursuing. Such as the creation of the position of the commissioner of ethics and integrity and the commitments that go with that. The extension of conflict of interest requirements. The expanded disclosure policies. Not just policies, but, in fact, mechanisms to make that work.

We spent last Thursday night on the floor considering public interest disclosure and whistleblower protection legislation that would see the appointment of an independent officer, a commissioner, who would be appointed in the same manner as the attorney general.

Indeed, when we speak of the mechanisms and the Leader of the Third Party made reference early in his comments to the Auditor General. The Auditor General is a prime example of what we achieve through oversight offices. In the case of the Auditor General with a considerable staff, a capable and expert staff, and a young and talented staff that is well-resourced and does, indeed, look into matters in a way that inform our work as a Legislature and that lead to measures, responses, actions that take advantage of that good work and, indeed, move us toward ever better government. That's precisely what this motion is aimed at. What the spirit of the motion is about. Then, how we, as a Legislature, or as a province, consider what is – in the spirit of first-things-first and good government, what is the most important thing to do, I'll say, next? We continue on that path.

In addition to the whistleblower and public interest disclosure protection regime, we have on the table, on the order paper, right now, the *Lobbyists Registration Act* that was introduced last week.

There are other matters that we work with today and that we continue to reflect on in terms of our ability to make it as effective as possible; prime example being the freedom of information and protection of privacy, the FOIPP regime. It has been said in the throne speech that that will be open for comment, reflection, review starting very soon. That's really the work that we have as a Legislature, and as a government is to continue to enhance access to information; to enhance the ability of the citizenry as a whole to feel that government is transparent and responsive.

We spoke, this afternoon, in Question Period about the role of the children's lawyer as a frontline worker, who, indeed, has the independence of an officer of the court, and has developed a significant workload and a response to the need for that on-the-ground frontline service that we've said is a priority

–

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until Wednesday, December 13th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, December 13th, at 2:00 p.m.