

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Friday, 15 December 2017

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The Legislature met at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the last day of our fifth week of this sitting. I want to say a special welcome to the folks, who are joining us in the gallery. I see we have got a delegation from the Three Rivers area, or maybe we should say greater Martinvale.

I see Wayne MacMillan here and Ben MacDonald; welcome to them.

I think we were all proud to see, this morning, on the CTV morning show Atlantic – good folks from ADL and the promotion and celebration of what they've been achieving with their award-winning Dairy Isle cheese. That's a great thing for our province in every sense and for all parts of our province.

Today marks the culmination of a number of major fundraising or turkey raising or food gathering or toys gathering campaigns to support Island families at Christmas. That, in some cases, will continue on into next week. We acknowledge the great work that's involved in that. We celebrate and thank the volunteers for what it means in a material sense to the ability of Islanders to celebrate Christmas and what it says, as a community-building initiative, and what it says about the generosity of the people in our province.

The final thing is to acknowledge that today is the final day of work for Mike Fagan, our Queen's Printer, who has worked, for many years, in that role for the province. Indeed, in a way that shows up directly in this Assembly. All of our bills and other documents will have, right there on the front page: Michael D. Fagan, Queen's Printer, Charlottetown, PEI. To Mike Fagan, and to the team, but to Mike on his retirement: thank you for those years of great service and thanks to the team at Queen's Printer for

what they do to support our work here in the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd certainly like to acknowledge the great work of Mr. Fagan and wish him all the best in his retirement. It seems like we have a bit of a theme going this week. There seems to be a lot of retirements happening. I wish Mr. Fagan, and all the other individuals that have been mentioned here throughout the week all the best as they move on into the next phase of their journey.

I'd also like to thank all those community organizations; churches, services clubs and, of course, the CBC, as well, who wrapped up their Feed a Family campaign, this morning. All of these wonderful organizations couldn't do the great work in their communities that they do do without the generosity of Islanders in general. Whether it's throughout the year when we see benefits being planned for a neighbour, a friend, a community member in need, whether it's the annual food drives throughout the year for the food bank, or whether it's this time of year, it's just heartwarming throughout the year to see the outpouring and the generosity of Islanders when they're neighbours and family and friends are in need.

I just want to close by saying that, although I have heard a few complaints over the last couple of days about the seasonal temperatures that have come on fairly quickly and we're still trying to get used to it, I just want to remind everybody that there's always a silver lining. Think about all those little individuals, all of the children, that are so excited that their outdoor backyard rinks are finally going to be – to get the cold temperatures that they need to freeze and our young people will get out and to be able to enjoy the great sport of putting on the skates, whether you're a figure skater, playing hockey or just getting out to get do

some exercise, Mr. Speaker. It's a wonderful time of year, please get outside and enjoy it.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery this morning; Wayne MacKinnon for his usual Friday morning soiree here.

I'd also like to congratulate and thank everybody at CBC for a fantastic show this morning. It was freezing cold outside, but the warmth inside the lobby at the CBC building was beautiful. There was some great music by the West Kent elementary choir. Tara MacLean and Chris Corrigan, provided some, again, beautiful live music in the hall. Mike MacDonald was there picking up hundreds of turkeys. It's just a really heartwarming event. I want to thank Matt and Mitch and everybody at CBC for doing such a great job.

I also want to, particularly, thank some people, who established a food bank in my own district. Marianna Burda and Jenny and Jackie Myers, very recently decided they were going to establish a food bank, and they just did it. It's enormously successful; great community support, and providing, sadly, a very great need in our community. I wanted to thank and recognize them for the amazing work they've done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I want to welcome everyone here. Ben MacDonald, it's good to see you in the House again; to all my district, District 5 Vernon River-Stratford. I want to put a shout-out to all the students: this is a very busy time of year for sure; I know a lot of

them are cramming and trying to get their exams done so they can get home and we're looking forward to them getting home so we can spend some time with them. They may even be able to come into the House and watch us work here as we work over the holiday season.

But I do want to put a congratulatory thing out – I know the Member from Borden-Kinkora congratulated his wife the other day on her graduation – well, my son just completed his master's in education at McGill, so I'm going to congratulate him on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: I also want to bring up the point the Premier spoke on there about ADL who has some fantastic wins at an international competition. So now, not only can you buy a great product from ADL, you can do it knowing that you can buy local and buy an international winner. So that's absolutely terrific. Hat's off to ADL.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise here on another cold Friday morning in the Legislature. I wasn't go to do greetings because I feel like I'm going to be talking a lot here later today, but I thought I probably should considering the majority of the gallery is filled with people from District 2. That doesn't happen very often where we have the majority here in Charlottetown. I'm going to, I guess, enjoy the morning.

With us today we have Sylvia Teasdale; Doreen Doyle; Mike Shepard; Gary and Lucy Robbins – Gary is a veteran of the Canadian Forces too, by the way; over behind me here we have Ben MacDonald who played defense on a hockey team that I played on on Sunday, in a charity game – I think they may have scored a goal too –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: Three? I don't think he had three.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good try, though. I did think he had one.

And Susan Hartley, who has a place down on the river, outside of Georgetown. I want to welcome them all here today and, of course, I want to thank the people that are here on behalf of the Three Rivers issue that's ongoing and, of course, we'll talk about that here later.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to welcome everybody here today. It's a big day in Morell today. First things first; it's the annual Morell Christmas party is tonight. It's a fundraising dinner and dance tonight on behalf of the Northside Communities Initiative, which goes to a number of different events, but it's more specifically to the fundraising for the Morell rink.

But even bigger news is a former MLA here in the Legislature, from Morell is turning 90 today: Junior O'Brian is turning the ripe, old age of 90 and many people know Junior and certainly know members of his family. Two years ago, when I was attempting to become an MLA for the first time; at 88, Junior and I drove around for a couple of days together. The time in between houses is much more out home, as you know, than when you're in around Charlottetown and places. I treasured that time in between because I heard a lot of stories and a lot of good advice for those couple of days. We see Junior a lot and there's an open house tomorrow at the fire hall from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. to wish Junior happy birthday and I encourage everybody to attend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's a pleasure to rise in the House and welcome everyone who's watching from Montague-Kilmuir. And I, as well, would like to welcome everybody from District 2, in particular: Ben MacDonald who's going to be leaving District 2 and moving into District 3 and he's going to be a new neighbor, so I look forward to him to moving over to District 3.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Dave and Charlene Clark

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand in the House to recognize the generosity of a community-minded couple in Summerside, Dave and Charlene Clark. The Clarks have recently established a \$250,000 life insurance policy that, in time, will provide the Prince County Hospital Foundation with a gift of \$1,000,000. This is known as legacy planning and is a way to maximize your donation by buying life insurance payable to Prince County Hospital Foundation. The Clark family have been well-known in my community for many years. They owned and operated Clark's Toyota for half a century, until Dave's retirement in 2015.

Dave has always been very generous and has supported community sports teams and fundraising initiatives consistently. People were never turned away when looking for donations in our community. I know any time I was fundraising for any community projects, Dave was one of my first stops.

This legacy planning is very forward thinking, and will ensure that this couple's community is well cared for long after they are gone. This initiative demonstrates how one family really can have a major impact on the greater community.

On behalf of my community of Summerside, I would like to thank Dave and Charlene for their generous gift that will benefit future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Library Cards for Children

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to congratulate the 1964-1965 Saint Dunstan's Saints hockey team on its recent induction into the PEI Sports Hall of Fame. Eleven Island players played on the team, including well-known Charlottetown resident Vince Mulligan. The Saints were a very talented group of hockey players in the mid-1960s and won a silver medal at the 1965 national championship in Manitoba. This win is still recorded as the highest finish for Prince Edward Island's university team.

Vince Mulligan was a defenseman on the team for five years; he was captain for three of those years and was named an all-star player four times. He was honored with the Father MacGuigan Memorial Trophy for the Most Outstanding Athlete this year and as a member of the team. Shortly after his Saint Dunstan's Saint's hockey career ended, the university honored him by retiring his number 8 jersey. In 1983, Vince returned to university hockey as coach of the UPEI hockey team. He coached the team for five years.

In 2009, Vince was inducted into the PEI Sports Hall of Fame in recognition of his many contributions to sport. It is great to see him being recognized once again for his contribution to hockey, alongside his former teammates.

I would like to congratulate Vince and all the members of the Saints 1964-1965 team. It is an honour to be recognized by your community for your accomplishments and contributions to sports on Prince Edward Island. I would also like to recognize those

involved in the sports hall of fame, who works so hard to put him in there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Three Rivers Amalgamation

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a privilege to rise in the Legislature and represent the constituents of Georgetown- St. Peters. They are who I have fought for since the day I was elected and don't intend to stopping that.

As per custom when the House is in session I will be making an important announcement today. Over the past two years, the Three Rivers Committee has been meeting and pushing forward the proposed new Three Rivers municipality. This new municipality will encompass a large geographical area and take in some 7,000 residents.

This new municipality is also being pushed strongly by the Minister of Communities Land and Environment. I have been receiving phone calls and emails from residents who live in the unincorporated areas who feel they do not have a voice and want to know why they don't have a vote. They feel like they are just being taken along for the ride.

Recently, a number of the incorporated areas held their own plebiscites and had their own voices heard. However, what was interesting was, before the vote actually was received, they received a presentation from the Three Rivers committee extolling the virtues of the new municipality. It's an interesting way to hold a vote.

Last Friday on the floor of the Legislature, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment said residents in the unincorporated areas were not well enough informed to vote. It is unfortunate the minister thinks so little of those unincorporated areas. They simply want to have their voice heard too. They want to have their vote too.

That's why it is my pleasure to rise today and announce a plebiscite that will be held on January 20th and 22nd at the Kaylee Hall, the Sturgeon Hall, and Eden's Gate. Residents will be able to vote between 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. This will allow residents in unincorporated areas to have ample opportunity to cast their vote – yes or no. It's their voice and their right and they deserves to be heard. This plebiscite will ensure the residents in unincorporated areas have the same and equal voice as those in incorporated areas.

I am pleased to announce this plebiscite and I can tell you the work has already begun to inform residents for their chance to cast their vote. I am very pleased everyone will have the opportunity to cast their vote and I certainly hope when their voice is heard, it is listened too.

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 very much, Mr. Speaker.

One of the biggest takeaways from last year's plebiscite is the importance of honouring the vote results, especially if the results aren't exactly what you expected or wanted.

Mr. Speaker, my first question today is to the Premier.

Recommission DR committee to work on referendum

Premier: When will you recommission the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal to start working on their referendum?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it was indicated in the Speech From the

Throne that there would be legislation considered in the spring sitting to address a referendum and that's as far as anything that I've had to say about that to date.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In last year's plebiscite, 16 and 17-year-olds were eligible to voice their opinion and many of the 16 and 17-year-olds were very engaged in the plebiscite process, only to have their opinion dismissed when this government rejected the results. With the referendum being tied to the next general election, where the legal voting age is 18, now 16 and 17-year-olds will lose their opportunity to voice their opinion on electoral reform.

Voting age on referendum

Question to the Premier: Will you commit here today to having 16 and 17-year-olds here in this province – will you give them the right to vote on the referendum?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it is not accurate to say that government rejected the plebiscite. We were very clear that the further step is to take the result of the plebiscite, to respect what was achieved there, which was the purpose in having a non-binding plebiscite, and to carry it forward into a referendum where Islanders will have an opportunity to make a clear choice on a clear question. That's exactly what will take place. The 16 and 17-year-olds who voted in the plebiscite will indeed be of an age to cast a vote by the time of an election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Well, I guess the Premier didn't quite understand my question. Yes, 16 and 17-year-olds were able to vote in the plebiscite, my question is: Will 16 and 17-year-olds be eligible, not the ones that have aged to 18, but the 16 and 17-year-olds that will be 16 and 17 on the day of the referendum. Will they be allowed to voice their opinion on how the electoral system will be operated here on PEI in the future?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: The particular question that's being asked, along with many others, will indeed be matters that will be for this Assembly to determine when we take up the question of legislation – which will be required since we don't currently have referendum legislation in the province, but that legislation will address any number of questions. I'm sure that's the better time to take that up, not to be asking me to commit to this or that here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The reason I'm asking the Premier what his opinion, or what he's going to do with this or that, is that's the way this Premier operates. It's this or that in his way, or the highway.

The Premier's on record on multiple occasions that the referendum will be an A or B option. One question has already been determined and the other will be determined by this House.

Public consultations on referendum

Again, question to the Premier: Will there be public consultations on the second question before the vote is called in this House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there will be plentiful opportunity for the views of Islanders to be taken into account and that will be something that will take place, including here in this House and, ultimately, it will take place in the casting of votes in a referendum. That's exactly the spirit and the purpose of this direction, is to build on the work that's already been done through the plebiscite and to ensure that we get a clear answer to a clear question.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Timetable for referendum on DR

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

Well, a lot of work needs to be done to hold a province-wide referendum, especially on getting the information out there and educating Islanders on what the options will be and we're already hearing that Islanders want this information.

Question to the Premier: What is the timetable for the next step so that Islanders will be able to make their voice heard again?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the timetable will culminate in conjunction with the next provincial election. That's been very clear. The further piece that we've talked about, and indeed it's been indicated in a Speech From the Throne, is that there will be legislation enabling a referendum in

the spring sitting of the House and that is a very generous timetable, a timetable when Islanders will have an opportunity to consider the options, to consider the case to be made on one side or the other. Indeed the whole point of clarifying it and putting it forward in this way is to enable Islanders to have a fulsome debate and consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Commitment of fixed election date

Final question to the Premier: Premier, can you commit here today – can you advise this House and all Islanders as to when the next election date will be? Will you commit here today to the fixed election date?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the legislation pertaining to election dates in this province has many aspects to it, one of which is that if circumstances arise or if the conditions require in a sensible judgment that –

Mr. Myers: Rules don't apply (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – the date occur as it's supposed to, then it will. But we know that the legislation provides that the Lieutenant Governor can indeed prorogue the House and that an election can be called and I don't see why I would stand here today when it's the law of the province and say I'm going to override what is in the legislation.

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 an interesting debate here this morning. The Premier picks and chooses what he wants to override because he couldn't honour the vote. He could override that vote, but he couldn't override the Lieutenant Governor, but he couldn't follow the legislation to begin with when he called the last election. It sounds like the rules apply to everyone, but Liberals, once again.

This Premier has the track record of not listening to Islanders. He didn't listen on the school boards. He didn't listen on school closures when we told him not to do it. He refused to honour the vote, and now he's not listening to Islanders who live in unincorporated areas, in particular the Three Rivers unincorporated area.

Three Rivers amalgamation discussion

Question to the Premier: Islanders want to be heard. Will you accept that unincorporated areas have a voice in this amalgamation discussion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome all those from District 2 that are in the public gallery today. All Islanders are probably aware at this point that there is a community-driven initiative in six municipalities in the Kings County area. It began with seven and the municipality of Georgetown decided to step back from this community-driven initiative to form a new region.

Currently, the steering committee is working within the municipalities that exist there today on presentations and public meetings, and having opinion polls of how things are going there, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My questions aren't actually for the minister. They're for the Premier because this minister has made it very clear that he doesn't believe that these people are informed enough to make that decision, and that they can't decide their own future and they can't decide their own fate so this is for you, Premier, because we need you. We need your leadership. We need you to step in.

Will you step in and make sure that the people living in the unincorporated areas have their voice heard in this Three Rivers amalgamation discussion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As part of this process, we were pleased to support the community to develop a feasibility study that was conducted by a private consultant from the area, well known to the area and I think the hon. member might know him as well, who put together a presentation that painted a pretty good picture of how the community could look moving forward. Currently, the steering committee is taking that presentation, going out to the existing municipalities to explain how this could be affecting them in the future, what it could mean, how it could be better. That process is unfolding as we speak, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is quite insulting; it's insulting for the people that are here from unincorporated areas. It's insulting to my intelligence; it's insulting to the intelligence of the House. Every time I ask a question, number one, I ask the Premier he doesn't answer; number two, the minister gets up and talks about the communities who have a voice. This is all about the people who don't have a voice and

he won't understand that because he thinks that they're uninformed.

Premier, you need to get up on your feet on this. You need to tell these people yourself. You need to face these people and tell them yourself, your amalgamation minister is wrong. Islanders living in unincorporated areas are informed. These people are well informed. They're so well informed and they couldn't have their voice heard, they decided to organize their own vote.

Honouring vote on amalgamation

Question to the Premier: When this vote is held, will you honour the vote, or will you again impose your will on Islanders when you don't get the result that you want to hear?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this is a process that has been unfolding for some time. It's unfolding under the municipal government legislation. The minister responsible has my full confidence that he is proceeding with this and the people that are involved are proceeding. I heard him say on many occasions that he's interested to hear the voice of the people. That's how I understand this to be unfolding and I'm confident that this is a continuation of something that has been signaled to this province going back over many periods of developing public policy and it will be done in accordance with our laws.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is quite insulting to the people who came in on a cold morning here all the way to Charlottetown to hear answers that they're not getting, the people that are tuned in from District 2 at home. It's insulting to them; you won't answer the question.

Premier, will you honour the vote that these people are going to hold?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Currently, as the process is unfolding in the municipalities of the area, through the steering committee and of course the steering committee did have representatives on it from the unincorporated areas. We will be talking in the New Year. I think most of the municipalities will probably have their opinion polls done somewhere in the early spring of January, even February months we'll be moving forward.

Obviously today, the hon. member announced that he is holding a plebiscite. Understandably, I think it would be well within the scope of the duties of any MLA on the floor of this Legislature to hold public opinion polls of their own residents of their own communities at any time under any issue; whether it be an issue under my department, under health or education. That is the full scope on every MLA of this floor to go ahead and do those functions, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So twice the question has been asked: Would you honour the vote? Neither will answer the question. I think I know what's wrong. I think I know what's wrong with government. I think I know why the Premier is so unpopular in the polls, it's because he won't face issues straight on. I'll face issues straight on. I'll face them straight on. When I was told that it was my responsibility to make sure that these people had a voice, I stepped up to the plate to make that happen; engaged some wonderful volunteers who were going to hold a vote of their own.

Premier, answer the question: Will you honour their vote?

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

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

As I said earlier, last week on the floor of the Legislature, this is a process that is working its way through. Currently, opinion polls are being taken within the municipalities. When that process either says we're moving forward or we're not, then each step begins a new step. When the time is right I will be talking with the representatives from the unincorporated areas to establish a method that the voices from those areas can be well heard. It's been a mission of mine from day one to ensure that all residents involved in this have an opportunity to have their say, to be heard, to be fully engaged in this, and I believe that's been fully undertaken at this point with many public, open presentations for members to come in and have their say, to have a look at the presentation, and that will continue as the process evolves, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Democracy in amalgamation process

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So this isn't a joke; this is actually real life. These people are organizing their voice. The minister's talking about having some other – what's he going to – is he going to trot in the steering committee in front of them and give them a presentation of the virtues and say: Here's the ballot box, vote – like he's doing with all the other communities? This is real life and these people came for real answers.

Question to the Premier: Will you let democracy rule the day, or are you going to let your amalgamation minister dictate a solution instead?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Currently, what's going on in the East Kings area, it's going on all across Prince Edward Island. Communities are talking to communities all over our wonderful province about building new regions, about building strong futures, and we want to be a part of that, and we want to hear and talk to every individual that has a thought on this.

As a department, we are open for discussion to help communities in any way, shape, or form. We already provide funding for studies; we will help communities if they're looking to organize votes; we'll give them advice and much advice needed and experience that we have; so our door is always open, Mr. Speaker, and we're working with communities all across Prince Edward Island every day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Dividing rural Islanders

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It makes me wish there was an actual rule in our Assembly that required ministers to answer questions because it's embarrassing to take people in here on a cold Friday morning – give up their own time, drive all the way to Charlottetown on their own dime, unlike you fellows who all have government gas cards to get yourselves here, they paid their own way here today and they're not getting answers? Boy oh boy. This is why democracy isn't working. This is why people are upset. None of you guys seem to get it. None of you guys seem to understand. Some people have a vote. They have a vote and it goes back to their council. Now we're organizing our vote.

Question to the Premier: Why are you letting your amalgamation minister divide Islanders in rural Prince Edward Island into two classes: Those whose voices heard, and those who aren't?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Actually, what we and I, as a minister, are doing – we're actually working to join communities. We're looking to join communities that have areas of common interest, areas that need to be improved on, and that's the work that we're doing, Mr. Speaker. It is very important to us that everybody has an opportunity to have their voice heard and spoken and we'll continue with the process. It's been an incredible process thus far. Many people have attended meetings; many people have come to see the presentation; many people understand that things probably need to change in the future and they're coming to see what it means. For that, I commend those people who take the initiative to do that and I will continue to work with them in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Democracy in amalgamation process (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister keeps saying: Those who want change are wonderful and great people; those who don't want to amalgamate into mega communities: Well, go on. Go on your little way. That's what we're hearing. That message is loud and clear through rural Prince Edward Island. That message is loud and clear through the unincorporated part of Three Rivers. These people are upset. These people are upset that number one: Government has completely cut them out of the process. Government has completely ignored them. Government won't answer any questions on it, acts like our whole fate lies in the hands of whether or not the incorporated areas want it. So if the incorporated areas want it, then they're going to come talk to you and not see if you want it, see how they can force it down your throat. If they don't want it, you won't get a voice.

Question to the Premier: How is that healthy for democracy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, like any process that occurs on anything, there are steps, there are measures that are taken. We are at the early part of the process involving the municipal areas.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: When it comes to the point in time where unincorporated areas need to have an opportunity to have their say, that will be the case. I've indicated that as often and as plainly as I could. Obviously the hon. member has a problem coming to terms with that, but I will work with him on this. We want to encourage people to have their say and we want to work with them assure that's obtained.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Islanders' voices heard equally

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny to hear the minister say he wants to work with me. It certainly wasn't his attitude Tuesday and you know exactly what you did on Tuesday. I think rural Islanders are looking for a signal from this Premier to say that this type of process will not stand.

Question to the Premier: Will you clearly tell Islanders today – because this is going to happen in more than this community – will you clearly say to all Islanders living in incorporated and unincorporated areas that they are equal and you will make sure that their voices will be heard equally?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The hon. member is right. This is happening in many communities all across Prince Edward Island and it's important that we take the opportunity to listen to all Islanders on this very, very important subject. This is the one that may be the furthest down the pipe on the Three Rivers, so we certainly want to take our time to do this one correctly so that other areas can look at that and say: That was a good process where it's time we want to come to my area and talk about it.

We will take all the effective measures to ensure that everybody has had an opportunity to have their say, to speak their mind, to offer their concerns, and to do it in the proper manner, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this week we celebrated Human Rights Day. It is important to be reminded of the importance of respecting the rights of all people. In 2010, Canada became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Could you update the House on progresses being made to make PEI compliant to this convention?

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it was last – actually probably my first House sitting, we decided to take a look at our disability support program and to transform that disability support program. We were very happy to bring many, many advocates from throughout Prince Edward Island, and even people from off-Island to come in and help us with that transformation. We are looking at many, many avenues and many, many aspects of

the disability support program and accessibility and making Prince Edward Island fully accessible will be something that we are talking about and we will be looking at.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Legislation supporting persons with disabilities

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the most significant changes that PEI must make to comply with the convention is to introduce supported decision making legislation that recognizes the right of those with intellectual disabilities, aging diseases, and other cognitive impairments to stay in control of decisions which affect their lives.

Could the minister provide us with an update on progress being made towards this new legislation?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Supported decision making is something that I'm very aware of. I have met with advocates several times and it has been part of our management plan for several years. We have now moved to the next phase of that and we have moved on and we have engaged our colleagues in justice and public safety and we were looking at how we can incorporate supported decision making into the lives of Islanders, who will benefit from supported decision making.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding is that government has been very actively working with community groups over the last seven years to implement this requirement under the

convention. Although I can appreciate that it is a complicated issue, we must also remember that vulnerable people with disabilities are being denied their fundamental rights as we continue to wait for this legislation.

Could the minister provide us a timeline of when she expects this important legislation to be introduced to this House?

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed important work. It's something that I live with in my life every day. I have a son who has autism and currently, I cannot speak for him so this is something that is front and foremost in my mind every day and something that I will continue to push and work collaboratively across government with my colleagues in justice and public safety and when we get it right, we will be presenting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Province House renovations

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. Minister, Province House National Historic Site and home of this Legislative Assembly, and the most prominent symbol of our province-hood, is currently closed for extensive conservation work. Islanders are curious. Minister, they're curious about this steel scaffolding surrounding the building.

Can you update the House on the progress of the renovation and explain the purpose of the scaffolding?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, recently we all have seen the scaffolding go around the outside of the Province House and the ongoing work that's taking place there. We, as a province, are a stakeholder. The project itself is being handled by the federal Parks Canada.

Phase one was tendered earlier in the year and the successful company was Quinan Construction from Ontario, but I do know there are a lot of local contractors working there such as Livingston Steel, Hansen Electric, Tim's Crane Services, amongst others. They're doing extensive work to the outside and inside and phase two is expected to be tendered in early 2018.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Legislative Assembly to be held in renovated Province House

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, Province House is owned by the Province of Prince Edward Island and has an agreement to co-manage Province House with Parks Canada. The home of the Legislative Assembly plays a major role in Province House.

When Province House reopens with over \$43 million in renovations, and as the minister responsible, have you received assurances that the Legislative Assembly will be able to operate as a modern parliament with appropriate space and amenities well into the future?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we would all agree that we consider Province House the home of the people of Prince Edward Island and are anxious to see it renovated in a safe and operate-able way. The federal government has committed \$41 million towards that renovation and included in that will be improvements to the building to ensure that there is safe occupation and improve security measures for when the

Legislative Assembly does re-occupate the building. We expect that that work will be completed and for occupation in 2021.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Heeding to emergency vehicles

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is also for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. As a former RCMP officer, I quite often encounter drivers who are unsure of what to do when encountering emergency vehicles on the road. When approaching emergency vehicles such as ambulances, police cars and fire trucks, some people are confused about whether they are supposed to pull over and come to a complete stop or slow down. We have many tourists and new citizens.

Can the minister remind the public of the rules of the road in those situations?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The safety of the travelling public and those emergency vehicle operators is very important so, if you see an ambulance pulled over on the side of the road with lights flashing you should slow down and safely go around the vehicle. If you meet a vehicle, an emergency vehicle, on the road – meet it or coming behind you with flashing lights – you need to pull over to let them pass safely. They have the ability or the right to go through traffic lights if they need to and can do that safely. Also, you may see them go above the speed.

We need to ensure that when an emergency is occurring, that we heed to the emergency vehicles.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Respecting funeral processions

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prince Edward Island drivers are some of the most courteous drivers in the country and are very respectful of funeral processions. We're all proud of the way people pull over when they're meeting a procession.

Are the rules of the road the same for funeral processions?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have had it commented to me by several visitors as well about meeting funeral processions and seeing Islanders pull off the road and thought it was a wonderful gesture, of showing respect, but they do not have the same rules in regard to vehicles needing to pull off. What we do advise as a safety measure –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – is to slow down and pull over if you can to show respect, reduce your speed and pull off to the side if you possibly can. But, they do not have the same ability or right to go through stop lights or to be speeding, but we appreciate what Islanders do to show respect and if there are any questions that drivers have, they can contact highway safety.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Education of drivers

Minister, will you look at launching a social media campaign to educate and remind Island drivers about the rules of the road in these situations?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen several tragedies with RCMP officers being killed on the side of the road, some close calls with our emergency vehicles on the side of the road, and we certainly would be very glad to work together with our department and with highway safety to engage and to educate people on the importance of heeding and being aware of those first responders that are pulled off on the side of the road or that we are meeting, so I think it's a great idea and we will take that under consideration to engage the public in a campaign.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

Electricity demand-side management plan

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government turned the energy corporation into a public utility last week. Staff told this House an electricity demand management efficiency plan will be submitted to IRAC between the next four to six weeks.

Question to the minister: Why are you not bringing this plan before the House, or at least standing committee, and allowing public debate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it was noted during our Committee of the Whole when we had our bill on the floor, but this is a time-sensitive demand-side management plan that has to go before IRAC on behalf of Islanders to ensure that Islanders, through our energy efficiency program, will get the best benefit from efficiency programs that we provide for Islanders.

We are working on that plan as we speak, so we have not had it completed to be able to table here in the House, but it's a public

hearing that people will be able to see what is being put forward.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has been quietly meeting with larger electricity consumers and other stakeholders around this plan. The message from their government has been: Making our electricity system more efficient, modernizing our grid, putting together a whole suite of programs.

Question to the minister: Why are there no public details around your plans, and you are keeping this in secret?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we certainly are not keeping anything secret. We went across the Island as part of our energy strategy and coming back out of that we're now implementing a lot of those recommendations that were put forward as part of that consultation process.

We are meeting with other energy areas to ensure that going forward we have the best plan that we can put together. We need to have efficiency programs put in place. We need to be out there looking at other options for energy, which we are doing. The energy corp are working on a smart grid and a grid modernization program, so we are doing that work as part of our energy strategy, which is a 10-year strategy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Other energy suppliers for electricity

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I asked the minister of energy last week about looking at new suppliers for energy

besides Maritime Electric. The minister responded that we are.

Question to the minister: What other energy suppliers are your government meeting with and who are they?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as we talked about, having energy storage is very important. We have had a number of discussions with companies out there that are looking for innovative ways to store energy.

Mr. LaVie: Which companies?

Ms. Biggar: We haven't entered into any contracts with anyone and at that time, we certainly will be transparent on what is happening. We have to go out there to the market to get the best deal that we can for Islanders. We are working on that; we are working on our strategy; we're working on our efficiency programs; we're working on other wind opportunities; –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) secrecy.

Ms. Biggar: – we are working on our smart grid to incorporate those all together into a plan that will help Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Accessing dollars from Low Carbon Economy Fund

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's also over \$34 million from the federal government's five-year Low Carbon Economy Fund that's been available since April.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Fox: Question to the minister: Why has this government never once mentioned this \$34 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: What's going on?

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

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: When the federal government announced the low carbon energy fund, Prince Edward Island is one of the available provinces that have access to that fund.

We are making efforts and have applied to the low energy carbon fund to be able to provide a suite of programs for Islander. We are in the middle of those negotiations with the federal government, which are going very well, and we will be looking forward to the fruition of another partnership with the federal government who have supported us in many of our energy projects, including the cable for \$70 million.

Mr. R. Brown: That's great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There has been no detail whatsoever on how that \$34 million, or even that it existed, how it's going to be spent and how much will be available for the next fiscal year.

Question to the minister: When is this government planning to access the money?

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trivers: Open and transparent.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as we are aware, and it hasn't been any secret, that we are presently in bilateral agreements –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Biggar: – discussions with the federal government on the new suite of programs that they announced under the new bill Canada under their green energy fund. We are in those negotiations at the moment; we are applying for funds to ensure that Prince Edward Island gets their share of federal government funding for energy and it's all tied in with our energy strategy. Anything that we do is going to be for the benefit of Islanders.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

PEI Energy Corporation administrating dollars from federal fund

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Low Carbon Economy Fund has three criteria: projects that significantly reduce emissions; prioritizing those that reduce the most emissions the most cheaply; and the third: initiatives must also be in addition to existing projects, or those that are already planned.

Question to the minister: Will you confirm that the PEI Energy Corporation will be administrating this \$34 million secret fund from Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Islanders on a need-to-know basis.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: They've announced it. They've announced it. It's on the website.

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

Mr. Trivers: Let us know what's going on.

Ms. Biggar: Well I'd hardly say it was secret, Mr. Speaker.

It is on the federal website. I believe they made announcements yesterday in other Maritime Provinces. We have our projects in

there that we expect to be announced very soon. They will centre around energy efficiency. It is not a secret fund. It will be through efficiency PEI and the energy corp and again, all part –

Ms. Biggar: – believe they made announcements yesterday in other Maritime Provinces. We have our projects in there that we expect to announced very soon. They will centre around energy efficiency. It is not a secret fund. It will be through efficiency PEI and the energy corp and again all part of our energy strategy for Islanders to help save them on energy consumption.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, \$34 million will go a long way in efficiency and new incentives to reduce emissions on PEI.

In fact, it would assist the transition from home heating oil to other forms of heating. It would upgrade transportation infrastructure for thousands of Islanders. And, it could retrofit fishing fleets and farm vehicles.

Question to the minister: Minister, will this money be invested back into Islanders directly to offset your carbon tax?

Mr. Trivers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's important to reiterate that the new fund will help Islanders in reducing their energy costs. It will help reduce gas emissions, carbon emissions on Prince Edward Island by doing that.

We are putting, again, the demand-side management plan forward, which will include a whole suite of programs that will

be funded under the low-carbon energy fund.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker for the final question.

Minister, simple question: When will you give the public –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: – the details of this \$34 million and a solid cost-benefit analysis of how you will be spending it to help Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we expect, very soon, in the near future to have that –

Mr. Trivers: Very soon.

Ms. Biggar: – agreement with the federal government which will lay out detailed –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) specific.

Ms. Biggar: – programs, which Islanders will be able to take advantage of, whether it's for home retrofit, or for heating alternatives –

Mr. Trivers: Winter, spring, fall.

Ms. Biggar: – and other programs that will benefit Islanders. Our commitment, through our energy strategy, is to work with Islanders, work with business, work with transportation, and –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – going forward to be able to reduce the emissions, and to also help Islanders reduce their energy costs.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Working for the people.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Seniors' Health and Wellness Symposium

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the great pleasure of joining more than 100 Islanders at a symposium for seniors health and wellness advisory network. I mentioned it in my speech yesterday.

These 100 Islanders were seniors, near seniors and caregivers. They are volunteering their time to share their experiences, their expertise, and their vision on how we can best support the health and well-being of older adults across this province.

There has never been a seniors' health and wellness strategy for Prince Edward Island. It's a priority for our department and we appreciate the support and guidance of these essential advisory networks which includes representatives from every region of the province, backgrounds and health care experiences.

We are building the seniors health and wellness strategy from the ground up. To do so we are engaging community groups, frontline workers, key partners and every day Islanders. We know that the demographics on PEI are changing and we are seeing a tremendous growth in our older population. Seniors accessed nearly every facet of our health care system and we have well over 100 seniors who volunteer within our hospitals, long-term care facilities, and as part of our hospital auxiliaries.

We need to ensure that we have the most appropriate services and programs in place for our seniors, today and into the future. The work we have underway is intended to enhance and to even transform aspects of seniors' health care on Prince Edward Island.

This strategy will provide clear direction on how we can enhance our system to ensure Prince Edward Island is a place where seniors can remain active, engaged in leading healthy and independent and productive lives. We anticipate PEI's first ever seniors' health and wellness strategy will be completed in the spring of 2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

I'm glad to hear he met with such a large group of people. There's a demographic that, you know, I wouldn't call seniors, but they're going to be probably seniors, or the most experienced people in our population very soon. That's a number of people that are moving back to PEI. They're early retirees. They're coming back from very successful careers in other provinces. I would encourage the minister to get in touch with that demographic, as well.

I know where I live in, kind of what we call a cottage community, there is a lot of really good people there that can get involved in a lot of these committees and do a lot of this stuff. I encourage the minister to keep encouraging that demographic to get involved with this strategy, as well.

We know that homecare is a serious issue that's coming forward; how the province is going to deal with it. We have home care workers in the province that are travelling from Charlottetown to the rural areas where they can probably only do two or three visits a day sometimes. That's a problem. We need to increase that. We know that if we can keep people in their homes longer then the queuing to get into the hospital is less, the queuing to get into long-term care is less.

Speaking of long-term care, I just did an interview yesterday with Radio Canada on long-term care beds. The minister keeps saying: we're waiting for this strategy. We already know that we're going to need a

certain number of beds. I think we should issue those licences, just a certain number right now to get those done. If the number is few hundred, we already know that we're going to need –

Mr. Henderson: We just did that.

Mr. MacEwen: – 50 or something like that.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah, six. That's – wow, that must have cut the list down, a lot –

Mr. Henderson: Well, it's by six.

Mr. MacEwen: Six. Every single one of us here could name six people waiting. So, six is a start, okay. Six is a start, but let's –

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much.

Mr. MacEwen: – we know we're going to need a large number, so we can put out a number right now. That's the point I'm trying to make, especially in a French serving community like Wellington, what a wonderful idea.

The dementia strategy that we debated yesterday. I'm glad to hear that that's going to be part of the seniors' strategy. I just hope it's not another delay tactic. I hope it comes. Yes, the consultation is great. This government has been consulting for 10 years. I'm really going to hold the minister to his timeline of next spring.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next responding to the minister's statement, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the announcement, minister. Here, again, we have, yet, another strategy. We've been talking in the House a lot about strategies in this session; affordable housing strategies, autism strategies, dementia strategies, and here we have seniors' health and wellness strategy.

This morning, in response in the supported decision-making questions from my

colleague, we heard that this is something that's being worked on. That's absolutely true; for the last seven years, but we have yet to see any concrete sign of legislation coming forward.

When asked for a specific timeframe, we didn't get an answer. Strategies are great and they are important and you have to have plans, but they also have to be married to action. There's no point in having a plan if you do not have action. There's no point in having action if you don't have a well-constructed plan. Strategies are important, but we cannot stop there.

Seniors' health, of course, health and wellness is important for all age groups, but particularly for seniors, who have, who face specific challenges in terms of their decreased cognitive function; their immobility tends to increase as you get older. Medications; the number of medications that older people take tend to increase and they often have side effects – physical, mental, emotional.

There are some particular challenges that seniors face and I'm glad the minister reached out and had a large group of people advising him on what those challenges are. I look forward to these – to this strategy coming forward. Again, not just being a strategy, but that there will be funding behind this strategy to make sure that seniors can live the best quality of life that they can to stay in their communities if possible.

I think a big part of health and wellness is to curtail the amount of loneliness and isolation that so many seniors face and reconnecting the generations. There are some lovely plans in other jurisdictions where childcare centres are held in long-term care facilities; where students will live with elderly people and be given a reduction in their university fees for doing so. All of these things are good for the community because it reconnects these people, who, sadly because of the way our societies evolved have gradually become disconnected from each other.

I welcome the announcement. I look forward to action following the strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Library Cards for Children

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

I continue to appreciate the high level of collaboration within our department.

Today I want to recognize an excellent project recently undertaken by our public libraries and early years centres to support family literacy.

Family literacy can have a powerful influence on a child's early development and later learning, and when families participate in literacy activities together, the children are much more likely to enjoy reading and learning.

This fall, our public libraries sent 1,800 forms to early years' centres. As a result, more than 300 children responded and received their own library card. This represents at least 20% of children in our early years' centres. A similar project was done with kindergarten students in all schools. As a result, another 550 children received a library card.

Our librarians never run out of great new ideas to bring Islanders to the library. It's no wonder visitation continues to increase. For example, the Montague library offered an escape room activity last week, where patrons were locked in a room and had to solve Jane Austen clues to get out.

Dieticians partnered with Morell library staff, last month, to offer health eating sessions at the library for more than 100 Morell Consolidated students. The Stratford library is offering a holiday gift wrapping service where moms or children can come to a quiet place to wrap presents with materials provided.

Teens took part in a six-week program this fall to help seniors improve their computer skills. Library hours were extended this year in Kensington, Summerside, and Montague to respond to growing demand.

Libraries are now collaborating with the PEI Literacy Alliance on a gift of reading project to collect children's book for Christmas food

hampers. It's not too late to take part by dropping off new or gently used books at your local library.

One of the best things about library services is that they continue to be free. Islanders are lucky to have some – such awesome librarians provide a very high quality of service and they're to be commended for their dedication and excellent work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, think that the libraries we have in this province are wonderful resources. It's great to hear that they're doing such a wonderful job and they have all these activities going on. It's especially important because I know the minister has cut staffing in the schools, so that the school libraries are only run by volunteers. It's good to know that, at least, they have the provincial ones when they can't actually access the libraries in their school because of cutbacks.

I do think there are some wonderful programs going on and I'm familiar with quite a few of the libraries and some of the programs that are going on. I did not know about the escape room in Montague. While I probably wouldn't have done well in that author, there are a couple I might have gotten out quickly on. But probably just a couple –

Ms. Compton: Not Jane Austen.

Mr. Myers: Not Jane Austen, for sure. If it was Tolkien or something like that, I might get out quickly.

Anyway, either way, I do think it's wonderful that the libraries continue to find new ways to encourage young readers to access the library and learn to love to read. It's a – I think it's an asset for a skill set for anyone, but, in particular, in the world that's moving so quickly now, and how things are ever changing.

If you listen to a lot of the research now, they're talking about the jobs of future haven't yet been created, so a lot of our youth today are going to have to learn things really, really quickly to stay employable by the time they reach our age. Reading is going to be – will continue to be, as it always has been, a very important skill set in the daily lives of individuals.

The only other thing I might say is, you know, that we do have wonderfully resourced libraries in the provincial system. I did have the opportunity to see the new library, not so new library, I guess now, in Halifax. What a gem that is. And how well used it is. It's full of people on all floors and I think government certainly if they're looking to invest in our future readers and future libraries, should look at that as a model.

I know there's a model similar to that in Summerside. I think that Charlottetown could benefit from a major upgrade on their library. I know government always says they don't have money, but they do and when they want to they can find money and they can sneak it into things.

So I'd encourage government to continue to support the library system here on Prince Edward Island, and explore new ways to bring assets into the library system that could benefit us far into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to commend the support for extending the library card system to kids. My daughter is one of the beneficiaries of this, and will have many great stories about what happened in the library on the next school visit.

But it's important to remember that literacy programs and interventions have an impact on learning and learning performance in all curriculum areas, not just in reading, so there's great data that shows us that improved literacy improves as the overall

learning outcomes for children, and that libraries are an access to that opportunity regardless of income level or ability. It creates a level playing field for all to be able to participate and access those resources.

It's also important to remember that libraries are a resource for us, not only as a place that motivates those to learn, but to provide access for technology and accessibility that often is not available in any other space, including things like astronomy telescopes in our local one here, coding camps for kids in the summer, comic book boot camps. There's been some amazing programs happening locally.

Also, adaptive options for children with disabilities and accessibility that are, again, not available perhaps in their local schools, as well as family and community engagement, as a local centre where libraries, as they have in Halifax, as we heard from the other hon. member, create more than just a space where books live, but also where community lives.

So I would also echo the comments from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that should there be an investment coming in the future, it should be one that builds us a library that can be that centre for community activity and lifelong learning for our community.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Silliker Glass

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Monday afternoon, I will have the pleasure of making an important business expansion announcement with the federal government for Borden-Carleton. This expansion will allow a local, home grown company to add up to 30 jobs and to pursue new off-Island customers and adding to our 2,700 jobs year-over-year that we've created.

This is the latest in a surprising number of new business startups and business

expansions over the last two years in rural communities across Prince Edward Island. In the Borden-Carleton region alone we've seen expansions by MacDougall Steel, Mrs. Dunster's Bakery, the Handpie Company and Tree Top Haven. In Summerside we've seen companies emerge like New Leaf Essentials and Nautican. Further west, we've seen expansions at Trout River Industries and H.F. Stewart and Sons.

Our bioscience sector has added 18 new companies in the last three years. We have five major expansions in the bioscience community in the last three years alone, and our government has been there to offer support, guidance and investment. We understand the impact entrepreneurs can have on the economy and people's lives, and we are here to offer support when it's needed most.

Our economy is among the strongest in the country. Whether you talk about export levels, manufacturing, building permits, automobile sales, or many other facets of the economy, we are either near or at the top compared to our provincial counterparts.

We are also seeing our population grow. We've outpaced the Canadian Average and we were the provincial leader in population growth in 2016 and 2017; and for the first time in decades, our median age trended younger. These are all clear signs of a healthy economy.

We are small, but we are a mighty Island. We punch well above our weight and we can really surprise people with what we can achieve.

I'm proud of what is being achieved in Borden-Carleton and across the Island, and I invite everyone to join us for this announcement on Monday at Silliker Glass at 1:00 p.m.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I applaud any announcement that's coming to Borden-Kinkora and District 19, that's for darn sure.

When these rural businesses and companies expand, it's a positive for all over PEI, and it shows that we have great entrepreneurs that are out there in the rural areas and in our cities, too; but it's showing that our rural areas are doing fine and they're growing, and that employs people.

I know one problem we have in Borden-Carleton is the lack of a subdivision plan for residential expansion. That's something that's been talked about for a number of years in that area, and that's one area I'd like to see expand, is the ability to have more residents living in that area, because housing is at a very low availability.

I think we can never forget that rural PEI needs very strong infrastructure. It needs very strong Internet access and high speed. That's something that I am hearing a lot of time, is that there just isn't enough ports to allow high speed access into the Internet.

It's disheartening when you hear a business is moving down here from Ontario and I'm thinking about a couple that moved to Chelton Beach. They sold their business up there which is home-based, they moved here to PEI, and they couldn't operate that business due to the lack of Internet in that rural area.

Now I can say that the minister and I, we did work on that, and that was solved; but it goes to show that we need a very strong Internet base across all of PEI where we are so small, and that should not be a problem to do, but we've got to continue to work on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed great to hear about some fantastic business success in rural PEI, especially some of the businesses that I've had the opportunity to work with myself in my past experiences; but I would also like to

continually remind this House that small business starts small in PEI.

Micro-businesses, which are businesses that employ three or less people, are often where businesses begin. They can grow up to be large and be exporting and having a huge impact on our economy, but when 97% of business in PEI is small and medium, then we cannot ignore the impact of that business.

That's the dollar to dollar that happens on a day to day in our community. It's the coffee shops, it's the sandwich shops, it's the food trucks, it's people making things in their home; and while we speak about export on a regular basis, we also have to recognize that the ordinary people that work in PEI are to be valued for their impact and the value that they bring to our economy, whether they live in Charlottetown, Borden, Tignish or O'Leary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Point of Order

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Speaker: Yeah, go ahead.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Legislative Assembly, I think, is doing a really good job of modernizing and going in the future. We're doing some great things of putting Question Period and the Assembly online and on Facebook in particular.

We put the members' statements and the ministers' statements online, but it's come to my attention that the responses to the ministers' statements don't go online with the minister's statements, and I think a lot of times that the opposition and the members of the third party add a lot of context, they add a lot of local content. They're well-thought-out responses.

I wonder if you could look into the Legislative Assembly adding the responses to ministers' statements as well to that clip.

Ms. Biggar: It's in the Hansard.

Speaker: Hon. Member, I'll take that under advisement.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said committee on committee activities and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that the report of the Committee be adopted.

Your committee is reporting on its activities since last reporting to the Legislative Assembly on December, 2016. Since last reporting to the Legislative Assembly, the committee met eight times. As a report of its deliberations, your committee is pleased to make several recommendations to the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

On the topic of smoking cessation, your committee is making the following recommendations for legislative changes:

1: That government consider increasing the tax on cigarettes to the same level as Nova Scotia (an approximate increase of 2.25 cents per cigarette); and that any additional tax revenue be directed towards smoking cessation initiatives including, full-funded pharmacological support.

2: That government consider including prescribed flavouring agents designed for electronic smoking devices as banned substances within the *Tobacco and*

Electronic Smoking Device Sales and Access Act.

3: That government consider including multi-unit dwellings within the *Smoke-Free Places Act*.

4: That government consider providing front-line health care professionals in community health care centres access to courses on smoking cessation.

On the topic of long-term care facilities, your committee is making the following recommendations:

5: That government accelerate the timetable of its review on long-term care beds in order to move forward with the considerable private and non-profit sector interest to increase long-term care bed capacity in communities across PEI.

6: That the government explore a pilot project to partner with private long-term care facilities to provide a more appropriate care setting for these medically discharged patients awaiting placement.

To conclude, your committee would like to thank the groups, who took the time to make thoughtful, informative presentations to the committee.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any hon. members, who would like to – the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for providing the report.

I'm fairly new to this committee. I was able to get to a couple of meetings and one of the first ones was when we had the long-term care group in. We had a really good, deep, discussion that day. I'm quite happy with two of those recommendations that the hon. member just read out: accelerating the timetable of the review of long-term beds.

I think that is so important that we really get that report done as fast as we can. I know the committee has agreed to get that – the

group that's working on that into the Legislature as soon as possible in the new year, too, to get that in. I think that's a really important recommendation to accelerate that. I hope the minister really takes that to heart.

The second one was the pilot project to partner with private long-term care facilities to provide a more appropriate care setting for medically discharged patients awaiting placement.

I think that's a fantastic recommendation. It's one that the opposition brought up here in the Legislature. I really want to thank the health committee for listening. It's an idea that has merit. We know there are a number of long-term care beds out there in facilities now. The minister referenced the one down in Belfast.

There are extra beds in facilities right across PEI. We know there's a group from Wellington that is looking for. What we could do is to get people out of the QEH, out of hospital, is partner with those communities, they're not licensed, yet, but they go in there, into those beds for now to open a bed in the QEH or Summerside. I think that's a fantastic idea for the government to do. I'm happy that the committee agreed to that.

I know I did an interview with CBC there a few weeks ago and I think they're going to come out with some information, too, about the costs of keeping people in these long-term care beds. I shouldn't even say the cost. It's a revenue source for people that are staying in acute care beds in hospital that are medically discharged. You have to pay so much a day to stay there. It's probably surprising. I know CBC will probably break this story at some point. If we could get them out of those beds and into these private care settings, that's going to free up those beds for other reasons.

Those two; accelerate the timetable of the review of long-term care beds, and this pilot project to partner with private long-term care facilities. I wholeheartedly agree and really encourage the government to listen to those recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Also speaking to the report, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to congratulate the committee for this excellent report and the great recommendations they're bringing forward.

I wanted to echo the comments of the Member from Morell-Mermaid regarding the long-term care facilities. Those two recommendations, especially the recommendation to get medically discharged patients out of hospitals and into more appropriate facilities.

I also wanted to make a point about the – there are four recommendations regarding smoking cessation. Here we have a federal government that's pushing legalization of, yet, another recreational drug that is actually most commonly used through smoking, when we've got a standing committee that is coming out and saying: what we need to do is to stop people from smoking. They came up with four recommendations on ways to do that, including; raising the taxes on cigarettes. I applaud those recommendations, and I think they should be followed.

I think that the shortsightedness and the way that the federal government is forcing this provincial government to bring in cannabis legislation and access to cannabis too quickly, is something I would like to see the provincial government push back on. I think there's too many items that haven't been thought about; not enough stakeholders consulted. Especially, when it comes to legalizing a recreational drug like cannabis; not even considering the edible side of things, which is, another way, of course, that the drug can be ingested.

I know the federal government recently said they were going to look at that at a future date, and they pushed it out a year. They're going to have cannabis legalized. We're going to have people, more people smoking instead of less people, while the standing committee is saying we need to have less people smoking.

Let's get a complete idea of what's going on before we rush to legalizing another recreation drug that people smoke. When, in

fact, we're trying to move away from smoking.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other hon. members want to speak to the report?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, I'm going to revert back to Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table it's a petition that was collected by Gary and Lucy Robbins on behalf of the residents of Martinvale asking to be removed from the Three Rivers process, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: All right, thank you.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 17, *The Lobbyists Registration Act*, Bill No. 24, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, please.

Chair: Thank you.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor? Granted.

We'll allow them to come to the floor and set up and while they're doing that, I'm going to give way to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy for recognition.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Since we opened earlier on, we have a couple more guests who have arrived that I didn't have a chance to recognize. I would like to recognize Graham Miner, our Director of Highway Safety and his guest, Maria Chen, to the gallery. I'd also like to wish Graham a happy birthday today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: So we appreciated them and hope they enjoy the rest of the proceedings.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Premier MacLauchlan: I hope if it's his birthday, he's making sure his registration's renewed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Hon. Members, we'll have the stranger introduce herself and her title for the record.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:
Wendy MacDonald, Clerk Assistant.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Hon. Members, as in other bills that we had to the floor, I'll read the full section and then I'll open the floor for discussion.

1. Definitions

(1) In this Act

(a) "Crown" means Her Majesty in right of the province;

(b) "education authority" has the same meaning as in the Education Act R.S.P.E.I 1988, Cap. E-.02;

(c) "grass-roots communication" means appeals to members of the public through the mass media or by direct communication that seek to persuade members of the public to communicate directly with a public-office holder in an attempt to place pressure on the public-office holder to endorse a particular opinion, but does not include communication between a person, partnership or organization and its members, officers or employees or between a body corporate and its shareholders;

(d) "lobby" means communicate with a public-office holder, directly or through grass-roots communication, in an attempt to influence

(i) the development of a legislative proposal by the Government of Prince Edward Island

or by a member of the Legislative Assembly,

(ii) the introduction of a bill or resolution in the Legislative Assembly or the passage, defeat or amendment of any bill or resolution that is before the Legislative Assembly,

(iii) the making or amendment of any regulation made by a Minister or the Lieutenant Governor in Council,

(iv) the development or amendment of a policy or program of the Government of Prince Edward Island or the termination of any program of the Government,

(v) a decision by the Executive Council to transfer from the Crown, for consideration, all or part of, or any interest in or asset of, any business, enterprise or institution that provides goods or services to the Crown or to the public,

(vi) a decision by the Executive Council, a committee of the Executive Council or a Minister to have the private sector instead of the Crown provide goods or services to the Crown, or

(vii) the awarding of any grant, contribution or other financial benefit by or on behalf of the Crown, and means, in relation to a consultant lobbyist referred to in section 4, communicate with a public-office holder in an attempt to

(viii) influence the awarding of any contract by or on behalf of the Crown, or

(ix) arrange a meeting between a public-office holder and any other person;

(e) “Minister” means a member of the Executive Council;

(f) “organization” means

(i) a business, trade, industry, professional or voluntary organization,

(ii) a trade union or labour organization,

(iii) a chamber of commerce or board of trade,

(iv) an association, a charitable organization, a coalition or an interest group,

(v) a government, other than the Government of Prince Edward Island, or

(vi) a corporation without share capital incorporated to pursue, without financial gain to its members, objects of a national, provincial, territorial, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, charitable, educational, agricultural, scientific, artistic, social, professional, fraternal, sporting or athletic character or other similar objects.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: I’m just wondering – there’s 21 sections to this bill, is the House agreeable to go section by section and then we can make amendments or ask questions section by section?

Chair: Well, that’s what I’m doing. I’m reading each section.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay. What’s the next one up then? Not section then. By part? Is that what you want to call it? There’s 21 parts.

Chair: Yes, there are 21 sections.

Premier MacLauchlan: Definitions.

Chair: So, I’m in section 1, which is the definition section.

Mr. MacEwen: I’m just wondering – is it agreeable (Indistinct)?

Chair: So you don’t want me to read clause by clause?

Mr. MacEwen: That’s what I’m wondering.

Chair: Well. I’d be agreeable to move off clause by clause if that’s the case.

An Hon. Member: Even if we could just ask some questions as we go on.

Premier MacLauchlan: And I might give a brief explanation.

Chair, perhaps I could give a –

Chair: An explanation?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair. I just didn't hear the outcome of that.

Chair: Yeah. I think what I'm getting from the discussion is we're going to move off the clause by clause.

Mr. MacEwen: No, I just wanted to ask – instead of reading every single line, there's 21 sections. Could we read the title of the section and then ask our questions of each section, or make our amendments on each section?

Chair: Sure.

Are you agreeable with that?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I can go with that.

Chair: The Premier's going to make a statement on the lobbyist act.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair and colleagues.

This is the first time that Prince Edward Island will have legislation to govern and make transparent the activities of lobbyists and one of the large questions there is who's activity, then, would be captured by this and in effect, it's anyone who has the objective to influence a decision of government. As in all jurisdictions across Canada, it is then referenced to or has a parameter around the extent of time or the amount of the person's – the proportion of the lobbyist's activity that is spent lobbying government. The principle activity, I will say, is to create a registry which will make transparent who are lobbyists in our province and who they are in touch with and what they are trying to influence. The benefit of that, I'm sure, is apparent to the House and beyond the ways that we might obviously see the benefit, it also serves the purpose of, I should say, leveling the playing field in terms of what, I might call; competitors would be interested to know about approaches that are being made to government.

So this was brought in and tabled on first reading in our previous session. There was an opportunity to make comments or to offer feedback. We had a well thought out

submission from the Leader of the Third Party with eight points and six of the eight have been picked up in the further bill, the one that's presented here. There was an extensive letter authored by Guy Giorno of the firm Fasken Martineau who's one of the experts in Canada on lobbying legislation or regimes. A significant part of the comment that he offered was picked up and incorporated in the bill that's now before the House.

The bill that's here today follows suit with other Canadian provinces. There are some cases where we take a more expansive approach. Principally, in terms of a comparison, we can say that it's in line with the neighboring provinces in the Atlantic region and most directly with that of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

The final point, then, Madam Chair, and I'm sure points will come out in discussion, is that this further bill expands to three from two the categories of lobbyists whose work is addressed by this regime and it – maybe I should just say it this way off the top: This is not meant to reduce or constrain the interactions that any of us in this Assembly have with constituents or with people with an interest in public policy.

This is about paid activity of a, or remunerated activity, of a scale that represents a significant part of that person's work or of the work of a collectivity, or a group working together. The benefit, ultimately, in this is to the public to have that transparency and to understand where there is, I will call it, a formal effort to influence government and it's with that in mind and again with a view to working at our first time to have legislation in Prince Edward Island to fall – not fall in line – to be consistent with notably the other provinces here in the region.

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, just to be clear, I've read the title of the first section so we're having discussion under the first section and I have questions from the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Specifically with section 1, sub para 1, sub para (d), I'm interested in the definition of 'to lobby'. How would that apply to – if this goes through third reading as proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor, we'll say within a month, okay? Would that apply from that date forward or would it apply, and could it apply, to anything that is presently before the government? So, active files?

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: It would not be retroactive in the sense that it would reach back to activities undertaken by lobbyists prior to the coming into force of the act, and it's another way of appreciating what it means to have this legislation where we haven't had it to-date.

What it applies to, and what is required to be registered, is the activity of the lobbyist and if there's a lobbyist who's endeavoring to approach government, influence government regarding something that's now kind of underway, then any of that activity from the coming into force of the law would need to be subject to the registry and to this regime.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

What I'm thinking about there, Premier, is in Question Period it was brought out from the minister that the department is actually in consultation or having talks with possibly other energy providers. What I'm wondering is if that's going on, that's an active file right now. We bring in the lobbyist act – that active file is still continuing, right? So, if somebody, and not saying that somebody has, but if somebody was actually lobbying government to shift to a new energy provider on that active, ongoing file, would that information have to be declared?

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: If someone is actively lobbying at the time that this comes to the courts and going forward, yes. That would be registered even if the initiative may have had some early (Indistinct) but a lot of public policy can have a long trail, and the benefit there, member, would be – and I quite appreciate the way you're asking the

question – while we can't require someone with a new law to go back and say: This is what I did on November 10th – it will nonetheless cast a light on and add transparency to who is lobbying and you I'm sure have your own ways, then, of asking questions or trying to figure out what went on prior to there being a lobbying act, but we can't make it retroactive.

It will, though, and I can assure you that on the very file you're talking about, that work will be continuing after this comes into force.

Mr. Fox: Exactly, question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: One other clarification; say an MLA has been contacted and contacted, we'll say, over a road that's dirt and he wants it paved and that constituent or that resident in principle is lobbying the MLA to get the road paved. Would that be considered?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Would that be considered?

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: In section 2, there's extensive provision (a) for who is a lobbyist but in effect who is not considered to be a lobbyist, in 2 sub 1, and then 2 sub 2 spells out the kind of activity or activities that would not be considered to be lobbying, and your example is a good one, but bringing in a regime that requires the registration and transparency of people who are working as lobbyists, who are remunerated as lobbyists, there's no intention and the law is quite in detail – the bill is in detail drafted to not put a constraint on the interactions of a constituent and an MLA for where the constituents are seeking something for the betterment of the community and the MLA is doing his or her best to get it.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, okay.

Thank you, for now.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I want to start off by thanking the Premier for incorporating, or at least finding direction in part from the letter that we sent from our office a couple of months ago. I really appreciate that.

Premier MacLauchlan: We appreciate the honour.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Much of our recommendations or the ideas that we brought forward were from Mr. Giorno's original analysis of the first (Indistinct) of this act and you mentioned that he sent you a letter recently, so I'm wondering if you would be willing to table that letter –

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm referring to the letter that you're referring to, the same one.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, the original – so you did not receive one on this iteration of the legislation?

Premier MacLauchlan: No, we acted on his first commentary.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

You used the phrase, Premier, you want to capture those who are making a formal effort to influence government policy, and I know this legislation is part of a suite – the conflict of interest, whistleblower legislation that we rattled through great (Indistinct) speed last night and the FOIPP review – all of these things together will provide greater accountability and transparency –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and I'd like to – we're on section 1 here, Chair.

Chair: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I have a couple and quite subtle things, but I'm wondering if the Premier could clarify this for me. One of the definitions is of grassroots communication, that's 1 sub c and then later on we have organization which is 1 sub f, and I'm wondering whether, for example, the grandparents caring for their grandchildren who were here the other day, or the open adoption advocates who were here the other day; two grassroots organizations with no formal structure, mostly just meet in somebody's kitchen, certainly no paid members, but they were here asking for something very specific and I'm wondering whether – so that's one what I would consider true grassroots organizations.

Then, you have a situation where a large organization like CARP: Canadian Association of Retired Persons, for example, might contact all of their members and get them to write to MLAs or the Premier's office, or whatever, to lobby for something. That's a much more formal organization with funding and structure and paid people.

I'm wondering whether both of those things would be considered lobbyists.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: The association of retired persons of behalf of the (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: So, in the first example, Chair. The first example, hon. member, that activity or that organization would not be captured because of the requirement that the employee, or the in-house lobbyist employed by organization, this would be section 7, be compensated.

Unless someone is, in the first part, doing this for remuneration then that activity would not be required to register or fall under the regime.

I have to confess, I was looking for that language in section 7. I think you were offering, then, a further example of a more, kind of, resourced organization –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Exactly.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and was there a particular, but, I mean we could pick many examples, but in, let's say, some of the health foundations or research organizations.

Where there is an employee or employees collectively, who are lobbying government and they are getting a salary, or they have a role, you might say; executive director or something, then, those organizations or those in-house lobbyists would register. In fact, if you look at other provinces, a significant number of those who have registered would be people who have such remunerated roles.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Maybe my example's perhaps not clear enough. There is a gray area in between here for me and I understand. You mentioned health; the Canadian Cancer Society, very well-funded, enormously large, and important organization doing critical work. I can understand if they were to lobby directly to government that that would clearly be lobbying.

For example, we had Dr. Ian Reid here presenting to a standing committee a little while ago on the harm of cigarette smoking and making some very clear asks of government – not on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, but as an individual with particular concerns.

I'm wondering, now, that was just one person, but if the cancer society was to put a shout-out to all of their PEI members to write a letter, or some sort of campaign, would that, sort of, indirect use of membership of a larger organization, would that be considered lobbying?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: I think that would be grassroots. I would think that would be grassroots communications if done by a paid employee of the Canadian Cancer Society. The time that it took to issue that call would be counted as part of the time, you know, towards their status.

Premier MacLauchlan: But not the citizen, who fills out the postcard or who calls up the MLA, or who does, you know, the activity much in the of exchange with Borden-Kinkora. This is not meant to capture what the basic work of (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted some clarity.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I wanted to ask a question specifically about subsection 2 (1) (k).

Chair: We're not there yet, hon. member. Would you mind holding your question?

Mr. Trivers: Oh, I thought we were talking about all of section 2, sorry.

Premier MacLauchlan: One.

Chair: One.

Mr. Trivers: Oh –

Chair: Section 1 –

Mr. Trivers: Oh.

Chair: – we're under section 1 right now.

Mr. Trivers: Oh, 1 (2). Okay, pardon me. I can wait, yeah, for sure.

Chair: Thank you –

Mr. Roach: Carry the section.

Chair: Shall that section carry? Carried.

Mr. MacKay: What's (Indistinct)

Chair: Oh, you were out of the room so I thought.

Mr. MacKay: Well, I was behind Rustico-Emerald (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Just curious, Premier: How much lobbying has occurred in your office since you've been elected?

Premier MacLauchlan: I would say very little. I have to say less than I might have thought before I took the job –

Mr. MacKay: That's good news.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Premier: Are you aware of any of your ministers being lobbied?

Premier MacLauchlan: What you're really getting at then is what the thresholds are for this legislation. I'm not actually in a position to say who would register or who wouldn't, but I – this is obviously being brought forward to ensure that there is transparency around lobbying activity in the province.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Premier: Has there been anybody bring it to your attention in the past that there might have been some lobbying going on with certain ministers?

Premier MacLauchlan: You know, I can't say that it's been directly brought to my attention and not in conjunction with the development of this bill. So, again, it goes back to whether people are in that formal sense or compensated sense lobbyists. That's what this captures.

If you're asking in a more informal sense, I expect any one of us in this Assembly has been lobbied, you know, to encourage us to do something. The point here is: once the registry is established, that those who are doing it, at the level that is laid out here, and it is consistent with what's laid out in other jurisdictions then that would be the work that's captured.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Premier: In the legislation, what, I guess, what role does Executive Council play in this? What control does Executive Council have in that?

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me put it the other way. If Executive Council is being lobbied then that's exactly the activity that is meant to be registered and made transparent.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Am I right in saying, though, Premier, that at the end of the day if a Cabinet member is being lobbied, Executive Council can somewhat turn a blind eye and nothing come out of this legislation?

Premier MacLauchlan: As I understand it, in the jurisdictions, now most of them in Canada, where there is a lobbyist registry, if someone calls to look for an appointment, one of the questions off the top is whether they're coming to lobby you, is there a registry?

In that sense, whether it's the, you know, the Cabinet minister directly or staff, I think there is a, kind of a, a check that kind of gets built into the culture of when there's a lobbyist registry.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Premier.

When I asked a question, if there was – to your knowledge: Was there any lobbying towards any of the ministers? Has anything been brought your attention since you've been elected of any lobbying, maybe, in the health care system?

Premier MacLauchlan: I have to be honest that – if – I would expect because it's what has happened in other jurisdictions, and I might ask Wendy MacDonald to speak about the frequency with which people have registered as lobbyists in work related to health, whether as organizations or as for-profit-companies, but maybe that might be a better way to give a sense of where this is taking us, or what we might expect under this regime.

Chair: Wendy.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Yes, thank you.

I think the starting point for most of these pieces of legislation is the fact that lobbying is actually a legitimate democratic activity,

but that it contributes to democracy when those organizations who are large-scale or those individuals who, in effect, make a living from lobbying on behalf of multiple clients. If those people have required to enter their names on a registry so that the public may be aware of who they are, who they're lobbying, what they're lobbying about. But lobbying, in itself, is not seen as a bad thing. What's important is for it to be transparent.

And so, in that sense, all the legislation in more or less consistent way says the same things about who is a lobbyist; who's not considered a lobbyist; what the focus is in terms of what people are lobbying about; the things that are not considered lobbying targets that are legitimate, democratic, civic participation; and also there's some information in those bills around what approaches constitute lobbying. So that, for example, consultant lobbyists – would only – consultant lobbyists setting up a meeting on behalf of a client is considered lobbying, but if somebody who worked from a non-profit organization set up a meeting that, in itself, wouldn't be considered lobbying. So, the aim is really to level the playing field and to provide openness and transparency.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks for the explanation. I'm starting to get my head around it a bit more. So, in an open, transparent way, how is it determined – I'll go back to the health care system again just since I brought it up – what would the appropriate way, if a lobbyist is coming in to the health care system, who would they be dealing with in the system – or lobbying on behalf of a drug, say?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Let's say that a particular company or let's say a pharmaceutical association is promoting the inclusion of a certain drug in the formulary. They would have to file a return. Basically, if it was the first time – if they were beginning to do this, they'd have to file a return indicating a whole bunch of information on the organization, then, as well, who they propose to lobby, what the topic will be, and what methods of communications they'll use. I should qualify

that by saying that is typically what you would find in other registries.

We still have to develop those forms, but the act that's before you, the bill is very consistent with other provinces' statutes around the registry and it's likely that the forms would be pretty consistent as well. The act does spell out the required content of returns.

Premier MacLauchlan: In 4 sub 4, there's a quite detailed spelling-out of what must be included in the return. That provision gives us a much richer, a contextual, sense of what it means to have a registry.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I'm still trying to get my head around who would be dealing with a lobbyist, I guess, right?

So, once again, going back to a pharmaceutical company, who, on behalf of the province, is going to be dealing with a lobbyist?

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, if you look at one sub one sub g, there is the definition of a public office holder and it's written broadly, or it's written to include, really anyone who might be approached by a person who otherwise qualifies as a lobbyist. So if the lobbyist comes to Prince Edward Island and wants to see the head of Health PEI, or wants to see the deputy minister of health, or wants to see the minister, or wants to see various employees, that would all be captured.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: I just looked at that definition – that would fall under a minister as well?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, a minister would definitely be captured by that.

Mr. MacKay: No. I just got one more.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Where I'm struggling, Premier, is going back again there seems to be every piece of legislation that is tabled, you're giving control and power to your minister and your Executive Council and that seems to be exactly what's taking place here again.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, what I meant to say – and that was the first exchange we had – I might say, be the opposite. That is to say, the minister is part of this as the recipient of lobbying activity, so it becomes transparent and registered. It's not that the minister is controlling what is defined or what is registered. I'm going to ask Wendy MacDonald to comment on this, but my sense is that in the world that will evolve with this registry, it will be more like the – whether you are or aren't a lobbyist becomes almost a part of the, for example, setting up of a meeting in the same way as: Do you, or don't you have the time available? I'm pretty sure that's the way that interaction develops.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: That list of public office holders, Chair, is very similar to what you would find in most other statutes and really it means that (Indistinct) going back to that pharmaceutical association if they approach the manager of pharmacy services; if they approach – really, it's anybody top to bottom of the organization – anyone upon whom they're attempting to kind of bring their proposals is included as a target of lobbying. It's not only the ministers and senior management. So it's more inclusive.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I guess that's what I'm still trying to get my head around is – and we'll go back to health and a pharmaceutical drug. A minister might not have the knowledge of that drug or somebody in a system and a lobbyist is pushing a minister to buy a certain drug. Basically there's no protection on the end and if the minister accepts that – it just seems to be a bad approach that I would

have thought it would have had to go through tougher protocols, I guess, than letting a minister decide at the end of it.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, there's nothing about this bill that gives the minister any more authority or any more expertise than the minister already has. What this does is make transparent approaches that are being made in that formal lobbying sense or in a paid lobbying sense. Whatever the outcome of the meeting is, what the registry does, is enable you, or me, or the media, or the competitor to be aware that that meeting took place. It may even be, and I asked the question, that you would even register if you came to take part in a golf tournament. The idea is that the people will know what lobbyists are doing and who they're seeing.

Mr. MacKay: I'm okay for now, Chair. Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I just have some questions about who might be a lobbyist. So, I'm not 100% clear and I'm going to give you some scenarios and see if these people are lobbyists. The amalgamation group that was in here today, while they don't have an official title and they don't have a charter that they're following, they have come together for one goal and are working with me, would they be considered lobbyists under this act?

Premier MacLauchlan: No, Chair, they would not be. They're doing it as citizens. They're doing it out of their goodwill. They're not being paid to do it.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

The school group that I was a part of last year in Georgetown: they had an official title, they had received donations, they had a bank account, they advertised, they had flyers; they attended meetings, and talked to MLAs. Would they be considered lobbyists under this act?

Premier MacLauchlan: Unless – but from the way you describe it, it doesn't sound like anyone was an employee. Unless they were like hired to do it, they are taking part in democracy.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

If that group had to have gotten to a point where they hired a lawyer, would they then have to register as lobbyists?

Premier MacLauchlan: If the lawyer were lobbying, yes, but, and lobbying, to meet the threshold, in terms, of the amount of time, which, I think, be difficult to quite envisage, but not for the work that the person does a lawyer.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Would be consultant lobbyists undertaking (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Right, but not for giving legal advice.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Yeah. Not for legal advice, no.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, then, Chair.

What about – going back to pharmaceuticals. They were mentioned here earlier. They're obviously a large lobby group in all of North America.

Has our health minister been lobbied by pharmaceutical groups here on Prince Edward Island to date?

Premier MacLauchlan: I think you'd have to ask –

Mr. Myers: Chair?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So, I'll take that as a no.

I've heard lots of stories about pharmaceutical companies with doctors directly invited them on cruises and trips down to some warm places to golf and take their families and stuff like that, and give them presentations on some of their drugs.

How would those be reported when they're dealing directly with doctors through free trips for their families?

Premier MacLauchlan: Doctors, in their work as doctors in the province are not captured. They're not an employee in the normal course of the Government of Prince Edward Island. As I understand it, the activity that you're describing in the way, that, you know, you kind of see the calendar in the doctor's office or, you know whatever. I don't know about the cruises; I don't know anything about that.

My understanding is that that activity has been substantially, to the extent that it has ever taken place, I'm not saying I know exactly (Indistinct) this, but I think this is something that is more governed by the professional codes and the professional development and discipline of the self-governing bodies of doctors.

My sense is that this is – I don't – I'm pretty sure that doctors aren't going on any cruises. I don't think they could do that.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

This is the stuff that I have heard. I guess where the concerns would stem from would be some of the opioid addictions we have here on Prince Edward Island, granted not all of them but there are some that have been created by prescriptions.

They have started it with prescriptions. Somebody hurt their back at work and probably less so now, but when this thing really started, they were going in and the doctor had this great new drug. You won't feel anything, like, it's going to feel all better. And all of a sudden: bam.

I know people who worked construction and it ruined their lives. Ruined their lives because they got hooked on it. They

couldn't get off. Then, they turn to the street part because they couldn't get it from their doctor anymore and they had buy it from the street and stuff and it really ruined their lives.

Somebody got that into our system. Somebody lobbied to have these new drugs be taken on. If the doctors don't work for you, and they're able to make that determination that this is the stuff they're going to prescribe outside of government having any say in it. If a doctor is getting lobbied directly to use a new drug that could have a negative impact on our entire ecosystem as an Island, because those drugs did.

An Hon. Member: Chair.

Mr. Myers: What controls are held through the lobbyists act to ensure – and I guess it goes beyond the – the lobbyists act could be important in this, but it goes beyond that because it has created a social issue here on Prince Edward Island.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has an intervention.

Mr. Henderson: Just to explain to the hon. member a little bit of the process before a drug gets added to the PEI formulary, is that a particular physician can make a request. Usually, it's on behalf of a patient, if they identify that there may be a specific drug that would alleviate or be better to deal with a certain situation in a patient. They make that referral to the pharmaceutical, drug and therapeutics committee, which consists of, I'm going to say, 13 or 14 people. I don't know the exact number.

That committee consists of physicians. It consists of some bureaucrats within our department, as well as some laypeople. They would make, then, a recommendation to add a particular drug to the formulary, to which then comes to our department to decide whether we have the resources and the funding to add that specific drug to the formulary.

There is a bit of a cushion, I guess, is what I'm trying to say from the lobbyists. It doesn't mean that there isn't somebody that is talking to physicians to say there's a new product on the market. Physicians would

probably go to a somewhat, like, I'll say, comparable tradeshows and things of that nature where there are different companies that would be having booths and explaining different medications that might be better in a certain circumstance.

I also might add too, the only drugs that we can add to the formulary are drugs that are approved on the Canadian formulary. That's another, would be another cushion, as well.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate the information on that. Given what the minister of health just told us, Premier, would it be fair to say that any doctor who requests to have a drug added to the formulary, must first apply as a lobbyist? Because they don't work for you, but they're getting paid for the job that they do. So, they meet the criteria that you've already told me, but they're lobbying government for a change.

Would a doctor have to register as a lobbyist?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: It's hard to be specific with an example like that, but that doctor, unless that doctor was being paid by the pharmaceutical company and doing that as a consultant lobbyist, it's hard to know how that doctor would benefit from the addition of that drug to the formulary.

The other thing is, there is a section of the act that pertains to how much time you have to spend doing that. There is a threshold, which comes a little later in the act. Unless they did that, sort of, on a consistent ongoing basis.

Premier MacLauchlan: If I –

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

Premier MacLauchlan: – made just a general comment to this. This bill is not meant to displace or even get into the space of self-governing professions. There are processes already in place to, and quite well laid out processes, for example; adding a drug to a formulary. There are various

mechanisms to deal with doctors, for example, it was suggested if a doctor might be, I'll say, overprescribing, but this bill is – is really, it's a registry of people who are paid lobbyists.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

This latest discussion actually gives me more cause for concern because it's very true that we wouldn't know whether or not the doctor is being lobbied. So, we would – there's nothing – there's no way we're able to show whether or not, unless we add anybody who lobbies a doctor on Prince Edward Island because they're under contract with the province as lobbyists. Unless we do that there is no way of knowing when a doctor is bringing forward something to the formulary that they're not being lobbied themselves, which takes me back to my original concern: that some of these drugs ended up in a formulary were – it wasn't that they were bad, but there were some bad outcomes of having them here and they were being prescribed rather freely, at one point, and they created mega problems.

I'm not saying that the drugs themselves are bad when they're used properly, because I believe everything that I've been told is that the drugs, if used properly, are good. It's once you're outside the window of that pain that the addictiveness of them is higher. That's kind of in the gist of what I've been told.

I have a lot more concerns now than I actually did when I asked the question because I feel like – and this has more to do with public protection, even now, under the lobbyist act, that if we can't confirm who is lobbying a doctor, then we can't confirm, when a doctor wants something on the formulary, whether or not they, too, were being lobbied, but we can't get them to register as lobbyists because they may not meet the threshold of what it takes to be a lobbyist.

Plus, they're not a paid lobbyist, but we don't know they're not a paid lobbyist because we don't know if they've been given anything by the pharmaceutical to push it forward. So we've created this

vacuum of not being able to know. I think it's an important to address. Is there a way we can address that in this act to make sure there's not a loophole? Because I think this is important from some of the previous committee work that I've done.

Premier MacLauchlan: I don't think anyone would disagree that when a drug is being overprescribed or pushed in a way that you're describing, that there should be a response to that – and I'm going to ask the minister of health, if I may, to speak about how much this is actually done. The lobbyist registry is to make sure that it's transparent when someone has the objective to influence a decision of government, so that's really what this is aimed at and it's the way it's done across the country. I'm going to ask if the minister of health might tell us what mechanisms are in place to address concerns that – what doctors are doing.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Intervention?

Mr. Henderson: No, I didn't have an intervention, Madame Chair, thanks.

Chair: Nothing?

Mr. Henderson: No.

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

Mr. Myers: I know there's other people are on the list, so I don't want to take up all the time, but I'm wondering if the Premier would consider sending this bill to committee to explore, specifically, that part of it.

Premier MacLauchlan: Let's just see what other concerns there are.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I know, in the conversations so far during the debate today, there's a reference been made to a document from Fasken Martineau DuMoulin law firm, written by Guy W. Giorno and I wanted to, first of all – this is the one from December 19th, 2016 – I wanted to make sure this document was

tabled so first of all, everyone in the House has access, so Chair, would you mind if I tabled that document now?

Chair: No, you can table it.

Mr. Trivers: All right. I'd like a copy brought back to me, as well.

Thanks.

Premier MacLauchlan: You've got it all written on; I've got a clean –

Chair: We have a clean copy here.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, we'll be fine. Great. I'll continue on, then.

As the Leader of the Third Party mentioned, there were a number of concerns that they raised you in letter and that you addressed in the most recent version of the act. One of the concerns outlined in this document was lobbying by businesses and organization where the amount is less than significant, as determined by the Provincial Cabinet – and that, in terms of precedence, it does follow the pattern of federal – Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec law, but Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador actually define what 'significant' means.

So 'significant' is used five times in this document, with respect to employee's duties in all five cases and I was wondering why you didn't add in a definition for 'significant' as it could be interpreted as being recommended by this document.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair.

I had the same question myself. There is either a proportion of one's working time, or a number of hours per time period that ends up being the standard – whether it's done by regulation or it's put in the law and this really becomes the operating threshold, you might say. Precisely along the lines that you're asking, I would actually come with the plan to propose that the bill be amended to stipulate where – in the provisions – that leave some specification or translation of what a significant part means, that language be replaced by the precise language of at

least 50 hours of lobbying in a three-month period by one employee. That 50 in three months is about half of what would be prescribed in, for example, the other Atlantic Provinces and also the federal is 20% is it?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: So, in any event, I have a – Chair, are we getting ahead of ourselves to –

Chair: Are you on 1(1)?

Premier MacLauchlan: No.

Chair: Okay. Well, we'll get to it when we get –

Premier MacLauchlan: I share that concern, or in any event, had that same observation and we'll be prepared when the time comes to make that amendment, or to move that amendment.

Chair: When we get to that section.

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

I look forward to seeing that amendment come to the floor.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I don't want to belabor this point but the distinction I was trying to make earlier between those that are grassroots communications and those that are not and I just see in part 1 – we're still in section 1 –

Chair: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – subsection (c), if I read the last part – it describes or defines what grassroots communication is, but towards the end of the paragraph it says, "but does not include communication between a person, partnership or organization and its members..." which sort of suggests to me that the example I gave earlier would be considered lobbying. Am I right? Where a large organization asks its members to –

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: You're correct. I misspoke.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. All right.

Just one other clarification, and I know we're jumping ahead to section 6 here, but it's been mentioned by a couple of other members, but this is on the definitions of what a lobbyist is and, again, I'm glad that you have divided up the in-house lobbyist portion of this. I think I heard you say, Wendy, that non-profits would not be required to register, is that correct?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Actually, the division now that's there, in its essence, is to separate it into in-house lobbyists for persons or partnerships – which in most jurisdictions means, essentially, for-profit entities: corporations and partnerships – and in-house lobbyists for organizations which are defined in the definition section as including mostly non-profit enterprises. So section 6 pertains to what might be considered companies' lobbyists and section 7 pertains to what might be considered non-profit lobbyists.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Maybe I misheard, Wendy, but I thought you had said earlier that non-profits would not be required to register, but clearly they would.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: They would.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: They would.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: If they meet the threshold –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Of section 7.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Of, at this point in time, in the current wording of the bill, of a significant part of duties or the amendment, should it be accepted.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Just a point of information: the Member from Rustico-Emerald brought up Mr. Giorno's assessment of the first iteration of this law and I see just a couple of days ago he wrote

a follow-up saying: PEI reintroduces lobbying law – strong enforcements, fewer gaps than previous bills. Basically, he's giving it his much stronger stamp of approval than he did the first time. That was just from a couple of days ago.

Chair: Thank you.

You're good?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Yes. Thank you, Chair.

I certainly like this bill. In terms of each one of us in this House as MLA, or whether you're a minister, whether you're the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the Third Party, I think all of us, at least I do, I want to make sure that if I'm being lobbied, that first of all, that I know that that person has to go on and be registered as a lobbyist.

I want to make sure, myself, what is there, and I want you to tell me so that I make sure that I do the right thing if I'm being lobbied. I'm sure it could be the Leader of the Third Party, where, if there is a lobbyist that is trying to get government to do something, and then the Leader of the Third Party may have someone that's lobbying him to say: listen I want you to go in and fight against that.

Do you get where I'm going or a sense of that because, I think, each one of us, in here, don't want to find ourselves in the position that we haven't ensured that the person, you know, that we're being lobbied and where do we register and where do we put them, and how do we identify that?

I don't know if that makes sense or not, Chair.

Mr. Roach: Just want to do the right thing. I just want to do the right thing. I don't want to find myself liable. You know?

Chair: Wendy.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Minister, the section 2.1, which outlines to whom the act does not apply identifies a number of individuals, most of whom would

be in the public sector in one way or another, and that would include Members of the Legislative Assembly and essentially the group expands to include anyone who works for the province, municipalities, First Nations, federal government, other provinces. Essentially, anyone who works in the public sector doing their job is not considered a lobbyist.

Mr. Roach: A lobbyist.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: Okay, so –

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

My concern is if I have a company outside of government, a corporation that comes and wants to talk to the finance minister or wants to talk to the Leader of the Third Party, or the Leader of the Opposition to lobby any one of us to do something, and it's a professional lobbyist, what is my responsibility to ensure that that person is registered as a lobbyist?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: The onus is on them to register.

Mr. Roach: The onus is on them to register.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Yes.

Mr. Roach: Do I have to report or record that I've been lobbied?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: The act doesn't require that, but it would, possibly, make sense to keep a record of your meetings.

Mr. Roach: Okay, thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

This, somewhat, ties into that because, as minister, I get lobbied quite often to change policy, for instance, around ATVs on the Confederation Trail. If I'm getting lobby to change policy in my department is that, not

that necessary group, but if a group comes to us, and me, as minister, wanting me to change policy to accommodate their goals, should they be registered, or should I be taking note?

Obviously, I have that in my appointment that I met with them, but to what extent should I be filing a brief?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: There would be no requirement on you to file anything with the registrar. The filing is done by the lobbyists.

Ms. Biggar: In that case, then, Madam Chair, thank you.

Would that group be considered a lobbyist? For instance, if they're lobbying government to change policy in some way?

Chair: Wendy.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: It's partly who they are; what they're trying to change; and how they're going about it.

Who they are; if it's a group of volunteers. If it's a volunteer board of an organization. If it's not people, who are being paid to do what they're doing –

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: – they wouldn't be considered lobbyists.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: If they had an employee –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: – who did that for –

Ms. Biggar: For them –

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: – on an ongoing basis for a significant amount of time, or the threshold, then that person's name would have to be on record.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, that's –

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: But that's part –

Ms. Biggar: –good to know.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: – of the implementation.

Ms. Biggar: That's good to know.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: – and the public education that goes with it.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, just one follow-up question.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture has a follow on that point –

Ms. Biggar: An intervention?

Chair: – an intervention on that point.

Mr. J. Brown: A question on that point. A question directly related. I'm kind of wondering and this hearkens back to the democratic renewal process and there were a number of different individuals that would, kind of, request meetings, and you would be aware, generally, that they were working with a group that, certainly, would have, in a larger sense, connections back to other groups, particularly, off-Prince Edward Island that were requesting meetings and that kind of thing.

I would wonder, in that situation, you know, what onus is there on the elected official to determine: okay, well, who are you? Where do you come from? Are you getting paid to do this? And all that kind of thing. When they're come to – looking to come to see you.

Chair: Wendy or Premier.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Chair, there is not a legal requirement in this act for you to do that.

I would think those would be things you would want to know, perhaps, for the work that you're doing. But it doesn't form part of this regulatory regime.

Premier MacLauchlan: And, as Wendy said earlier: the onus is on the lobbyist. As I

understand it, since Prince Edward Island is joining a cast of jurisdictions that have some experience with this. People who are paid lobbyists have an interest in complying with the law. They might ask you who is the registrar? Or does PEI have a *Lobbyists Registration Act*? But from there the responsibility would lie on them.

Let's see two things, then, that are related to this. There is, among the registrar's duties, a responsibility to carry out education. To inform people about the law and its requirements. There has been added on one of the suggestions made, since the first bill provision that it will be online. I think, then, it's, you might say, in the interest of the lobbyist to know about that.

In the example that you give, and it goes back to a point that Wendy made earlier. We're not coming at this as if lobbying is bad. More, somehow, surreptitious; quite the opposite, it's democratic activity and the people that you're referring to, I don't see why they wouldn't want it known that they're approaching you, or they've spent this much time or they've gone to a meeting when that's their job. That's the world we're talking about, right?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Yes.

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

Ms. Biggar: I think that answered my question. It was in regard to, you know, if they're lobbying the minister to put more diabetes pumps coverage and that kind of stuff.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

I have to be honest, Premier, the more I listen to the conversations and the questions from Georgetown and from the Minister of Finance and the minister of transportation, the more concerns I have with the bill. I'm uncomfortable with it.

One question I have to ask is: What about, we talked about doctors, what about lawyers or accountants that are directly hired by the government on a contract basis that might be

lobbying for a change in policy or direction or putting ideas forward. What about them?

Chair: Premier? Wendy?

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm just trying to get the for instance. These would be professionals hired to do a job for government, by government, who would, in turn, be endeavouring to influence government, but they're providing a (Indistinct) service.

Mr. Fox: I guess where I'm going, Premier, is: I'm a lawyer –

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fox: I'm a lawyer. You hire me to do work for the department of justice. Another member, or pardon me, another individual knows I'm hired by department of justice and that individual lobbies me in regards to something going on in government. Would that count?

Premier MacLauchlan: The provision in the definition of public office holder in (g) that gives you the scope of people who are within the definition of who is being lobbied.

I don't see it captured by that provision. It seems to be that we may, again, be more in the realm of professional practice or the way people understand their responsibilities to a client.

These are things that have been the subject of a great deal of professional self-regulation, education, discipline as the case may be. I think it's important that we not – that we see this bill for what it is, which is establishing a registry for people, who are employed or paid or remunerated as professional lobbyists.

There are a lot of other ways that the issues that are being asked about are, I'll say, regulated. I mean regulated in the full – in the full sense. That's not the point of this law to, you know, get into the business of,

for example, the law society or the business of the accounting profession.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: I guess I just want it on the record: I'm very uncomfortable right now. I think we're into areas that are not covered good enough.

I'm concerned with that – this document that the PEI government introduced as the long-awaited lobby bill. I'm sorry; I'm just not comfortable with this, at all.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

I think this is a good spot for my question, and to kind of keep us focused on this piece and not try to boil the ocean here.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) boil the ocean.

Mr. Palmer: That we're really looking at public office holders. It's the first step into really getting a good record of who is talking to the people that sit in here to help influence decisions.

So, influence decisions, because it's, I think, a tough line between sales and lobbying. I think that's what we're trying to define.

My assumption is this has been done in other jurisdictions. We're not the first place. That line has already been created. I think that's where I'm just trying to get some clarification. That we're not trying to do everything. We're trying to look at public office holders in an effort to be more open and transparent so everybody knows who we're talking to.

I guess I'm looking for some clarification on that: Is that the intent, is to, have it as an act that help s regulate the pieces of work that we do and the interactions that we have or is it meant to be more broad and kind of encompass every profession there is on PEI?

Premier MacLauchlan: And it's the former. It's about influencing public policy, public office holders. It's not so much regulate as to make transparent. That's really the function of this bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: I think the difficulty may be that line between lobby and sales. Maybe there is no line. Maybe lobbying is sales. So, I think, could you speak to that?

Is there a line between lobbying and sales or is it the same thing and it's more about registration?

Premier MacLauchlan: There is a provision in (d) sub 8, which makes it explicit that if you're endeavouring to, "influence the awarding of any contract by or on behalf of the Crown..." that would be considered lobbying.

If it's to impress on you the benefits of this product over that as a, you know, a consumer, it wouldn't be captured, I don't believe, would it?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:
(Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: So, it's if you're in, you know, the procurement space that's lobbying.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Chair, as we know there – this kind of legislation is in other areas, so is there – in other jurisdictions.

What jurisdiction is this modeled from? Was it a jurisdictional scan and we kind of took the best pieces of it. Is there one particular location that we used as a template to, kind of, build ours in an effort to not reinvent the wheel?

Premier MacLauchlan: The three comparative jurisdictions, the three –

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:
(Indistinct) modeled (Indistinct) basis for the Newfoundland one.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's most directly taken from the Nova Scotia legislation. Significant reference to Newfoundland and Labrador and close attention to how we fit within the Atlantic region, for good reason.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Can you, and maybe it's in here, how long has this act been in place in those other jurisdictions?

The reason I'm asking that question is, is it their first version of it that we're attempting, or do they have more of a refined model that maybe some of those questions have been asked and this is – this covers some of those lines?

Premier MacLauchlan: That's a very good question. We will benefit from the experience in other jurisdictions. We can look online and see how many are currently registered in what categories in Nova Scotia, for example.

(Indistinct) and that.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:
Yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: Newfoundland and Labrador had its first *Lobbyist Registration Act* in 2004. New Brunswick is more recent, and then went through a period when it was passed, but not proclaimed.

In New Brunswick is has just come into effect April 1st, 2017. Nova Scotia, it first came into force in 2002. Nova Scotia was the fourth province to pass such legislation.

In modeling ours or in drawing upon Nova Scotia in the extent that we have, we have the benefit of their experience. Their experience in the scope and interpretation and not less – not least in the actually administration – making the regime work.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you for that.

When you talked about 2004 and 2002 as when their acts came in. Have there been

additions, or modifications or amendments to it, since those were proclaimed in 2004 and 2002 as examples?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: There've been – not comprehensive, I would say, but we know about those amendments. For example, Nova Scotia added the grassroots communication to the activities considered lobbying in 2010, and they also prohibited contingency fees for consultants in 2010 and both of those amendments are in the bill that's presented here. Then, in the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, there've been changes on several occasions, mainly what are referred to as housekeeping.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

I think that's important to know because it seems that any gaps in the legislation have been covered and we are going to benefit from that because we do have some pretty good legislation that we modeled this from that those gaps have been closed up, so I'm really glad to hear that – that it's based on some proven work that has been continually modified to get it to a place where we can look at it. I think it's good. I'm glad it keeps us in line with everyone else and maybe that's a piece for us to really understand because it is new to us in this Legislature – new to us to understand that line between sales and lobbying.

Thank you, Chair.

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

Mr. J. Brown: I think I'm fine, Chair. Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'm going to just make an overlying comment here first and foremost. There's been a lot of good discussion here. There's been a lot of serious concerns raised by ministers; members of the opposition; the presenter of this bill himself, the Premier has already indicated that he's got at least one

amendment that he's planning on bringing forward. I know that we have several amendments over here in opposition, as well, that we're considering on this bill.

So, I guess what I'd like to ask the Premier to consider if you would, at this time, take this bill off the table, potentially bring it back in the spring session after you and your department have had more time to do work on this, or even better yet: I'd propose that it be sent to committee for committee to do some work and then in the spring, we could come back and present a report from the committee on the work that was done on the bill during the winter months.

Would that be something you would consider, Premier?

Premier MacLauchlan: I think, maybe, that's the kind of thing that would be better to think about over the weekend, but I understand the question. There's need to get a sense of how close this is, but let's just take it as a question that we can reflect on.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I mean, Premier, I've done some of my research as well and a bit of a jurisdictional scan and the information I've received back is, perhaps, Nova Scotia isn't really the best model to be following because what I've been informed is that their legislation is probably, potentially some of the weakest in the country. I think, again, if we – I want to make sure we're getting this right and, again, I'm hearing from particularly, Cabinet ministers, that are concerned and there's some confusion as to whether they have to fill out a report to say that they've been lobbied or even every few years, when the position for Lieutenant Governor is coming up, there's people out there lobbying for that position, right? Premier, you know that yourself.

Premier MacLauchlan: Let's just say that we'll take that – I think it's better not to jump to an immediate answer to the question. Let's just see what other concerns people have.

Chair: Are there any further questions on that section?

Some Hon. Members: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Premier?

Premier MacLauchlan: Madame Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Lobbyists Registration Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. Members, before I ask the question: I have considered the question or the Point of Order raised by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, which by the way wasn't a Point of Order in the first place: Responses to ministerial statements, from now on, will be posted to the Assembly Facebook page starting today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, December 19th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, December 19th, at 2:00 p.m.