

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome back to week six; a special welcome to our guests in the gallery and those watching from home. There are many in the gallery to recognize, but let me start with Josh and Jared Vriends, who'd be your grandsons, and I'm sure you don't need to be told that, Mr. Speaker, but it's great to welcome new folks and your ties to the North Shore area on both sides of your family.

I also want to welcome our chief prosecutor, Cindy Wedge, and her, I suppose, family –

Ms. Casey: Kate.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) stretching here, but in any event, we're under good eyes if Cindy's keeping an eye on us.

Over the weekend and into the weekend was the celebration of the 100th birthday of Fred Hughes, a longtime president of Brackley Beach and of the –

Premier MacLauchlan: – here, but in any event our – we're under good eyes if Cindy's keeping an eye on us.

Over the weekend and into the weekend was the celebration of the 100th birthday of Fred Hughes, a longtime resident of Brackley Beach and of the York-Oyster Bed district, and congratulate Fred and all his family on that occasion.

I had an opportunity to take part in a very fine Christmas Cantata at Stanhope church on Sunday afternoon. A lot of work goes into that and a lot of talents. I certainly congratulate everyone involved. I know the community appreciates it.

Finally, on Saturday, had the opportunity to attend at A.P. Gallant's store in Rustico, where they were celebrating 90 years since

that business started; now in its third generation. They've spawned a lot of talent in music and art and law and other fields out of that family; great sense of fun and celebration and just coming together as a community. It was a real pleasure to be part of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today, as well, as the Premier said: the start of our sixth week here in the Legislative Assembly.

I'd also like to recognize a few individuals that have joined us here in the gallery today; of course our longstanding member, the dean of the Legislative Assembly; I think we call him now, Mr. Eddie Lund. Also, Cindy Wedge, and I know I'm not supposed to be speaking to the media, but I'd like to recognize Kate McKenna, who is a good friend. She does wonderful work at CBC.

I'd also like to say hello to a couple of gentlemen that have joined us today, as well; Jamie Larkin and Kevin Clory, two fine young gentlemen.

Last but not least, I'd like to send special birthday greetings out to my father-in-law, Pius MacPhee, who celebrated a birthday yesterday.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank all the staff at Clinton Hills. Friday night, Debbie and I, and a bunch of other attended Clinton Hills and their Christmas special and entertainment with Mike Pendergast and Mr. Doucette and Monique and they did a fantastic job. I just wanted to give them a big shout-out.

Also, want to congratulate Crapaud and Victoria fire departments. On Saturday and Sunday I attended the award ceremony there for their years of service. Congratulations to them and thanks for all their services they provide to the community.

I also want to say hello to Robyn Walsh. She's a young lady in our area, married to Andrew Mackay. She just goes above and beyond for the children's program at Amherst Cove school. Yesterday, I actually cooked up 10 lbs. of bacon and Robyn was there. She organizes this on a weekly basis. Chad Howatt, he provides – Ceretti's Grocery provides a lot of stuff to this program. It's great to see.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back here. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas out there today, to coin a phrase.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery today, especially Eddie Lund, and those watching from Tyne Valley-Linkletter. I know Ellerslie Elementary School are having their Christmas concert today. Unfortunately, I couldn't attend, but they always put on a great program and it's always overflowing with parents and friends and excitement of Christmas.

Yesterday, I was able to go to Tyne Valley Stewart Memorial manor, and have lunch with the residents there with my mom and my sister and all of us gathered together. We had a wonderful get together for lunchtime. I want to send kudos out to the staff that certainly offer such care and kindness to all the residents that are living at Stewart Memorial manor.

I had a great evening on Sunday evening. I went down to North Rustico to see the lights. My daughter and her little girl were visiting. We had a wonderful evening there. It's such a decorated village with all the lights. We had thoroughly enjoyed it, albeit

very cold out that night, but everybody's faces were warm with smiles.

I think what they should do below the sign of North Rustico is put a sign that says: Christmasville.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and best wishes to everyone today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today and I'd like to extend a merry Christmas out to all the residents of West Royalty-Springvale – also, special holiday greetings to the residents of Andrews of Charlottetown.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald. It's great to see that the Premier and the minister of transportation made it out this weekend. I, too, was at Gallant's Clover Farm and you know, those sort of small stores are so important for communities and locally they just call it Keith's store.

I also wanted to welcome everyone to the gallery and, in particular, I wanted to welcome Kevin Clory and Jamie Larkin. Kevin's a good friend of mine and he's the sort of guy that puts his all in everything he does. He does the coffee run in the morning and he's out there and brightens everyone's day. Jamie Larkin, also a friend of mine, is a great community worker. He's involved with many organizations, but in particular, lately he's been involved with the Lennon Recovery House, which is a great organization out in my area and helping to raise money there. It's great to see them in the gallery today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also welcome everyone in the gallery and those in District 16. Just a friendly reminder for those sitting at home watching today: if there's someone in their community, a senior or someone that lives alone, to make sure you reach out to them over the holidays and ensure that they have some company or have some discussions on anything. Just make them feel more at home and respect those individuals because they were the builders of our communities and we just want to ensure that everybody has someone to talk to over the holidays.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'd like to welcome the Wedge McKenna family – I guess minus one and I'd name them by name except there are identical twins in that family and I'm not – it's been 12 years I think since I taught the boys skiing and I'm not going to guess here today. I'd also like to welcome Jamie Larkin and all the other members of the gallery.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in the Legislature and welcome everyone and I have some special guests in the gallery today. I'd like to welcome my brother-in-law, **Ron** and sister-in-law **Jess Felton** from St. John's, Newfoundland and a very special

uncle to my wife and myself, Jerry Saunders from Saint John, New Brunswick, who was always quick to give me some advice and watches the Legislature and pays close attention to our PEI news.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gallant: As well, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege to attend the Miscouche fireman's Christmas banquet and awards dinner on Saturday evening and I'd like to congratulate our volunteer firefighters, Paul Perry and Blaine Gallant for their 30 years service to the Miscouche Fire Department. Also, congratulate the firefighter of the year, Tyler Richard and congratulate the junior firefighter of the year, Jackson O'Brien and thank them for their service and protecting our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise and wish Merry Christmas to all of those who are watching from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, especially the residents in Charlotte Court and 501 Queen St. I had an opportunity to visit them all on the weekend for a Christmas party with the Member of Parliament for Charlottetown, as well as the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

I, too, would like to welcome the Wedge McKenna family and Kate, we watch you on TV and we're quite proud of you with the CBC Montréal. We always know she's from Prince Edward Island and quite proud of that, so welcome home.

Mr. Speaker, Merry Christmas to everybody in the gallery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to say hello to everyone in the gallery and especially to those that are watching from Souris-Elmira on EastLink.

This weekend I had the chance to travel over the Fortune Bridge. The Fortune Bridge opened up and I'd like to thank the Highfield – the company Highfield – for doing a lovely job and doing the job on time. What a great company to work with and their staff is bar none to work with. I'd also like to thank the community for bringing the issue up and I'd like to thank the minister and myself for working with the community to make this happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: It's a bridge that community members were bringing up over a period of time, and it finally got fixed, and I'd like to thank the community for having the patience while Highfield were working on this bridge. They worked around the clock to make sure they met their deadline, and they did. It's not the first time I had the opportunity to work with this company, and I have great respect for the –

Mr. Myers: LaVie-verie.

Mr. LaVie: – company of Highfield, and so I want to thank the people, I want to thank the minister, and I want to thank myself for making this happen.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Didn't anybody else thank you?

Mr. LaVie: No, not a soul, so I thanked myself.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery today, and everybody watching at home in Summerside-Wilmot. Especially, I would like to welcome Mr. Trainor's political studies class at Three Oaks who are watching today, and in that class is my niece Kate, and she's turning 18 years-old-today,

and for her birthday she asked, and I will quote: a birthday shout-out from my favourite uncle.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'd certainly like to rise and welcome all that are visiting today in the public gallery. I see Senator Diane Griffin is with us today, a great environmentalist for PEI for many years. It's great to have her in today. Eddie Lund, of course, is with us, but a couple of other visitors on the far side of the House, the McKenna family who I know very well, it's good to have them in the House today; Jamie Larkin and Kevin Clory. Kevin spent some time on CBC, too, I see him showing up in commercials there a bit as well, so it's great to have you all in the House today.

To all that are viewing in from Sherwood, I certainly wish them all a great day, and a very Merry Christmas a little bit early, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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 in the gallery. A little note, too, our long serving member Eddie Lund who missed Friday – I don't know if we gave him the day off or what it was, but we recognized that.

And I, too, want to recognize Senator Griffin, who has now taken on the role of leader of the agriculture committee in the Senate, which is absolutely awesome. Now, we have the Senate leader on agriculture and the agriculture minister and the federal agriculture minister all from the Cardigan area, which is absolutely terrific. They're going to work together as a strong team.

I want to wish a great Merry Christmas to all the farmers and the fishers. I know the Member from Borden-Kinkora had noted how we had consumed, or helped likely consume, 10 pounds of bacon. We're going to be consuming a lot of great, local product here, so I want everyone to remember exactly where that comes from. It's from the farmers and the fishers, and we have to give thanks for that, too.

Merry Christmas to everybody in District 5, Vernon River-Stratford, as well.

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 great to be back for another week, and it's Christmas week, so I'm sure everybody is in great humour. I had a chance to make some rounds this weekend, and everybody seems to be gearing up to be ready for the season, so hopefully they all are.

I'd also like to give a shout out in the gallery here to Jamie and Kevin, as the hon. member from Souris said, not the part where he was thanking himself, but the other part when he talked about Kevin's days as refereeing. Kevin was quite a referee back in his day out in the Kings County area, and I know the House will probably find this really hard to believe, there was more than a couple of occasions he had to take me to the penalty box along the way –

Some Hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Myers: I know it's hard to believe, isn't it?

Mr. LaVie: And a shame.

Mr. Roach: Just get him to do that once more.

Mr. Myers: Either way, it's the truth. And I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Did I miss anybody? I guess it's my turn.

I just want to welcome everybody to the gallery today, and in particular Eddie, it's good to see you back, and Senator Diane Griffin, nice to see you drop in to see us; also Cindy Wedge and all the crew.

Certainly a special welcome to my two grandsons right there, as the Premier had mentioned: Josh and Jared Vriends. Josh, of course, is a former Page in the House of Commons, and he tells me that the members here are much better behaved than they are in the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Of course, Josh is a graduate from the University of Ottawa, and he is now taking the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Dalhousie University in Halifax and is finishing up there. His brother, Jared – Jared celebrated his 20th birthday yesterday, and he is in the third year of taking his Bachelor of Science in Geomatics Engineering at the University of New Brunswick.

Anyway, now members, you probably think that I'm bragging. Yeah, in fact, I guess I am.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

Stars for Life Foundation

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Stars for Life Foundation was founded in 2001 to assist families when their children with Autism Spectrum Disorder leave the school system and their vital daily supports disappear. The first Stars for Life Home and Resource Centre was opened in Charlottetown-Lewis Point in 2011. The home supports five full-time residents with 24-hour care.

As stated by Carolyn Bateman, the president of the Stars for Life, and I quote: Our mission is to provide life-long learning and

learning opportunities, and keep those with ASD connected to their communities and their families. We do this through continued education; teaching life and social skills; assist them in finding and keeping jobs; provide autism-trained support workers so they can go to college and in general, help them navigate an adult world which is so different from the security of the lives they have known up until now.

One in 42 boys are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and autism is four times more prevalent in boys than girls. Five-hundred children and adults have ASD on the Island. There are currently 40 individuals on the waitlist for services provided by Stars for Life and this is wrong. We support those students with ASD during their school years, and not when they graduate. We have citizens that are in need of immediate services.

I think it's time for our government to have meaningful engagement with Stars for Life as we prepare for the upcoming 2018 budget consultations to ensure their long-term sustainable funding. After all, we'll be remembered as a government by how we treat our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Abby Hackett SHAD Awards

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to stand in the Legislature today to extend my sincerest congratulations to Abby Hackett of North Cape. She is a grade 11 student at Westile Composite High School who participated in the STEAM program this past summer.

STEAM is a science, technology, engineering, arts and math program. Through this program, she has brought home five major awards. The STEAM program, which is funded by the SHAD organization, is a four-week summer camp hosted at 16 university campuses across Canada.

Abby was at the Carleton campus, and she was placed in the group with 10 other students from across Canada. The theme of the program this year was for the students to develop an end pitch, an entrepreneurial solution to help Canadians reduce their energy footprint. Abby's group developed a product called Chameleon, which are roof shingles optimized to repel heat in the summer and insulate your home in the winter through a combination of paints. Chameleon was recognized as the best innovation development (Indistinct) during the STEAM program.

Abby and her team marked the first time in history that a team swept all five major awards, which are the best application of theme; the best application of scientific principles; the best business plan; the best prototype, and they were also named the SHAD innovator of the year.

It is wonderful to see how brilliant the young minds of our Island students are, and Abby certainly has a very bright future and I look forward to seeing all she is able to accomplish in her life.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Community Garden Project, Kensington

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today to applaud the efforts of Jamie MacKay of Irishtown, a great Islander who is working on starting a small community garden in the town of Kensington.

Jamie is a well-known volunteer in our area and is always helping people in need. Jamie had an idea that he wanted to grow food to help people and decided that he would approach the town of Kensington for some land for a community garden. His goal is to grow vegetables for church groups, families in need, breakfast programs, seniors and basically anyone who needs food. The project will be run 100% by volunteers where individuals and groups can either grow their own food or receive food that is grown at the garden.

The new community garden will be called Ross's Place, in memory of Jamie's dad. Community gardens help to foster community identity and spirit. They also provide opportunities for residents to get to know their neighbours and a healthy, inexpensive activity for youth and their families.

I want to applaud Jamie for his hard work and his Christmas spirit that is alive all year round. Every community needs a volunteer like Jamie. I also want to thank the town of Kensington for their support for Jamie's idea and for donating some land for this worthwhile project.

In closing, I would encourage residents from the area to support the community garden and take the opportunity next summer to use this garden for growing their own food and contributing to their community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, before I ask my first question, I'm just wondering if I can impose on you for recognition of guests.

Speaker: Go ahead.

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

I'd like to recognize Senator Griffin. Sorry, Senator, I didn't see you when you came in. you were hidden behind the security individual there. It's certainly a pleasure to see you in the gallery. Diane also is a constituent of mine and a long-term friend. I'd also like to recognize Mr. Blake Doyle who just joined us as well.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Leader of the Opposition: Today the privacy commissioner issued a ruling finding this government broke the law in disclosing personal information to the Liberal Party of PEI.

Breach of privacy and apology

Question to the Premier: Will you publicly apologize today to the three women whose privacy was breached?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge, and I do so, on behalf of our government that we agree with the Privacy commissioner's findings that there was a breach of privacy and that it was done in contravention of the FOIPP law. I note that this took place roughly six years ago and that the individuals involved are long since – no longer involved in government, but I will apologize to the individuals whose privacy was breached in contravention of the FOIPP law.

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.

Government's press release stated that the key players involved in the shameful incident are no longer in government. Islanders deserve to know who these key players are.

Names of individuals involved in breaking FOIPP act

Again, question to the Premier: Please name each key player involved in breaking the FOIPP act who are no longer in government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the privacy commissioner released her report

this morning, yet she wrote it in the style that she does and is also the style of the Auditor General and other independent officers of this House. As I said, those events go back some time and I would prefer to allow the privacy commissioner's report to speak for itself.

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 privacy commissioner was unable to determine how these private records got from the fifth floor to Spencer Campbell and, ultimately, to the Liberal Party. We know the media remember Mr. Campbell hand-delivering these private records to their newsroom in the middle of an election campaign.

Delivery of private records to Liberal party

Question to the Premier: Who was responsible for giving these records to the Liberal Party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this work started under a previous privacy commissioner. I take it to be something that had already been going on for three years as an investigation before I was involved in any way in government. I take it that the privacy commissioner did, indeed, look into the chain of events that the Leader of the Opposition is asking about and she did not make findings in that. From my perspective, I think it's important to respect what the privacy commissioner says, respect her work, and to honour it and intend to accept her recommendations.

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.

Try as hard as the Premier may, he cannot distance himself from this incident as he only needs to look to either side of him. Two of his own Cabinet ministers at this time were, in fact, in government at the time. In fact, nine Liberal MLAs were in government and the Minister of Finance was running for election under the same leadership at the time.

Question to the Premier: Premier, why are you failing your own standard and refusing to accept your ministerial responsibility for this terrible incident that your government is responsible for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone is refusing to deal with the issues. To acknowledge what the privacy commissioner has found. And, as I have said, to accept and to intend to act on her recommendations, and that's precisely why we have an office like the privacy commissioner; why we have the privacy commissioner, why she has done the good work that she has, and brought forward this report. That is the work of our government, is to acknowledge, as we've said, that this would not be tolerated under our government and that we intend to move forward learning and practicing the lessons in the privacy commissioner's recommendations.

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 privacy commissioner had found that a deputy minister disclosed this information to deputies and other senior staff in the

Premier's office and the Executive Council Office.

Disclosure of information and accountability

Question to the Premier: Premier, is this why your whistleblower bill has deputies, who are appointed and accountable only to you at the heart of your deliberately flawed process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition has brought up the whistleblower bill that is before us. I hope that when it comes to the floor that it will be dealt with directly as a positive step for our province; for the people of the province, and for the proper public administration along the lines that is proposed in the bill and that follows the precedents of other jurisdictions in this country. We're very proud of that, and of the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner and of the investments that we are making in record keeping.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, the FOIPP act was broken and Islanders' personal privacy was breached.

Proceedings to Crown Attorneys Office

Question to the Premier: Premier, will this matter be turned over the Crown Attorneys Office for proceedings to begin against the guilty parties?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I've read the privacy commissioner's findings and recommendations. None of them appear to point in that direction. I've asked of the people in my department to read it, as well.

If there is any feeling that there should be an initiative taken, then that may well be the case.

Let me say, that we respect the work of the privacy commissioner. We take to heart these recommendations. I repeat; we have, on the floor, perhaps, even today, whistleblower legislation that is meant to act directly on circumstances such as those involved here. We are making investments, as we have in our last, now, two budgets in record management and training that are also recommended by the privacy commissioner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CBC is doing a great piece this week on mental health crisis on PEI. It's called Peace of Mind. In the opposition, especially as health critic, we get these stories, as well.

I'd like to read one that we were made aware of recently: My 16-year-old daughter is getting worse every day. We are sitting in her room right now and she wants to hurt herself. I called my family doctor today to get her meds adjusted, only to be told they can't adjust them and there is nothing more she can do for her medication. We have been waiting to see a psychiatrist for 11 months. I don't know what else to do. Why is it so hard to get her the help she needs?

Mental health crisis on PEI (further)

I have a question for the health minister: Are we failing this family, minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the stories that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid is conveying here are certainly sad stories and we certainly understand the toll that mental health can have on a particular family or an individual.

I would say that we have lots of services that are out there. We are seeing lots of Islanders participating in those services, whether that's our strongest families services, or whether it's our behavioural support teams, or to actually go to our mental health walk-in clinics or emergency rooms or what have you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The answer to my question was: no, we're not doing enough and we can do better.

I want to tell you another one here: We are in the middle of a crisis right now. The police have been to talk to my nine-year-old daughter tonight. She was violent. The worst she has ever been. They will come back if she escalates again. It took them an hour to talk her down. The officer told her father to call the doctor in the morning and explain what happened to try to get an emergency appointment, but I know that won't be possible. We need all the help and strength we can get.

Does the minister of health think that his government is failing this woman's nine-year-old daughter?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, when it comes to mental health there, certainly we understand that there is an issue out there in the province, as well as there is in just about every other jurisdiction in Canada, and probably North America.

But I can tell this House that we are seeing Islanders participate in many issues. We've had over 520 families, or Islanders, have went to our mental health walk-in clinics just recently.

Our Strength Program has seen 177 youth go through that particular program. As well,

we have over 51 families that are going through the behaviour support team.

Once again, there are many services out there, but, you now, I acknowledge that it's sometimes difficult to get access to a psychiatrist, but in some cases, it's not always a psychiatrist is the appropriate health professional to deal with an issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sometimes it's difficult to see a psychiatrist? It's incredibly difficult to see a psychiatrist in this province.

Here's another one. Mr. Speaker, these are tough to read: My daughter told her counsellor what her plan was to kill herself. She wasn't admitted to the hospital. I was told to take any type of ropes and cords out of my home. We wouldn't leave her alone for months. We would sleep on the loveseat while she would sleep on the couch. The calls to and from the police; the cost to change cellphone numbers so she wouldn't hang out with those certain people; the cost to drop her food at random places because you were scared she's starving; the cost to buy her new clothes because she lost 50 lbs. in three months because of drugs.

Minister: Do you think government is failing this woman?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, certainly all these stories that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid are bringing forward are very difficult stories. They're challenges that our system is trying to work with and deal with. Once again, we've had over 369 Island individual have gone through our Strongest Families Program.

We have over 80 students have also been working with our student well-being teams. We're investing in developing a mental

health campus. We're going to be dealing with working with our Canadian Mental Health Association. We've invested millions of dollars with them. We'll continue to do the investments necessary, but it's always a challenge to meet every individual's needs immediately.

I will also mention that we went through the process with Accreditation Canada, and they rated PEI's health care system a 95% plus when it comes to our ability to deliver health care to national standards, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know there aren't easy stories to hear. They're not easy to read, minister, but they're important.

Here's another one: My friend just left the emergency room with her 12-year-old son who was suicidal. They were seen by a doctor, who told them there was no pediatric psychiatrist available to see him. The doctor didn't feel comfortable prescribing antidepressants. They were told to go home. So now, they're on their way home with no treatment, no help and no further ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I've been hearing these promises and the promise that things are going to get better and we're going to get to it for 10 years now.

Do you think, minister, that this government is failing this 12-year-old boy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it's good to know that the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid seems to be an expert in the delivery of health care services when it comes mental health.

Once again, if the individual did go to an emergency room and they seen a health professional and the delivery of mental health services or in emergency room to

identify what would be the most appropriate action to take and whether there should be a case of prescribing of a medication or what have you, you have to – I have to take some solace that the health care professionals are delivering the services and making the appropriate recommendations when it comes to the individual that they're seeing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's no need of firing shots over me here, minister. I'm getting these stories –

An Hon. Member: Oh, come on (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – you hear these stories – there's no need laughing about it. These are serious, serious things that (Indistinct) come. I know they're tough to deal with, but you have to deal with them as a minister. I know you don't want to hear them, but you have to hear the stories –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) every day.

Mr. MacEwen: – I know, but we've been hearing them for 10 years now from this government, okay?

You promised, in 2014 and in 2015, for a dedicated youth inpatient mental health unit. Do you think the time is now for this unit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity as minister to present to the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness with Dr. Keizer and Verna Ryan, and we outlined a plan as far as the delivery of mental health services in this province, and we are working towards that plan, and as well as that, we are working hard on the issues around recruitment, and I know the hon. member identified an issue about child psychiatrists. Yes, we are short one child psychiatrists in this province. Recruiting and retention is working hard to try to recruit the

necessary health care professionals, including psychiatrists, as well as a child psychiatrist, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government promised it in their election, and they did present to the standing committee, and do you know what they said when they were asked about this special unit? This is what they said, and I quote: However, we could not secure a reasonable location that was within our budget.

Minister, how much of a priority was this commitment if you couldn't find the dollars for it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the issues around mental health or for health care delivery in the province for that matter, it is not always about a money issue. It's also about trying to provide the services and health care professionals to deliver that service.

I readily admit that the issues of trying to find psychologists, to try to find psychiatrists, is a challenge. And when I asked my department about looking at other jurisdictions, are we the only one that's dealing with this, I'm finding out that we're actually not as bad off as many other jurisdictions.

Now, I don't want to say that it's about a race to the bottom, but it is about making the right investments, and we've committed about \$55 million to develop a campus model for mental health services to this province. We've got transitional housing, I think there's \$4.6 million in the Capital Budget to deal with some more transitional housing –

Mr. LaVie: No long term plan.

Mr. Henderson: – as well as forensics in this province, and we'll continue to put the investments in where required.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's quite ironic, the minister started off talking about how, you know, you can't just throw money at it, and then he lists off four things, big dollar figures.

They're going to be great. The campus is going to be great. That's going to be wonderful when it comes. When it comes, we're talking years and years.

Mr. LaVie: If it comes, if.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Presenting to ER with suicidal patients

Mr. MacEwen: What does someone do tomorrow when they show up at the ER at night with a teenager that's suicidal? What are they supposed to do?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to a question like that, I would suggest that they take the advice of the triage nurse and the physician in that's dealing with the service, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mental health beds for Island youth

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the minister brought up that point, because those are the people that are suffering here. We've got frontline workers, mental health advocates; they're feeling the brunt of this, because they're seeing them

coming in, nowhere to (Indistinct) refer to, no inpatient bed to put them into.

Minister, how did inpatient mental health beds for Island youth get buried and forgotten at the bottom of this government's priority list?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: No priorities.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, once again, when it comes to inpatient services, you have to be able to deliver that service. It's not about having a bed in a facility. You also have to have the health care professionals that are able to deliver the service, and if there's some situations, we acknowledge that we do have a shortage. We're trying to recruit about five psychiatrists to this province, and I think there's a couple of psychologists and other health care professionals.

So once again we have some locums that are coming, we have some contracts that our people are signing that are coming in the future, and we're going to do our very best to integrate those people into the services provided to Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard these announcements about psychiatrists before in this Legislature.

We're talking about the lack of mental health services in this province and how it's affecting other frontline services. You could think of police that are filling in for the mobile health teams. We could think of teachers in our school system that are trying to help out.

We need to know what is going to be done immediately. They've talked about their long-term plan for 10 years now. What is this government going to do to help tomorrow, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to many of the services, I had outlined many before, I mean we've expanded our mental health walk-in clinics. We've just recently put our student wellbeing teams together. That's just started in September. We have an opioid replacement program that's dealing with many of the issues, like the hon. member suggested, it is affecting other professions.

But we have also seen that issues around crime and some of those issues around with our opiate replacement program has seen a reduction in those kinds of things, so we have actually over about 900 people that are accessing those services right now, and we'll continue.

We've just recently launched an opioid action plan, and we'll continue to do other services as required, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Internal review of FOIPP act

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

Recently, I asked the Premier to table the 2012 internal government review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, but he would not commit to tabling the document.

Subsequently, I submitted a written question requesting its release, and I still wait for a reply. Am I the only one that finds it ironic that the Premier is being so secretive with a report that relates directly to access to information?

A question to the Premier: Why are you so reluctant to release this 2012 internal review?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The written question is with the department, and I'm not sure if I declined to release. I think those – that comments were made in a different context, whether it even was a question, I'm not sure. But in any event, we have a FOIPP review underway and I'm quite prepared to go back and work with the department on the question of that 2012 review, and for that to be part of the background as Islanders and members of this House are invited to respond to that FOIPP review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Indeed, last week the Premier announced a discussion paper on FOIPP, and considering government has had two-and-a-half years since it first committed to a review of the act, I was sort of disappointed when I read it to see the lack of analysis or of new information.

Almost everything in that paper has already been discussed extensively, was either in the privacy commissioner's latest review, or is information you would expect to find in a regular annual report. It offers no original research or visionary thinking.

A question to the Premier: Will you table all of the background information, including jurisdictional scans, budget forecasts, previous reports, reviews, and public comments that informed the preparation of this paper?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to take a look at what's currently on that landing page for people to respond to the FOIPP review, and quite happy to take a look to see if there is further information along the lines suggested by the Leader of the Third Party to enhance the ability of Islanders to respond to this FOIPP review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I personally believe it's critical that all Islanders have all access to all information regarding this act, and I'm not sure what results the Premier expects to receive through this consultation if he refuses to provide the public with all of the relevant information they require.

Premier, perhaps you could explain what you actually mean when you say openness and transparency, because this process appears to be neither open nor transparent, more like closed and opaque.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe I've said twice here today that I will take a look at the landing page, that the invitation – the question that arose and was first raised was whether the invitation was sufficiently presented and informed that Islanders could make their views known, make suggestions, engage in this process, which is entirely the objective and indeed the overriding spirit of our FOIPP legislation, and it indeed has force in this province, and I'm proud to say that's the case, so we haven't declined to do anything. We are very keen to have Islanders views, and that that take place in the spirit of openness and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Career Connect program

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

I'm personally aware of several students who find themselves unable to qualify for the Career Connect program. As you know,

I've been a strong advocate for helping Island students obtain a post-secondary education with the least amount of financial burden, especially for students from rural PEI and those in my district that have to move away and pay rent and other necessities.

Can the minister outline what the requirements are for post-secondary students to receive EI while attending post-secondary?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. member for that question and I know he's been a longtime advocate for the Career Connect program. I'm pleased to announce that back in the fall, the Career Connect information sessions went right across the province. We went to O'Leary, Tignish, Summerside, Charlottetown, and Montague and under this new program, post-secondary students have to be attached to full time studies at a post-secondary institution and they must also have an EI claim contribution with the federal government. They are also required to have at least one year workforce attachment to have done after high school completion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel very strongly that we have to remove any barrier to any program that could help ease the burden, financially, that our students may have to obtain an education. The minister just mentioned that one of the requirements was to be out of high school for one year.

Minister, why is it necessary for them to be out of high school for one year in order to be eligible for this Career Connect program?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd indicated earlier, they need that requirement to have workforce attachment, to be paying into EI to have a sufficient claim. What it does, it establishes some history to have the claim and it also gives them some workforce experience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister.

Removing barrier for students

I understand that New Brunswick, there's no requirement to be out of school for one full year and no workforce attachment, so I'm wondering if the minister and his department would consider doing the same by removing this barrier.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've had over 1,000 applications to this program, so that just goes to show the popularity of this program. My department's working hard with these students to gain an education and as the hon. member said, anything we can do provincially and federally to help students get an education with the least financial burden, we're certainly willing to look at.

My department is also willing to review this within six months of the New Year to see if there's any enhancements we can make to this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Diagnostic appointment services

Minister: We've been hearing about high numbers of missed diagnostic appointments at hospitals across the province which affects the timely delivery of health care services. Can you tell the House how many diagnostic appointments are being missed every month and with the increased publicity, are we seeing improvements on people missing appointments?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, this is a very good subject to be discussing and as you're well aware, the hon. member would be well aware that there's certainly diagnostic services that are provided at many of our hospitals across the province. When I've researched the subject, when it comes to diagnostic imaging testing across the province, whether that be ultrasound, MRI, CTE, echo, bone scans, across the entire province it's actually about 200 missed appointments per month.

So I would really encourage Islanders to make sure that to take in to consideration their friends and neighbors and make sure that they're either notifying us that they can't make their appointment or that they do attend their appointment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Impact of missed diagnostic appointments on health care system

Minister, we all know that timely access to diagnostic testing is extremely important. What kind of impact does missing appointments have on the health care system and people waiting for diagnostic testing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, it certainly is a significant issue that we're concerned about with missed appointments for some of these diagnostic testing images, but some of the issues that impacts, it really increases the wait times for individuals who may require these types of services. Also, it can have an impact on a health outcome. The longer the time before they actually get that diagnostic test or image done, it also can provide a wait time which might help deal with trying to provide a decision on a particular issue. On top of that, it is an unnecessary cost to our system when we have professionals already there, ready to do the work, and an individual doesn't show up. I certainly encourage all those individuals to attend and make their appointments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Texting of reminder to diagnostic appointment

Minister, if my dentist and my hairdresser can text me one week prior to an appointment and I can confirm this appointment and I also get another text one day prior to the appointment – is this something that your department can look at, texting Islanders to remind them of their diagnostic testing appointment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Indeed, our department is looking at many ways that we can try to improve to make sure that we can get this information out to those that may be considering not being able to attend a particular test.

Besides making phone calls, we are going to be looking at doing text messages, emails, doing whatever we can to try to make sure we can get those reminders out to those individuals to attend and make their appointments. We're also considering

looking at developing, maybe, a no-show – not necessarily a list, but to identify more how many people have missed their appointments in each of the facilities and locations. We have been doing it in some locations, but maybe that will encourage Islanders to participate in those particular tests.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Northern Pulp mill and wastewater plant

The news from Pictou around the Northern Pulp mill and the wastewater plants continue to alarm fishers. My question is to the minister of fisheries: When I first questioned you in November, you stated you wrote to Nova Scotia and copied Ottawa on your letter.

Minister: Have you heard back from Nova Scotia or Ottawa on this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

This issue is certainly a very important one. The lobster industry, as we know, here is king on PEI. The landings last year were \$226 million in LFA 26. The area where that pipe comes out – may be coming out, hopefully not, \$67 million worth of landings on our side – to the fishers on our side of the strait. I did write to the minister from Nova Scotia. I spoke with the minister of Nova Scotia; we had a good discussion on this. I wrote to Minister Leblanc, I just want to say: I'm really glad that MP Sean Casey and Wayne Easter and Senator Griffin are here today because we are trying to get the word through to all players, on all sides, how important this issue is because we have to have this solved before 2020.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Support of environmental review of plant

Four weeks ago the minister talked about communications being what he was doing about the issue. My question is to the minister of fisheries: Minister, do you support a full federal environmental review for the Pictou mill plant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Again, really serious issue and this is the kind of thing that we're discussing between the ministers. I know the Premier spoke about it as well. The Premier spoke with Premier MacNeill on this because it is, I said before, it's grave interest and it is a grave issue for sure.

We have a large pipe that may be coming out upwards of a kilometer into the Strait, right into the heart of the fishing grounds over there. We have to get this solved. I know the pulp plant itself has an issue there they want to solve; they want to get it solved before 2020, that's the idea. There was a meeting in the Pictou area, I'm sure as the hon. member knows, my deputy and my director were over at that meeting asking really good questions on that because we're trying to get to the bottom of this because we have to get this thing solved. I know the plant has to run but the fishery on PEI is king, as it is in lots of areas in Nova Scotia as well, really serious issue. We need all partners involved in this to bring this to a good conclusion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's not automatic that DFO be involved in a federal environment review.

DFO and full federal review

Question to the fisheries minister: Will you join with fishers in demanding that DFO take part in a full federal review?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Yesterday, I was at the annual meeting of the Southern Kings and Queens Fishermen's Association. Many of the players, you well know yourself. We had a good discussion on this topic there as well; had a little presentation by the fishermen's association as well as to actually what may happen.

They talked about the life cycle of the lobster and how some of the young are in the column for a good period of that time. When you're pumping fresh water into a salt water being, that's not a good scenario. We all have to work on that. I talked to Bobby Jenkins, the president of the fishermen's association. He and his executive met with honourable Dominic LeBlanc to discuss this very issue, so I think the discussions are going well. It's the solutions that we all have to get together and work on to bring this to conclusion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Stopping Nova Scotia discharge plan

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government was only too happy to send lawyers to fight against the New Brunswick free the beer case at the Supreme Court of Canada.

My question to the minister of fisheries: Are you willing to take Nova Scotia to court and stop this discharge plan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I don't think it's getting anywhere near that at the present time.

What we're trying to do is work with Nova Scotia, work with the federal government and I think in good, strong, clear discussions making our points clearly known, explaining to them the value of the fishery, both to our province and to Nova Scotia, which I know they're quite likely well aware.

But, that's the stage we're at the present time, and we hope we can come to a solution so we don't have to get government money spent going through the court system, but it's really serious and we are staying right on top of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Legal action to protect seafood industry

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In October, the mill was issued a fine after the stack test revealed it was emitting practical matter above the allowable limit.

To the minister of fisheries: Minister, will this government take legal action to protect our seafood industry and our environment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We realize the seriousness of this. I know the plant over there does as well. They know they have some things they have to clean up there. They've been put under a timeframe until 2020 to get this done. We also understand that the same company has a plant in Saskatchewan, which is in-land, and somehow they are solving that problem in there with not dumping it into a main waterway, and hopefully we can get them to see that's the solution we would like to see instead of taking this water out.

This is the interesting part – this water that they're going to release into the Strait – we say: Why can't you recycle that through the plant? Well, it's not fit to recycle through the plant so why would you put it in the Strait? These are some of the things that we have to get clarified and –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) fishery (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – good discussions, making sure that they know the value of this industry to both our provinces. I think we'll come to a good conclusion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our seafood industry employs close to 9,000 Islanders directly, and it is worth \$300 million per year to our economy.

Question to the minister of fisheries: Will you contact your Nova Scotia colleagues once again and tell them directly that PEI is against the proposed project and will go to court to stop it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

In my first answer, I think I noted \$226 million worth in landings in the fishery. That's not the spinoff of that as well. We

know the value of the industry, not only to PEI but also to Nova Scotia.

We will work with all our partners. I am in good communication and have a good working relationship with hon. Keith Colwell in Nova Scotia and we will continue to keep that communication going. We also have to deal with the environment minister there and when I wrote the letter to minister LeBlanc, we also copied it to the federal minister of environment as well to make sure that all parties are fully aware of the situation going on over in the Pictou area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

North Lake bridge

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My next question is to the minister of transportation.

Minister, during the House sitting this fall I asked you a question if your department was meeting with the people of Eastern Kings over the North Lake bridge. Do you know if that meeting took place yet?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, hon. member, that hasn't taken place yet. But we certainly will be making contact with that community, and continuing to work with them on any concerns that they have about the North Lake bridge.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, your final question.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the minister of transportation: Minister, there are 90 boats fishing out of there just during the lobster

season. Over 100 during the summer season; it's the tuna capital of the world. They deserve a bridge and the money, the tax dollars that Eastern Kings puts in to your government; I think they deserve a bridge.

Will you have this meeting as soon as the new year starts?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Speaker: – Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would agree that the lobster fishery, the tuna fishery is of importance, not just to our government, but to all of PEI and the people of PEI, and the employment that it makes for the people of PEI –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Charlottetown (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – for the tourism industry –

Mr. Myers: Dragging all the money to Charlottetown.

Ms. Biggar: – across PEI –

Mr. LaVie: They deserve a meeting.

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – it is a very important –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – industry. Our government will continue –

Mr. Myers: Stealing from the poor –

Ms. Biggar: – with –

Mr. Myers: – giving to the rich –

Ms. Biggar: – with communities –

Mr. Myers: – the Liberal way.

Ms. Biggar: – with fishers, with tourism –

Mr. Myers: Hood robin.

Ms. Biggar: – to ensure –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that is an area that we continue to build for all –

Mr. Myers: Reverse Robin Hood.

Ms. Biggar: – Islanders, not just for this government.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

Speaker: I'll give way now, to the hon. Premier for recognition.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as has been noted, since we did recognition, two of our Members of Parliament, Sean Casey for Charlottetown and Wayne Easter for Malpeque have joined us. Their House is in recess for the Christmas period and I know they're taking advantage of that to come and enjoy the proceedings here.

An Hon. Member: If they come Christmas Day, we'll be here.

Premier MacLauchlan: While I'm on my feet, I certainly want to say that we appreciate all the good work they do on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of Prince Edward Islanders, and in good partnership with our government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

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

**Recognition of Charlottetown as the
Birthplace of Confederation**

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

If I could beg your indulgence for one second, I would continue that welcoming of guests to the gallery. We have recognized MP Sean Casey, who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Senator Diane Griffin, MP Wayne Easter, Philip Brown and Sharon Larter. They have all worked, kind of, tirelessly on this next motion, or statement.

This statement is really an update of a motion that was passed in this House about a year ago –

Mr. Trivers: Universal basic income.

Mr. J. Brown: – and I rise today to recognize a historic milestone reached last week in Ottawa, in our Parliament, that officially marks our province's place in the history of our nation.

On December 11th, 2017, Bill S-236, *Recognition of Charlottetown as the Birthplace of Confederation Act*, was passed in the House of Commons. This act officially recognizes in statute that Charlottetown is the place where the idea of confederation was born.

It was the Charlottetown Conference of 1864, which took place next door at historic Province House, that Ontario and Quebec arrived at a meeting of the fledgling Maritime colonies and the vision of a new country was created.

It is fitting that the long journey towards this recognition came to fruition in 2017, the 150th anniversary of our great country. The celebration of our sesquicentennial year has given Canadians cause to celebrate our accomplishments over the past 150 years that have made Canada one of the greatest countries in this world.

Canada 150 created opportunities to examine how we will move forward together to shape the future of our great country. There were many people involved in the evolution of this act over the past several decades and they deserve to be recognized today.

Former premier Joe Ghiz, who appointed a confederation birthplace commission in 1991; former MP George Proud, who sought to have a private member's bill passed in

1995, Senator Diane Griffin, who spearheaded Bill S-236 through the Senate this fall, and I might say without her efforts we might not be here today as she was able to expedite it so that it made it back to Parliament in time to get this done for the 150th anniversary;

MP Wayne Easter, who sponsored the bill in the House of Commons;

Philip Brown, who championed the act for many years;

Sharon Larter, who did a great deal of research to support the legislation and the discussions;

The former and current members of this assembly, who passed a motion in 2016 urging the federal government to support Bill 236.

Fortunately, several of these folks are with us today, and I want to recognize Senator Griffin, Wayne Easter, Sean Casey, Philip Brown, and Sharon Larter, and I also want to recognize Mayor Lee and council members for their efforts, all in relation to this great piece of legislation.

This act will have many benefits for our capital city and our province. It formalizes our role in confederation in statute. It affirms a significant historical event in our position as a heritage destination. It strengthens arguments for greater federal funding through culture and heritage programming. It will boost tourism, one of our key industries. But most importantly, the passing of this act means that going forward the history books will clearly show the significant role that our great province played in the formation of our country.

I ask the members of this Assembly to join with me in celebrating this major milestone.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to thank all those involved with this. I guess we've always recognized Charlottetown as the Birthplace of Confederation and that it happened right next door. The part that we seem to forget that it was some Liberal MP in New Brunswick that started this big feud that somehow it happened over there when it didn't.

I go back, not only to the motion last year, but a number of years ago when Robert Ghiz was the premier, we had a joint motion which I seconded to have the building next door recognized as a UNESCO site. I'm not sure where that is in the process. I think that takes a long time.

But it was because Canada was founded in that very building was why that motion was brought to the Assembly and voted on and passed unanimously, and then passed up through the chain to the folks who do UNESCO type business.

I know myself, when I was leader of the opposition, I went to Ottawa with the Premier's now Chief of Staff Rob Vessey, and we went begging Gail Shea for money to help us start the restoration process over here, and that was the preliminary part where the building was being investigated, and they had sent quite a bit of money down here at that time to make that happen. I think it was \$20 million they had committed to, originally, to have the building looked at, and that too, was because it was an important part of the history, of not only Prince Edward Island, but the history of Canada, because it was widely recognized at that point that Canada was founded right here in Charlottetown right next door.

So, it's great that it's finally finalized, once and for all. There are no more arguments, we know it's here. What Islanders have known for a long time is now a done deal. We are the Birthplace of Confederation.

I want to thank Senator Griffin for taking this forward, and I also want to thank Wayne and Sean and all those involved in Ottawa who made this happen.

I guess while I'm on my feet, I'll invite Sean back tonight because we're debating a motion on bringing a passport office back to Charlottetown, one I know that he's been –

so come on in at 7:00 p.m. and watch the show.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As many people before me have stated, this has been a long time coming, and I think it's important that we give credit to all of the people who have worked tirelessly for many decades, really, to bring this forward.

But I do, specifically, want to single out Diane Griffin, who just very recently became a Senator, and as she told me one day when we were chatting, she only has five years in this job and she wants to get some stuff done.

And here we are, here's some very tangible fruits of her labours as a relatively new Senator, and that's exciting. Thank you, Diane, for that.

I also, of course, want to thank Wayne and Sean, who are with us today, for their part in this, and the other MPs from PEI and Senators who are not able to be with us today, because I know that they all came together in a united force to make this happen.

In some ways, though, it's a shame that a place that's so rich in its own distinct heritage and as multifaceted in character as Prince Edward Island is, that we should be in some people's minds, many people's minds, singularly known for that week in September in 1864; a very important week, and don't get me wrong, and I think that now that we have put that stamp of authority, that indeed we are the Birthplace of Confederation, but PEI is very much more than that, and it's wonderful that we celebrate this.

But I think we need to remember that Prince Edward Island is not defined by that week in 1864, and history is a continuous thread. It's a seamless story. And while it's no doubt that that meeting, that series of meetings that

took place here was a seminal, critical part of that process that produced this most unlikely country, from the turmoil of economy and politics and war that was happening in what was North America at that time, the chances of producing this most unlikely country out of that chaos was just extraordinary, and it's very important that we acknowledge that.

So I want to pass on my huge thanks and congratulations to all those who have brought this forward. It was clearly a pivotal moment in our country's history, and as a personal – with a personal lineage back to that particular moment in time, it's especially poignant for me today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Health Care Appointments Impacted by Winter Weather

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, winter weather in PEI can be unpredictable.

When harsh conditions arrive many businesses and government services are impacted, plows are on the roads, schools are sometimes delayed or closed, and Islanders are listening to the radio and checking social media for community cancellations.

Our PEI health authority works to ensure that essential health care services are always available.

However, during the winter season, it is not uncommon for some health services to be impacted by inclement weather and road conditions.

At times primary care clinics or public health nursing programs can be delayed or cancelled if road conditions are deemed to be unsafe.

On days when the weather is bad, we ask Islanders with health care appointments to call ahead or reconfirm that their appointment is still on, or to let staff know if

they themselves are unable to make the appointments due to the weather.

At times, pending weather forecasts, health care service professionals will contact Islanders proactively to reschedule their appointments – especially early morning appointments – to allow time for snow clearing and salting to take place on Island roads, making them safer to travel on.

Cancelled patient appointments are always rescheduled, and Islanders can utilize 811 services for non-urgent health care needs during these situations.

And regardless of weather, Islanders should call 911 in the case of an emergency.

Finally, we are incredibly appreciative of our health care staff and physicians.

These dedicated professionals work together to ensure that Islanders continue to receive the care they need during the winter season, always being mindful of road safety and ensuring that our staff are taken care of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the minister is working hard to address this. I'm sure everybody on PEI probably knew of some sort of missed appointments, but I think it's fantastic that we're making a highlight of it and putting it right out there that this many missed appointments are going on each month. We all know people in our communities that are waiting for a long time for these appointments.

And on a couple of things, I know they're starting to get their heads around it and how to work it – I know the utilization department in the department of health could use the resources to look at this for sure. I think it's a good project for them. It's a potential project for the department of engineering at UPEI. They could look at ways to do this. There's many companies

around here that could solve this, I would suspect, pretty easily.

One other thing is the potential of an overflow list. I wonder about the thought of, if we're missing this many, if someone had the time to go there and wait for an hour or two, and if a missed appointment came up, they would automatically get in if they wanted to put the time in waiting, something like that.

I know there are all kinds of good solutions coming, hopefully, sooner than later. I encourage the minister to keep working on them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As my hon. colleague mentioned, it's great to hear that we are being proactive and as a province that has storm-stayed in our vocabulary, we do know, sort of, the impact of having to adjust as challenges come up with weather and other things.

I think it's important to recognize that grassroots and community-based activities are often some of the most effective in terms of sharing information, whether that's through the school system or the health care system or media and so on. The impact of things, simple systems like social media, in particular, for communicating when there are delays and impacts as one of the most effective ways that we have to share challenges.

The other one that we hear a lot, both from constituents and on a general basis is just the number of different ways that we need to contact and where we need to contact. That not everyone, for instance, who has an appointment, may know where or who they should be contacting. Simplification and clarification of the points of contact would also be something to consider when you're looking at updating systems for whether it's rebooking appointments or whether it's notifying people of cancellations. Some

considerations to think of that I'd like to see included.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table questions asked during estimates from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, the Leader of the Opposition, the Member from Souris-Elmira, and the Member from Borden-Kinkora, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: Read them off.

Mr. Myers: Can't wait to read them. Let the rest of them know.

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

Mr. Myers: Tell all your friends.

Reports by Committees

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, *Lobbyists Registration Act*, Bill No. 24, in committee.

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 will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and 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?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Chair: Hon. members, the last time we were doing this there was a request from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid that we just read the title of the section, then we discuss the section. Are we still okay with that?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll let her get settled and introduce herself and the Premier will have an opening remark.

Section 1 has been read and we were discussing it.

Good afternoon.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:
Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon, Wendy MacDonald, Clerk Assistant.

Chair: Thank you.

Welcome, Wendy.

Hon. Premier, do you have an opening statement today?

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair, I'll be brief.

This is a return to the discussion of the *Lobbyists Registration Act*. The first point that we all understand in approaching this is that Prince Edward Island is the only Canadian province without a lobbying transparency law. It was introduced as a bill in the spring sitting last year, and is now reintroduced.

In that, it was left there on first reading and that was the intent to invite comment. As I said, last day, there were some. One of the many ones, which was, indeed, was tabled here, last day, was by Guy Giorno with the firm Fasken Martineau. He recently produced a further commentary on the new draft bill with the – to the effect to say: Prince Edward Island reintroduces lobbying law; strong enforcement, fewer gaps than the previous bill, then, goes through with his analysis.

The key point for all of us to understand here is this is about transparency. It's about registering with the onus being on the lobbyists or on the firm to register. And, thereby, to allow Islanders, people in this House, competitors, others, to know the extent of lobbying activity in the province, and it's in line with and an enhancement on the legislative regimes here in the region. As we have said, it's consistent with others across the country.

The point here is that this is in the public interest. It's something that we have promised to do. It's timely for Prince Edward Island to have this legislation.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Premier.

Would you like to table that?

Premier MacLauchlan: Sure.

I think we have copies made.

Chair: The hon. Premier is going to table the letter that referred –

Premier MacLauchlan: It's a commentary on it –

Chair: – to.

Thanks.

You could take a copy to the Clerk, please.

Premier MacLauchlan: I believe copies have been made, if I'm not mistaken. If you ask, you'll find that they have been.

Chair: Thanks.

Premier MacLauchlan: I think they were made.

Chair: Thank you.

We've had considerable discussion on the definition section, section 1. Shall that section carry or is there any –

An Hon. Member: Carry.

Chair: – other questions on –

Mr. Fox: Question (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, do you have a question on section 1.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, I do.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Leader of the Opposition: I have a question, Chair, with regards to where we left off on Friday.

Chair: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: With the recommendation I made to the Premier that perhaps he would consider taking this bill off the table for the time being, taking it back to the department, doing some more work on it or, even better yet, sending it to committee to do some work as well. And in the spring, once we able to do some work on this bill and strengthen it, we can bring it back. The committee could table the report, the Premier, even on Friday, had mentioned that he had an amendment that he was going to propose to this.

With a lot of discussion, a lot of questions, ambiguity from even some of the Cabinet ministers that they were concerned over how it read and what the responsibilities were. So I just felt at that time that I don't think the bill was at a stage where we were prepared to move forward on it. So the Premier had said at that time, Chair, that he would take the weekend and think about it. I'm wondering what the Premier's intention is at this time.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thanks, Chair.

My view is that we are currently in committee – committee of the whole – which is entirely timely to consider any improvements or issues that people want to raise – that's why we exist. The amendment that I spoke to will be a clarification of the language that is currently in the bill, regarding a significant part of one's time that now make it clear in terms of the number of hours, so that is the kind of thing that is appropriate to do in the spirit of discussions that we have here from time to time about being as clear as we can when the law is being passed. So I don't have any concern about that needing to go to committee.

This did get introduced on first reading and left for consideration and in comment and for any issues to be raised. I think, Madame Chair, we're in a good position and considering that we've been able to draw on legislation in all other provinces and one territory, that we're in a good position to proceed in committee in the whole.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair, I'm in disagreement with that. I still think that this bill has a considerable amount of work to be done to it. As it doesn't appear that Premier agrees with my position on that, I'd move that we just vote on this bill now because obviously the Premier wants to have his way and any amendments that we bring forward, as in past, won't be welcome by this government, so I think we're spinning our wheels, basically, right at this time.

An Hon. Member: We'd like to have a show of hands.

Chair: No. We're just –

An Hon. Member: Third party has a question.

Chair: Do you have a question?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I just wanted to clarify what the Leader of the Opposition was asking for, whether it was to carry the bill or to send it to committee.

Some Hon. Members: Carry the bill.

Chair: Carry the bill.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Well, in that case, I have some questions that I would like to ask.

Chair: Okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: If I could go to section 3 please, Chair?

Section 3 is a very short section and it's about the designation of the registrar. All that it says is that: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council shall appoint or designate a person as the Registrar for the purposes of this Act."

I would like a bit of background on this, first of all. As the Premier will know and I support the statement that he just made that there's been ample opportunity for input on this bill within this House because it was tabled in the springtime and the office of the third party took advantage of that time and sent a fairly lengthy letter to the Premier and many of the suggestions we made have been incorporated, or at least it's quite clear that they informed some of the changes and many changes that were made between the original draft and the one that we have before us today. But this was one that was not changed. For me, it's a really important issue. It's to do with where this registry is held.

Currently, the way the bill is written, the holder of the registry – the registrar, if you like – is somebody who'll be appointed by the Executive Council, by the Cabinet, and in most other provinces, that's not the way that the lobbyists' registry is held – it's usually held in an arms-length, independent body. That varies from province to province.

In some jurisdictions it's the information and privacy commissioner, in Alberta its office of the ethics commissioner and on and on – it's held in various places, but the most common place for it to be held is with the conflict of interest commissioner. It makes a lot of sense, of course, given that we're talking about lobbying here. So, I've asked Legislative Counsel to draft an amendment, which is circulated last week when we were debating this bill and it's a very simple amendment and the amendment is to call the conflict of interest commissioner be appointed as the registrar of the lobbyist registry.

Chair: Perfect. Hon. Members, we have an amendment on the floor. Anybody want to discuss the amendment?

Mr. MacKay: Can we get a copy of the amendment?

Chair: He gave you copies last week.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It was circulated last week.

Chair: We can get copies.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair. I jumped in there. My apologies.

Mr. MacKay: Can you just brief the amendment one more time?

Chair: Sure. Leader of the Third Party, it's suggested that you just read – we'll make copies again, but if you could just read your amendment.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Section 3 of the bill, that single sentence, is repealed and the following substituted:

Section 3

The conflict of interest commissioner appointed pursuant to the *Conflict of Interest Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988 CAP. C-17.1 is the registrar for the purposes of this act.

Chair: The hon. Premier is going to speak to the amendment.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, as I indicated, and as the third party leader

mentioned, there were eight points raised in the submission from the Leader of the Third Party. Six of them were picked up or addressed through that exchange and other ways that we've been looking at this. On this point, this is something that we see as an administrative function.

Chair, the registrar and the registry are an administrative function. We have, within the department of justice and in the corporate and consumer financial services division, 21 registries. One that's envisaged for some significant enhancement and modernization is the corporations' registry for example. That work goes on as an administrative function (Indistinct). The work of the conflict of interest commissioner is as an independent officer of the Legislature and the work is in relation to the Legislative Assembly. It was with that view that this is an administrative function that we didn't feel it was as well placed, I'll say, with the conflict commissioner as with other registries that are run as an administrative function within government.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, you were talking to the amendment.

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Thank you, Chair.

Just considering this amendment; I support the amendment. I don't think we need to make the administration any bigger than it has to be and I'm not sure I quite understand why the conflict of interest commissioner couldn't do it. What sort of remuneration would the registrar receive if they were appointed or designated as the original clause indicated?

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: The likely route would be to designate the director of consumer and corporate and financial services, which is really the work that you're getting at when it comes to lobbyist registering. There is currently a person in office as the director of that division and indeed, within that division there are currently 21 registries. So, this is not adding administration in the sense of a new division of government. It is allocating to a part of

government that is in the business of operating registries, the function under the *Lobbyist Registration Act*.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Again, maybe you could describe why wouldn't the amendment be a good one and then the conflict of interest commissioner could work with one of those directors as needed to actually do the work of maintaining the list? Because the conflict of interest commissioner is in a good position to be impartial and make sure that the lobbyists are managed properly and at arm's-length, I would say.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Let's recall that this is about a registry. It's about transparency. It's not about managing the lobbyists. The conflict of interest commissioner does indeed have an important role and one that is set up as an independent officer of the Legislature, and the conflict of interest commissioner's work is in relation to the members of this Assembly.

Frankly, we're fortunate to be able to recruit someone of the expertise and the standing that we have to that role of conflict of interest commissioner. I'm not supposing it's going to make it any easier to get someone to do that job if we start giving them the administrative functions that in the normal course lie with the executive branch of government. So that very simply is it. It's an administrative function. It's not more complicated than that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

The Premier mentioned that the other provinces see this as largely an administrative function and the evidence would suggest otherwise. Transparency demands that this be held in an arm's-length office and if I go through the other jurisdictions, I started to read them but I stopped, but I think it's important the House

hears where the other jurisdictions hold the registry.

The registrar is independent in the majority of other jurisdictions. In British Columbia, it is in the information and privacy commissioner. In Alberta, it is in the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. In Saskatchewan, it is the conflict of interest commissioner. In Manitoba, one of the independent officers of the Assembly or the conflict of interest commissioner holds the registry. In Ontario, it's the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. In Quebec, the lobbyist commissioner of Quebec, an independent office of the National Assembly, and in New Brunswick, it's the independent integrity commissioner.

So, in all of these provinces it's very much more than an administrative function. It's held at arm's-length because that's what transparency demands, is that we have an independent office to look after this. I think it's important that the House knows that this is more than an administrative function, that there is a reason why this is kept at arm's-length and that's for real transparency.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. MacKay: Show of hands.

Chair: Sure, thank you.

All those voting in favour of the amendment, raise your hand.

Contrary minded, raise your hand.

And the amendment is defeated.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Chair: We just defeated the amendment.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) I just want to make sure I get (interpretation ends) here (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay, great.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, and then we're going to call the question on the bill.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

In fact, it's on an amendment to section 2: Act does not apply. I discussed this briefly with the Leader of the Opposition and this is, we believe, an important amendment that needs to be made and we need to understand the reasoning behind this particular clause:

2(1)(k), so that's subsection (k): Other persons or classes of persons specified in the regulations.

So, currently the act does not apply to other persons or classes of persons specified in the regulations, which leaves it wide open. As we know, regulations can be changed quickly and easily, and it does seem like it's a hole because then you can exclude people at will if it suits, potentially, the purposes of people being lobbied.

My amendment, and I do have copies here, Chair –

Chair: (Indistinct) pass your copies (Indistinct) great.

Mr. Trivers: I'm proposing that the bill is amended by the:

deletion of sections 2(1)(k), so just take 2(1)(k) out completely.

Chair: Hon. members, there's an amendment on the floor to section 2(1)(k), and the amendment by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald is to remove section (k). Any discussion on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Chair: The question has been called.

All those voting in –

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct) standing vote, please.

Chair: There's no standing votes in Committee of the Whole, but you can raise your hand.

Mr. Trivers: Recorded division?

Chair: All those voting in favour of the amendment, please raise your hands.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair, I'm not sure (Indistinct) chance to see the amendment or not.

Chair: Oh, sorry.

Mr. MacEwen: I know the members on the government side haven't even seen it yet.

Chair: They called the question so they –

Mr. R. Brown: It's a pretty easy amendment.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. member, the amendment is very short and I just stated it verbally and I thought I made that –

Mr. Myers: They're all geniuses over there so they got it verbally.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. members, I have the floor.

I thought I stated that clearly. Does everybody have the amendment now?

Mr. Trivers: Chair, quick question.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to hear the Premier's response to this amendment before we vote it down because at this point, they are hell-bent on voting it down and we haven't even heard an explanation of why it's not good.

Ms. Compton: It doesn't matter (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you, hon. member for your question.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair.

Most of the other jurisdictions where this clause regarding to whom this applies would have this further clause and other classes as specified in the regulations and this clause is meant to make it clear when there are groups who would not be considered to be lobbyists, so MLAs for example, in the very first clause.

Then, as you go through (a) through (i), you get the gist or the under theme that runs through this. It's to ensure that the law does not pull in as lobbyists people, ourselves for example, who would not be seen as lobbyists because we have a job to do.

The (k), as I said, it would appear in most of the other jurisdictions, would be interpreted in a way that has to be consistent with (i) through (j).

That is to say in case we've missed someone or if something arises, then this is an ability to add to the categories or to those designated in (a) through (j), and indeed there is a whole principle of law that says when something follows a long list like this, it is interpreted and its scope is to be captured by, and not go beyond, those that are specifically named. That's what it's here for and it's really to ensure, as does section 2, that about people who don't get picked up and require to register as lobbyists when it would not be appropriate for those people to be required to register.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm speaking to this amendment, Chair.

Chair: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I think it's important because I don't think this has been mentioned in the debate on this bill thus far, that when it mentions the word 'person' or 'persons' we're not just talking about individual human beings here. We're talking about corporations who are seen as persons under the law.

Just when – make sure that everybody in this House is aware when they talk about other persons or classes of persons, that we're also talking about corporations that exist here in Prince Edward Island.

Chair: Thank you for that.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I understand where the Premier is coming from, where you want to have a sub-clause that allows you to expand as necessary and I would agree in the case whether it's an inclusive section as opposed to the negative, the not.

As a computer programmer by trade, it gets very tricky when you're dealing with logic that does the exclusion, and if it was an inclusive clause as opposed to an exclusive one, then I could understand what you're talking about, but when you get into the exclusion side of things, that's where you get into trouble, and that's where you're giving way too much power to the regulations, in my opinion.

That's why I just wanted – and that's why I'm not sure I think your explanation doesn't really apply in this case.

Chair: Thank you. Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. MacKay: Show of hands.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member. There's been a request for a show of hands on this vote.

All those voting in favour of the amendment, raise your hands; favour of the amendment.

All those voting against the amendment, raise your hands.

Mr. Trivers: Are you allowed to abstain, Chair, or (Indistinct)?

Chair: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Chair: No, you have to vote. Sorry, you missed it.

All right, thank you, the amendment is defeated.

Are you ready for the question on the bill?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

We have a series of questions here which we've developed over a lot of time after careful thought, and I think it's important that they get answered here.

I'm going to jump ahead to the second amendment that I have prepared for this particular act, and that's on Section 17. I would like to go back to previous questions, but this is actually an amendment, Chair, and it's to do –

Chair: Section 17, hon. member?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, and it's to do with the so-called cooling off period after somebody leaves office, the time between them vacating office and being able to lobby, and in most other jurisdictions you'll find that this, the minimum is 12 months and frequently it's two years. I see in this bill that six months is the period chosen.

I'm wondering why you chose a shorter period than any other jurisdiction in Canada, and I would prefer that to be bumped up to a more reasonable time limit, which I think it 24 months. Some provinces have 12, but many have 24.

So just, I'd like to know what the rationale was for making it such a short period of time.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: In a few words, the answer is that it's Prince Edward Island and people have lives to get on with after they've been in public office.

Second, this actually is the first time that there will be legislation constraining the activities of MLAs post-service, so in that

sense, this is going from zero to six, in terms of the period that former MLAs would not be able to engage in lobbying.

The restrictions that currently exist for ministers, that cooling off period is six months under other legislation, and it was considered that when we're getting into this for the first time, that wasn't the – I'll say it wasn't the purpose of the *Lobbyists Registration Act* to go too far in changing other restrictions that we may have for former MLAs or former ministers, so it was consistent with the six months for ministers, and it does bring it forward for the first time for MLAs, and I'm going to ask Wendy regarding the jurisdictions that have gone to 12 months, but we were looking at, I'll say, this end of the country.

Can you speak about the months that pertain to our neighbouring provinces?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:
Thank you, Premier.

Chair, in Nova Scotia it's true that there's a 12-month requirement for ministers and ministerial assistants, but actually the Conflict of Interest Act has a period of six months for members of the House of Assembly and for the others, senior public servants that would be covered under that. The same provision exists in Saskatchewan.

But in New Brunswick and in Newfoundland it is a 12-month period. That is correct. And what the act does is the six months that's now provided for in the conflict of interest policy that's been brought in from senior management who are mentioned in the act as among those who are covered by that description, it now moves that into legislation which is a stronger approach.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, I appreciate the explanation, and I was guessing that it was done, six months, in order to align with the *Conflict of Interest Act* that we have.

But the Conflict of Interest Commissioner recommended that we extend that to 12 months in the *Conflict of Interest Act*.

So here we are, complying with an act where the commissioner has recommended it's inadequate, and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't extend this and make it in line with almost every other jurisdiction.

To the Premier's remark that because it's PEI, well I actually think that quite the opposite argument can be made, that because of the intimacy of our community here, there is a much greater opportunity, if you like, for things to – for people to have a very personal contact with their MLA or an MLA who has just retired, so I think if anything, because of the closeness of our community here, it's imperative that we have strong legislation, not the weakest.

So I – the amendment I have before the House is to extend the period from six months to 24 months, and I would like to have either further debate on that or for the question to be called.

Mr. Roach: Question.

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Chair: Do we have copy of –

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Chair: You've circulated copies of the amendment?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I have, yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair, it was on the original (Indistinct) –

An Hon. Member: There was two on one page.

Chair: Sorry, it's on the same page, thank you.

Hon. members, the amendment before you is an amendment to Section 17, move that's – and you have it right there in front of you. Any further discussion on the amendment?

An Hon. Member: Question.

Chair: Question has been called on the amendment.

An Hon. Member: Hands.

Chair: And we have a request for a show of hands.

All those voting in favour of the amendment, raise your hand.

All those voting against the amendment, raise your hand, please.

The amendment is defeated. Thank you.

Are we ready for the – you have a – hon. member from Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, you have a question?

Ms. Bell: Yes, on Section 7, please.

Chair: Seven.

Ms. Bell: It's definitions related to in-house lobbyists employed by organizations, where we had previously, in our previous section, identified that organizations refer to those that were, in particular, of a non-profit nature or organizations representing community interests.

The question is relating to that there's a separation here between employees who are compensated, in-house lobbyists, and senior officers, where only a lobbyist is considered to be a paid – they are already considered to be a lobbyist if they are paid, however, a senior officer in, for instance, a non-profit association is often the only person who would then also be doing lobbying type activities, so there seems to be a bit of a conflict of that the challenge of somebody whose main duties are, or may include applicancy, lobbying, or those kind of activities, but it is part of their compensation of their role rather than one of being an in-house lobbyist.

I'm just wondering if there is any kind of allowance for that separation.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) want to take a crack at it (Indistinct).

Chair: Wendy, or Premier? Whoever's going to take it.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's not so much that it's a separation. It's so that to ensure that the organization, providing it's engaged in lobbying that meets the threshold of files they return, and you might say that whereas

we're not saying that this senior officer is being compensated as a lobbyist, we're saying that he or she has responsibilities in an organization that lobbies a certain amount of time.

And in fact, if you look at the registries in, (Indistinct) we could go to Nova Scotia, it's not as if it's frequent that you will find the executive director of Heart and Stroke, for example, registers as a matter of course, and that's kind of the normal practice that this captures, and does in other jurisdictions.

Ms. Bell: And so there would be an expectation that with this registry, that we would see organizations registering sort of in advance (Indistinct) because the potential for sort of being on either side of that is quite grey, and just that the concern that, particularly for organizations that are community-based, the potential fiscal impact when we look at fines, are the kind that could put an organization out of business.

There's a consideration there to, particularly when we looked at some of the other definitions around the fear that that, or the what potential does that bring in terms of things like liability and concerns for directors of organizations and employees of organizations, and is there an aspect of education that we need to reflect?

Premier MacLauchlan: Two points –

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in that answer. First, this is not anticipated as something that, will create fear in people, who are taking part in democracy, and we've said that before, not that the lobbying itself is a problem. The clearest threshold, in terms, of are you or are you not expected to register would come down to the amount of time involved. That's where the norm of 20%, or a day a week, has pertained in other cases.

On the question of the education. Indeed, that is here, stipulated, and it's not necessarily done in exactly the same way in other provinces, that the registrar does, in fact, have an educational function in section 16, that is made clear, the additional duty to develop and implement educational plans, programs and foster awareness.

That, indeed, what we would envisage as the first work of the registrar.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So given that, previously, you had spoken about this registry as being primarily the ministry of function. Whether there is a requirement for, in this case, potentially significant education, particularly when we think about the fact there are 1,123 non-profit charities on PEI who would all need to consider this. Does that, sort of, speak to, perhaps, there being more support and requirement for, perhaps, a dedicated person to be overseeing this registry and the associated impacts thereof?

Premier MacLauchlan: In the first part it would be that the education and awareness part is about the existence of the registry and to be sure there is awareness about that and that comes with the territory. Any time we're bringing in a new law, I think this one will, in fact, stand out, or will be more easily promoted than might be the case for some of our other registries. At that point, it's principally that the onus lies on the organization to register. The content of what is to be reported is also spelled out here in 7(4).

The approach has been, really, to see this as a – to not see this as something that would involve a lot of red tape for the organization.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My question was: There are many lobbyists that are registered as federal lobbyists, and organizations that operate on Prince Edward Island that fall in that category.

Did you consult with any of those organizations that registered as federal lobbyists, and then run the bill by them because they already understand what it means to be on registry and operate on PEI?

Chair: Wendy.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant:

Thank you.

At the present time, a look at the federal registry indicates that there's about 13 registrations. There needs to be a registration for each individual entailed. For example, the Dairy Farmers of PEI have half a dozen names.

We did not actually go and seek out organizations currently involved in the federal registry.

Premier MacLauchlan: Can I expand on that?

Our approach to this and it has come out in a number of the questions that have been raised, is to make it user-friendly, I'm going to say. It's a new requirement. There are public commentaries on the different regimes. We would not have – we weren't really going out to ask people how they're getting along with the federal registry. There are other people, who are, kind of, responsible for that.

To be clear, what is in this bill is consistent with what people who already are engaged in lobbying and registries elsewhere are already doing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I spoke with one of those organizations recently and they were wondering why they weren't consulted.

It seems to me that this bill really is not ready to be brought to the floor. It should be sent to committee for further consideration. In fact, the amendments that have brought forward, it seems that the government members aren't even reading them or giving them full consideration before voting them down. It's obviously being whipped. This is a crazy process. This is not working together.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Myers: Merry Christmas, Brad.

Mr. Trivers: Merry Christmas.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I have two –

Mr. Roach: You can tell the leadership race is over.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – short questions –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – one is on section 9, which is to do with filing of returns and fees; specifically about the fees, section 9(2).

I'm wondering how much you're imagining the fee for registration will be.

Chair: Wendy.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: Thank you, Chair.

The fees tend to be relatively modest. They're higher for consultant lobbyists than they are for organizations. Within that, they're usually higher for a company in-house lobbyists than they are for organizational in-house lobbyists, that's to say non-profits.

In Nova Scotia, they would range from 60 to 130 for a first filing. And then, for the updated returns 30 to \$60 and no fee for the non-profits.

An Hon. Member: Good.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can I just confirm, Wendy, that for the first year of registry, there would be no fee for non-profits, or there will be?

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: There is, I think, a small initial filing fee, but it's more modest, again. It's, actually about \$60 I believe. Let me just have a quick look.

Wendy MacDonald Clerk Assistant: And then none thereafter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to now go to, well, you can either, it's in both sections; section 6.1 (d) and section 7.1 (b) and this is to do with, and the Premier, actually, mentioned this in his reply to my colleague about what constitutes a significant part. That's the language used.

The Premier cited that 20%, one day a week, which is, indeed, our neighbouring provinces use that benchmark, but there are other jurisdictions where it's quite different. In Ontario it's 50 hours a year. In Quebec, it's 12 days per year. And BC and Manitoba and Saskatchewan have 100 hours per year.

I'm wondering how this government – because that will be in regulation – and I'm wondering how this government intends to define a significant part of one's duties.

Premier MacLauchlan: So –

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: – as I mentioned on Friday, and again today, we've come prepared to made an amendment that would put it in the legislation that it would be 50 hours every three months, so a half day a week. You might say, it's half way between –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Premier MacLauchlan: – the neighbouring provinces here and the western provinces, which have gone to the 100 a year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Premier MacLauchlan: And why don't I make that amendment, Chair, if I may –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) let it pass (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – we have copies –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) talk about it on the floor.

Premier MacLauchlan: Okay, so –

Mr. Trivers: Chair, I'd like to speak to the amendment.

Chair: Hon. members, an amendment is being passed around.

Hon. members, what's being passed out, is there are two amendments, to, one to section 6 and one to section 7 and we have to do them separately.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Who is making the amendment?

Chair: The Premier is making the amendment.

Mr. MacKay: The Premier is making an amendment to his own bill?

Chair: Yeah.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: After clarification and questions.

Premier MacLauchlan: In response to a question.

Chair: Response to a question.

Mr. Myers: He just wrote it up in (Indistinct) response to a question.

Mr. R. Brown: No (Indistinct) you guys (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. members, the amendment has been circulated. Is there any questions on the amendment through to subclause 6(1)(b)(i)?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Of course, in a previous sitting, I brought forward a question about the 'a significant part' wording. As per the report from Fasken Martineau DuMoulin and the Premier had indicated then he was going to bring this motion forward, I think it's rather interesting that the bill was almost passed without it coming forward. Had not the Leader of the Third Party asked, the bill would have been passed without this amendment being

coming forward. So I want to know, Premier, how many other questionable sections are there in this act that you are harboring amendments for that not bringing forward.

An Hon. Member: Oh.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, I have two amendments. I indicated what they were on Friday and they're in the interest of clarity and, frankly, consistent with points that we make from time to time here in the Legislature about putting things in legislation where it makes sense to do so and that's precisely what's being done here; first with the section 6 sub 1 and then with section 7 sub 1 to define that the significant part as 50 hours in every quarter.

Chair: Hon. members, I've been asked by the Clerk to read the amendment into the record.

Moved that:

1. (1) Subclause 6(1)(b)(i) of Bill No. 24 is amended;

(a) by the deletion of the words "a significant part of whose duties as an employee, as determined in accordance with the regulations, is" and the substitution of the words "whose duties as an employee are"; and

(b) by the addition of the words "for at least 50 hours in a three-month period" after the word "lobby".

(2) Subclause 6(1)(b)(ii) of the Bill is amended by the deletion of the words "a significant part of the duties of one employee, as determined in accordance with the regulations" and the substitution of the words "at least 50 hours of lobbying in a three-month period by one employee".

Ready for the question on the amendment?

All those voting in favour of the amendment, raise your hands. 'Aye'.

Contrary-minded, raise your hands.

And the amendment is carried.

The Premier has another amendment which he will pass out.

An Hon. Member: I've got one.

Chair: I'm going to read this amendment into the record, as requested by the Clerk while the amendment is being circulated.

Moved that:

1. (1) Subclause 7(1)(b)(i) of Bill No. 24 is amended

(a) by the deletion of the words "a significant part of whose duties as an employee, as determined in accordance with the regulations, is" and the substitution of the words "whose duties as an employee are"; and

(b) by the addition of the words "for at least 50 hours in a three-month period" after the word "lobby".

(2) Subclause 7(1)(b)(ii) of the Bill is amended by the deletion of the words "a significant part of the duties of one employee, as determined in accordance with the regulations" and the substitution of the words "at least 50 hours of lobbying in a three-month period by one employee".

Ready for the question on the amendment?

All those voting in favour of the amendment, raise your hand.

Contrary-minded, raise your hand.

And the amendment is carried.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So I'm looking at section 20 Regulations. In there, there's also a reference to "...a significant part of the employee's duties as an employee for the purpose of the definitions..." Section 20(a).

An Hon. Member: 20(a)?

Mr. Trivers: I'm wondering why you wouldn't need to amend that section as well.

Premier MacLauchlan: That's a good point. That should be done to tie in with or to compliment the changes we've made to section 6(1) and 7(1). Is there any way, Chair, that we can take that to be within the spirit – it's simply the amendment would be to delete 20(a).

An Hon. Member: That's easy.

Leader of the Opposition: The easiest way to do it is just pull the bill and come back in spring with the changes.

Chair: Hon. Members, there has been a request that in the spirit of the two amendments that we just made, that this is in line with those two motions and the amendment would be to delete section 20(a).

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Chair: Everybody okay with that?

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Well, thank you.

So Chair, I'm not sure that deleting 20(a) actually has the same meaning within the context of the bill because I would think that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting the termination of when the duties of an employee to lobby would be an important thing to have in there. I would question whether that should be deleted. I would like to see it amended, as per section 6 and section 7 instead.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Look. If this is going to tie us up for long, we can leave it in there because it doesn't relate to anything.

Chair: Okay.

Premier MacLauchlan: So we can simply

Chair: Okay. You're pulling that amendment off the floor?

Premier MacLauchlan: Look. If that's the easiest way to deal with this, just leave it there as an orphan and it's there.

Chair: He's going to pull this amendment off the floor.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I just want to thank the Premier for dealing with this properly and not rushing it through –

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Trivers: – and maybe – again, it gives me a low feeling of confidence that maybe there are other cases in this bill that amendments need to be made and there were amendments proposed by several members of the floor. I just want to make one final appeal to the Premier to consider sending this bill to committee for further consideration.

Premier MacLauchlan: I thank members for the efforts, and the attention, and the consideration that they've put into this and I believe we've got us all a piece of legislation here that will be a step in the right direction for our province in terms of openness and transparency and ensuring that our province is in line or addressing this issue and, indeed, that we've been clear about the threshold in a way that will allow us to move forward and be proactive about this.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Premier MacLauchlan: I move the title.

Chair: *Lobbyists Registration Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Premier MacLauchlan: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Premier MacLauchlan: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the

Chair report the bill agreed to with amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: 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 gone through the said bill and has agreed to same with amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Trivers: Recorded division.

An Hon. Member: Standing vote.

Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, a recorded division has been requested. Could you ring the bell?

[The bells were rung]

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, opposition is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Palmer: Government is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

All those not supporting the bill, please stand.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, come on.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

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

Speaker: All those supporting the bill, please stand.

Mr. MacEwen: Pretty close.

Clerk Assistant: The hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier and Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot and the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Speaker: Hon. members, the bill is carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 15th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 15, *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*, Bill No. 25, in committee.

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 will, once again, ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to Chair the committee of the whole.

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

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: Overview, Chair.

Chair: Overview.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Just an overview.

Chair: Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Mr. Myers: Granted.

Chair: We'll allow them to get settled and introduced and then we'll –

Good afternoon. Could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Blair Barbour Manager: Blair Barbour, Manager of Policy, Planning and FTP Relations at the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Premier, could give you us an explanation or an update?

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, we've had in committee of the whole twice. It's that this bill strengthens government's approach to public interest disclosure by public servants and protects against reprisals for individuals making disclosures of serious wrongdoing.

Much of the discussion that we've had to date has to do with the appointment and related provisions for the commissioner of public interest disclosure.

My comment on that would be that the move to have this in the form of legislation is often linked to the advice of the Auditor General and to her work and the provisions that we have for the commissioner of public interest disclosure are, in effect, the same as

for the Auditor General in terms of the status of the office relative to the Executive and Legislative Branch. So, it is an independent officer of the Assembly.

Further, there are the provisions that spell out the process by which disclosure of wrongdoing would be made and considered and then, action taken and notably, starting in section 17, the related provision regarding the prohibition of and punishment for reprisals.

Chair: Hon. members, section 2 has been read and we are asking questions on section 2 and would you like me to read clause by clause or do you just want me to read the title of the section and then we'll open the floor for discussion on the section?

Mr. MacEwen: I think that's fine (Indistinct)

Chair: That's fine. Thank you.

I have a question for section 2 from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I do have an amendment I want to make on this section, but first I want to talk – we were on this section, I know, over the two days, so far, that this has been on the floor we have talked, numerous times, about government's direct involvement in selecting this person.

Today we have a report out from the privacy commissioner that proves the point that we've been trying to make here for two days of how important it is to have this be a step removed from government.

Basically, what the report says is that people inside of government at deputy level were breaking privacy protocols and doing all this backwoods kind of stuff during an election campaign, which also brings up another point that I had mentioned about, that – what happens during a writ period that all kind of bets are off.

I wonder if the Premier has any better understanding of what we were talking about after reading Karen Rose's report, today.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, we read reports from the Auditor General and been considered in some fair amount of attention in this House as an officer of the Assembly. The commissioner, or the Auditor General, in that case, is appointed with the same combination of roles as is the case for the commissioner of public interest disclosure.

This regime that we would have and do have in now in policy, but would have in legislation, confirms the merit of having this regime, this public interest disclosure and a whistleblower protection in place. We assure it gives us a chance to understand the value of it and that's exactly why this bill is on the floor.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

The Premier keeps going back to the Auditor General like it's the same thing. I'm going to explain to the Premier how the Auditor General works.

The Auditor General decides to audit a department, a section, a program, whatever it may be; goes into the department, demands the information, must be given it, has to be talked to, gets interview – gets to interview whoever they want inside of government to get the details that they need to make their report.

The Auditor General, by nature, is independent and can do all those things down through.

What this bill does is it puts the onus on the person to walk that information all the way up, so the protection that the Auditor General has is the Auditor General has full control of that whole process all the way down, so if they want to go right to the mailroom to talk to somebody, they can.

But in this case, what we're saying is that somebody in the mailroom has to walk this all the way up, and if the Premier can't see what Karen Rose's report today said, what it basically said was that the people in – that in the middle – were the ones that were all the problems, so it was at the deputy level. It

was the people representing the executive branch of government that has caused the issue, so it's not the same as the Auditor General. Yes, the process to pick them perhaps is, and that's what you seem to be hiding behind, but the truth of the matter is it's not the same thing because the Auditor General can then work completely independently and can ask whoever they want in government a question and demand the answer.

This is the reverse, where you're taking the lowest person on the totem pole and saying: you have to walk that right up to the deputy or the person that the Premier hired. I can't understand how you can't see that it's not the same thing at all as what happens with the Auditor General. It isn't the same thing at all. The Auditor General has a million times more protection than somebody who couldn't – might not even be a classified employee, who may have no protection with the union at all.

Chair: Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: 9(1): An employee who reasonably believes that he or she has information can make that disclosure to the deputy head or to the Commissioner, and that's exactly how this is set up.

Under Section 7: the Commissioner has the powers of a commissioner under the *Public Inquiries Act*.

This is how this is set up. It's not to change the expectation that deputies will do their job and lead their department. That's the nature of their role, and this is adding to their responsibilities, but if the employee doesn't want to go to the deputy, he or she can go to the commissioner.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So the Premier doesn't get it, I mean, because he didn't even attempt to answer my question. I know how the act works and I know that the deputy (Indistinct) – my point is that they all belong to government, so the commissioner is not independent in this act; neither is the deputy head, because they work for government, so they work

directly for you. And now this person – so there's no independent body, there's no –

So my point is that there's nobody who has been selected through an independent process who these people can go through, because you've somehow injected yourself in the middle of it, and you can't see that you've basic – unless you can see, and that's probably the scariest part is that you know full well that you've torpedoed this act, and that it has no value at all.

I'm fully against it. I don't even know why I'm going to make this amendment, because I am against it because I don't think the Premier cares to protect people at all. I think quite the opposite. I think the Premier loves to lord his power over people and he's going to lord his power over people with this process.

Now, he's putting processes in place that he can use to hold the gavel over people's heads.

Chair: Do you have an amendment? Did you say you have an amendment?

Mr. Myers: Yeah, I do.

So, given that, I'll move my amendment anyway, knowing that government's going to defeat it because they don't want any help from anybody; the Premier doesn't want to listen to anybody, and the Premier, quite frankly, wants to have power over absolutely everyone. I don't know how he's ever gotten this far in life by not being able to work with anyone –

Chair: Let's have the amendment.

Mr. Myers: – but I'll make my amendment.

The amendment to Bill 25: I'm going to add:

(8)(a) Where the Legislative Assembly is dissolved, subsection (7) does not apply; and

(b) Where the Commissioner is temporarily absent or unable to act or is suspended, or the office becomes vacant while the Legislative Assembly is dissolved, the Information and Privacy Commissioner shall act as the acting Commissioner, until the Commissioner returns to act on the

appointment of a new Commissioner, as the case may be.

2: Subsection (9) is amended by substitution of section (8) with subsection (9), and the existing (8), (9), (10), and (11) are numbered (9), (10), (11), and (12).

Chair: Okay, we'll have to take a look at it.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) is that what you wanted?

Chair: The amendment is being circulated.

An Hon. Member: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Myers: You ready to vote against it, (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: You read it so well. I'm ready for the vote.

Chair: Hon. members, what this amendment is, is it's a new subsection after Section 2 (7), and it's number (8), it's going to be a new number (8), new subsection (8), and it has a new title: Dissolution of the Assembly.

But I just have a question for the promoter of the amendment: Georgetown-St. Peters, would you agree that number 2 of your amendment –

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Chair: – is actually when you –

Mr. Myers: It's further orders to –

Chair: Yeah, like it's –

Mr. Myers: – (Indistinct) were to happen.

Chair: If you took subsection (2) out, it's already – subsection (2) is already in (3), because it's where it says (8) and (9) are already mentioned there. Do you know what I mean?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Chair: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: It was just meant to reorder.

Chair: Yeah, well I think number (3) reorders everything.

Mr. Myers: Okay, yeah.

Chair: So, would you withdraw number (2)? Do you know what I mean? Number (2), and then make this (2)?

Mr. Myers: Yeah, (Indistinct) can I just take that out?

Chair: All right, hon. members, the amendment before you, there's a new subsection after Section 2 (7), and it has a new title, which is there. The promoter of the amendment has agreed to take out number (2) because it's already in (3), so number (3) will become number (2), if that's clear. All right?

Is everybody in agreement with the amendment as amended, I guess?

Mr. Roach: As revised?

Chair: As revised, everybody okay with that?

All right, now I'll open the discussion to the amendment that is on the floor.

Madam Clerk, would you like me to read this into the record? Thank you.

Amendment to Bill 25, Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act.

1. Bill 25 is amended with the insertion of the following after section 2 (7)

Dissolution of the Assembly

(8) (a) Where the Legislative Assembly is dissolved, subsection (7) does not apply.

(b) Where the Commissioner is temporarily absent or unable to act or is suspended, or the office becomes vacant while the Legislative Assembly is dissolved, the Information and Privacy Commissioner shall act as acting Commissioner, until the Commissioner returns to act or on the appointment of a new Commissioner, as the case may be.

2. Existing subsections (8),(9), (10) and (11) are renumbered to (9),(10),(11) and (12).

I'll open the floor for discussion on the amendment.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Chair: You're ready for the question on the amendment?

All those in favour of –

Mr. MacKay: Show of hands, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

There has been a request for a show of hands on this vote.

All in favour of the amendment, raise your hand.

All those voting against the amendment, raise your hand.

Mr. LaVie: First hand up.

Mr. Myers: First hand up.

Mr. LaVie: First hand up.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Get it higher, I can't see it.

Mr. Myers: I wish I had that as a picture –

Chair: The amendment is defeated.

Hon. members, we'll continue on with discussion of the bill. We're in section 2.

Shall section 2 carry? Carried.

Would you like me to continue to – I think the request was just to read the title of the section.

3. Office of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Counsel, experts

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Premier MacLauchlan: You got all of three the first time didn't you?

Chair: Yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: Okay.

Chair: 4. Operating expenses

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: Chair.

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

Mr. Myers: I know personally, I'm really frustrated with the Premier on this bill. I feel that he – not only is he not protecting employees with this, he's actually putting them in harm's way.

I'm ready to vote against this anytime that anybody else is because –

Mr. R. Brown: Call the bill.

Chair: You're calling the –

Mr. Myers: I am. If other people have questions, go ahead –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: What's the point.

Chair: Are you calling the question –

Mr. Myers: No, he has questions. I'm just saying for –

Chair: Okay, all right –

Mr. Myers: – I asked a lot of questions on this bill. I'm done because I'm frustrated with the Premier.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party, do you have questions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I do, Chair. We could go through –

Chair: Okay –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – section –

Chair: – do you want me to go through section by section –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure, section 7 is my first question.

Chair: Okay.

Shall section 4 carry? Carried.

5? Carried.

Annual report, shall the section carry?
Carried.

Section 6: Principles – Investigation Powers.
Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 7 Powers under Public Inquiries
Act.

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

Chair: Question from the hon. Leader of the
Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering if you could explain
what these powers are. It's not made clear,
at all, in the bill.

Blair Barbour Manager: Section 7
provides the commissioner with the powers
of a commissioner under the *Public
Inquiries Act* that allows the person to
administer oaths and to compel evidence.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And that would be the
extent of the powers, Blair?

Blair Barbour Manager: To my memory
those are the main pieces.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Blair Barbour Manager: Yes.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Chair: Request for advice, section 8. Shall
the section carry? Carried.

Section 9, Making a disclosure –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Question.

Chair: Question from the hon. Leader of the
Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I have a couple of
questions on this section, Chair.

The first is, there don't appear to be any
special arrangements in this sections for
disclosing the wrongdoing committed by a
head.

Am I correct in assuming that disclosure or
complaints against a head would be handled
in the same way as it would for any other
public servant?

Premier MacLauchlan: The head is
captured by the definition of public office –

Blair Barbour Manager: The person
include the head.

Premier MacLauchlan: Right.

So, the head would be captured by the
definition of, by the word 'person' and then
the person making the disclosure would
have the option to go to the commissioner.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The point I'm trying to
get to here is the minister, head, the
minister, acting as head of the department,
could he or she claim that as a Member of
the Legislative Assembly they would not be
subject to this act, or am I not correct?

Premier MacLauchlan: Where's the
definition of (Indistinct) is that –

Blair Barbour Manager: That wouldn't be
here, it would be the interpretation
(Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Right.

You would, in that case, find, in the
Interpretation Act that a minister is included
in the definition of a person when it comes
to the disclosure of wrongdoing. The
minister wouldn't have any immunity by
virtue of being a member of the Assembly.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, that's (Indistinct)

I have another question on this section, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's about the inability of citizens, members of the public to make disclosures. I know that the majority of other provinces have that facility, and I'm wondering why we chose not to allow citizens to make disclosures.

Premier MacLauchlan: I think the best review of other jurisdictions is that some have and some haven't.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's probably close to half and half –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct) majority. A slight majority do, six, I believe.

Premier MacLauchlan: This is being set-up as a regime for the public service. That's the simplest response to it. I appreciate where the question is coming from. We're looking to do this by creating this ability to make a disclosure for the public servants and have the protection against reprisals.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: This, sort of, peculiar and unique situation we have here on Prince Edward Island is, yes, it is a slim majority, Premier, I agree with you that allow public disclosures in other provinces. However, every other province has an ombudsperson through which that process can also go.

Here on Prince Edward Island, we don't have an ombudsperson, so that avenue for the public to come forward with complaints does not even exist. That's why, I think, it would be really advantageous for us to include the facility for public citizen – for citizens to be able to make a disclosure.

Could you –

Premier MacLauchlan: We –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – give me your thoughts on that?

Premier MacLauchlan: – have, of course, had that motion on the floor and it may well be back at it this evening. I think that that would be an opportunity for members to speak about an ombudsperson. For this – for the purposes of this act we feel it's better to go straight at the question of the public service disclosure and protection.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Despite that, I'm going to introduce my amendment, Chair, which is to allow disclosures by members of the public. This is, again, on the sheet, which was circulated.

I don't know if need to read that out, Chair, or if you want me to read it out?

Chair: Hon. members, there's an amendment on the floor.

The amendment is to section 9.

Moved That

1. Bill 25 is amended in section 9 by the addition of the following after subsection(1):

Disclosure by a member of the public
(1.1) A member of the public who reasonably believes that he or she has information indicating that a person has committed wrongdoing or is about to commit wrongdoing may make a disclosure in writing, in the form required by the Commissioner, directly to the Commissioner.

Mr. R. Brown: Question.

Chair: Do you have a copy of that?

The floor is open for discussion on the amendment.

Ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: All those voting in favour of the amendment, raise your hand.

All those voting against the amendment, raise your hand.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Chair: Thank you.

And the amendment is defeated.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Section 10 Duty to establish procedures.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Section 11 Referral to Commissioner.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: Who said Chair?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: As we whip through these sections here, I just had a quick question. Based on some of the amendments that were defeated today through this bill, in particular the one from Georgetown-St. Peters, I was wondering, Premier, if the whistleblowers from 2011 during the PNP scandal would actually be covered by this act or helped by this act if the government of the day decided that they didn't want the whistle blown on them.

Premier MacLauchlan: This is really the whole purpose of the legislation is that people who have serious wrongdoing to disclose do it through the process that is laid out by this bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. So my specific question is: In 2011, those in that specific scenario, when it was during the writ period, would this legislation allow the government of the day – the government that was the government going into the election – to not allow the whistle to be blown on them before the election?

Premier MacLauchlan: The process is clear and it would go forward and, indeed, as we've learned, their privacy is also protected.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So with the writ dropped and no standing committees available – dissolved – and the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to go and basically get rid of the commissioner, then would that not allow them, in a quiet way, to simply put off the whistleblowing until at least after the election in that scenario?

Premier MacLauchlan: Three points on that, Chair. One: we've passed that section, two –

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

An Hon. Member: Weak.

Premier MacLauchlan: Two: There's a requirement that the legislative management committee play a part – they wouldn't exist –

Mr. Trivers: The writ; they're dissolved.

Premier MacLauchlan: – precisely.

Three: Even if there is no commissioner in place, the law has the ability to proceed so this would go on. It would be business as usual for disclosure and the role of the commissioner to be very precise, and we talked about this the other night. There are very clear standards by which that would be done and a very clear process by which it would be done and that would not take place – could not take place – during a writ period.

Mr. Trivers: Well, thank you, Premier for clarifying exactly why I should vote against this bill – because it does not cover that situation and those whistleblowers would not be protected and the government could manipulate the election so they got elected even though the whistle should have been blown on them.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Section 12 Duties on completing investigation.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Section 13 –

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

This talks about when a disclosure is made to the Commissioner, the Commissioner has to notify the deputy head of that public entity. What happens if it is like the case like 2011, when you're blowing the whistle on a deputy minister who opened up the program for two extra days to allow him and all his friends to access PNP units, and then shut it down? If you're blowing the whistle on the deputy to the Commissioner, how come the Commissioner has to report back to the deputy in charge of that public entity?

Mr. LaVie: Good question.

Premier MacLauchlan: The deputy is the operating head of the department or the agency. That's the role. It may well be that if the deputy is the one being complained about that the deputy would opt to stand aside and have someone else act in that capacity.

I think that that would be proper practice in that situation. The powers of the commissioner would continue to deal with a disclosure.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I don't see that anywhere in here, Premier. I would agree with you that that person should step aside, but right now, the commissioner is required to report to the deputy that conflict on the deputy and then get the deputy to investigate him or herself.

Mr. LaVie: Supper time.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair –

Chair: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: It seems like a major flaw.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, if we turn to section 16, if the deputy is the subject of the allegation and the disclosure shall be made or referred to the commissioner. The

commissioner shall investigate the disclosure and then it provides for the commissioner to go on with the commissioner's work.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

But the commissioner still has to disclose it to the deputy? So the employee is still working under that deputy while the deputy is being investigated and it's disclosed to that deputy.

Premier MacLauchlan: Under 16, in that case, and 16 sub (c) deals with this. The – this is done, in that case, to the head of the public entity, who is the minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: So, going back to 2008. The minister was involved, too –

Mr. Roach: Oh!

Mr. J. Brown: No.

Mr. Roach: Oh!

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah, the minister and the deputy both opened it up for two more days, so what happens then? If the employee has –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) that's (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – wants to – what was that?

Chair: Hon. member, direct the questions to the Chair.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, the Minister of Finance had an interjection there.

Chair: I didn't hear one –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) wishes. There's an accusation made there that has never been proven, Chair.

Mr. Myers: Take him to court.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. Myers: That's your option.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Back to the 2009 Auditor General's report.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, do you have a question?

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

That employee, if they have – if they want to blow the whistle on the minister and the deputy minister, what happens then, Premier?

Premier MacLauchlan: The commissioner's work goes on that the fact that they make a report to, either the head or the deputy head does not stop the work of the commissioner. The commissioner goes ahead and has the powers that we've already passed.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I guess, Premier, the point I'm trying to make here is okay, say I am the administrative assistant for, and I'm in a minister's office, okay? Say, I suspect the minister and the deputy of wrongdoing, and so I report it to the commissioner.

This is saying that the commissioner, if it's about the deputy has to report it to the minister. It's basically letting them know directly. I'm going into to work the next day and after I just reported my two senior people. If it's about those two, why do we automatically have to let the deputy and the minister know, I guess, is my question?

Premier MacLauchlan: And to be clear and these are the sections that we're coming to – there is a law against reprisal. There's a prohibition with a serious penalty against reprisal, but the commissioner has the power under 15 sub 3, "Where the commissioner believes..." and we can read the language,

that there isn't cooperation, the commissioner can, in that case, report on the matter to the Clerk of Executive Council.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I don't feel comfortable with that process. My questions are done.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hour has been called, hon. members.

Mr. Roach: Extend the hour.

Ms. Biggar: Extend the hour.

Mr. MacKay: No.

Chair: Okay, we just –

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) halfway through.

Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intitled *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection 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.

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

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may be seated. I'm going to have a look in the rulebook, members. I think there's something about props.

An Hon. Member: It's a suit.

Speaker: Anyway, nice suit, hon. minister.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would now like to call Motion 18 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 18.

It's moved by the the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the following motion:

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island remains the only province in Canada that does not have a full-service passport office;

AND WHEREAS the influx of new immigrants and refugees to our province involves individuals who may be required to travel back and forth to their countries of origin;

AND WHEREAS trying to get a passport more quickly by travelling off-Island is a cumbersome and expensive process;

AND WHEREAS many provinces have a large number of passport offices available to serve their travelling population;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to take immediate action to establish an accessible and full-service passport office in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today in the Assembly, the minister of education had brought remarks, and it was about the recognition of Charlottetown as the Birthplace of Confederation, and I guess that's where I will start tonight.

Based on that, and being a full-member province of Canada, we don't have a passport office anywhere on Prince Edward Island. I don't particularly care where it goes as long as we have it somewhere on the Island so that Islanders can access it.

I think it's high time that we stand up to Ottawa, and I don't think that government's been doing enough of that for Islanders since the government changed. I know I sat through this assembly when Stephen Harper was prime minister, and everybody was great guns to stand up to Ottawa then. They couldn't wait to be the next one to stand up to Ottawa and have their voices heard with their displeasure about how they were being treated.

Now, suddenly they've all gone silent, including the MP that originally brought this up, Silent Sean.

And I'll tell you, it's one of those things that needs to change right across the board, so let's start there.

Whenever the Conservatives were the government in Ottawa, continually heard how terrible they were and how they were neglecting Prince Edward Island, how they were neglecting Atlantic Canada, and I heard it not only from the government members here, but I heard it from the local MPs, so one of the several things that Sean Casey stood for before the Liberals formed government was having a passport office here in Charlottetown.

Obviously no longer stands for that, because I haven't heard hide nor hair of him on this issue in two years since government was formed; that and door-to-door delivery; that and the EI zone; and numerous other things that he seems to no longer stand for.

And that's the thing that I feel that the electorate is really sick of. It's great to make these crazy promises at election time, but if you have no – if you don't have the chops to go to your boss and say: This is what I want, because I've told my electorate this is what they were going to get, then you don't deserve to be in government or elected.

We are all elected here in this Assembly to represent a district, as well as on a larger scale to represent all of Islanders.

I believe that when you're elected to represent your electorate, you should stand by the words that you used on the doorstep. So if you told people that you were going to be their voice that you need to be their voice. If you told people you were going to fight for a passport office, you need to fight for a passport office.

If the one trick you have up your sleeve is turning silent when you're told to be silent, that's not an admirable quality for an MP, and that's what I feel has happened on this passport issue, as well, as that's what I feel happened on the door-to-door delivery and EI. Islanders were sold a false bill of goods by the local MP, and I think, personally, it's time that that's rectified.

So I think this Assembly, because I know we all agreed on it, because this has already been debated on this floor, and several members are in favour of it; the minister of transportation, she was in favour of it. She said last time it was on the floor that she was going to vote for the motion, so I assume that she'll vote for the motion tonight. It doesn't particularly matter to me, again, where the passport office would be on Prince Edward Island – maybe down in Montague. I'm sure the Minister of Finance has a spot that he could put it; maybe up in Summerside. Maybe the minister of human services has a spot up there it could go. Maybe Slemon Park could be a good spot for it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: Okay, that's your district. Either way, if we look around this room I'm sure there's several people – it'd be closer to drive to Tignish than it would be to Halifax to get your passport. Maybe Tignish is a spot to have it; at least if we had it here on Prince Edward Island, then Prince Edward Island would be served equally that the rest of Canada has been served when it comes to a passport office.

We have a lot more people coming in here through immigration streams here now than we have ever had before, and once those people reach a Canadian citizenship, they

still have a majority of their family from where they originated from, and I'm sure would like to be able to travel back and forth. It's kind of perplexing to me that they wouldn't be able to get a passport right here on Prince Edward Island, that they'd have to go off-Island to get that, and that's why I think it's one of the many things that government should be standing up to Ottawa for. But they should at least make an effort to start pushing back in Ottawa and saying that we're not going to be pushed around any longer and that we need to stand up for what we believe in.

There's also lots of people here on Prince Edward Island, more than ever before, that travel and go see the world. We have a lot of baby boomers that are out and about and seeing the whole world, and for them too, the people who have built Prince Edward Island all these years, the people who have been the solid tax-base for Prince Edward Island for all these years, that we don't have a passport office for them is something that I don't really understand.

It's a small ticket item when you consider how much money the federal government spends. It's strange that this is something that they would choose to save money on. A passport office here on Prince Edward Island – I've been to the one in Halifax. It's not that big of an operation. It's not complicated at all. Like, there may be like eight wickets, and that's in Halifax. I mean, if we had one here, we'd still be able to put through passports right here on Prince Edward Island. I don't know if we need an eight-wicket system like they have in Halifax, but certainly if you had one person who you could deal with for passports here on Prince Edward Island, I think it's something that – I don't think it's a big ask, and I think it would be the beginning, and a good opportunity for this government, a place to start, a beachhead as it were, a beachhead for this government when it comes to standing up to Ottawa.

Islanders love provincial governments that stand up to Ottawa. You go back to the days of Alex Campbell, and he stood up to Ottawa and brought volumes of money here – granted, it was to shut down rural Prince Edward Island – but he brought volumes of money here anyway and he stood up to Ottawa and battled for it.

If you go back through the great leaders that this province has had over the years, they were the ones that went to Ottawa and stood up for Islanders first. They put Islanders first, and I think that's something that they still look for today in the leadership out of their government; a government that's willing to go to Ottawa and say: I care so much about the electorate of Prince Edward Island that I'm going to go head-to-head with Ottawa on all the issues that are important to Islanders.

This government hasn't done that, which is fine. They used to pretend to do it there for a while when Harper was in Ottawa, but I know that they had volumes of money poured into them here like left, right, and centre, because Gail Shea was really good to this province because she never forgot where she came from. Sometimes the government here would take little shots at her, but not too heavy, because they knew that she was pretty well keeping them in business here and keeping the local government afloat.

This is an opportunity for everyone in the Assembly to start this process of standing up to Islanders. Not only that, the second thing that I think is important it's an important opportunity for this Assembly to tell Islanders that it's not okay to go door-to-door and say one thing and then never talk about it again.

The silence that comes out of forming government is mindboggling to me. I think if you stand for something prior to being government you should stand for the exact same thing afterwards.

I know governments don't want to hear that. I know when you have leadership that's top down and highhanded they don't want to hear that. I think it's time for some of this highhandedness to go away and an opportunity for the –

Do you want on the list?

Ms. Compton: I do.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

It's an opportunity for –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – us to start expressing the fact that there's a desire in the electorate for the voice to be a voice all the time and for that voice not to be silenced once you're in a government. You guys know what I'm talking about too, because you faced a little bit of that – thank you – yourselves over there. I know, I know, you don't want to talk about it, which is fine.

Let's talk about Ottawa. If you talk passionately about what's going on in Ottawa and the silence that they've put on their MPs, then, maybe we'll dig a little deeper and realize that maybe you're talking about yourself when you're talking about those things –

[Unidentified noise]

Mr. Myers: That's all right.

Unidentified Voice: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) Legislature.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Ebenezer Scrooge is coming.

Mr. Myers: It was. It gave me a scare there.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Just to go back to that point about what you stand for prior to and what you stand to – for afterwards. For me, it's the same. For me it'll always be the same. I think that the more people who stay true to who they are during their cycle of election, whether or not they're in government's side or not then the more the electorate will get what they're actually expecting when you're knocking on their doors and making these promises.

People are disappointed. People are disappointed in the type of leadership they get when their MP goes to Ottawa and decides to remain silent. Wayne Easter is a great example of the opposite. No one sits Wayne Easter down and tells him to stop talking. Wayne Easter says what's on his mind whenever he wants. I have a lot of respect for that. I really do. I may not always agree with what Wayne says, but I totally

respect the fact that he'll say it. I think that, in my opinion, is the most important part.

I don't always agree with what the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park says. He used to speak his mind in this Legislature, too. I used to have a lot of respect for him for doing it. I'm not saying I don't respect you know, but you're a little bit different than you were back when you used to speak your mind.

You used to sit behind me –

Mr. R. Brown: My buddy Ryan (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You used to sit behind in the Legislature over there, and during that period of time, quite often, you'd give brilliant speeches where you stood up for things that you believed in. I hope, tonight, you'll give –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – one of those brilliant speeches.

I'm glad to hear that. I would like to hear one of those impassioned pleas that you've been known to give –

Mr. R. Brown: No, we want to get out of here by July 2nd.

Mr. Myers: July 2nd. You can have a few minutes at it. You can have a few minutes at it.

It looks like there's starting to be a list forming, so I'm not going to talk long on this, I'll have an opportunity to close it later on before we vote.

Hopefully, everybody will support this under the principles that we're a province. We deserve to have what other provinces have and that it's very important to keep the promises that you make. Once you've went and told people that: This is who I am and this is what I believe in. You have to believe in it after election day, as well

I think that's not what the electorate received with Sean Casey. I'd like to see Sean Casey going back to where he was prior to the election, and making all these promises. Make the same promises now.

Make the same promises now that you're in government. Don't tell people it's hard. I'm working hard. It's hard. It's hard to get it. Speak out. It's okay to speak out. Wayne Easter gets away with it. It's okay to speak out

Sometimes it's okay to speak your mind. The member from Alberton, there, got in Cabinet by speaking his mind. No one told him to not speak his mind and look where he is over there, now, he's all dressed up in a fancy suit and he spoke his mind every bit of the way.

I see a lot of that in the young member here from Summerside. He speaks his mind. He throws some hard questions across to government every day. Maybe he's going to work his way up to over to that side.

It's okay to still be –

Mr. R. Brown: Jordie –

Mr. Myers: – yeah.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Myers: I'm going to pass on that one, though. Good try.

Mr. R. Brown: Why?

Mr. Myers: He worked his way up, yes.

Anyway, the point is that it's okay to stay strong about things. Even Ronnie MacKinley, when he was in Cabinet. Ronnie still pushed hard on things. Everybody – all saw him here do it. He was probably a little more calm then he was when he was in opposition –

Mr. Murphy: He used to ask himself questions.

Mr. Myers: He used to ask himself questions, and he used to answer them.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: He did.

Mr. R. Brown: I don't know if he agreed with himself all the time, though.

Mr. Myers: No, sometimes he's get in some pretty heavy debates with himself over it.

Either way, he stayed true to who he was and that's why, when you go around the countryside today you still find lots of people who like Ronnie MacKinley, because he was the kind of person, who stayed true to who he was all the way through.

It's as much about living up to the expectations you create at election time, which a lot of people over on that side can probably relate to with the unpopularity of the Premier, as it is to us getting what we deserve being a full member of Confederation.

Hopefully, everybody will support this bill and maybe we can start sending a message to Ottawa that we want to be treated equally. Not only do we want to be treated equally, we're going to be demanding that we get treated just like every other province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to our opposition motion, which calls for the establishment of a Passport Canada office in our province.

We brought this motion forward during the spring session and it passed unanimously, but I believe, as a Legislative Assembly, that in order to get a positive response from the current federal Liberal administration we will need to continue to make our voices heard for the need for such a service in our province.

As we stated previously, Prince Edward Island is currently the only province in Canada that does not have a passport office. The fact that all the other provinces have more than one office, and most have several, seems to fly in the face of equality, a provision of federal services to our citizens.

Prince Edward Island is attracting more and more international citizens, who, while residing here, also travel to other countries

to do business and to see family and friends in their previous country.

We are also seeing greater international trade and commerce that often requires quick trips for business meetings or emergencies in other countries. We need to be able to serve these individuals quickly and efficiently.

Charlottetown Airport is seeing a record passenger numbers with 52,754 passengers travelling through our airport in July alone. The fact that we don't have a passport office in our province is both inconvenient and costly.

It is true that Islanders can receive assistance with their general passport applications at the Service Canada office in Charlottetown. However, I will point out that there are a number of applications that Service Canada, as a receiving office, cannot accept.

First of, if your application is urgent and you will be travelling in less than the advertised processing times, you will need to apply in person at a passport office, not Service Canada.

If your passport is still valid for more than one year, you have to have it processed at a passport office to have it renewed. If your current passport is lost, stolen, damaged, inaccessible or found, you, again, must have the passport office deal with the issue as Service Canada cannot handle that for you.

Service Canada cannot accept your application if you do not have a guarantor. You must also utilize the services of a passport office if you're applying for a passport on behalf of a child, and only one of the parents is participating; no matter what the circumstances including death or sole custody.

You must apply to a passport office for a free replacement or if your application includes a legal name change that is not due to change in a relationship status.

As you can see there are many areas where complications can arise in trying to address our citizens' needs for passports. I believe it's unfortunate, costly and inconvenient for someone who needs an emergency passport for a death in a family in another country

have to travel to Halifax to get one. And, should they fail to take it with them, all the necessary documents or identifications, they may find themselves facing huge delays.

Many Islanders who make plans for vacation in another country check their passport and find out that their passport is about to expire. Yes, we should be more diligent, but on occasion someone offers a free trip and, well, we can't turn that down. Getting your passport renewed in time may prove difficult and if you have to make a rush trip to Halifax to try and speed up the process, it means an added expense for travelling across the bridge, for gas, and for a meal or two along the way.

I believe that if we are to be a modern and successful place to live and to do business in our new global community, we must offer passport services comparable to our provincial counterparts.

From April, 2015 – March, 2016, the four MP offices in PEI received 1,118 passport applications out of a total of 13,666 for the whole Island. Almost 60% – 8,178 were received by Service Canada in Charlottetown. It was indicated as well that more than 10% of PEI passport applications were made in person, either in Halifax or Fredericton, and more than 600 were urgent or express applications.

What is particularly unfair is the urgent or express applications cost an extra \$110 and they must be submitted in person at a passport office. The Halifax and Fredericton locations are all there for Islanders to use. That's an eight hour round trip to both locations and if someone is elderly or ill, that's a long ride – an expensive one to boot.

Our province needs to be able to fast-track passports and although it appears that our current provincial Liberal administration does not enjoy the comradeship that might have once anticipated with its federal counterpart, we urge this government to represent us on this issue and request that the federal government take immediate action to locate a passport office in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll be short Mr. Speaker.

I want to, first of all, thank the opposition for this motion because it's important that the more we recognize immigrations and the importance of it to Prince Edward Island, the more Islanders will see that it's good for Prince Edward Island. As I've always stated since day one, diversity is our biggest asset here in Canada and with diversity comes a lot of good things.

I want to just say – I really want to thank the staff over at the Jean Canfield Building that does the passports now. They don't do the full passport, they just get it ready for it to go to Ottawa or wherever it goes. I know when I went over, they quickly done it up, took your money, sent it off, and it was back pretty quick. I believe with the opposition, we need an office here on Prince Edward Island. We need to make sure that, not only Islanders that are requiring assistance in terms of a passport, I think new immigrants that are here requiring some assistance from the federal government, they should be allowed to go to the Jean Canfield Building or other buildings across Prince Edward Island, federally, and to get any issues they have fixed up right away.

So I'll be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's great to see the cooperation in the House that's going on in the last couple of days.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the members on the opposite for bringing this motion to the floor as well. This is a prime example of the positive effect immigration is having on our province. Services like a passport office and even a federal immigration office are becoming all the more necessary. Some

would say it's long overdue. Just recently, we had 975 families a year coming to PEI and that's going to happen continuously in the foreseeable future. We're seeing growth all over the place, right from one end of the Island to the other.

It wasn't too long ago someone came up to me and talked about attending an Islanders game, it was minor hockey night and several of the kids on the minor hockey team were Asian, which was very interesting to have someone come up and recognize that, but in the next breath, they were talking about how that could save some of the sport programs through natural immigration.

Charlottetown Curling Club hosted a night not too long ago and we all know the Charlottetown Curling Club is working hard to save their membership – hosted a night for immigrants. Charlottetown Rotary just inducted an individual from France. That's how we're seeing immigration grow right across the province. We did have a dwindling population base and immigration is certainly helping us with that. Our median age, for the first time in over 50 years, has trended younger.

They bring much needed skilled labour and specialized training, new ideas, new cultures, and new ways of doing business. We're part of the Atlantic Growth Strategy. We have endorsed 79 candidates to date – 110 employers with over 340 positions available. Three applicants and their families out of that group have permanent residency here on Prince Edward Island. We've got some good programs. And we talk about the labour force – manufacturing growth exports and talking about people travelling abroad. We led the country several times throughout the year on manufacturing growth exports. That means there's more companies, actually, exporting into international markets.

I saw a stat the other day that showed almost half of the top 50 start ups in the United States come from immigrant families or are immigrants themselves. That's an astounding number, but something that we should keep an eye on because we do have a great IT sector here and some of them are immigrants. And it's one we cannot forget when we talk about our immigration programs.

We are working very hard to ensure immigration streams are benefiting our province and helping us accomplish our goals. The recent changes we've made are in line with that. We've increased the number of immigration agents to the province. Combined with our new expression of interest model, this will allow the Office of Immigration to be far more selective about immigrants approved to come here, as well as the business ideas and skills they bring with them.

We also see tremendous potential for immigration in Rural Prince Edward Island. We are in discussions with 13 communities across the Island that are interested in increasing immigration to their region. It speaks for itself when you have communities right across Prince Edward Island that are very interested in immigration. They understand and they feel that they can. We're seeing banks close across Prince Edward Island and it's due to technology, obviously, but it's due to an outsourcing of population heading to more urban centres and we have to continue to try to build that.

When we were at Silliker Glass yesterday and I did an interview, one of the things that I talked about was trying to maintain businesses like Silliker Glass that are growing 30 new positions in the next little while. Maintaining that base and stability in those rural areas and it's really important that we keep those communities vibrant and that's exactly what we're trying to do.

An endorsement from a rural community will improve the likelihood of an immigrant's approval for permanent residency. It will also give those communities an opportunity to shore up services, increase economic development, and create new jobs. These communities have suffered from outmigration for generations and there are really only three ways to recover at this point: improve retention of existing residents, increase immigration, and inspire repatriation.

It wasn't long ago – approximately 10 years – economists were saying that our population was going to continue to decrease. Immigration is key to us growing our population. A passport office and an immigration federal office would improve

Islanders' ability to do business abroad and would make it easier for immigrants to participate in our culture. I have personally spoken to the parliamentary secretary over the past few months and have discussed the topic of the federal/national immigration meeting with the federal minister.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. MacDonald: It's important that we continue to work on this. It's a good motion, Mr. Speaker, but it's one that I would like to make a minor amendment to and it's to strengthen the motion. I agree with the motion in total; I think we need to strengthen it and ask for a little more.

As minister of immigration, I will continue to pursue the issue of an immigration office and a passport office on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Mr. MacDonald: It's the last part of the motion:

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly call upon the Government of Canada to take immediate action to establish an accessible and full-service passport office and federal immigration office in Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: And do you have copies of that, hon. Minister?

Mr. MacDonald: I do.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Immigration.

Speaker: Hon. minister, do you have a seconder?

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) early learning.

Speaker: Education?

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, can I comment on the (Indistinct)

Speaker: No, you have to (Indistinct). You can speak to it if you want on the list.

An Hon. Member: Yeah, a point of (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, we have a motion that's amended, and you all have copies of it.

An Hon. Member: Great amendment.

Speaker: Is there anybody who would like to speak to the amendment? And I know that the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald was first, so go ahead.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to rise and speak to the amendment. In fact, the amendment that has been proposed by the minister of economic development leads into the line of speaking that I was going to use to speak to the motion itself.

This amendment shows exactly what the problem is with this government. They're constantly trying to bite off more than they can chew. I mean, we're trying – they want to add a federal –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – a federal immigration office, right?

An Hon. Member: It's Christmas.

Mr. Trivers: And we've already heard, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is absolutely right; can't even reverse the EI changes. They can't get home delivery, and now we're asking not only for a simple full-service passport office, we want to add in a federal immigration office, and they can't even get the rules right for the PNP program, for God's sakes.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) immigration office.

Mr. Trivers: I don't know why this motion had to be amended. It was a simple request. Let's take things one step at a time. As you

know, you've got to crawl before you can walk, and this government hasn't learned to crawl yet, so you've got to start –

Mr. R. Brown: We're running.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) we've got stage time.

Mr. Trivers: – has got to start slowly. And you can talk about getting money for transportation. They've got these strict requirements about collector roads all the time –

An Hon. Member: There you go.

Mr. Trivers: – so we can't fix the roads that really need to be fixed in this province. That's why this amendment is symptomatic of the problem with this government, and now it's becoming more clear to me why our requests for a universal basic income pilot are also falling on deaf ears and going nowhere.

This government needs to take simple steps, one action at a time, not go right from a full-service passport office to a federal immigration office right off the bat. I mean, it is great to have lofty aspirations, but that's the point I wanted to make.

So I would like this government to prove me wrong. I would like to see them cooperate with the federal government on the passport office and prove to this House that they can do simple things with the federal government so that we can then tackle the big issues that require federal government aspiration and make some real progress in this province.

So I am fully against this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: That's not cooperation.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to ask – I'm wondering if we add in the final paragraph, and a federal immigration office in Prince Edward Island, that we should also not consider changing

paragraph number one: "WHEREAS Prince Edward Island remains the only province in Canada that does not have a full-service passport office;" and add in there also, and a federal immigration office.

Mr. R. Brown: That's a good one.

Ms. Biggar: Good point.

Mr. Fox: So that's –

Mr. MacEwen: Are we the only province?

Speaker: Yeah, that's – the –

An Hon. Member: Probably.

Mr. R. Brown: Just a minute.

Mr. Fox: So I would make an amendment –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I would make an amendment to the amendment that we would add:

Whereas Prince Edward Island remains the only province in Canada that does not have a full-service passport office and federal immigration office.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Good job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Yeah, hon. member, do you a – who's the seconder for your amendment to the amendment?

Mr. Myers: I'll second it.

Mr. Fox: The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is the seconder.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, okay, thank you hon. member.

Hon. members, I don't think we really need copies of this –

Some Hon. Members: No.

Speaker: I think it's pretty easy to understand.

Mr. R. Brown: So clear in his explanation.

Speaker: Is everybody okay with understanding the amendment to the amendment? Is there any members who would like to speak to the amendment to the amendment?

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Speaker: Question: All those in favour signify by saying aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Opposed, say nay.

An Hon. Member: Nay.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Grinch.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) Scrooge.

Speaker: Okay, the amendment's carried. The amendment to the amendment is carried.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Speaker: Yeah, now it's back to the amendment as amended and the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your name was on the list to speak. Oh no, you're done, that's right.

Mr. Fox: Yes, that's right.

Speaker: Ready for the question?

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River would like to speak to the amendment.

Ms. Compton: I'll speak to the amendment. I'll speak to the fact that we do not have a passport office in Charlottetown. I'll speak to the fact that right now, I'm filling out my passport renewal application. I started last night, and I thought, okay, I can take it to the Jean Canfield Building. I've done that

before. It's a great help. It doesn't really get you what you want.

Mr. R. Brown: Don't mind.

Ms. Compton: If you mail it, it's going to Gatineau, Quebec. It's the middle of December. When are you going to get it back?

It says: Do not finalize your travel plans until after you get your passport back. How many of us have heard our friends say: Well, I'm hoping to go but I don't have my passport back yet.

So personally, I've been to Halifax, Fredericton, and Ottawa different times to renew my passport, just because you need it done. My husband's lost his passport, come home here for a month and have to scramble to somewhere to get his passport renewed.

Mr. R. Brown: Lawrence could get him one.

Ms. Compton: Lawrence would get it, yeah. It's too bad I wouldn't have had it filled out earlier. I maybe could have gotten the hon. member, Sean Casey, to take my passport, because we're waiting for the office that he promised.

It was part of the platform in the last election. It's a concern that we all have. We want to know why we do not have a passport office, and it's great to amend it saying a passport office and an immigration office. I think maybe we should start with baby steps, because an immigration office would mean different staff than a passport office, so let's not forget that.

So as much as we're all saying the amendment's a great idea, I think first if we can go with a passport office and have our one or two wickets where you can go and renew your passport, that's a start, as opposed to an immigration office where you're dealing with people from all different countries and all the different visas that you need and all the documentations that are required for the number of people that come to Prince Edward Island, so I think it's something that we maybe would have to have a sober second thought about.

I just would like to say I would love to have my passport application back and know that I could go to Charlottetown, somewhere in Charlottetown, and do it. It would simplify life for all Islanders, and I hope that everyone will support the motion. The amended motion is great, but I think the motion to have a passport office is primary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's great to get up and speak to this motion and the amendment to the motion.

It's a priority in my department to see population growth and immigration in Prince Edward Island, and we are seeing success, and I agree that we need to make government services easier and more accessible to both newcomers and long-term Islanders.

Prince Edward Island, as I've mentioned many times, our population has grown to over 150,000 residents for the first time in history, meeting government's population target for 2017. In actual fact, our population as of July, 2017, was 152,021 people.

Driven by strong international immigration and business innovation, PEI has led the Atlantic Provinces since 2007 in population growth, and our population is larger and more diverse than it has ever been.

As mentioned earlier, our median age is getting younger, which shows progress in reversing the trend of an aging population. The last time this happened was in 1967.

We are well on our way to building a resilient, diverse population of 160,000 by the end of 2022, as laid out in our population action plan.

With the population action plan released earlier in 2017, government has made a commitment to recruit, repatriate and retain a skilled and talented workforce; and may I

add, we're only about seven months into our plan, and we've seen many successes to date.

Each action is aligned with specific targets to ensure a resilient, diverse sustainability in Prince Edward Island. With a particular focus on rural development, government supports population growth in all communities right across Prince Edward Island.

In light of the government's commitment to population growth, I am supportive of any initiatives that support government's population goals and make life on Prince Edward Island easier for all newcomers and Islanders.

A consolidated passport and immigration office would be more convenient for Islanders and newcomers. It would be more convenient for Islanders going on vacation of traveling for business or any other reason. It would be helpful to immigrants who may need to travel back and forth to see family or to do business. We need not only ensure access, but make sure that the services there to be responsive, easy and timely, in time of need of Islanders.

Whether it is an express entry, skilled workers, temporary workers, people who are coming as investors, people who are coming as refugees, an increasingly diverse mix of people are living and doing business in PEI. Such an office would provide help to newcomers in government processes like filling out forms or language barriers, or simply the process of becoming adjusted to dealing with the Canadian government and make this a bit more not so difficult.

A consolidated passport and immigration office would also create new jobs for Islanders, which would be a great thing for our economy. On these points – service to newcomers, service to Islanders and creating jobs for residents – I support the amended motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, speaking to the amendment.

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I support the motion, the amendment. I think it's incredibly important that we do have a passport office in Prince Edward Island, and equally, that we have an immigration office here.

I think that we're at a – almost like a crossroads here in the province. Our population is growing. With that population that's growing, there are more family visitors that are coming to Prince Edward Island.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, good point.

Mr. Roach: We've just done a major expansion on the runway at Charlottetown airport so that we can start to –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. Summerside (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – garner international flights into this country; and if we have international flights into this country, we need to have an immigration – a Canadian immigration staff –

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Mr. Roach: – Canadian immigration officers there so that we can greet those passengers. I think when that word spreads, I know that there's several countries who are now, have expressed interest in having direct flights from their country of origin right into Charlottetown.

We're going to need those immigration officers. I know that from time to time over the last number of years, we have had immigration officers here for up to six months doing that kind of work.

So I think that we're getting to the point that we need to have that office established as well. As other speakers have said, we have many businesses that are coming here. I know of many that I've spoken to in the past have always had a little bit of frustration that there hasn't been that direct flight able to come in to Prince Edward Island.

So I think for those reasons, I support the amendment of the member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other Members who would like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I've talked numerous times in the Legislative Assembly with regards to the lack of a passport office here in PEI, and I had the great privilege back a number of years ago, particularly when I worked at the Confederation Centre of the Arts, of working with the staff at CIC here in Charlottetown.

I do agree with the hon. members that spoke about it, and the province of Prince Edward Island not having this representation here in this very important office and staff here on PEI. There were some tweets went out today, as a matter of fact, talking about PEI left out again. They were talking about the popularity of the Premiers across PEI, and unfortunately, they talked about Atlantic Canada, but they didn't even talk about our Premier here on PEI.

Unfortunately, it would appear that PEI, for some reason which I totally don't understand, is being left off the map. We're being left off representation federally. I think it's time that as a province we're an equal partner in Confederation. When we signed on, that's what we were and that's what we still are.

I do firmly believe, that not only do we deserve a passport office here on PEI, but we need and we deserve full representation of immigration here on PEI, and that would be the reinstatement of a full citizenship and immigration office here in Charlottetown. I say here in Charlottetown. I'd be more than happy as well if they wanted to establish it in Summerside.

But you know what? At the end of the day, we are an equal partner in Confederation. We deserve to be treated equally and so – I'm sorry, I just got a glimpse of an interesting piece of clothing across the floor there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Leader of the Opposition: I may have expected to see that in a seat over here, but maybe not over there. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, I digress.

So, just, I want to reinstate that I feel that PEI, as an equal partner in Confederation, we deserve to be treated with fairness and equity by the federal government of Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters speaking to the amendment.

Mr. Myers: I had some time to reflect on this amendment, and the more I think about it, the more I think we need somebody here from Ottawa keeping an eye on you fellows when it comes to immigration. There's been an awful lot of things that have been out of whack since this immigration program has started, and I think you're right. I think you need a watchdog right in here from Ottawa in Charlottetown keeping an eye on what you're doing.

I remember there was one (Indistinct) – I didn't even know what PNP was – one afternoon the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park near broke his wrist signing two or three thousand of them to get them all in, in the final days of one of the programs that the federal government had stepped in and closed down because it was being abused by this government.

Mr. MacEwen: Some MLAs knew what it was.

Mr. Myers: Some MLAs knew what it was, yeah. Some MLAs got their share of it, but I didn't know what it was, like many Islanders didn't know what it was. I remember when I ran in the 2011 election, I still really didn't know what it was, but I knew a whole bunch

of people did something that they weren't supposed to do, and that was about as much as anyone knew.

After I was elected and I got a little more details on the whole file, I thought: Boy, there was really –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Yeah, somebody was really –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Somebody was spending a lot of time cooking and scheming on this, yeah. It was Allan Rankin said in an article in the *Graphic*, he said it was strange – because he was working in the Premier's office at the time – he said it was strange to see how much Robert Ghiz was involved in that program right down to who was getting PNP units.

So I do think that the amendment is worthy of a further discussion with Ottawa, because I do think that you guys need a watchdog of some sort when you're dealing with immigration. I know there's been several questions come up here recently about PNP again.

I've always said it was a good program for Prince Edward Island and it's great to have immigration into the Island. I was always really questionable whether or not government's goal was to actually have people move here, or if it was just a revenue stream and the more defaults they could get on the numerous deposits that they had – at one time there was a language one, and I don't know what all the deposits are anymore – but government seems to cash in on those deposits quite a bit.

The more I think about that, the more I think that government really isn't running an immigration system here where they're trying to encourage people to become Islanders and move here and live here and raise their family here, as much as it's a business scheme and they're the ultimate intermediary because they're just trying to cash in on the final stage.

The less the nominee actually does fulfill the requirements here on Prince Edward Island, the more, actually, the government stands to

make. I do think that we need to have some sort of a local on-the-scene immigration person here to ensure that this government is being watched a lot more closely so that we know that people are being treated fairly, who are choosing to be immigrants here to Prince Edward Island and that this isn't just a cash-in scheme by government.

I believe it was also the Leader of the Opposition, earlier in this session, who had made the recommendation to change the way that you run this system. There has been a lot of talk about the deposit system; that maybe the deposit system isn't actually the best system for long-term immigration. Several provinces have moved away from that cycle.

It's great and I want to thank the minister of tourism for bringing forward an opportunity to talk about immigration tonight. I thought we were just going to talk about unfulfilled commitments of Sean Casey, but here we are talking about a federal office.

I would suggest, if you're looking to bring a federal immigration office back into Charlottetown that you sidestep Sean Casey. There's a fellow up the road there, Wayne Easter's his name, who stands up to his own government. Maybe start with him. At least you'll hear it back in the media if you bring it to his attention. If you put Wayne – I might call him myself, actually, once this passes in the Legislature; call Wayne myself and he might be the kind of guy who'll become vocal and stand up for Islanders. It's something that we deserve here on Prince Edward Island. It's something that we elect people to do; to stand up for the people, who they represent. I think we need more of that.

I suggest avoiding the fellow, who represents Charlottetown here. He's got his hands full. He's got a whole bunch promises that he hasn't yet fulfilled, probably never going to; never heard about them again and they were only important when he was going door-to-door. I'm sure he'll cook some more up for the next election cycle and try to make people believe, again, that he cares about what they think, and that he cares about the things that they believe in. Hopefully, they'll be wise to it next time, and see otherwise.

Part of me is in the seam of the Member from Rustico-Emerald here, too, where I do feel like you're biting off more than you can chew by adding this. I'll probably myself vote in favour of this amendment simply to get the whole thing passed at the end of the night. While I do feel like, you know, you're asking for a lot. If you've noticed what Prince Edward Island has gotten in the last two years under Justin Trudeau, it's nothing –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: What did we get?

Mr. R. Brown: 300 million.

Mr. Myers: 300 million, and it was 582 when Gail Shea was minister of revenue.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Five hundred and eighty-two million dollars. So we're cut 200 million under Trudeau. We found out that night from the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

I think that it's lofty to add other things, to tack other things on to Ottawa, when we haven't been able to get anything out of them.

Even their misplaced carbon tax, where suddenly, it was the biggest thing in the world, and now no one will talk about it. There's utter silence when it comes to carbon tax by everybody. By this government, who, one time, were big proponents of it, and they were beating the drum how great this was going to be. Suddenly, they're silent because they – maybe they're finally getting the message of how much this is going to hurt rural Prince Edward Island. How much this is going to hurt farmers. How fishermen can't swim their boat out to the lobster grounds to land the 227 million lbs. of lobster – is it dollars or pounds?

Mr. McIsaac: (Indistinct) dollars.

Mr. Myers: Million dollars; \$227 million worth of lobster. That's a big thing here for Prince Edward Island. We don't need a further impact on that by carbon tax. It seems to be those types of things that Justin

Trudeau has set his sights on. None of those things, which are good for Prince Edward Island: the greenest province in Canada.

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Myers: Jamie Ballem put windmills up right across Prince Edward Island. If you go back to Angus MacLean, we were the first ones to have an environment minister.

Tories, over here, we have been very green for all these years. We don't have a big carbon footprint. I understand there are places, I've been to Ontario, the places where they need it. I 100% support reducing the emissions into the environment in some of the places that are the heavy polluters. I'm not convinced that we're one of them. I think that we need to everything that we could do to encourage things like the electric car here on Prince Edward Island, and contribute to reducing our footprint, but we're not a polluter, not like the other provinces are.

We are way, way down the scale when it comes to pollution here in this province. Justin Trudeau's plan was completely off-target. He's targeting people that fish and farm here on Prince Edward Island and completely ignoring places where they're just pumping the sky full of smoke making steel and that kind of stuff. Those are the people, who need to pay first. Those are the people, who need to be brought under control first. If the emissions of Canada are still too high after that come see the rest of us.

In the meantime, we get after this government here to do the right thing and put systems in place so that people can move to a greener form of energy in their home; so people can move to a greener form of transportation, so that there's a bigger and better bus system here on Prince Edward Island; so that people from rural Prince Edward Island don't have to drive to Stratford to get on the bus system; that I don't have to drive 40 minutes to save the environment.

It seems like it has been poorly thought out by this government. I think that this government needs to stand up – yes, I know, Mr. Speaker, I'm back to the immigration –

Mr. MacEwen: 2019 throne speech.

Mr. Myers: Yeah. Back to the immigration; I think the reason I got off on such a tangent there is because there are so many things. There are so many opportunities for this government to stand up for Islanders, and they're going to tack the federal immigration office on, which I support us having. I just don't know who is going to carry the ball on it. I don't know who is going to stand up for Islanders. It doesn't seem that anybody is, besides the opposition parties here on Prince Edward Island, anymore.

It's important to have a focus. I'm not convinced that they have it over there. While, I support having an immigration office because, as I have always said in this House: immigration is important. I'm not sure that they have the horses across the room over there to pull it through. They certainly don't have the local partnership by the local MP to do anything; gone silent and disappeared. He's like the groundhog. He saw his shadow two years ago and no one has seen him since.

These are types of things that I believe politicians need to be better about. Let's call a spade a spade. Let's all stand up and call everyone to task for not doing the things that they said that they were going to do. If you made a promise, you now have to live by it. I've always said when you're out here in Prince Edward Island or anywhere in the world, that your word is the most important thing. It's a thing that you need to protect. The best way to protect it is to be honest and to live up to the promises that you've made. I think that's something that has been lost on this government here. It has certainly been lost on Sean Casey and it has been lost in Ottawa and Justin Trudeau because he's in la-la land because he thought his popularity was going to carry him forever by actually doing nothing –

Mr. Trivers: Like to talk (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Not even good at talking. Justin Trudeau's not even good at talking. Let's face it, he's, at very, very best, he's doing his best when he's not talking. To be honest with you, he's great in pictures. But the minute he opens his mouth he has nothing to say that's worthwhile for the rest of Canada. That's why we need strong leadership across

there. That's why we need a Premier who can go to Ottawa and stand up to Justin Trudeau. This Premier should be able to. He's plenty educated. He has lots of experience. Justin Trudeau should be coming to him for advice.

If this was Pat Binns, then the Prime Minister would be coming down here asking for advice saying: What should I do, Pat? That's what we should be striving for over there. That's what this government needs to do. This Premier here should be the go-to guy for Justin Trudeau and he needs to work towards that. Number one, it takes standing up to him and earning the respect by saying: We're not going to be pushed around by you. He won't like to be embarrassed and then he'll have to come to you and say: what's it going to take to keep everybody happy? And maybe you could offer him some great advice.

I know that your protégé, Alec Campbell, was able to do that with his father. Maybe – you wrote the book. Surely, you read it. That there's an opportunity for you to fashion a relationship with this Trudeau like your protégé did with the other Trudeau. I think that, while I'll support this amendment, I think this government, like the Member from Rustico-Emerald; they've probably bitten off a bit more than they can chew. While I think it's important to have it here. I just don't see any leadership over there to make it happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other hon. members that would like to speak to the amendment as amended?

Ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment as amended, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Speaker: Again, signify by saying 'nay'.

Mr. Trivers: Nay.

Mr. R. Brown: Well, he's persistent.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The amendment as amended is carried, so now we're going back to the main motion as amended.

Ms. Biggar: Call the question.

Speaker: Premier, did you want to – I do have other names on the list. Now, the names that I had on the list, do you still want to speak to the –

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Speaker: Okay, Premier, we'll get to you in due time; your name is on the list.

Mr. R. Brown: Old Hunter River wants to get up.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, did you want to – okay.

Ms. Compton: Yeah.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to (Indistinct) short.

One thing I've heard from a lot of people over the last number of years, without having a passport office here on PEI, was the inconvenience that causes to their schedule, and that they have to take time off for work, and they have to arrange for babysitters, and then they have to do the long travel to either Halifax or Fredericton, and that is a big inconvenience, and I think we're actually asking the residents of PEI to do too much in that regard. They should have the same opportunity that every other province or every other citizen in Canada has within this province.

If they need a service by the federal government, then that service should be provided here in some regard, and with a passport office, there's no reason why we shouldn't have a passport office here, given the facilities we have representing other parts of the federal government. I can't think of anything other besides a passport office

and an immigration office that we don't have on PEI, but every other province does have, and I think it's time. I have to agree with the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters – this is where it all started, and at the end of the day our citizens should be given the same opportunities and access to services as every other person in Canada.

And with that I'll throw in there the Confederation Bridge – you know, our citizens, they have to pay \$47-48 to go off the Island to go get a service provided that should be provided here, and I'll end with that and say that I support this motion.

I think that we need, as legislators, give our citizens the same access to service as every other Canadian has across this country.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The motion as amended, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am in favour of this motion –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: – as it was originally presented. I wasn't in favour of the amendment, and that's just because we did pass a very similar motion in the spring of this year, unanimously in this House, and maybe I missed it, but I haven't heard a single person on the government side stand up and give an update to the progress they're making on getting a passport office here. Did I miss that?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

An Hon. Member: That's all right.

Mr. Trivers: And if there was an update that was given, I didn't (Indistinct) any timelines associated with it, that's for sure.

Ms. Biggar: Check the Hansard.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) a letter.

Mr. Trivers: So this is – that was my problem with the amendment, is it's adding

more talk that are going to result in the promises that are not being completed. I think that this government, if they're really serious about getting a passport office on Prince Edward Island, and you know, a federal immigration office would be nice too, but if we're going to have to wait two years for a federal immigration office that also has passport service, or if we can have a full-service passport office let's say this winter, I'm at a loss as to why there hasn't been action on this file.

Presumably, there is the support of the Members of Parliament. Presumably, there's offices that exist on Prince Edward Island that could do this work. Presumably, there's people with the expertise to do that that already exist on Prince Edward Island. So I don't know why this hasn't happened yet.

And this is why, I mean, I spoke out fairly forcefully before, because it's a matter of confidence. I've just lost a lot of confidence in this government. I remember when I spoke up and spoke to the original Speech From the Throne and responded to that. I was upbeat. I was optimistic. I said this is great; I can't wait to see this happen.

Mr. R. Brown: You lost it in five weeks.

Mr. Trivers: It took more than five weeks for me to lose my optimism, but here we are, three speeches from the throne in, and we're still talking about the same things. We're bringing a motion to the floor about a passport office where we haven't seen any action, so I hope that there's some more government members that get up and speak to this motion, and I hope they commit to making this happen, and perhaps even give a timeframe, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: He'll bring some sanity to the House.

Mr. Palmer: I wasn't going to get up and talk on this, because I knew everybody in here, I knew that everyone in here knew that this should obviously be in Summerside, the passport office, so I didn't think it made any sense for me to bother to get up and talk about it, but I think I will go over a couple of the really good reasons why it should be in Summerside.

We've got great land there. We've got great skilled –

An Hon. Member: Should be built in Borden-Carleton by the bridge.

Mr. Palmer: No, no, it needs to be in Summerside; for sure it needs to be in Summerside.

Leader of the Opposition: No, we've got a bridge in Stratford (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: We've got great land, there's lots of place where you could – it's an easy city to develop in. You could build a building. There's lots of buildings there, also, that you could rent and you could fit up. We've got lots of skilled people in Summerside. Really importantly as well, we have lots of people, expats, that are – there's people from Summerside that would love to move back home, and I bet you if we did an inventory of the people that were out there, we may even find some that work at a passport office or an immigration office somewhere through Canada that could come home, so they may already be trained.

I think if we do this, and put this in Summerside, it would be a wonderful asset in Summerside, because there's lots of businesses in Summerside that export; they sell internationally, so their sales folks will need their passport to be updated now and again, so what a great place to do it. We could be a hub in PEI for international exports, so I think that's a wonderful thing for us to have in Summerside.

Around the job growth that we could have in Summerside with this passport and immigration office, I think – because a week or so, we were talking about 2,700 new jobs were created in PEI in the last year –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: – so there could be even more, and we could continue to grow our exports –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Palmer: – and I seem to recall the export number in the potato industry, is almost \$300 million. I think if we were to continue to grow those exports and have our sales force based in Summerside, that they would have access to this passport and immigration office.

With that growth in business in Summerside, we provide lots of opportunity for our kids. There'd be lots of things for them to do. There'd be increased commerce, there would be more businesses starting, there would be lots of opportunities so kids don't have to move away; they could continue to stay in Summerside and continue to grow exports and bring new money into the province. And as new money comes into the province, we could pay for all those things we know are so important: Hospitals and manors and roads and schools.

We need money to do all those things, so if we had our passport and immigration office in Summerside, and Summerside became the export hub of Prince Edward Island, our sales force would be there and they'd be able to easily have their passports renewed, and as new people were hired, they'd be able to get their passports initiated there.

I know everybody here already knows that those are all the obvious reasons why it should be in Summerside, so I just wanted to make sure in case there was anything that was missing that people weren't sure of, that I just wanted to get that out there, so thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Speaking to the motion as amended, the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to support the motion, and to support it in its first part, which is to have a passport office in Prince Edward Island, and to endorse the amendment to underscore the

growth that we've seen in immigration, and the reasons why it's important that people who are immigrants or intended immigrants to Prince Edward Island, have the service of a pass – of an immigration office, a federal immigration office, here in the province.

In the past year, we've had a total of 2,300 to 2,400 immigrants, just under 30% of those would be in the business or investor stream. There are people here, a growing number, who are here as refugees, who are here as skilled workers, who are here as temporary workers, who are here through other programs including; the reunification of families.

I think it's very useful in that sense to understand the number of times that people do interact with federal immigration officials. If you go to a citizenship ceremony. The thing that you hear and see in that room is that, people by the time they get to become – to take the oath of citizenship, have been in this country and in the case of those, who come to Prince Edward Island have generally been in this province for five to seven years, which includes a lot of interactions with and opportunities when they have to fill out forms, get updated, be sure they know where they stand.

It's been a matter of concern. It has been a matter of concern in our province and it's an important piece of our population action plan to ensure that we have a strong record of retention or of the successful integration and settlement of people, who come here as immigrants in whatever category. For people that come here at the rate of 2,300 or 2,400 a year, actually, in 2016 that was the highest rate of immigration by comparison with any other province in the country.

For people to come here and then be told: Well, you have to get somebody to do this for you in Ottawa, or you have to go to Halifax or Fredericton. Sometimes, people of modest means, it's not a very confirming message about their choice to come to Prince Edward Island in the first place.

It's in the light – understanding the sense of vulnerability, the sense of changing circumstances and simple questions that people may have to consult with. An immigration officer, that it's imperative, I

would say, that there be a federal immigration office in our province. I was – and it's to – to understand that, not in, what I would call the pathological sense that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters described, but in the service sense of the responding to people in their situation. To confirming that we want them to be Prince Edward Islanders and Canadians.

I was, yesterday morning, it's one of those moments, when you appreciate, you know, what's going on in this province, and how people are moving through their phases. I stopped at a corner store in the east end of Charlottetown. One that would be well known to some members in this House, and the proprietor there, certainly, older in age than many people would know him to be, came here as an immigrant from the Middle East. Quite an upstanding part of the community and a leader, and in the store with him was a man, who came here as part of the refugees, who came from Syria in the latter part of 2015 and the first months of 2016. The proprietor told me that the person, who had come recently as a refugee is getting along great. His family is getting along great. He has said: The only thing I would like now, is to win the lottery. The person, who has been here for many decades said: You did win the lottery when you came to Prince Edward Island. That said a lot to me about who we are as a province. And how people do see us.

The young man, Basel Alrashdan, who spoke at the United Nations, and then subsequently spoke with the Prime Minister and is a great ambassador for our province. To see how he, and his younger sister and younger brother have progressed in the time since they have been in our province. Very short – less than, still less than two years, or just about two years, even today. They're getting along great. They're happy and they're doing well in their studies. To hear them speak English really, you realize, how quickly, particularly, young people learn.

They're undoubtedly interactions with the whole immigration system that might, in a case of, if their family weren't so strong and resilient, indeed, get them to ask: Why are we hanging around in Prince Edward Island if we have to go to Fredericton or Halifax or Ottawa or somewhere else to get some attention. So, it's in that respect and with the

clear expectation and commitment that we will see greater numbers of immigrants come to Prince Edward Island, settle, do well, contribute in multiple ways; culturally, educationally, in the economy, in our community and in the ways that they simply bring joy to our collective lives.

It's in that spirit that I would totally endorse this motion that would seek both a passport office and an immigration office. Neither of which would, I would contend, be a stretch in the slightest.

We've had a passport in the past. It was withdrawn or cancelled by the previous government. And it's time to advocate to get that back. And to have a combined or certainly related complimentary effort for immigration.

There has been much said about the relations between the province and the federal government. I think there is a underlying misapprehension there in this sense. It sounds like it is being said that the province is not, sort of getting along okay, or not getting enough achieved in its relations with Ottawa, if we're not what our grandmothers might call: giving lip. That is not our approach to how we get along. It wasn't with the previous government either. Although, we certainly had to push against the door more often than, I think, should have been necessary.

Let me say because the reference has been made – can I have some water, please? That the reference has been made here to Alec Campbell (Indistinct) but I don't think he was ever my protégé. At this time in the mandate of premier Campbell, relative to their election, they were still about two to three months short of signing the comprehensive development plan; important to understand the time periods that we're dealing here.

The comprehensive development plan made a commitment to spend \$225 million in federal dollars on Prince Edward Island over a 15-year period. That was a great thing for our provinces. And the various ways in which we had a real – a transformation over those years. Those 15 years took us right on into the Angus MacLean years.

Let me make this comparison, since that

question has been squarely raised on the floor about whether we are or aren't getting enough done with the federal government. The Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park said: there's a number on the order of \$300 million –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – that has been spent in federal-provincial relations in this province, and that that would – that's being done over a period of three years. The very three years that we're talking about, coming up three years that we've been in government. And –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Let's talk about what those resources represent. The transmission cable, been talked about here in this House a lot: \$142 million. Water and waste water: \$90 million. Roads and bridges: \$122 million in that period and more to come. Those are three big areas.

Talk about the areas where the federal government spends directly, that's to say without – with by spends 100 cent dollars. Small harbours: \$12-15 million a year; province house next door heading for 50 million, now in the mid 40s; the work that's been done in the National Park. I was in the park on the weekend and the number of trees, and the work, and the roads, and the bridges in the park around the order of \$25-30 million, and that was, indeed, started under the Harper government. Wood Islands Ferry – the Nova Scotia, PEI ferry – a federal responsibility, major commitment, 20 years – 20 plus years – and that's been done with cooperation –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: – with the federal government, with the leadership of the federal government, with the province being clear that our responsibility is to promote the welfare of our citizens, but not to reach into

our pocket if the federal government is going to do it, and they are.

That's been a major, major achievement – historic – never, never seen before. If you take those areas where there's shared spending; where there's federal spending in its own jurisdiction; those are some of the key areas. We can see what's going on at the airport, in the harbour, you can see what's going on when they intention the program that's been laid out for rural and northern infrastructure – one for which Prince Edward Island will qualify.

One of the things that really stands out, and what we've been able to achieve quietly, some my say, but effectively, in our relations with the federal government, is the number of those programs where there is a stipulated base per jurisdiction in terms of the amount of spending.

I mentioned the water and wastewater where of the \$113 million that was allocated to be spent in that program, 55 of the 56 that was earmarked for Prince Edward Island was the base funding. So, if we hadn't had that base, the number that was available to be spent in Prince Edward Island would have been more like a couple of million dollars.

Let me say something about our Member of Parliament for Charlottetown because I was there with him the day that we had the opening or the announcement of the tie-in between Stratford and Charlottetown –

Ms. Casey: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and what we were really celebrating that day was that Charlottetown, for the first time in four decades, if not five and more, had an effective, integrated water and wastewater system and a second well field and the member, Sean Casey for Charlottetown, was a very effective proponent for his district and for our province in having that achievement and we appreciate it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: We were with Sean Casey at Park Royal on the day of the housing announcement of \$7.2 million and that was for the upgrading and the enhancement of housing, but that day, and

no one could doubt what was being said, Sean Casey said: This is just a start and housing is a priority and everywhere I go – and he does go to the doors in his district and he knows what people are dealing with and he is an active proponent and he never lets us forget it or his federal colleagues forget the importance of affordable housing and proper integrated and robust response to the need for housing in our province and we thank him for that.

Province House next door – it's a lot more than saying we're the birthplace, it's ensuring that that facility is being done at the standard it is with 100 cent of federal dollars. We have a very effective relationship and a positive relationship and they do ask our opinion, they do seek out our view on things and they do respect Prince Edward Island as a partner in confederation. They also respect, and I'm proud to say because it's been a key part of a lot of what we've been able to achieve – they respect the scale and the ability of Prince Edward Island to move ahead in a nimble fashion and to grow and that's why we're doing as well as we are relative to all of the other provinces in the country, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to say one further thing about what's getting done with federal and provincial cooperation and partnership in this province because I asked for it within the past week and we've now taken a tally of the number of dollars that are structurally – that are baked into the base – for people who are vulnerable Islanders and, in particular, who are in a vulnerable economic situation. If you compare what was available in programs – federal and provincial – in 2014 with what's available in 2017 for Islanders who get those benefits based on their economic situation, it's between \$40 and \$45 million.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: I'd be quiet over there too.

Premier MacLauchlan: And the biggest single part of that is a promise that was lived up to which is to put the Canada Child Benefit –

An Hon. Member: But we still don't have a passport office.

Premier MacLauchlan: – on the terms that it now is. \$25 million to families and children in this province from the federal government since the election on a promise that was made and kept and it's making a big difference to Islanders throughout Prince Edward Island. The guaranteed income supplement –

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: – enhanced on the order of \$900 for the people who qualify for that – running into the millions. The program for students, post-secondary students, through the link to the EI, will this year mean about \$4 million in circulation in this province by people who can benefit from that.

If you go over to the provincial side between the Generic Drug Program, the food allowance, the tax changes, the comfort allowance, the disability programs, that's a sizeable number and it's done in a collaborative spirit, it's done in a spirit of commitment and it's done with the positive partnership. That's why we speak about that because I don't think any Islanders benefit from and I don't think, frankly, many would spend time believing that when they're told that somehow the province and federal government aren't working well together or achieving things together for Prince Edward Islanders, and there's more to come.

In housing, in broadband, in further work in transportation, in further work in water and wastewater, and that's the kind of government we've got in Ottawa; that's the kind of government we have in this province and we're making historic, structural, positive change and if we're doing it on good natured terms, we don't apologize for that. We're happy to work positively, progressively, and proactively for Prince Edward Islanders and we're happy to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Speaker: Okay members, we are running short on time. I have two names on the list: the hon. Leader of the Third Party and the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, only need two minutes.

We're a small province and there are certain things that we shall never have here; a 50,000-seat professional sport stadium, a professional opera company, an underground railway system, subway – certain things we will never have and should not expect –

Leader of the Opposition: Underground economy.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – but we are an equal partner in Confederation and we celebrated that this morning and I think it's important that we are given equal access to all of the services that every other Canadian citizen, new or been here for generations, is used to.

One thing that hasn't been stressed, I don't think, enough in the debate this evening is that there's a significant financial barrier for some Islanders in getting to Halifax. I know it's been touched on, but you need either your own transportation, you need the bridge toll, and for some people, it could require being off-Island for a couple of days if you have to use public transportation, so that barrier for me is perhaps the biggest argument why we should have – why we have to have a passport office here on Prince Edward Island and really that's – I support the motion, of course, and that's all I would like to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

As I said, just a couple of points I want to make. This comes from talking with some of my constituents in Stratford-Kinlock, and there's some very serious issues, concerns that they've raised with me.

Yes, it's true the cost of travel to Halifax or one of the other areas here in the Maritimes to renew your passport or to apply for a brand new passport and receive it is one thing, and I do agree that it can be cost-prohibitive for some people.

But one of the issues that we hear about all the time, and the federal government is always trying to remind us, is that a Canadian passport is a treasured document. There's people out there in the world that will do almost anything to get their hands on a Canadian passport, to be able to edit it, to sell it on the black market.

One of the things that, as I said, has been raised to me over and over again by my constituents and friends, is that, so, you get your paperwork, you can go into Service Canada here in Charlottetown to get it reviewed, you can send it in, mail it in, and what happens?

If you have the time and you don't have to go to Halifax or Fredericton or another city to actually get your passport, the federal government feels it's fine to send this treasured document, this document that you're supposed to protect, they'll send it through the mail. It just goes beyond common sense that a document that is supposed to be so treasured and so protected is simply sent through the mail.

That's one point that I think we need to also consider when we're advocating to try to have a passport office here in Charlottetown or, as the hon. Member said, in Summerside, which I'm not against.

People can say: You know what, a small province of 150,000 people, it's cost-prohibitive to have a passport office here on PEI; but again, I've spoken earlier about we're an equal partner in Confederation, but I'd just like to bring up a point about where we see wasteful spending.

We have a federal government that has just spent \$5.6 million – and that's what's been announced is \$5.6 million, so you know the cost overrun is going to far exceed that, it'll probably end up being about \$8 million – for an outdoor rink in Ottawa for a few weeks. Eight million dollars potentially, 5.6 million we know of, \$8 million potentially.

Mr. Fox: Total waste of money.

Leader of the Opposition: That's – I mean, this is taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker; and as Islanders and taxpayers, we should just be so upset over that, that we, as an equal partner in Confederation, don't even have the respect of this federal government to have a passport office or an immigration office here in our province. That's one of the things I'd like to get off my chest.

Another one, too: We talk about the immigration, particularly through the PNP program, and temporary foreign workers and things like that (Indistinct). Right now we have a retention rate of approximately 20%. Imagine if we had full service here on PEI. That other 80%, we could be making a potential impact on that by also having those services here.

So if you have an immigrant coming here from another country, all the way around the other side of the world, and they get here, and all of a sudden they see that: You know what, I can't get a doctor; you know what, I'm having a problem with my children in school; you know what, I can't even do a simple thing within my province that I'm living and residing, of getting my diplomatic or my passport documents, my immigrant documents updated, that I have to go and travel to another province. If we had that, it might help us with our retention as well.

Those are just a few of the points that I thought should be brought up, and just in closing I want to correct a couple of the issues that the Premier spoke about. He had a long list of things and I could stand here all night and correct many of the things that he talked about, but he talked about the previous government, like we had a passport office here on PEI and the previous government got rid of that. Well, that's not true. We didn't have a passport office; we had an immigration office.

The other thing, the last thing I'd like to correct him on, is when he talked about the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, he referenced to this member as being a minister. This Premier should know better than anybody else that this member is no longer a minister. You took that away from him.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Before I go to the hon. Member to close debate, hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, you had your name on the list. Do you still want to –

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, sure.

I know I haven't got a lot of name, but I'm not going to stand here and tell you I'm going to be short.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. McIsaac: I think each and every one of should stand tall in the position that we're in here in the province and stand up for the province. The Premier talked a lot about the great things we've had happen here, and the connection to the federal government, just in my portfolio alone.

We've fought with the federal government to make sure that we got the CAP program in place, and that's \$37 million for business risk management, 129 for BRM, which is over a five-year period. In the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, something that we started here and the Premier pulled off in the end, \$38 million over seven years. Those are things that we went to the table and we fought for.

I was expecting the Leader of the Opposition, who represents part of the town that I do, would stand up and say: Sorry, Summerside, but hey, Stratford is the fastest growing area in PEI at all. Talk about immigration, that's where it's happening.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: I think we can put across a very good point for that as well; but we need immigration in agriculture, we need it in fisheries, we need workers there.

I'm not going to say a whole lot more on the topic, but I do want to say one thing. Picky, picky in some ways, but I'll tell you, Sean Casey, I know what he works for. He stands up for PEI, so I'm going to stand up for him right here and now and tell you this guy is very, very important to Prince Edward Island. He's just been appointed secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, and you

don't get that unless you're recognized by the Prime Minister of Canada.

All our other Members there as well, a minister, a former minister, another member who has fought for things on PEI with the federal government, we are well represented in Ottawa and we should be giving them kudos for that, because we need to work for them on a day to day basis.

But I fully support the motion as amended.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I will now on the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, to close debate on the motion.

Mr. R. Brown: Just get up and say Liberal times are good times.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I heard a lot of different things here tonight, some of which I'll believe them when I see them, that including the fact that Sean Casey has stood up for anything here on Prince Edward Island since he's been in government, because we all know that's not true.

Now that this is going to be voted on for a second time, I can't wait to see how the Premier's going to make this happen. He talked about affordable housing, but I hear some of his Members giving shout-outs to Tim Banks who's calling \$1100 apartments in downtown Charlottetown affordable housing.

Obviously, you guys over there have no idea what people are actually going through in Prince Edward Island, what it actually means to be poor, what it actually means to need affordable housing, if any of you think \$1100 is an affordable place on Prince Edward Island. That's completely ludicrous. Even in downtown Charlottetown, you need to do better.

This Premier needs to stand up to Ottawa. Whether he believes that or not, he needs to stand up to Ottawa. His electorate will judge him for it, and I can't wait till the next election so he can see that people here on

Prince Edward Island are not happy with him and not happy with the work he's done when it comes to standing up to Ottawa, and they'll be looking for somebody who will go to Ottawa and fight for Charlottetown.

I hope that the MPs in Charlottetown get the same message, because he's not doing his job here. He had all kinds of say until he turned into silent Sean.

Mr. Speaker, I'd love to vote on this motion.

An Hon. Member: Silent Sean.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: Are you all ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those supporting this motion, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: All those not supporting the motion, say 'nay'.

Mr. R. Brown: Good, quiet.

Speaker: The motion is carried and it is unanimous, the motion as amended.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

May as well (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: All that debate convinced me.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: See?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request Motion No. 30 be brought back to the floor for debate.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Debate was adjourned by the hon. Premier, so you can carry on.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had an opportunity the other evening to make most of the points that were to be made on this. Let me reemphasize my first point, which is about our role as MLAs in our districts and in our interactions with people whether they may or may not be constituents. There is hardly a day, but there's an opportunity to hear what some of our citizens have as concerns, or have as issues that they would like to be addressed by government. Whether it's directly with an MLA, interactions with public officials, ways in which people work together through community organizations.

The way that things have gotten done and done well, and that Islanders have stayed engaged, has been more what I would call grassroots and collaborative than what might be considered to be a complaint-driven process and it's in that sense that I made the first point about the privilege that we have to live in a province where each member of the Legislature has roughly 3,700 or 3,800 voters and 5,500, roughly, citizens as constituents.

If I take that together with the many ways that there are paths in, there are opportunities to engage with to be accessible. That, to my mind, is the starting point as we consider other offices that may be needed or may be needed in other jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker, with that I will close my remarks.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Hear! Hear!

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

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

Great pleasure to get up this evening and talk about the resolution. I'm the ombudsperson for the people in District 12. I'm pleased to be an ombudsperson for the people of District 12. We have a unique decision here on Prince Edward Island. The new member from Parkdale would realize this; that we are unique, as the Premier has said. We have a very small constituency, so

we're very close to our constituents. I know that the new member from Parkdale visited each and every door in her district during the election.

That's important. Because you go across this country and you talk to some colleagues across the country, they don't even campaign. Downtown Toronto, the only time you'd see an MLA out at a door is when the CBC is behind them or somebody; a photo-op. Not actually at the door talking to the constituents; talking about kitchen-table issues.

I like our system in Prince Edward Island. I like our closeness to our constituents. The closer we can get to our constituents, the better we understand their issues. When you're sitting there at a kitchen table with a senior citizen that needs her roof repaired, as I have been over the last couple of days, and I continue to work on it, you get to know and you get to feel the importance of the issue to that person. You get to feel the leaky water coming in because it's important that we continue with that. I know some people would rather us not interfering with government. We should be coming to this Legislature only as policy advisors or as thinkers; great thinkers.

Well, although this place is for that. We have a number of weeks between sittings of the Legislature and that's when we should be really working for our constituents; seeing what they really need. You get that feeling when you're at their front door, you're in their backyard, or you're meeting with the two senior citizens, or you're meeting with somebody with a disabled child. You get to know their issues.

It's important that we get to know the issues firsthand from our constituents. I think that's one of the reasons Prince Edward Island is one of the greatest provinces here in Canada because our closeness to our constituents.

We come to this Legislature, not with great speeches of policy. Not with great speeches of what should be the world look like and everything. We come to this Legislature with real down-to-earth constituent issues. I know each and every member gets up in this Legislature, and when they're talking about a – an issue here on Prince Edward Island, they're talking about it because they know

firsthand about it. They haven't been given some consultant's report that we pay a couple of hundred thousand dollars for to tell us how to think; tell us how to think about an issue. We don't need \$100,000 consultant's reports to tell us how to think about constituent issues because we are out there on the street each and every day working for our constituents.

I know some people think: Well, maybe, MLAs shouldn't be calling government on behalf of constituents. You know, that's wrong in some area. I don't think it is. I think if I'm sitting with a constituent and they need an issue resolved, that's our job as an MLA to help them navigate the system.

For some people it's very hard to, first of all, they become scared of calling the bureaucracy. To us the big building on Rochford Street may be a small building, but to some people that is a big building. It's intimidating to some people. It's intimidating to some people thinking: Like, you know, I don't have a great education and I have got to go down there and I have got to meet with this guy with three or four degrees and try to explain my situation to him. And it becomes hard. That's why we, that's why I take great pride and when a constituent calls me and a constituent has a concern to make sure that I go over and see that constituent.

I live in downtown Charlottetown and my front yard wouldn't be the size of that table there and my neighbours sometimes talk about the – 2:00 a.m. in the morning some constituents would be walking by and they'll let their voice be known to me in my bedroom on the second floor, but that's a great democracy. That's where we are.

I think it's great. The next day they'll show back up and we'll hash their issues out in the backyard or in the front lawn. We get to know what that person is feeling. We get to know what they need in their – to make their life better.

I'll be opposing this motion because, and I think, that each and every member, and I think the new member for Parkdale will realize that grassroots politics or grassroots representation to your constituents is more important than a bunch of big statements sometimes. I'm not saying that with

disrespect. I'm just saying that with years of experience of knowing that – going through the issues. Sometimes it's the same issue over and over with a different person.

It's good that you get to see those experiences. It's good that then when we come here as elected people. And when we get up and say that this policy has to be changed or that policy has to be changed or we have reengineer government in order to make it easier for our constituents in order to navigate the system, we are talking with personal experience here, not with somebody else telling us what should be done.

I really feel that an ombudsperson, then, that job will be taken away from us because the next thing will be: Well, you shouldn't be helping constituents navigate government. We have an ombudsperson for that. You shouldn't be doing that. Then, all of a sudden, the next thing you see, well, we better have regulations that MLAs shouldn't be helping constituents because we have an ombudsperson that should person should go to.

I think we, Prince Edward Island, is unique. I think the people I know in this Legislature, each and every one of us, I think, they're extremely good ombudspersons for their constituents. I know when I was minister that the calls from some of the MLAs concerned here across the floor and my colleagues on this side, I know, when I got a call from them, that this was a real issue. This was really concerning. This MLA – and it's not – I know it's going to come up that: Oh, it's partisan politics. Or it's some Liberal or some Conservative or Green member.

I've never seen in this House, in my experience, when any MLA called that they said: This is because of political reasons on an important issue on a constituent that needs a roof or needs something done to their house or needs something done for their family member.

I can say, with all due respect, that each and every member in this House, when it comes – 27 days fighting it out in an election, the day after the election, I can say each and every member of this House represents each and every member in their district no matter

what their political stripe is. That's unique in Prince Edward Island because in some places, you know, you get, you know – you didn't vote for us so don't come to the door. I have never heard it once that people were turned away from a door because they didn't vote the way the person at the door said.

We work hard and we do it because it's the best thing for Prince Edward Island. We know working for our constituents it's only good for Prince Edward Island and that's what makes us unique here on Prince Edward Island and you can go across the country and you can hear, you know, when you talk about: I had this constituent concern or that concern and they're talking there and they're saying to you: Why would you do that kind of stuff? Why would you meet with a constituent? Like, you know, I'm in Toronto, 90,000 voters. I get my policy documents delivered to me and we discuss policy. I wouldn't know what it is like somebody not having the proper medication. I wouldn't know what it's like not having a doctor.

That's why we can come to this Legislature and we can see the passion and the commitment of each and every one of us in here when it comes to issues, and when somebody gets up with an issue, we know they're talking from the heart, and we know they're talking on behalf of their constituent.

I like it the way it is, and I'm going to vote against the motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion. It has been less than three weeks since I've been elected, but in that time, even perhaps before I was elected, the calls began from constituents, including people I met at the door during the campaign and afterwards.

Having been somebody who has worked in grassroots community development and impact for over 30 years, I'm very familiar

with the necessity to remain connected to your community and to the needs of the people that you represent in whatever role that may be, and I'm looking forward to be able to continue to do that as I take on this new role.

But when I hear from constituents, not just from my district, but from across the province, bringing forward issues that they feel – they perhaps feel a new voice could address for them, because those are longstanding and complex issues, as well as things that are more simple and easy to address.

It's clear that this is something which is part of our system, and certainly when we talk about introducing something new into a system, it does not mean in any way that we are implying that the current system does not work, but that it could be improved or added to.

What we see with the opportunity to be able to speak on behalf of constituents is that we do bring our own experiences and relationships to that expertise, whether it's in terms of the contacts we have or the networks we did build, or how we think about addressing and solving problems.

The role of an ombudsman, though, allows us to think about, as you mentioned, a nonpartisan, independent body with the authority to recommend changes, not just on a case-by-case basis, but to be able to see the patterns that allow us to think about how we influence policy.

One of the challenges that we have when we work in small spaces and with individuals on a one-on-one basis is that we are effecting change for those individuals, but not effecting change to our system. And we all have amazing stories, that if we had the opportunity to get together and share, I'm sure we would find those common patterns, and sometimes we come across those by accident. Sometimes we come across them because we're doing a plan or a study or a strategy or a consultation, and we realize that the stories that we have heard are also the same ones that others have heard in other areas.

What an ombudsman allows us to do is provide that independent space where those

stories can be collected and addressed in that, in a nonpartisan way, but also in a way that says this is something perhaps that is speaking to a greater issue, and how we can effect something for the greater good, not just to solve the problem that's being brought forward by that constituent, but to address a problem that should be addressed because it is better for the province. It's better for the community. It means better policy. It means a better outcome. It doesn't mean that that problem will go away, but it gives us more tools, all of us, more tools that we can use to better affect being representatives for the people.

And surely, one of our things that we want to do is not be afraid of change, that perhaps change is the toolkits that we have available to us, but be embracing change that allows us to add to our toolkit in a way that will leave the place better than where we started.

Modern governance demands that citizens have access to fair and independent grievance mechanisms, as well, which also means that yes, sometimes ombudsman is dealing with a grievance or a challenge or a complaint, maybe they don't feel they were handled fairly.

But despite the fact that we are doing the best thing for our constituents, we are also representatives of ideologies and parties and values that maybe don't always align, and so an ombudsman also allows us to be sure that we have that impartial view and that impartial viewpoint when it comes to dealing with something that may be interpreted as a grievance.

I think we can speak a lot about some of the other things that we've seen in the last few days around the lobbyist act and whistleblower, about FOIPP review, but in the spirit of thinking about changes of something for the greater good, what I would just bring forward is when every other province in Canada has an ombudsperson, it perhaps is time that PEI recognizes the value and impact that this role could have towards this government's stated goal of transparency and accountability, and also to perhaps the commitment that we have made as MLAs that we are here not only to represent individuals and their individual cases, but

also to impact the greater good and do the right thing for the province.

On that basis, I would ask for your support for this motion to bring an ombudsman forward for the province.

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'll just speak on this to some degree, too. I want to follow up on the points made by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park. I think, presently, we have 27 ombudsmen right in this room, and I think that's key, and it's very important. We were elected for that role.

I want to relate to you a pretty interesting little story here. It's something that would happen on PEI but not happen in any other province in Canada. I can tell you that from talking to my counterparts in other provinces.

Sunday, I was away, but a neighbour of mine, who's not in my constituent, but called because he had an issue that he wanted me to help him with. He left a message on my machine because he didn't get a hold of me. He actually went and called the Premier. It was not a big issue, but it was a big issue to him; not something that we couldn't solve.

But pretty neat on PEI when you can call the Premier, and I'm not saying that everybody should do this on a regular basis, but he took the call, and Monday morning at 8:10 a.m. I was in the office; the Premier called me and said: I got a call from a neighbour of yours. And I said: Yeah, he's not really in my riding, but he's a friend of mine. (Indistinct) actually in the Member from Morell-Mermaid, and I don't know, maybe he called you as well.

But he needed the issue dealt with, and the Premier said: He called me last night, can you give him a call back? And I did, and I contacted someone else who can work on

the issue for him, and in that way we're all ombudsmen. And we've seen this many times, but if you talk to some of the members, or even the ministers in other provinces, many issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis, they wouldn't even think of doing that, and maybe that's because they have an ombudsman, and somebody wants an issue, well call the ombudsman and see if they can get it figured out for you.

The other thing is too, I'm going to talk about the financial part of this. We have X amount of dollars here. We're trying to balance our budget. I wonder is this the time that we want to spend money on that? We need a few more doctors; we need a few more nurses; we need a few more teachers; whatever it might be. Every dollar that we spend, we try to look at seriously to make sure we spend it in a proper way.

We don't want to replace ourselves with the job of connecting directly with our constituents. I don't, I know none of the members on our side. And again, I want to fully agree with the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park that we need this job ourselves. I want this job myself. I'm sure everyone here wants to be the ombudsman for the people in their riding.

It's not broke, I don't think, and I don't think this is exactly the area we want to go in. Maybe someday down the road when we get a group of people who are much more disconnected or whatever that might be, but at the present time, I feel we need to be the ombudsmen. We're already being paid for that job, so let's continue on carrying in that way, and for that reason I will not be supporting the motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to agree with what a couple of the other members have said. I think we're the best ombudsman there is on the Island. I think that we know our districts, we know our constituents, and we can be our best advocates and fighters for issues in our

districts, and I try that every day, and I strive to, when people call, I answer the phone, and when they send a message into the office or they send me a Facebook message, I call them back, and I think that that's truly working for your people and your constituents.

And I remember on the way down here this morning, my Blackberry went off, and I looked at it, and it was a friend of mine up in Tryon Road, and I called him right back.

Ms. Biggar: After you pulled over.

Mr. Fox: Yes. Actually, I was at the Irving garage getting gas. And I called him right back, and he was so appreciative of the fact that I called him right back within minutes of him calling the office. I've had conversations with the Minister of Family and Human Services there, and we've made jokes about –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. R. Brown: It was a great speech.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, December 20th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, December 20th, at 2:00 p.m.