

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, welcome to everyone in the gallery, Rosalie and Logan Dawson, Bus Gay, Jeff Matheson doesn't have his tie. I've got a Matheson tie in my pocket if you need it.

This is of course Tartan Day, celebrating or marking the anniversary going back more than 600 years when Scotland first declared its independence from England (Indistinct)

We have lots of people in the House with their tartans, and in my own case it's MacPherson, which would recognize grandmothers on both sides of my family. I could have worn MacDonald, MacIntosh, Matheson, or MacLauchlan.

I'm happy to recognize the representatives of the Caledonian Club who've joined us for Tartan Day. We've got Horatio Toledo who's the president. We got Bill Acorn, Douglas MacKenzie, Eleanor Boswell was to be here but I think is not well, but it's a great organization, and of course Douglas MacNevin is with us.

In addition to the MacPherson tie, I'm wearing the Island tartan socks, of course, which goes with the ties of our Pages, and an opportunity to recognize a longtime West Covehead neighbour Jean Reid, originally a MacLean from Souris, who designed the Island tartan.

Later this afternoon, I and other members will be attending an event engaging Island women for political action. This event is sponsored by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government, by Winding Path, and by the Women's Network, in an effort to encourage more women to participate in the political process, which we welcome and look forward to that event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody in the gallery today and everybody watching on EastLink. I notice Jennifer Keenan's here from Meetings and Conventions PEI, and also (Indistinct) I believe saw stepped in.

Today, actually, I'm wearing the Grant tartan tie which is was my mother's side of the family. We actually came to Canada back in 1783, and it was by Samuel J. Grant who was researched by my uncle, and our roots actually come from Scottish and Irish descent, from Dublin by the way of Wales.

My uncle, he did a fantastic job on the history of our family coming into Canada, and I'm actually quite proud of my uncle that he actually was one of the – he was in the air force at the time, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and he was one of the actual members who worked on the Bomarc missile system and the Canadian – the Avro Arrow, and he has quite the stories to tell about that, which is quite interesting.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody back, and everybody in the gallery. I want to make special note of the members of the Caledonian Club, of course, who are here to celebrate Tartan Day. I come directly to you from the land of tartan, and I see Horatio Toledo, Doug MacKenzie, Doug MacNevin of District 17 – hi, Doug – and Robert MacArthur.

I also want to welcome the Dawson family who are here, and I will introduce them all individually later.

I also recognize Jeff Matheson and Jennifer Keenan.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery, especially those that came, travelled from the far west from Tignish. It's not very often I have an opportunity to welcome them to the public gallery. But in the gallery today we have Lisa Carragher, we have Mary Ann Nelligan who I'll be speaking about a little later, Judy Skerry, Sandra Stewart, we have Juanita Arsenault, Holly Perry, and Leona Perry. So, welcome to the gallery today.

And again, we'll be making a statement on Mary Ann a little bit later.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Happy Tartan Day, Mr. Speaker.

I have the MacEwen tartan on today; my grandmother gave it to me at a very young age. They're very proud of their tartans. We used to get a tartan gift pretty much every year. We've had ties, coffee cups, mouse pads, you name it. They were very proud so they kept giving it to us every year.

I also have my Vimy Ridge pin on today. I'd like to wish well wishes to the 27 kids and four chaperones and teacher Jonathan Murphy who are going over to France today. I know a number of students across PEI are going, this week, over for the 100th celebrations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise today and to acknowledge one of the most distinguished constituents from Stratford-Kinlock, and, of course, I'm speaking of Mr. Bus Gay, who has joined us here today.

I'd also like to recognize Krista Shaw, who has joined us in the gallery. I just wanted to take a brief moment to talk about a little bit of an event that she's helping to coordinate on Thursday, April 27th, the PEI connects event.

It will be held at the Jack Blanchard hall at Holy Redeemer. The event will be free and this event is being put on for people without a home; people who are at risk of homelessness, and can benefit from services and resources, which will be on-site, such as a hot lunch; comfort kits; haircuts; nail care; blood pressure checks; mental health services; addiction services; medical care; tax services, and more. To register, I am going to actually post this on my Facebook account.

I'm not put everything out there today, but I would like congratulate Krista and her committee for the terrific work that they are doing to help Islanders in need.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone in the gallery today, from Tignish, from Wellington area, and all across PEI that are here with us, and to celebrate, as well, for all of those who are celebrating Tartan Day today.

I'm wearing the Biggar tartan in honour of my husband's family and my grandmother's pin. My great-grandmother was a MacKinnon, so I honour that family. As well as my son-in-law's family, the Keith family from Scotland, who are direct new into Canada from Scotland; so my son-in-law Robert Keith.

I also will be attending, this afternoon, along with, certainly, I hope other hon. members of the Legislature and my colleagues to celebrate the event on behalf of Women in Politics that is going to be at the Holman Grand and to encourage everyone if they can make it by, to support those women who are interested in politics.

What we do here in the Legislature towards each other certainly sets a tone as to what women may want to put their names forward to be part of this. I commend everyone who can attend this afternoon.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today, especially those with their tartan finery on today. I'd also like to say a shout-out to those residents of West Royalty-Springvale, and particularly those, that are in Andrews of Charlottetown.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say a welcome to all of the good folks in the gallery here, especially the people that travelled from Tignish today; Mary Ann Nelligan, and she's pushing for a great cause there. I'm sure we're going to hear a bit more about it later.

I'd also like to say hello to all of good people of Alberton-Roseville that are at home watching.

I'd also like to encourage every Islander to please get on your computer and vote for the Alberton peewee team in the Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup award. There is money that goes to organizations right across the province, including the Prince Edward Island minor hockey association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome those to the gallery and those watching back home in O'Leary-Inverness.

Certainly, a special acknowledgement to the Caledonian Club; I, too, have Scottish descendents in me. This is the Henderson tartan that I proudly am wearing here, today. I think, also, and I know the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned the Grant, I do have Grant lineage, as well. I'm not sure if there are any connections there, but we'll have to check that out. I can see he does have a lot of red in the Grant tartan so that's probably, either he is sort of split off from that line, or not, I'm not sure.

Leader of the Opposition: Easy.

Mr. Henderson: Also, the Hendersons' they came from Tynron, Scotland about the early 1800s and settled in the Freeland area and I'm one of those proud descendents of them.

I also want to acknowledge Dick Arsenault. Last night he was sitting behind me at the Classic Albums Live - The Eagles at the Harbourfront Theatre and it was a good time. I see he doesn't have any tartan on him, but Arsenault tartan - I'm not sure if they got that clan status yet.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to welcome everyone to the gallery and the people at home and also to recognize Meetings and Conventions Prince Edward Island staff that are here today and the job that they do to help bring tourism to Prince Edward Island.

Also, the Caledonian Club. When I think of the Caledonian Club, since I've been a child, I always think of Cecil MacPhail, who's not here with us today. Every time there was an event or something, Cecil was front and present. Also, the Dawson family. I've known some of you for quite a while and we're with you.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery and wish everyone a happy Tartan Day and a special welcome to Dick Arsenault from my district of Evangeline-Miscouche and a big shout-out everyone back at home in my district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I'd like to rise to welcome Bus Gay to the chamber this afternoon. Bus, at a ripe, young age is a very active person in his community. He had some tips that he wanted to send my way at our annual meeting last weekend and I was very happy to receive those. The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, you better watch out – he may have a run in him yet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: Yes.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone back today – everyone joining in the gallery. Happy Tartan Day; I'm very proud to wear my kilt today. It's the hunting MacRae. I was a MacRae and very proud of my Scottish heritage and the strong Scottish ideas that

we have in Belfast about growing our community.

I'd like to also say hello to everyone in district 4. I will be attending Engaging Island Women for Political Action this evening, as well, and I encourage everyone to come out and join us. It's great to have women involved. Regardless of the demeanor in the house, we women can stand up to the men any day of the week.

Mr. Myers: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Compton: I wish everyone a very good day and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for giving me a second chance to stand up today and recognize guests. We had a few latecomers come in. But, like I said earlier, it's not often that we have people from the west here. Our late entries – I just want to welcome to the gallery today – is Mark Arsenault, Buddy Pit and Ben Arsenault. Welcome.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: In the spirit of second chances, my neighbor and constituent Krista Shaw came in after I said my part and I certainly want to join and the welcome has been extended to Krista.

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

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

And for giving me an opportunity to stand up once, for certain, today. I want to recognize in the gallery and it's great to have the Dawson family with us today, the members from the Caledonian Club, Dick and Bus – who I had a great conversation with on the weekend – it's great to see you in here today and Krista Shaw on the far side – always a pleasure to have you in the house.

Although you're going to see great things on the floor of the Legislature here today and again this evening, but I've got to remind Islanders of a big event that's going on at the EastLink Centre tonight. The Charlottetown Islanders are taking on the Cape Breton Screaming Eagles beginning this really, really big series – it's going to be a barn burner. Charlottetown Islanders are on their way to the Quebec Major League championships. I just want to remind Islanders of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

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

Mary Ann Nellilgan

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shine a light on the strength and determination of one woman. Mary Ann Nellilgan was not the type to question how just one person could make a difference. She rose to a challenge and she encouraged her community to band together and show strength in numbers.

Her husband Richard was in hospital for several months before a bed became available at a local manor. There were others in the same situation, and even though Richard was settled in at Maplewood Manor, Mary Ann knew she needed to raise awareness for other families going down the same road.

This strong-willed woman resides at the Tignish Co-op Seniors Home, but she was not afraid to go out looking for signatures for a petition in support of others waiting for a bed in a long term care facility. Within a month, she had 2017 names on a petition that she presented to myself, and also to the member from Alberton-Roseville. Mary Ann is a well respected member of the community of Tignish, where she has raised her family. Her children, Juanita, Mark, Leona, Wilma, Peggy, Kenneth, Lisa and Sandra have been witness to their mother's willingness to help others throughout the years.

Mr. Speaker, may we all be so determined and dedicated to helping others in our communities, like Mary Ann Nellilgan. She is a true example of how one person can make a difference.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Poverty on PEI-*The Guardian*

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

I want to thank *The Guardian* newspaper for today's special issue on poverty on Prince Edward Island. The paper deserves credit for bringing attention to this issue for all people across Prince Edward Island. I especially want to thank those people who had the courage to speak out in the paper and to talk about their struggles in asking and finding help.

I also want to point out, the Legislative reporter, Teresa Wright, for bravely writing about her experience of a time in her life when she had to speak out for help.

I want to thank everyone who told their stories; some of their pictures were also published.

The Guardian also recognized the principal and staff of Prince Street School for the work they do for the safety and security of their students and many who arrive at the school hungry each morning. I know about the school – my brother works there – and I know the great work they do.

Both Prince Street and St. Jean are making a difference in the lives of their students and their neighborhoods.

I also want to thank *The Guardian* for telling the stories about the people who help – the people who spend their time providing hot meals, warm clothes to the people in need.

It's *The Guardian* shining a light on poverty that can bring about change. I know we have a resolution here this afternoon and I look forward to debating it because it's an issue that affects our neighbors, our friends, and

Islanders in general. I know we will have a great debate this afternoon and hopefully we can work together on this extremely important issue that it wants to help people.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Tartan Day

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise today and recognize Tartan Day – a day where we recognize and celebrate our Scottish Heritage. April 6th was chosen as the date – it's the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, where Scotland gained its independence.

More than 200 years have passed since the arrival of the first Scottish settlers on the shores of Prince Edward Island. The Scottish settlers brought with them a strong bond of kinship which meant a strong attachment to their homeland, and something that we've always cherished.

In 1837, almost 70 years after the first migrants had landed at our shores; the Highland Society of PEI was formed. In 1864 the Highland Society adopted a new name, a new policy and a more formal constitution. It was called the Caledonian Club.

I'd just like to make an aside mention of the fact, 1864, and the forming of our great country and how important and how big of a role the Scottish settlers played in the forming of Canada and the fact that they came here to Prince Edward Island to do that.

I am proud of my Scottish descent. I am grateful to celebrate this day to honour the many Scots who have since called PEI and Canada home and have contributed greatly to our history and our country.

The name Tartan Day was chosen to promote Scottish heritage by the most visible means – the wearing of Scottish attire – as many of my colleagues in the

house have done today – and most notably the kilt, which I've donned today.

I want to recognize some people in the gallery. I think they probably thought I forgot them, but I certainly did not. The Caledonian Club members that are here today; we've got the President Horatio Toledo. We've got Douglas MacKenzie, a board member. Doug MacEwen, a board member. Bill Acorn is here with us. I would just like to say that Eleanor Boswell, our chief is home sick with the cold and I wish her the very best and I hope she's feeling better.

I want to thank them for attending today and celebrating Tartan Day and promoting our Scottish heritage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Scott Dawson

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

It's my great privilege to rise today to pay tribute to my neighbour and friend, Scott Dawson.

On January 19th of this year there was a dreadful vehicle collision in Bedeque resulting in the deaths of two distinguished Islanders, both who happened to live in District 17. Melissa Lank was a loving wife and mother of four and a much respected physiotherapist in Prince County Hospital.

Her obituary states: She loved everyone deeply and was deeply loved.

The other person who died that night was Scott, a devoted husband and father, neighbour, community champion, successful business person and a personal friend. Scott was one of the first people I ever met when I moved to Prince Edward Island and as happens so often, it was through the shared interests of our children that we went on to become close friends. Scott helped to organize virtually every community event that you could think of in the Crapaud area, from the community hall with, as Scott used

to say: The softest seats on the Island. He was so convincing in that claim I often thought I should go pick one up for my living room.

He was involved in the Crapaud Exhibition. The tractor pull fundraisers, like the curling club's Chase the Ace, which was the last place I ever saw him in his customary place by the door selling tickets only days before he died.

As a measure of his dedication as a community builder he was also the past president of a long list; the South Shore Actiplex; The PEI Road builders Association; the South Shore Minor Hockey Association; the South Shore Chamber of Commerce; the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce. He also served as past-president of the Association of Rural Community Halls and past director of the Community Business Development Corporation in Summerside.

His consistent dedication, his unfailing energy and his booming laugh were a constant presence in my community and their absence has left a gaping hole.

Scott and I spent countless hours sitting beside each other on the sidelines of soccer fields as our sons and daughters played together. I should say the Dawson genes producing far better soccer players than those of the Bevan-Bakers.

While we sat we talked, and it was quite clear that Scott was wise and worldly and he was intensely concerned about the future of our province, including the health of our Island environment. He was a passionate advocate for solar power, and he was one of the first Islanders to build a solar array attached to his house.

Scott and I did not agree on everything, but the essence of a true friendship surely is that you can disagree respectfully and retain a relationship despite your differences.

I know I speak for thousands of Islanders when I say that Scott Dawson is deeply missed. I wish Rosalie, and his entire family the peace of acceptance and the joy of many happy memories.

With us today are Scott's wife Rosalie, his son Darren, with his wife Kate and Breanna; Justin, Logan, Rebecca, Matthew, Amy and their aunt Janet Wood.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Tuesday, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters asked me questions regarding the Monday's Public School Branch meeting and the presence of RCMP.

I'm pleased to follow-up with information to the House today in the form of a briefing note from Chief Superintendent, Joanne Crampton, Commanding Officer RCMP L Division. The facts were not as represented in the preambles to those questions. There was no filming by the RCMP of audience members. There was no surveillance of the bus returning following the meeting. And the decision to be there was that of the commanding officer.

I table this and I regret that either, Question Period or indeed the Recognition of Guests yesterday would be used to cast dispersions on the integrity or the function of the RCMP in this province.

Mr. Myers: It's the integrity of you (Indistinct) you guys called them in. You guys were scared to face Islanders. You're scared to face them every day. No surprise.

Speaker: Before I begin Question Period hon. members, just a friendly reminder – I'm not going to sit here and start scolding anybody on the third sitting day of this session.

Yesterday, there were 31 questions asked. Of the 31 questions, 10, the preamble, went over the 40-second limit, 10 of the 31 questions. Twenty-three of the 31 questions that were answered went well over the 40-second mark. That's 23 of 31. I could say that that's maybe showing a little bit of

disrespect. Not for me, but for the institution itself.

Anyway, just a friendly reminder.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: I have purchased a new (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: And you have a big hook?

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I would like to actually indulge a little bit and if you'd hold off on picking them up there.

I want to express my sincere thanks to the hon. Leader of the Third Party for his words in that statement, and my sincere thoughts to the families that were involved in that tragic accident.

Give me two seconds and then you can push the button.

Questions by Members

Poverty issues

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

Every day many Islanders deal with poverty, which is a root of social programs that we struggle with as a society. The complex implications of this poverty casts too large a shadow over our Island.

Question to the Premier: How can we be a mighty Island when so many Islanders are struggling daily with the realities of poverty that your government has failed to address?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, poverty reduction has been a central commitment to our government going back two years, and indeed much earlier than that. There are five ministries, including my own, who have poverty reduction as part of our

mandate letter. We have, from the time we took office, starting with the Generic Drug Program; the renovations; the changes to income tax; the food and comfort allowances dealt with this.

Let me say, as did the hon. House Leader starting off, this is, indeed, something that we take to heart and which we intend to keep working on, on all sides of this aisle to do better for Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Universal basic income pilot project

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, he talks about it being priority, but your government has done nothing but raise taxes and raise fees across the Island. Every MLA in this House has constituents that deal with poverty problems.

Motion No. 83 was unanimously passed by this House last December endorsing the concept of a pilot project or a pilot program for universal basic income across the province. The final motion, the final cause of the motion, called for a progress update.

Question to the Premier: What progress has been made, by you, Mr. Premier, on establishing a universal basic income pilot on Prince Edward Island by your Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You're absolutely right hon. Leader of the Opposition that everyone does deserve a change for fulfilling a rewarding life; a life that they can live with honour, and that they shouldn't have to need for anything.

The motion was unanimously passed in the House, and I wish I was there to speak to it because, actually, one of the first conversations that I had with the Premier after I was appointed was around the idea of a basic income guarantee pilot project.

It's not something new. It's something that's been around for over 200 years. The hon. Leader of the Third Party and I have had many conversations on it as well, and I have also had conversations with the – my hon. minister in the federal government, Minister Duclos, and I do have some updates on that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Poverty reduction strategy

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

Back to the Premier: It was truly a priority by you, Mr. Premier. I would've expected to have seen movement by now.

During the last election, this Liberal Premier said – and this was about a universal income (Indistinct) pilot – he said: “We'd be actively interested in pursuing that... I'd call it a model program and build in a commitment to evidence-based research and action-based research.”

Question to the Premier: Why have you and your Liberal Government gone soft on a promise to explore new approaches to reducing poverty for Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the motion that we passed in this House was connected to, or linked to, their being a federal partner. We continue to work on that and we continue to hope for it.

But in the meantime, our province and our government have stepped forward for starters with the Generic Drug Program; 16,000 Islanders registered. We, in fact, overspent that program because it has been so well-responded to by Islanders.

An Hon. Member: Because there's a need.

Premier MacLauchlan: We've got – there is and we're responding.

There's the home renovation programs, several of them; there's the food allowance, which is upwards of \$2 million that we've committed there; there's the action on disability supports; and others that I would respond to if I had more than 40 minutes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Forty seconds.

Speaker: Forty seconds.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We just heard that poverty reduction is a priority of this government. To the Minister of Family and Human Services: Can you explain then why there has been no update to the poverty reduction strategy of this government for over four years?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can really only speak to what I've done since I've become minister, and within the last few months we have appointed a social policy person who will deal specifically with leading the poverty reduction strategy.

Over the last months, she has already connected with various groups within the community. She has consulted with academia; she has consulted with our NGO partners; and she's gathering all that information and she's putting it together, and it will contribute to a discussion paper that we will be putting forth within the next couple of months.

That discussion paper will launch the poverty reduction strategy and engage Islanders in the discussion process as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Less talk, more action.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No update in four years – it says a lot to Islanders about how poverty is a backburner issue as far as this government goes. This is a minister who publicly just said she thinks that poverty is one of the top things in her ministerial mandate letter.

If you're the lead minister in this, shouldn't you have a better handle on whether you're in charge or not?

Speaker: The hon. –

An Hon. Member: Was there a question there?

Ms. Mundy: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear the question.

Speaker: Yeah, hon. member, the question?

Ms. Compton: To the Minister of Family and Human Services: If you are the lead in this poverty strategy, shouldn't you have a better handle on whether you're in charge of this or not? You said you thought you were. That's what you're quoted in the paper today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't recall saying that I was in charge of it. The poverty reduction strategy is going to encompass many departments. It's going to encompass my Department of Family and Human Services, as well as workforce and advanced learning, education, justice, health and wellness.

For so many years, poverty reduction has been on the shoulders of one department. We cannot keep applying 20th century solutions to 21st century issues. Poverty isn't just in community services. Poverty is reaching all of our departments and we need to work collaboratively as a government through our departments to reach the poverty reduction strategy.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: You've been there for 10 years. You've been here since 2007.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I quote: "It's a priority... I think it's one of the top things in my mandate letter." Your department, minister.

The poverty reduction plan said this is about follow up and follow through. A steering committee has been created to see that progress is made on the social action plan.

Question to the minister: If reducing (Indistinct) – sorry.

Mr. LaVie: No plan.

Ms. Compton: How many times has this steering action committee that you talk about met since 2013?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) no plan.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I can speak to what I've done since I've been minister, and one of the first things we did when I was minister is we appointed someone, a working group, to go out there and take a true look at poverty on Prince Edward Island. That was led by Wendy MacDonald.

In consultation with many anti-poverty groups, they said Wendy was the best person to have to lead this working group, and we do now have a little bit better of a picture of the true picture of poverty on Prince Edward Island.

Now, we have turned the work over to Sharon Cameron who is now leading the work on developing policy and taking the lead on the poverty reduction strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Impacts of HST on families

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to point out this government has been in power for 10 years. You're a new minister. You have a whole staff who should have you up to date on what's happened in the past and how you're moving forward. You're not reinventing a new program and a new department.

The HST was brought in – I asked you this question before and I'll ask it to you again: How do you think the HST – how has that affected poor families on PEI, and has it made Prince Edward Island a better place to live for those families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is committed to ensuring that programs are delivered effectively and efficiently in meeting the needs of Islanders and also making the best use of our public funds.

We have over 34 programs that help low- to moderate-income Islanders. We have a social assistance program, and we are now in the fourth year of a food increase. That's the first time in the history of this program. We have increased the comfort allowance to low-income Islanders, and still to come on our platform commitment we will also be looking at increasing the shelter allowance as well as the transportation and optical. That's just in one program.

We've also made great gains to our disability support program which we just announced actually last week. We're now including mental health, so we are making progress, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you. It's hard (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Child care subsidies

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've asked questions before to the minister about child care subsidies, and as it stands now we have an increased minimum wage, but the income threshold to access full child care subsidy is lower than what someone working at minimum wage fulltime would earn in a month.

Question the Minister of Family and Human Services: How is it fair that your government expects Islanders to be making less than minimum wage to qualify for a child care subsidy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this government respects and we understand that strong families begin in early childhood, and the hon. member knows I rose in the House last spring session and I said that that was one of our top priorities of review was going to be that child care subsidy program, and we have reviewed it. We had a working group working all winter long –

Mr. Trivers: Less talk, more action.

Ms. Mundy: – in consultation with the early childhood centres.

I've been out to the early childhood centres. I've spoken to the owners. I've spoken to the parents. I've spoken to the executive director. I've been involved myself –

Mr. Trivers: Less talk, more action.

Ms. Mundy: - and we will –

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms. Mundy: Sorry.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: Do you recognize that this is a roadblock? Let's talk about this. Do you recognize that this is a roadblock for families to be able to actually go out and earn a living?

Minister, you talk the talk. You've met – you've done all that you say you can do, but still we have parents looking for that child care subsidy. We know you just have to go to Cabinet.

Will you commit today to real action on poverty and adjust the income threshold for child care subsidies at your next Cabinet meeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, our child care subsidy program – we subsidize 30% of the licensed child care centres in Prince Edward Island.

Last week I had a look: 62% of families that are accessing the child care subsidy are getting full subsidy. That means they are not having any parent contribution. It is a valuable resource that is being used by families out there. When my working group comes back to me with recommendations on how to improve the program, I will welcome those recommendations and I look forward to them, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Immigrants and rental units

Mr. Trivers: Will the minister of advanced learning explain why his government is forcing out dozens of immigrants and low income islanders and bulldozing their affordable rental units in Charlottetown?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, hon. Speaker.

As everyone in this house is quite aware, we're all very concerned about poverty reduction in this House and across the Province. I'm only to elude that the hon. member referring to the initiative by Holland College on their expansion for beds for rooms for their students in the upcoming season.

Holland College is a partner with government and we do what we can to work together. We are aware of some of the initiatives they have put forward. They've followed all the city ordinances, they've dealt with IRAC, they've said they would help with the rent – they would not collect rent during their period of notice. With that, we're doing what we can and we're well aware of the situation.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

The minister shouldn't try and pawn off responsibility to other groups. On February 28th, Cabinet approved a \$6 million capital project that involves tearing down seven properties in Charlottetown that house low-income rental units.

Minister: Why did you fail to put any safeguards on this project for the people living in these units?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In all due respect to the member's question, we work very collaboratively with Holland College and over their skills programs to try to help people get an education and a place to live. We will work together to support these people that are being misplaced. As I must reiterate, this was an initiative of Holland College and we cannot interfere

with advancement in their business plan and with any city ordinance or anything with IRAC.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

It's the government that gave approval for the loan. This minister is bulldozing a large part of this community with many immigrants who moved to our province to build a better life. They poured a lot of their money into small businesses in this new stage of their lives here in Charlottetown.

Minister: Why do you support destroying these people's homes and bulldozing the business they've worked so hard to build here?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had indicated earlier, Holland College – there's an act that Holland College follows and we have to approve any borrowing or any spending they spend.

I'd just like to say that the college has hired a real estate agent to help these tenants find new accommodations – at their cost. The college is also giving the commercial people notice. As I said earlier, this is an initiative of the college and we're going to do what we can as a government to help our youth get an education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Affordable housing

Mr. Trivers: Our PC team are not the only ones asking questions. Residents and business owners in the area came to a public meeting held by the City and they voiced

their disapproval at this plan. The City response was that affordable housing is a provincial responsibility. Indeed, one this Liberal government has failed on for 10 years.

Minister: You and the rest of the Cabinet have responsibility for all of post secondary institutions, affordable housing, and immigration. Why did you drop the ball?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to kind of combat that, I don't think we dropped the ball, hon. member. The minister of family services has indicated that there's a poverty reduction strategy plan in place. I'm not the only minister that this falls under. There are other ministers in our government and we're all working forward to see what we can do going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the ministers across the floor often reference their close relationship with the federal Liberal government. Can the minister explain why this government has failed to put pressure on Ottawa and access the urban affordable housing money that was announced by the feds last month? There's a solution for you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The national housing strategy will be released sometime in 2017. The money that was allocated in the federal budget last year will not be spent until 2019. And we are – I am at the table currently. I've been to at least two meetings on housing with my federal –

Mr. Trivers: More talk.

Ms. Mundy: – and provincial, territorial ministers. I fight for Islanders' unique views and I bring their views to the table. The money is not coming until 2019. I still have a year to make sure that Islanders' interests are represented and I will be there, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

An Hon. Member: People are losing their homes (Indistinct).

Poverty reduction strategy

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's obvious that this government needs a more comprehensive approach to projects that may impact vulnerable Islanders. In this case, it's obvious that not enough thought was given to the people that will be displaced because of this development.

Minister of advanced learning: Will you commit to bringing in a new policy that requires that government plan for and mitigate the community impact of major capital projects?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, as a government, and as I had indicated earlier, there's numerous departments that are working on this poverty reduction strategy and to see what we can do. We're working collaboratively with the federal government and across government to do what we can do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Poverty issues

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

As we all know, today's Guardian is devoted entirely to the issue of poverty on Prince Edward Island. Almost every article in today's paper talks about the root causes of poverty and how any truly successful strategy is going to have to tackle those underlying issues.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What do you believe are the root causes of poverty?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a great question. If I had more time, I could have listed 34 programs that are geared toward low- to-moderate income Islanders. For years and years, what we've been doing is throwing money at the situation and that's not solving anything. As the papers show today, we still have poverty on Prince Edward Island. We need a more comprehensive strategy that will get to the root of poverty and what causes it.

Right now we've got some great programs that we've been working with my department and Workforce and Advanced Learning in trying to mitigate and intercept at a younger age. There's – sorry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

New poverty reduction strategy

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

For the last several months, this government has been promoting its Mighty Island strategy. A strategy that continues the decades long focus on export growth and competing in global markets. This economic model has seen a continuous increase in GDP over the last 30 years – 500% increase – while poverty levels have remained pretty-well unchanged. Clearly, economic growth does not automatically translate into prosperity for all.

A question to the minister: How will the new poverty reduction strategy take a different approach to improving the well-being of all Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And again, Islanders will have plenty of opportunity to have their voice heard during the consultation process on the poverty reduction strategy. I don't know that there is one particular area. And again, it goes back to what I said earlier: We have been always focusing on one department to handle poverty when we know that poverty isn't in one department.

We're going to have to work closely with our partners in Workforce and Advanced Learning, in Economic Development and Tourism, in Justice and Public Safety and in Health and Wellness. Every department in government will have to have some kind of input into the poverty reduction strategy – employment being a big one.

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.

Everybody in this House recognizes the critical importance of reducing poverty and there's a great opportunity, I believe, here for multi-party collaboration to put partisanship aside. We saw that last fall when a motion brought to this House on universal basic income was unanimously approved by this House. It was a great example of non-partisanship.

Since we have multi-partisan agreement on this idea, which the minister talked earlier about looking for 21st century solutions; Hugh Segal, the Conservative Senator talked about universal basic income as a 21st century solution.

Will this minister ensure that basic income is included in the upcoming discussion paper and poverty reduction strategy?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can't commit to anything because that is going to be up to Islanders; whether that is something they want to have in their discussion paper. But, as for the discussion paper that you mentioned that Hugh Segal wrote, you know what? Right now Ontario is using the basis of that discussion paper to launch their own universal income pilot project, and we're looking very closely. It's a three-year project that they are undertaking right now as well.

I have been talking with my colleagues in Ontario to get feedback on their pilot project, so we will continue conversations with our federal government, with the parties that are already making some progress in it, and I will have an update to table a little bit later.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Counselling services to assault victims

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

My question is to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: Minister, at a recent hearing of the Standing Committee on Health and Wellness, a representative of Mothers Helping Mothers outlined a number of concerns in our health care system.

One concern that stood out related to the rape and sexual assault centre helpline. It was explained that a recent rape victim had called the helpline and received a recording stating that: If they left their name and number, someone would be in touch within seven days. I understand that the response came within a day or two from that time.

Minister, do you feel that counselling services to victims of rape and sexual assault

are being provided in a timely manner in this province?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did attend the meetings that were in Summerside and Charlottetown and participated in them and listened to the stories of the women that have been victims of assault and sexual assault in Prince Edward Island, and I also listened to the recordings from your committee.

Rape and sexual assault is certainly a serious matter, and it's imperative that we do support survivors.

In regard to the rape and sexual assault centre, it's a non-profit organization that does provide counselling and therapeutic services, but it's not within our governmental department. It does provide crisis support in timely fashion. But I would encourage anyone to call 911 and to be aware that there is a 24-hour Island helpline for those that are in immediate crisis, or to go to the ER.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Response time to assault victims

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

I applaud the work of the rape and sexual assault centre and note that it is a community-based organization funded in part by government.

I would think that the response time is a critical factor in providing counselling services to victims, especially recent victims, and that seven days seems too long.

Minister, has your secretariat had any discussions with the centre with respect to improving response times or confirming that

they are, in fact, getting back quicker than the seven days stated in the message.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that the rape and sexual assault centre is not the only place that victims of violence can go to for support. There's many agencies right across this Island, including services right at the ER.

I want to commend all the organizations on Prince Edward Island that support victims that need that support.

I would like to announce that the Interministerial Women's Secretariat has provided a \$7,000 grant in funding for review and to evaluate the program for supporting survivors of sexual violence in Prince Edward Island. Also, that this is not just a responsibility of the rape and sexual assault centre. It's medical professions, violence victims services, mental health, private and community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Counselling services for assault victims (further)

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

Minister, going forward can you advise this House today as to whether there are any plans to review, or see if there needs to be a review done, I guess, of the services for counselling for sexual assault victims in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, part of the funding that we provided to the rape and sexual assault centre is for them to do a review, but also internally within

government we are working together with health and wellness, with mental health, to provide services for those women right across Prince Edward Island, and we do not want them to be afraid to go to and ask for help and to be aware that we do care what is happening with them.

I will be asking your committee, hon. member, to have the rape and sexual assault centre come into your committee and highlight the great work that they do and what Anderson House does and what every organization across this province does for women in crisis of sexual assault.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mandate of senior policy analyst

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Minister, I understand that your department recently hired a senior policy analyst. Can you just give us an idea of what his mandate is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, seniors are a long-term – seniors are certainly important contributors to our Island community, much like the (Indistinct) here, and we are working to ensure that we are developing a continuum of long-term care that meets their health care needs, and this position – the senior policy analyst – is being created to look at a number of typical issues.

Number one, would be how we address home care – can we invest more in home care to help meet seniors' needs? What assessment tools do we use to admit seniors into long-term care? If we require more long-term care beds, how many and where would they be located? And, how we work with our community care facilities to also meet the needs of seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Senior assessment tool-interRAI

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, it's my understanding that at the present time our province is the only one that uses a seniors assessment tool. All other provinces use interRAI.

Is there a possibility of implementing that system to assess seniors here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road is correct. Prince Edward Island, we happen to use the Senior's Assessment Screening Tool and we are the only province that uses that particular tool to assess seniors for admittance to long-term care as well as community care, and the interRAI system is used by most other provinces.

We are working with our Atlantic partners to see how that system works, and that's one of the ideas that the senior policy analyst will be looking at to see what impacts that would have on seniors' assessments here in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Beds to existing manors

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, with this, will you be adding more beds to the existing manors or to the community care facilities on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That, once again, will be one of the situations that the senior policy analyst will look at, but I have made statements in the past at legislation committees that we would like to work with our community care facilities and partner with them. Right now, they're partnering with us for approximately half of our long-term care beds in the province, but the seniors policy analyst will certainly look at the pros and cons to building more beds for – in our own system should that be required and working in partnership with our community care facilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Gas prices on PEI

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, poverty has many faces. Poverty is hunger. Poverty is a lack of shelter. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job. It's a fear of the future; living one day at a time. Poverty is being sick and not having access to a doctor.

Premier: What is the current price for gas on PEI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I suppose the hon. member is referring to the regular gasoline. The last time I filled up it was \$1.13, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, this government raised the price of gas April 1st. It's \$1.07.02

–

Mr. Aylward: But he goes for full-service so he pays more.

Ms. Compton: Yeah (Indistinct) province (Indistinct)

Mileage rates for Social Assistance travel

Mr. LaVie: To the Premier: What is your government's mileage rate for people on Social Assistance travelling to medical appointments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That question would be taken as notice and I can get back to probably before the end of Question Period.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's not surprise that the Premier doesn't know, but his minister doesn't even know the answer.

Premier wouldn't even know what a taxi-run is from his North Shore mansion into Charlottetown. Premier, the rate is 20 cents. Twenty cents per kilometre.

Premier: Why do you think 20 cents per kilometre is enough mileage rate for a social assisted client travelling for medical appointments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do have the answer to your question, and you are correct. It is 20 cents a kilometres to a maximum of \$31 per month, or the actual costs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: Premier, what's a government employee's rate for travelling to an appointment to medical assistance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any government employees who have to go to a medical appointment, they have to pay for that out of their own pockets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trivers: Unless you're a minister driving a (Indistinct) government vehicle.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Government rates for travel

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, if you're travelling to a meeting, what is the government's rate? To the Premier.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are several rates that apply to government employees who use their own vehicles when they travel, or if they have to use their own vehicles within their work frame. Those would probably range anywhere from, I'll say, 34 cents to 42 cents per kilometres.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier and to the Minister of Finance it's 42 cents. And the Premier wouldn't get it. He was brought up on a silver spoon. That's why he doesn't get it.

Born in privilege, raised in privilege. There are a lot of people who are not born in privilege and raised in privilege here on PEI.

I'm one of them, Premier. I had my name on the wall for IOUs. I walked the hall down to the Social Services. I know what's it's like. I know what it's like to lose a job with two kids home. I know exactly what it's like.

Do you think it's fair for somebody on social service going to a medical appointment to get 20 cents a kilometer when you're getting 42 cents a kilometre?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: There you go. His mother hired somebody to cut the grass for him.

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

Ms. Mundy: I'll take that question, Mr. Speaker.

Special circumstances, our social assistant caseworkers with work with the client; in many cases it exceeds the 20 cents a kilometre. If we have patients that are travelling, or clients that are travelling off-Island we work with them to make sure that they won't ensure any hardship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do get 42 cents, minister of finance; I do have 42 cents a kilometre. There are a lot of days I never got 42 cents. I'll tell you, I couldn't afford to put gas in my car. I know what it's like to lose a job. I know what it's like to have an IOU out there.

To the Premier: Will you be raising the 20 cent rate for people on social services to 42 cents, the same as government employees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Here we go.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, our caseworkers, they deal with very complex and challenging situations and they have empathy for the clients that they serve and they work their clients –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) five years (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – and they come to me and they say Madam Speaker, we need to take a look at our programs and they need to be more modern and they need to be more efficient. If you take a lot at my mandate letter it does say to review all of the programs and services to make sure that they are meeting the needs of the clients that they are intended to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Nursing strategy

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is an exciting day for nursing on Prince Edward Island. Today I will table the first ever nursing strategy for the province.

It sets the direction for nursing within our publicly-funded health care system ensuring a strong and dedicate workforce to care for Islanders. Nurses are among the frontline superstars of our health care system and they work tirelessly for their patients and they are our biggest advocates.

Being a nurse is one of the most important jobs in the province. We are so thankful for the over 1,900 nurses we have working here with Health PEI. The three-year nursing strategy outlines four strategic pillars; workforce capacity; engagement; leadership; professional practice, and innovation.

A comprehensive effort was undertaken to collect feedback from the frontline nurses;

educational institutions; nursing associations; nursing unions, and other health care providers.

Today, I would like to recognize a few people who are in our gallery, who are part of the creation of this strategy and will benefit from it. Joining us today, we have Cynthia Bryanton, President of our Association of Registered Nurses; Rosanne McQuaid, our principle nursing advisor for the province; Cathy Sinclair, our manager of our Recruitment and Retention Secretariat, and one of our recruiters, Sheila Kerry, who works every day filling vacancies within our health system. Thank you for joining us here, today.

The new strategy defines nurses as registered nurses; nurse practitioners; licensed practical nurses, and it will address areas of priority including recruiting more graduated nurses; increasing the ratio of fulltime to part-time positions; enhanced collaboration and professional associations, unions, educational institutions, and improving nursing retention; launching a new Graduate Employment Guarantee Program; developing and implementing frontline nursing leadership; working with professional associations to identify opportunities; and increase the scopes of practice; and work collaboratively with health care providers in seeking innovative approaches.

I want to thank all those who worked on the strategy, particularly those nurses who took the time to voice their opinions. I can't say enough about the nurses that we have in our province. I, too, have a nurse in my family; my oldest daughter is a nurse, a graduate of St FX, and working at the Wedgewood Manor.

They are tremendous assets to our system and I'm very confident this strategy will help utilize these professions even more effectively.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise as well and to recognize the nurses here on Prince Edward Island and the incredible work they do on our frontlines.

I'll put it this way: I had the unfortunate circumstances to spend pretty much my whole summer, last summer, at the QEH between the ER, Unit 1 and Unit 8 with my mother as she went through some health journey's.

The thing that was unfortunate, or that was fortunate, about my experience and my mother's experience, was the care that she received from the amazing nurses on the wards and in the ER.

This government took it upon themselves back several years ago to roll-out a new model of care. Whether the individuals that were looking after my mother, were on those ward, units, knew I was the health critic, or not, I was quite taken back at how frustrated they were and how willing they were to share their experiences.

I'm just going to point out a couple of things here. It's openly recognized that there is an overall shortage of registered nurses here in many sectors on PEI. Again, a few years ago the government reduced the number of funded nursing sponsorships from 30 down to 18. Last year, they introduced the new nurse graduate model employment program, accepted 20. So that's for a total of 38.

I can't understand why the government isn't offering jobs to all of the 56 nursing graduates from the UPEI School of Nursing. I mean, we have a shortage. We need the nurses. The demand is there in the health care system.

On any given day there are over 70 vacant positions. The implementation, as I said before, the model of care did nothing to help stabilize the health system; all it did was put more demands on the system and eliminate jobs.

Unfortunately, work-life balance for those, who work in our health care facilities are poor. There is little relief for nurses; causal pools are at an all-time low. Nurses are being denied vacation time and general time off to reenergize.

I do applaud the government for coming forward with a three-year strategy with regards to the nursing situation here, but simply, I've seen strategy upon strategy; report upon report, placed on shelves whether it has to do with health care, education, finance, et cetera, just sit on a shelf and collect dust. Unless this government is actually committed to improving the health care system here on Prince Edward Island by hiring more nurses and putting them back into the frontlines where they're needed, then I'm afraid the strategy is not even worth the paper it's printed on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I welcome this announcement from the minister. Thank you very much. I, too, want to recognize the extraordinary work that nurses do on our Island and across this country.

Nurses are, obviously, a critical component of our health care system. In fact, nurses represent the largest number of health care professionals in Canada.

As the minister said, they have a wide scope of practice. They are trained in a broad range of skills. They will represent a critical component of what will be an effective and cost-effective health care system on this Island.

I think one of the areas that we don't put enough emphasis here on when it comes to health care is prevention. The World Health Organization definition of health is: The complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity.

Nurses can play a significantly important role in primary health care centres in our schools, and in other places to promote health and prevention on this Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Prince Edward Island Home Renovation Programs

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to remind Islanders, who need financial assistance with home renovations that they can apply for the Prince Edward Island Home Renovation Programs between now and April 21st at 5:00 p.m.

The program provides eligible Islanders with grants of up to \$6,000 per home renovation such as; electrical; structural; heating; plumbing; fire and safety. And up to \$8,000 for individuals with a permanent disability for renovations that accommodate their disability.

The program helps more Islanders remain in their own homes and maintain their independence, reducing their need for family and seniors housing, and community and long-term care.

Eligible Islanders must have an annual income of less than \$35,000 and an assessed property value of \$145,000 or less.

Applications are prioritized based on income and those with the lowest income will receive funding first.

I'm very pleased to say that this program has assisted more than 900 Islanders since it started in 2013. Government recognizes how important these grants are in helping Islanders remain in their homes. We have invested \$4.7 million in this program since 2013, including a funding increase of \$400,000 in 2016.

For the last two application intake periods, a total of 401 applications were approved. Renovations on the 369 households have been completed and 32 more projects are in progress. This represents more than \$2 million in grants to support Islanders in need.

More information and applications can be found online or by calling the toll-free number listed on the webpage. Applications

can also be picked up at any Access PEI site across the province.

We also offer valuable home renovation programs to assist Island seniors. The Seniors Safe @ Home Program provides up to \$5,000 to improve accessibility to allow seniors to remain living in their own homes safely.

The Seniors Home Repair Program provides up to \$2,000 to help the cost of major repairs such as; roof, windows or furnace.

I am very proud of the initiatives our government has implemented and the improvements made in recent years to help reduce poverty.

Some examples would be; the Be Aware & Get Your Share, which I spoke of in the Legislature earlier this week; a five-year plan to increase the food rates; Generic Drug Program; increased personal comfort allowance.

We know there is more work that needs to be done and government certainly has a role to play. However, we cannot do it alone. Communities and various other sectors also have a part to play. We must all work together to ensure everyone has the chance to be self sufficient, healthy, and to be able to thrive in our Island society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, another announcement, and we know the home reno program is very important, but it did give people a lot of false hope because anyone earning under \$35,000 thought that they'd be eligible. We know that that was definitely not the case. The threshold was much lower because of need.

I think that that's the focus here. It's about need. The fact that *The Guardian* had to do a whole paper today on poverty, I do commend them for it because I think it needs to be brought to the forefront.

This government needs to do better. That's the bottom line here. You can talk about home reno and all the other programs that you're working on and the strategies that you have, but we're 4,000 plus fewer jobs. We have increased pressures on our food banks; service clubs and churches, there are more demands. It goes on and on. This government needs to do better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

The key word in the minister's statement there was 'eligible' Islanders, and there's an irony, of course, in that we have spent virtually the whole afternoon talking about poverty on Prince Edward Island. Although, indeed, the threshold is \$35,000, we all know from the calls that we've received in our districts, that in reality, that threshold came in, in the low twenties. The need for this program far outstrips the resources that are available.

While I welcome, and I understand the value of this, seniors, particularly, being able to improve the living conditions where they are, an enormously important thing in their well-being; allowing them to age in place in our communities, is one of the major ways that we can improve the mental health and the physical health of our elders, and strengthen our communities at the same time.

It's a demonstration of how we always have to think across the silos, across the department lines and recognize that social services is tied to health care, to education. Why are we not looking at hub schools where seniors, who have their home renovated through this program, are then able to go into school and read to a kindergarten child?

All of these things improve the well-being, the welfare, the true welfare in the sense of the word, of Islanders.

I welcome this program, but we always have to remember we can and we should do better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Global Meetings Industry Day

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to talk a little bit about some of the unsung heroes in the tourism industry.

Today is Global Meetings Industry Day where leaders from across the meetings and conventions industry come together to highlight the measurable impact that meetings have on businesses, economies, and our communities.

With each passing year, Prince Edward Island becomes more well-known as a world-class destination for meetings and conventions.

The construction of the Prince Edward Island Convention Centre in 2013, helped our small but mighty province to surprise many people with our ability to compete for even larger, more lucrative convention business. It also helped raise the profile of our existing, smaller convention facilities.

In 2016, Prince Edward Island hosted more than 100 conventions and meetings that brought in close to 16,000 delegates.

The industry now generates nearly \$20 million for the economy that directly benefits the people of Prince Edward Island.

The average delegate and their travel party spend almost \$1,200 during their stay on the Island, which includes the time they are here before and after the conference, and this does not even account for the return trip that many of the delegates make after deciding he or she wants to vacation here.

The industry is also seen as an integral and strategic opportunity for tourism development on PEI – particularly for our

season extension – according to Vision 2021, the industry’s new five-year strategy.

So, it’s safe to say that the economic importance of this industry is growing, and it shows no signs of slowing down.

Meetings and Conventions PEI has done a tremendous job attracting new conventions and raising our province’s profile as a destination we are proud to support, and we’re proud to support them.

And everyday Islanders are helping as well.

The Local Champion program – created by Meetings and Conventions PEI – encourages, enables and assists Islanders to invite and host meetings and conventions on the Island.

Islanders are our very best ambassadors for our province. We encourage everyone to invite the world here to experience PEI and our culture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly agree with the minister. Meetings and Conventions PEI have done a tremendous job of attracting visitors to Prince Edward Island. I had seen firsthand my first convention here on PEI last year when Century 21 Canada – the convention had come to Prince Edward Island, and there was 9,700 agents across the country. There was probably, I think, 500-600 showed up here, and one thing that was said, they couldn’t believe the viewscape, the friendly people, the atmosphere, and everybody that I spoke to had a fabulous time here.

It’s certainly a great opportunity to attract tourism visitors here year-round, and I also wanted to say how great a website Meetings and Conventions PEI have. I was on it there this morning – easy to navigate, beautiful pictures on it. You’re doing a great job.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Everybody knows that everyone wants to come to Prince Edward Island. When we hold conventions here the percentage of registration is higher here than it is in other provinces for similar conventions, so that’s a wonderful thing.

I just want to thank Jennifer Keenan for the work that she does, and I also want to say that – I hope this isn’t a secret; I don’t think it is, but – for the first time ever the Canadian Dental Association is holding its annual meeting convention here in 2018, August 22nd to the 25th, in the new convention centre. That’s never happened before that all the dentists in Canada have come here, so –

Mr. Roach: They drilled into the website.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Northside Windmill Enhancement Fund

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2014, the provincial government announced the Northside Windmill Enhancement Fund, realizing a commitment made to local residents after the commissioning of the Hermanville/Clearspring Wind Development project.

The fund supports local business and community infrastructure projects in the area. My department is responsible for the administration of this fund.

In the first three years of the fund, 30 projects have been approved with a total project value of over \$660,000.

One of the community organizations that has received funding through the Northside

Windmill Enhancement Fund is the Friends of Shipwreck Point Lighthouse. This group has managed the development of a 24-car beach parking lot at Naufrage Beach, a seasonal rental retail space known as the "Rocket House" at Naufrage Harbour, a gazebo at the Naufrage pioneer cemetery, and historic signage for the area.

In addition, the group has made significant repairs to the historic Monticello School building making it rentable and open to tourists. A new building was built on the school property to provide washroom facilities and a storage room.

The third phase of the Monticello School project recently completed was the addition of a carriage shed replica that will be rented to a local business opening this spring.

The Hermanville/Clearspring wind project was intended to be an economic driver of the community. This included approximately \$20 million in contracts to local firms during construction for the road construction, concrete supply, metal fabrication, carpentry, turbine installation, electrician services, tree cutting and site security.

Now, this enhancement fund is ensuring that the area can grow and thrive.

As a province, it is important that we continue to identify the development successes and opportunities in rural Prince Edward Island.

As Minister of Rural and Regional Development, I will be working across government departments to develop a comprehensive approach to rural and regional development.

This approach will focus on how we can help our communities grow their populations and become more prosperous.

Communities themselves will play a large role in their success going forward, and equal partnership will be key to ensure a coordinated approach.

I look forward to the work ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations to the minister for his first minister's statement in the House, as well.

The fund is doing well, and it sounds like there is a lot of good projects coming through it. That helps drive economic development.

I'll tell you what else drives economic development was the Island Community Fund that used to be under that minister's department that was cut.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEwen: And I hope that the minister has been in the finance minister's ear since he took over that chair and has been lobbying hard to get that Island Community Fund back or something similar, because we've got community development officers out there that are trying to get things done. We've got a number of community organizations that are trying to get projects done that we're all involved with, and that that minister was involved with when he was also a backbench MLA, to get things done.

So, I encourage him to keep fighting to get something like that back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It is great that some of the funds from the generation of this power go back into the community, and it's really important that communities receive benefits from such projects.

It would be even better if we could develop a power strategy and an energy grid here with a distributed capability where every house, every rooftop, could be a potential solar collector; every basement could be a potential storage area. And then, you would

see the true benefits of energy coming back to every household, not just in a lump sum payment to a community.

However, this is great, but it's only a small step along where we need to be if we're going to have a truly visionary and sustainable approach here on Prince Edward Island to energy. I hope that in the energy strategy as that is rolled out, that we move to a distributed grid where such benefits can go directly to the householders on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to present a petition from Mary Ann Nelligan and residents of Prince Edward Island concerned about the situation with seniors in West Prince.

The petition states: We, the undersigned, are sending this urgent letter of petition to inform you that the dire situation with our seniors in West Prince is no longer acceptable. Our seniors are being cared for in local hospitals and waiting, some of them, for over a year to be placed in a manor.

This is unacceptable. Our seniors deserve better care and compassion than what is now available to them. We cannot deny that this situation is only going to get worse if something is not done immediately.

Our population is aging. Our nursing homes and community care facilities are filled with seniors who need more care than our hospitals can provide for them.

It is also very difficult for people who are ill and need hospital care to get a bed because the beds are taken up by these seniors who are waiting and waiting. We believe that they deserve to be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. They are, after all, the backbone of our society.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the petition now be received and do lie on the Table.

This petition contains 2,017 signatures and the prayer of the petition is as follows:

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island to urge government to review the current long-term care facilities to see where additional beds and staff can be placed, or additions made to the current structures – specifically, The Maplewood Manor in Alberton and/or the Margaret Stewart Ellis home in O'Leary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table Health PEI Nursing Strategy: 2017-2020 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table *The Guardian*: April 6th, 2017 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Executive Council Order: EC2017-129, which authorizes borrowing of an amount not to exceed \$5,960 000 for the land acquisition

and construction of an 80 bed students residence and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Stratford-Kinlock, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: – hear the bulldozers from here.

Mr. Roach: They can build wherever they want.

Ms. Biggar: Can't prevent that unless the city wants to.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table an update on the Motion 83, Universal Basic Income Family and Human Services for the period ending April 6th, 2016 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Excuse me for a moment.

Mr. MacKay: Oh, yeah. Go ahead.

Private Member's Bill

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: May I just take a moment to recognize a couple of guests who have come in, please?

Speaker: Yes, you may.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to recognize Lynne Lund, deputy leader of the Green Party of Prince Edward Island and sitting beside her, Karla Bernard, who is the newly instated shadow critic for education.
Welcome.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to notice given, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *The Election Age Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Bill No. 103, *Election Age Act*, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: A brief explanation, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: This bill amends the *Election Act* to lower the voting act from 18 to 16 years of age.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Motions other than Government

Mr. MacKay: Opposition would now like to call Motion 10 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Motion No. 10.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, the following motion:

WHEREAS 79 per cent of Island families suffering from food insecurity are families in which someone is working;

AND WHEREAS food insecurity is defined as not having enough money to buy enough healthy food every single day;

AND WHEREAS 44.9 per cent of single parents in our province live in poverty and 38 per cent of people who use food banks on Prince Edward Island are children;
AND WHEREAS Government's 2014 Wellness Strategy has as its goal the reduction of food insecurity rates in our province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly direct the Legislative Committee on Health and Wellness to engage the public in a discussion on the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy aimed at the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty in our province.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to address our opposition's concerns about the need for a comprehensive and effective strategy to address the continuing growth of poverty in our province. Despite how government likes to spin its numbers, the reality is that our rates of poverty are increasing and continuing to rise on an annual basis.

Just recently the HungerCount report indicated that 35.5% of food bank users in PEI are under the age of 18 and the number using the food bank rose by 6.9% in the 2015-2016 year over the previous year.

Food bank use has risen by a disturbing 16.5% between 2008 and 2016. What's even more alarming, is that one in six food bank clients on PEI had a job and another 1 in 8 were receiving some kind of pension. As you know, we're continuing to lose full-time work while part-time jobs are on the rise.

Just recently we learned that more and more Islanders are having to rely on Employment Insurance this year over last year. That's somewhat, unbelievable, but according to the survey by Canadian Labour Congress, there are 2300 Islanders who are classified as working poor. That's an astonishing number. Our province cannot have a sustainable economy with \$23,000 Islanders who are struggling to make ends meet, who are living from paycheque to paycheque.

We cannot have such a large population living with the stress and anxiety – fearing that some unexpected bill will put them under.

I know that the province has been increasing the food allowance for social assistance recipients, but according to the HungerCount report, people on social assistance made up the largest number of people who were food bank clients. Obviously, the current rates are not enough to allow families to live without having to top up at the food bank.

The fact that PEI has the highest percentage of workers in the country earning \$15 an hour or less, is not a figure that should allow us to be complacent about poverty. I know that the province will be bragging about its increases in the minimum wage – which is now at \$11.25 an hour, but I don't think it's anything that we should be proud of because our province has a much larger population that is earning minimum wage in the first place.

Compared to PEI's 10.6% of workers who are receiving minimum wage, Nova Scotia has a figure of 7.9%; New Brunswick has a 6%, and Newfoundland has 8.4%. These figures are simply not good enough. I cannot imagine trying to feed my family, pay for daycare, a car, a house or rent, plus lights, heat and telephone on minimum wage. I doubt any of us here today could budget that well. The problem is that we do not have a real action plan in place to address these alarming numbers.

The problem is that our situation with poverty is further extended by the current crisis we have in mental health. I am not an expert, but I'm sure that some of the reasons for our growing mental health issues are related to the constant anxiety many families undergo worrying about how to pay their bills, or to put food on the table for their children; making that choice. For those workers who are classified as 'working poor', it must be extremely frustrating and discouraging that no matter how hard they work, they can never get ahead because costs keep rising.

The sad reality in our society today is that many minimum-wage or low-wage earners are struggling to get enough hours to ensure

that they can sustain the current level of poverty they already live in. Many do not have predictable schedules and live with the pressure of not being sure when they might get to work again, and if they can pay their bills with the paycheck the next month. Many live in a world where they can't get sick because they will not get paid. Many have to drag their kids out in snowstorms because if they don't know up for work their pay will be docked. They have no sick leave benefits, no retirement benefits; little opportunity for advancement because there are simply no good-paying jobs out there.

Unfortunately, small business owners are impacted by increases in minimum wage. They want to pay higher wages, but they are struggling to make ends meet as well. We need to have the input of our small business community to tell us how we can help them deal with their rising costs. They need to have a say in how we address poverty in this province. They are our employers. They need to make a profit, but at the same time they want Islanders making enough money to eat in their restaurants and to buy their goods and services.

Taxing our population to death with increases in HST and fee increases is not helping them. We have to put the brakes on taxes and fee increases. It is frustrating for all concerned. Businesses just begin to make a small profit and the government comes along and takes it away. How can businesses harm our workers and increase wages if every time they turn around government is gobbling up more and more of their profits. Our Island businesses have been relatively patient with government, but they are beginning to get fed up. The 1% hike in HST is hitting them hard and we know government is going to gauge more and more money out of their pockets through a carbon tax.

Government's only answer to poverty appears to be increasing the minimum wage. I think we can do better. I know we can do better, and we must do better. I believe that by increasing and indexing the personal tax exemption in this province not only would our businesses flourish, but those living in poverty and working at minimum wage would benefit greatly. Our opposition has asked for this to happen year after year, and while there has been a slight increase,

Islanders still start paying taxes on their incomes long before people in other provinces. I simply cannot understand how this government feels it can punish the citizens of our province for living here. It's not fair. A first step towards poverty reduction would be to change this inequity.

The HST is very costly compared to other provinces because it applies to many more essentials, and the rebate is by far the lowest in Canada. The recent 1% increase is raking in another \$28 million on the backs of our residents. Islanders simply cannot take anymore.

Campaign 2000 carried out research on the rate of child poverty by federal riding in advance of the 2015 federal election. This was conducted in the 308 ridings that existed before the electoral boundary changes added 30 seats. It found that 147 of those ridings have poverty rates above the national average of 19%. The Charlottetown riding stood out with a poverty rate of 24.8%. The next highest in our province was Egmont with a child poverty rate of 18.8%, followed by Cardigan with a rate of 16.5%. Malpeque riding fared the best with a child poverty rate of 14%. There were no PEI ridings in the first category with less than 10% poverty. All were in the second and third categories between 10% and 30%. The truth is: We are failing these families and our children.

One of the recommendations contained in the latest Campaign 2000 report is for the Government of PEI to take immediate steps to implement a poverty eradication strategy. They asked for increases in funding and a commitment to transparency, as well as province-wide consultation. Other recommendations that could be discussed in a committee forum call for part-time workers to be assured by law that they receive enough hours of work to qualify for social benefits. Our legislative committee, in its public consultations, could review the Campaign 2000 recommendations to determine if any are workable in our province.

The new federal Liberal government committed to reduce child poverty by 50% in five years. A comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in our province could work towards that goal through

collaboration with all levels of government and through various agencies and helping groups in our Island communities. Low-income Islanders need more affordable and accessible housing. They need to be able to heat their homes, feed their children, look after their health needs, and not live in constant fear of not being able to pay their bills. It is our job to ensure that the lives of all Islanders are made better. That is our work.

We have an opposition to put in place meaningful policies to help improve poverty levels in our province. I believe that Islander citizens should have input and that the province can benefit from their ideas. I would ask that this Legislative Assembly support our motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I'm pleased to rise today to second our opposition motion outlying the need for a comprehensive strategy to address the various serious issues relating to poverty here in our province.

Canadian politicians promised as far back as 1989, when the poverty rate was only 13%, to eradicate child poverty by the year of 2000. As we can clearly see, that has not happened. The second annual report of child and family poverty on Prince Edward Island released in November 2014 – sorry, November 24th, 2015, by the MacKillop Centre for Social Justice forms the PEI portion of the Campaign 2000 report, referred to by the mover of our motion. It outlines the depth of poverty for low-income Islanders in our province. It is much greater than that of other Canadians across our nation. This province has always responded to higher numbers of Islanders using food banks by increasing the food allowance rates for Islanders on social assistance. But, we know that increasing food allowance rates is nothing more than a stop-gap measure; a Band-Aid, and really

does nothing to improve the standard of life for these individuals.

In May of 2012, the provincial government released the social action plan to reduce poverty, but here is it April 2017, and food bank and poverty rates continue to rise. That plan was centered around two main goals.

Number one: To support people to move out of poverty by strengthening their educational and economic opportunities, and their participation in the labour force.

Number two: To protect and enhance the standard of living and quality of life for those unable to participate in the labour force. The plan recognized a commitment to social justice and poverty reduction benefits for all Islanders. The goals and objectives of this plan are certainly laudable, but unfortunately; similar to every department in our government, there's a lack of financial resources and strategy necessary to effectively address the issues identified.

I've heard time and time again that the various departments are doing the best they can with what they have, and I don't doubt that. But, I think that if we had a government that was in place that had the priorities in place, and the priorities should be the people first, then many more resources would be able to be applied. I just have to think back to the millions of dollars that were wasted on the e-gaming, GeoSweep, and the list can go on and on.

Can you imagine what the Department of Family and Human Services could do with an additional \$8 million? Or what we could do with the nursing strategy if the minister of health had another four or five or eight million dollars?

Again, I think it's very important that any government puts its priorities in place and is there for the people first and foremost.

The 2012 strategy included the following priority areas:

Increased access to affordable housing – well, we had quite the discussion on that this afternoon, and it's obvious that Charlottetown's losing more affordable housing;

Improve the social assistance program;

Continue to enhance services for persons with disabilities, and apply the disability lens to program planning;

Continue enhancements to early learning; improve literacy and support adult learning, training and work;

Continue increases to minimum wage with index increases.

Change tax policies to assist low income Islanders;

Improve access to needed prescription medications;

Strengthen mental health and addictions services;

Enhance family supports in such areas as justice services.

Again, lofty goals but no substantive plan behind them to ensure the outcome identified. Yes, there have been tinkering, but again, many of the efforts are being taken in silos. One department does one thing and it results in a negative somewhere else.

Most recently, we saw this happen with the increases in minimum wage. Those increases – according to Sonya Hooper, executive director of the Early Childhood Development Association – means many of the working poor find it too hard to qualify for the program. She is quoted in a CBC story as stating: That minimum wage has risen to the point where people are already topping out for access to the Child Care Subsidy Program.

In 2011, there were 2,054 Island children covered under the subsidy, a number that dropped to 1,624 two years ago.

Despite the increases to provincial social assistance programs, those increases did simply not keep up with the increases in rents, food and other goods and services. This has resulted in a growing number of Islanders using food banks.

Housing prices are lower in many of our rural areas, but this also means having a

vehicle, and that requires gas, insurance and repairs. The average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Charlottetown increased from \$814 in 2014, to \$845 in 2015. I don't even need to mention about the electricity rates and the increases there, to either heat your home with electricity, and/or the fee increasing prices in heating fuel.

We only have to go to look at any of the various service stations, particularly around the outlying Charlottetown areas that sell heating fuel, and you'll see people lined up with jerry cans because they can't afford to have an oil company come and deliver.

Now, Feasible Fuels is providing a great service here on Prince Edward Island and I applaud the work that they've done, and the undertaking of establishing their business. I think they started out with one truck, and I think they have approximately four or five trucks in their fleet now. That just answers the question there, that people just need help. It's great that there are organizations and business people out there willing to help.

The province's affordable housing waitlist for seniors doubled in the past five years. While there have been increases in funding for the Seniors Home Repair Program, it simply does not match the demand for this program. Many seniors are still living in unhealthy and unsafe housing. As we all know, many Island organizations have expressed concerns over the general lack of targets in the poverty strategy. Partners for Change suggest that too many adults are being housed in hospitals because no viable alternative exists and they are critical of the fact that there is no comprehensive provincial housing strategy.

The 2015 Prince Edward Island Poverty Progress Profile: Canada Without Poverty says, the bottom line is: That while PEI has made some progress in the years since its strategy was developed, considerable work remains to be done. Child poverty is particularly prevalent on Aboriginal Reserves and our strategy simply does not address this issue.

“Increasing social assistance rates might provide short-term gains but low wages across the province are largely responsible for food bank usage, food insecurity and

many Islanders' inability to meet their basic needs."

This province is facing a fast growing seniors' population, many of whom do not have retirement income put away. We are facing a crisis in diabetes among our general population, which is leading to very high costs within our health care system. We are suffering a shortage of affordable housing, and we have a new immigrant population that needs to find meaningful employment to support their families.

I believe that we need a province-wide consultation relating to poverty and the development of a comprehensive long-term strategy that meets the needs of all of our population. Our caucus believes we need to have this wider discussion now and we need to get to work as soon as possible.

Government must support our efforts with resources through the collaborative approach with our communities. We do believe that we can eradicate poverty in our province, but it will take more than Band-Aid solutions and words. We will need to change policies, perceptions and prejudices.

Basically, every level of our society needs to become engaged in addressing this major concern that is affecting negatively so many aspects of our lives in our province.

Therefore, I would ask all hon. members of this Legislative Assembly for their support of this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to debate and to talk about this very important issue that affects many Islanders, and many Canadians.

Canada, is one, if not the richest country in the world. Think of it. The land we have. The resources we have. We have more oil than Saudi Arabia. We have more electricity, hydroelectricity than any place in

the world. We have the best land for growing crops. We have the best mining in the world. We have so many riches in this country that there should be no poverty in this country.

Today's debate takes me back, I guess, and I'm – 1964, I was only a little fellow –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) still a little fellow (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – then – yeah. But if you read –

Mr. Aylward: That's (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – Lyndon Baines Johnson's War on Poverty. In 1964 he introduced legislation to do that.

In one of his speeches he talked about being a teacher in Texas where he'd say, the kids would come to school, the first day they would come to school they would – their eyes would be full of joy and hope and the future ahead. But he said: Eventually, when they were losing hope you could see that joy and hope for the future going from their eyes.

His experience as a teacher in a poor area of Texas guided him to making one of the best things that happened in America, which was the War on Poverty legislation.

I think it's time for, not only the province, but for Canada, to take up that challenge, too. Because we do have the greatest country in the world to live. We have no excuse to seeing our fellow Canadians, and our neighbours and friends going without.

And, I referred earlier today about *The Guardian*. I want to thank, again, *The Guardian* for their tremendous work on displaying and telling stories about fellow Islanders. It must have been hard. Anyone noticing here, many of the stories are in my district, Jordie's – or the member from Brighton's district, the member from Parkdale's district.

When I walk to work I go by – the food bank is close by. The Salvation Army is close by. Bedford MacDonald House is close by. I walk by the Salvation Army in the morning and you do – as *The Guardian*

has indicated, there are a number of people out in front of the Salvation Army waiting for their morning breakfast, I would say. Then, there is the food bank – or the soup kitchen that provides the services to many residents in the Charlottetown area that are needed each and every day. It breaks my heart to see it and to see it happen. But, progress is being made. Is it made fast enough? We'll see.

But over the years of sitting in this Legislature, a number of issues came to the floor. I remember the fight for the breakfast program in the previous administration and back then how some MLAs just couldn't get it beyond their mind that: Why would we ever need a breakfast program in Prince Edward Island?

I'm glad to say today, with each and every person I know in this Legislature and my colleagues that thought is in no mind. Each and every member in this House knows that breakfast programs are needed.

Also, over the years I remember when the federal government came in with the National Child Benefit, and that was a benefit that was going to everybody in Canada but there was a national benefit supplement that went for low-income families. At that time, the provinces were clawing back that money from people on social assistance and using it for other programs.

I remember being in opposition, and people that don't think things can be done from the opposition is absolutely incorrect; a lot of things can be done through the opposition. We fought extremely hard in the opposition to bring forward the elimination of that claw back to people on social assistance.

Again, I don't blame anybody for not jumping on that bandwagon at the time because poverty is probably something we want to hide; a society wants to hide, we don't want to talk about it. We don't want to talk about it in the Legislature, in the government, but I think those things are changing and changing extremely quick. I was proud when we took over the administration of government in 2007 and one of the first things we did was end the claw back to the National Child Benefit for people on social assistance. That gave a big

boost to the people at the time. Was it enough? I don't think so, but there's only so many resources and we've got to work towards putting more resources in it.

Also, when we came to power we identified, I think as the Leader of the Third Party indicated, education is important to rid poverty in our society. One of the first things we tried – we did was to bring kindergarten into the school system. I do believe that it is working and it's working quite substantially, helping a lot of families.

But, one of the other things was the youth centres that were set up for children, I think it's three to five – early childhood centres. Another thing that was done to help families of modest income to allow their children the opportunity. There is nothing more important in a society than allowing children to start out life equally.

Another thing I'm pretty proud of is the minimum wage. We were complained. We were argued with and fought with on our policy to increasing minimum wage higher than the consumer price index. It was a policy that we thought was needed on Prince Edward Island. A lot of people complained about it. The Chamber of Commerce complained about it. But, everybody has to participate in the elimination of poverty. Businesses have to understand if poverty exists it's going to (Indistinct) their businesses anyway with higher taxes and things, so we all have to join in here to eliminate that.

I'm proud to say with the policy of increasing minimum wages, and a never increasing rate over the consumer price index. Today if we followed the consumer price index as businesses wanted us to do, minimum wage today would be about \$8.75. Do you think Islanders wanted to people to live on \$8.75? No. Did it hurt any businesses? No. I know a lot of businesses, that's their benchmark. It's the benchmark for Prince Edward Island. I know a lot of businesses strive to pay their employees more than that.

The stories that are in the paper – I want to thank each and every person that put forward a story, because without those stories, I don't think Islanders would comprehend the issues at hand here. Each

page is full with various stories. I look at the one – the one I picked out is the walking in the door of the food bank. It's hard and she did a good job, but I want to also say – talk about Prince Street School. It's close to downtown. It's a school, I think, that's a model for schools everywhere. You see the commitment the teachers, the people that are there. The clothing program they have, helping the needs of the students, and the principal – no wonder the principal was recognized as one of the top 40 principals in Canada for the efforts done there.

I look at its sister school, St. Jean, and St. Jean is doing the same. St. Jean has worked extremely hard and it's not only about the building. I was disappointed – I'll get in trouble here, I'm not used to trouble.

Ms. Biggar: Your second name is trouble.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

When one of the school board representatives said: If you had to drive by that place. Her comment on the radio: If you had to drive by that place. Like it was a place you wouldn't want to drive by. I commend the efforts of the people that fought to keep this school open. It's a school in my area, it's a school in the Brighton area, and like I said earlier, it's more than a school. It's a safe place for a lot of kids that may not have a safe place.

Anyway, I commend the Premier for his leadership in reversing that decision. We get criticized for it. A lot of people have said: You should have closed it. Well, I tell those people to go down there and see what's happening. See what people are being helped, and see how the community is coming together. Some people may disagree with the decision of reversing the school board's decision. I don't. I don't think anyone in this House does, and it's important that we recognize that Prince Street and St. Jean – and I'm only talking about these schools because these are the schools I (Indistinct) by every day and I see each and every day. I don't see BMWs and Porsche's and SUVs in front of those schools. But, I'm not complaining about the other schools. They have their place, but these two schools are important to poverty reduction in Prince Edward Island. Because as the leader has said: Education is

important. But, the supports of helping people in those areas is important.

Again, I can't say enough about them and I'm proud that – one of the proudest things in the last debate over the school discussions – I remember the school debate in 1996 where there was discussion about schools and I was extremely proud at the Colonel Gray meeting. I went to that meeting as I went to the meeting in 1996 to hear from the people of Stratford, and at that time – the comments at that time were intercity schools, like we were – we wouldn't want to drive by them, the comment.

But, I was extremely proud of the people of Stratford in the last debate around the school issue.

They have recognized Birchwood as a class-A school. They recognize the importance of their children going to that school. It is a diverse school.

What better way to teach child? The best lessons a child could get is seeing other children –

Anyway, I also want to thank *The Guardian* for – each and every page has a story, an important story. You know, you have a single mother: Roots of the problem; talking about her struggle.

Her struggle is the struggle of many people, and you see in her eyes the concern that she has for her children. She is probably consumed by how she is going to make it through today, tomorrow, and the next day, and you know she shouldn't be. If anything, there should be supports there for her.

But, the main support there for her would be the school. She would be able to go to that school and meet her friends at that school and to see other children at that school. She gained support in her efforts on making her children's lives better.

That's what happens in a lot of these cases. Parents will sacrifice to make their child's lives better. They will go out. They will go without food. They will go without the little things in life.

And I'm so mad. It gets me so mad when some people think that it's their fault or it's

their family's fault. Some people just can't understand.

We may not all can be millionaires, but we can all end up poor. Never think you are so fortunate that something will never happen to you that you'll end up in the shoes of the people in this paper today.

That's the big important question and the big important thing that's coming out of today, is that any one of us in this room – an accident, something could happen, you can't work, you can't do – make an income in your life. You could end up in this position, so put yourself in the shoes of that person.

But I see hope in the people that are in the paper here today. I see they have struggles and they want to make their lives better and their family lives better.

They're not complaining. I don't hear complaints in the paper here. Most in the paper here today is about: I'm in a situation, I have to work towards getting out of this situation, and how do I do it.

That's why the Premier – and I agree with his position that the best social policy is a job, the best social policy is an education, and we're working towards providing that. But there are some people that can't work and education is out of their reach.

I think the better we can do – Progress has been made and is being made in these areas as we move forward in our journey, I would say, on the war on poverty. Progress is being made.

Changes have been being made in order to get people back into the education system, into Holland College and into UPEI. Levels of support have increased. Deduction levels have increased. We have introduced that people can now collect unemployment insurance while they are getting their education because it's most important when people find themselves in a position that they're in a rut that there is an opportunity for them to get an education, to get themselves out of poverty.

Holland College and UPEI, it's a great effort now that supports are in place there.

Earlier today, we were talking about the facility, the new facility that's being built at Holland College. I've requested Holland College to consider to putting social housing with that complex, that student residence. I think it's important that that facility be looked at in terms of Holland College. I want Holland College to put some rooms in the facility that allow for a single mother or a family to have accommodations while one spouse or the other spouse goes to Holland College. I think that should be done. Holland College has –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: – has a responsibility here to provide –

An Hon. Member: A social responsibility.

Mr. R. Brown: A social – thank you – a social responsibility to provide that.

Can I get a glass of water please?

We will work – I know the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning and the minister of social services or family services – we've been discussing the possibilities of doing that, because I think again, Holland College has a social responsibility to help all its residents, and we will continue to work towards that.

I just can't believe it – every page I look at I know the person in it. Sorry.

The grandmother looking after her grandchildren – I have to admit, or commend *The Guardian* again today for the way they outlined this story, this (Indistinct), this thing. They told different stories of different perspectives of different people.

One of the things the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning did do was hire – or was a partnership in hiring Jen Nicholson last year. Jen was on a one-year contract. She went around the streets of Charlottetown, for the people that are on the streets, and engaged the people in those circumstances to see what she could do in terms of helping and assisting those people. Sometime that's all that's needed is some advice and some education, you know.

When she does that she helps those people, she helps Charlottetown, she helps Prince Edward Island, she helps Canada.

And the mayor – I was at his affordable housing summit and there was a lot of good discussion there, and the federal government has introduced policies and monies for affordable housing. Do I think it's coming fast enough? No.

The problem cannot wait. We must be there.

I also want to take an opportunity here to thank the police departments. We criticize them a lot of the time. We complain about them a lot of the time. But they are frontline workers in the fight against poverty.

I saw a police officer a lot of time as a little kid working (Indistinct), so thanks to the police. I want to conclude by – the last section –

Sorry, I see my old friend Mary Boyd here. Mary Boyd, what an advocate. What a fighter. What a person. She'll not give up, Mary. She has a cohort of friends there that are fighting for the people of Prince Edward Island too. Every meeting you go to, Mary is there fighting for the people in need. God bless her. I don't know what we'll do without her if – I want to conclude by saying the last section of the paper was the people – Islanders that help. Great pictures – I hope these pictures inspire a lot more people to take up the cause.

You have volunteers – Salvation Army – I walk by. Mable Gallant – a lot of us know Mable. Every day she goes around and picks the second hand – or not second hand. It reminds me of the muffin tops. She goes around and collects the donuts – day old donuts and bread and all that, and every day she goes to the different group places around Charlottetown. It is individuals like Mable Gallant and the ones that are in the paper here that shows each and every one of us in this place how great Prince Edward Island is.

We must be one of the only places in the world that when anybody is in need and the benefit dances – the benefit thing is the first thing we do. You've been at a lot of them. All of us have been at a lot of them. The outpouring of support to fellow Islanders,

when a disaster hits a fellow Islander, is phenomenal. Each and every time I go to one of them, I'm so proud of how we, as Islanders – as a collective group – come out to support fellow Islanders. I think the – just one more thing, Mr. Speaker. Sorry.

There is one group – the federal government has introduced increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement. That's when you get old age security, if you don't make enough money, you go on Guaranteed Income Supplement and the federal government has added \$900 to that in the last budget, which has gone a long way to helping a lot of people. I still think there's a group of people that needs – the federal government has to come forward and all of us have to come together here – is people between the ages of 60 and 65. There's a group of mostly women – in that group – that their husband was the sole breadwinner back in the days when one spouse worked. There are a lot of people in that category today that are struggling to get to the age of 65 in order to get the benefits available at 65. I think we have to take a look at that.

Guaranteed income – I think it's a necessity that we should take a look at. I think we could take a look at it immediately in terms of people that qualify for the disability Canada pension. I understand and I stand to be corrected, but over 50% of the people that are on social assistance are long-term social assistance clients, either because of a disability – or something that they cannot work for the rest of their lives. I think maybe the federal government, we should be looking in terms of getting a guaranteed income for that cohort of people right away because there's always going to be complaints about – and another thing that gets me really mad is people talking about a lot of people are using the social assistance system that don't need it. I think I may be talking out of school here, but I think we might have wrote off one or two or \$3 million dollars – over \$180 million of social assistance at the last seven or eight years. That's 2% – very low.

But if you look into the files, you'd see that it is \$100 here, \$50 here and the social worker gave it. We should have a little bit of flexibility there – and I know there is flexibility there, in terms of helping people in needs. I wouldn't want to be in a situation

come the end of the week, there's nothing. If I had to do a little cheating, I would.

Anyway, support the resolution; thank *The Guardian* for bringing it out. Let's get on and listen to Islanders because I know we can do better. It's not a complaint against the government and it's not a complaint against the system. It's time has come to move the file and to move the markers. We have good economic times and that good economic time should be shared. There's tonnes of reports out there that – the divide that is occurring. Can you imagine? I stand to be corrected.

There was a report out that six or seven of the richest people in the world have more money than half the world. Can you believe that? I was amazed at it. Six or seven people have more money than half the people in the world combined. That's unfair. That's not right. I know that a lot of these – the wealthiest people – are spreading their money around. Warren Buffet is doing a lot, but he has a lot more cash. That's not the world we want to live in.

When you look at the first picture from outer space of our world, it's not that big. It's not that big when you look at it. If we can't get along, on that little dot in the universe, or that little ball in the universe, we're in pretty bad shape.

Another statistic heard is that half the people go to bed at night overfed and half the people in the world go to bed at night malnourished. Is that right? No. There are geopolitical problems there and I hope at some point our nations can get together and work these issues out.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to my colleague for that impassioned speech. I want to thank the members opposite for bringing forward this motion.

It is important for us as legislators to take the time to look seriously at the issue of

poverty on our island and to recognize many people in our communities struggle to keep their households together, their families together, and their families fed. For too many people living below the poverty line, life can become a series of very painful choices and unmet needs.

When I was a young girl, we didn't have the supports in place that are there today to take advantage of – even though they may need some upgrades and some tweaking. My mother was a single mother of nine children. We did have to have help to make – and to have help to help us survive. She worked many hours cleaning, working at the chicken cannery to try and make a few dollars – so I know what a struggle it can be. We were not able to stay together as a family, but thankfully, because of our grandparents, we were able to stay connected.

I applaud the initiative to take a sweeping look at poverty across our Island and to get the public, as a whole, involved in examining the issues because it takes all of us, as a community and as an Island, to look at this face on.

With that being said, I'd like to talk for a minute about some of the initiatives that my department has undertaken in order to help ease some of the financial burdens on families. efficiencyPEI, formally the Office of Energy Efficiency, was created to help Islanders reduce energy consumption. Whether we are talking about heating oil, propane or electricity, home energy use can be a very significant part of a family's monthly bill. efficiencyPEI strives to help Islanders reduce some of that burden, and our government has retained the HST exemption on oil. But when it comes to energy, the first place to find savings is in conservation. You don't have to pay for energy that you don't use.

Since opening in 2008, efficiencyPEI, formally the Office of Energy Efficiency, has provided over \$7 million in grants to over 8,000 residential clients; \$9.4 million in loans to 1,775 residential clients, and a free weatherization service to 3,600 low-income homes and that last point is key. Our free weatherization service is accessible to Islanders, no matter how limited their resources are, and it addresses one of the main culprits in energy loss. Sealing around

doors and windows, blocking the major drafts from a leaky home, this can drastically lower fuel use.

We have reached 3,600 low-income homes, but our estimate is that there are 9,000 more homes that do qualify for this kind of help. For whatever reason, people don't know the help is available, or sometimes they are reluctant to ask for it. We want to reach them, and in order to do so, efficiencyPEI is stepping up its outreach efforts. Staff members are going out into the community and are working with service groups, such as the Salvation Army, in order to reach people who might be able to benefit from improved energy efficiency programs.

Going forward, we want to increase the visibility of efficiencyPEI to Islanders when they come to Access PEI and other offices. It's our mandate and our mission to help people reduce power use and power bills. I'd encourage my fellow MLAs to keep that in mind as well. I know you hear daily from families in financial need and when you do, it might be good to consider whether that particular household could benefit from some of the programs that we can help with in helping reduce their energy consumption.

Those monthly bills for oil and electricity can be reduced in many cases. I don't think energy efficiency alone, though, will lift a family out of poverty. But, I do think when money is scarce that every little bit that we can do to help families can help.

I would encourage all members to make sure they spread the word that the Government of Prince Edward Island, through efficiencyPEI, can help and may help to be able to reduce their monthly energy costs.

Poverty is a complex issue and a persistent challenge for all of us across the Island and in other communities on a daily basis. I want to thank all the members who have shared and addressed this issue and helped raise awareness, and I also want to thank all those organizations across PEI that reach out to help and support families in need. We should all be united in working to eliminate poverty.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to take this time to tell four stories over the last 18 months of constituents in my district and then we'll find out if we have a broken system.

The first one; I got a call from a lady asking me to go meet her. She was probably late 70s, a senior. A single lady, widower, taking in her monthly pension and I believe it was approximately \$1,100 a month. She said: Can you help me out of getting some food? She said: All I've had in the last three days is bread and peanut butter. Sure enough, I said: Have you gone to the food bank? Yes, I've used it in the past. The food bank is great, but I'm only allowed to get so much at a time. It's never enough to keep me through. I said: No problem, I'll look after it. I went down to the Lion's Club, helped the lady out. It was a temporary fix, but it was one example of a senior on a fixed income that has eaten bread and peanut butter three days in a row.

The next one comes, a young lady with two kids. She called me and she said: Mr. MacKay, I'm having trouble. She said: I have been dealing with social assistance on an issue and I'm not having any luck, can you come out and see me? I go out and see her. This lady just finished knee surgery. She, I believe, is three quarters blind. She has a rough time finding work. She just finished her surgery and she was looking for disability support. She was taking in \$680 a month, raising two kids, trying to pay rent. It couldn't happen, the money wasn't there. I said: No problem. Where can I start, she said: Well, I just sent my kids to school today with no groceries, with no food; my two kids are gone to school and haven't eaten today.

The first thing I do, I go into the Super Store and I buy \$200 of groceries myself. I hand deliver them out there. Temporary fix, great for a week but in a week's time she is still going to be there. In the meantime, I call the departments and I call around because I said: There is no way this lady is going through what she's going through with no support. Sure enough, it's exactly what

happened. There was no support there for her. We did get it rectified, 18 months later. They back-paid her now, but she went through 18 months of torture over something that could have easily been prevented.

Next one on the list: 18-year-old male. A year ago I get a call from him. I'm not even sure what district he was in, but somebody told him I could help him out. He called me. He said: Mr. MacKay, I'm wondering if you can help me out; I've been living in a tent in a woods in Cornwall for two months. My parents threw me out. I'm trying to finish grade 12. I need some help. I said: No problem. I called the department. The department right away, jumps and says: Yes, we'll help. And they did, to a certain extent. They gave him \$350 a month for a room to finish high school. Well, there are not too many rooms you can find for \$350 a month. They ended up giving him a couple hundred dollars a month for groceries. He came to me, he said: I need some clothes. He said: Is there any help for that? Sure enough, I call the department: Yes, no problem. We'll find money for clothes. Guess how much his clothing allowance for the month was? Seven dollars. You can't buy a pair of socks for \$7, and that's what this kid was getting. Trying to finish his education; a good kid on the street - \$7 for a clothing allowance.

Next one, last one: An 80-year-old man. Seniors housing. Fixed income. Widower. He needs to go for open heart surgery. He comes to me: Mr. MacKay. He said: I'm due in Halifax next week for open heart surgery. He said: I need some help getting there. He said: One of my neighbours has a car, if we can get the gas and bridge paid for he can take me. Great. I get on the phone: Sorry, Mr. MacKay, no luck. We can get him on an SMT bus over there. So we've got an 80-year-old fellow that they're willing to put on a bus for open heart surgery. Well, I went through open heart surgery when I was 23 years old and I wouldn't want to be on an SMT bus coming home nine days later after an open heart surgery. That's what this 80-year-old man going through open heart surgery had to do.

We're taxed to death. Right now we've got a provincial Liberal government. We've got a federal Liberal government and we're saying the system is not broke or it's not government's responsibility? Of course it's

government's responsibility. We've got 18 of the most influential people on Prince Edward Island – we've got a federal government – things need to change. People are on the streets. They are falling through the cracks. Little things, personal tax exemptions – we're one of the lowest in the country. There are so many little things that can be done right now. For 18 months I've been here and yet to see anything happen. We're all getting the calls. Every one of us are getting the calls here. This isn't something new. If we've got to put a lock on the door, sit down and hash this out and try to come up with solutions as a group and not political, let's do it. I'm all for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

On the front page of today's *Guardian*, the headline is: The Price of Poverty: Is PEI Winning The War On Poverty? Well, the simple and the one-word answer to that question is: No.

For over 30 years, levels of poverty on Prince Edward Island have hovered stubbornly around the same place – and that's despite significant economic growth over that same period. While I don't personally particularly like to incorporate hostile language into political debates, it's clear that this war is ongoing and it continues to claim many victims – we just heard of four from the hon. member.

One of government's central roles is to improve the quality of life for all of its citizens. I, too, have to commend *The Guardian* for its commitment to this issue and for the courage of so many of the people who were interviewed and cited by the hon. member opposite. Also, of course, to one of the prominent writers in the paper, herself, who exposed one of the many painful aspects of poverty on Prince Edward Island.

Poverty, of course, is not a new problem, and for that reason, it doesn't command the same attention of some of the more vivid and, perhaps, gory stories that increasing

tend to dominate the headlines in today's media. Insidious, persistent problems can't capture our attention in the same way that some more lurid stories often do. For that reason, it's even more commendable that *The Guardian* would devote its entire copy to this one chronic and crucial if, from a journalistic point of view, unspectacular problem.

As elected representatives, I'm sure that I speak for all of us when I say we didn't need today's paper to tell us that poverty is a crushing problem here on Prince Edward Island. I, like I'm sure all members of this House, receive calls virtually every day related either directly to poverty or to some issue related to poverty. It's in every district and it manifests in stories that are often heartbreaking and quite shocking.

In discussion this motion, like so many of the stories in today's paper, we need to look beyond the individual tales of hardship and the grief and the anguish, though that's difficult to do of course, to uncover the root causes of poverty in our community.

Island values have always involved caring for each other – looking out for our neighbors and supporting each other in difficult times. I think that's why Islanders find it particularly hard to know that people in our community are suffering. It's our tradition – and I think it's an Island instinct to want to help to do something about that, and 150 years ago that manifested itself by helping your neighbor get the crop in. But today, it manifests itself with a steady stream of community fundraisers that we offer our neighbors when they're either stricken by illness or their house burns down – or faced with some other challenge.

Those strong connections that are woven so deep into the Island character, I think, make it excruciating for us to watch others around us, our neighbors and friends, struggle. The price of poverty is very real and it is high. There are, of course, some intangible costs such as the pain and suffering experience by those who don't have enough to meet their basic daily needs.

There are also real costs to society caused by poverty. Increased health costs, for example. I have to speak here specifically about mental health and the implications of

poverty in that area. Last week, members of the group Island Mothers Helping Mothers unleashed a flood of tales of piercing anguish around mental health.

Poverty was a persistent and a consistent part of almost every story that was told. Societal costs associated with poverty are also accumulated in other areas; education, for example, where teachers are exhausted as they deal with a torrent of behavioral and academic problems, in law and order, and, of course, in social services.

Last year, our Chief Public Health Officer declared the social determinants of health to be a central challenge in creating better overall for Islanders. I quote from the report released in 2016: Health for all Islanders indicates that an unequal distribution of the social determinants among population group is leading to health inequality. Islanders with the lowest household income have significantly poorer health behaviours and health outcomes. Poor health outcomes result in health care costs – already, or course, the largest and also the most rapidly growing cost to government. The World Health Organization defines health – I think I said this this morning in one of my answers – as the complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, not just the absence of disease or infirmity. And by not dealing with poverty, we are denying many Islanders the opportunity for better health and we are creating unsustainable burdens on our treasury.

I acknowledge that poverty is a stubbornly persistent and complex problem and that there is no simple or single solution. Having said that, I agree with *The Guardian* that it's not an intractable one. Again I quote from the editorial: Can the root causes of poverty ever be eliminated and consigned to history books? Yes, but there must be a change in political leadership or rather, there must be a change in the mindset, vision and priorities of our politicians. They're speaking directly to the 27 of us who sit in this House.

A long line of administrations on Prince Edward Island, and elsewhere in this world, have attempted to deal with poverty by growing our economy. Assuming that with growth and wealth will come an overall increase in collective wellbeing. That has clearly been shown to be a false hope. Our

economy on Prince Edward Island has grown 500% – five times. It's five times bigger than it was in the early 80s, yet poverty levels are largely unchanged. The promise of trickle-down economics is an empty one. Indeed, levels of inequality have increased significantly both on Prince Edward Island and around the world. The gains and wealth from economic growth are distributed less and less equally and the member across the way spoke to that very eloquently earlier.

The newest strategy to spur economic growth on Prince Edward Island, of course, is The Mighty Island. It is a plan focused on exports, and despite the glowing promises in the glossy brochures, I see nothing in this strategy that will do anything to overcome the limitations of this conventional economic thinking to reduce or to eliminate poverty. This is not, as *The Guardian* called for, a new mindset, vision or priority. It is more of the same.

How about some new ideas that will create a provincial economy more in line with Island values? That will move us to a position where we are living within our means, both economically and ecologically and create hope for young Islanders that they can stay on Prince Edward Island and forge a great future for themselves and for their families.

Competing in a global marketplace where forces relentlessly work against poverty reduction in the developed world is neither innovative nor sensible. We must think of new economic paradigms, ones that will serve all Islanders well and create predictable, long-term prosperity for all Islanders long into the future. We also need to start measuring differently what we mean when we say: Prosperity. We must stop making the assumption that economic growth is the pathway to increased wellbeing. We should start looking at other metrics that better indicate the true welfare of society, including and critically, levels of poverty and the distribution of wealth in our community.

Last year, I introduced the Well Being Measurement Act and it was designed exactly to do this. Certainly economic growth is important and we should continue to measure it, but we have to go well beyond that. Well being indicators look at a variety

of metrics to measure how we are really doing. They measure what Islanders really care about and there are several aspects to it. I'm going to run through – there are many, many different types of well being indicators, but the Canadian well being indicators I'm going to run through quickly here: Community vitality – what is happening in our communities? Are our neighbors well? Are our schools and other critical services that support the welfare of communities intact? Are we socially isolated?

I talked earlier today about how nurses can provide care for people to stay and age in their homes. A small aspect of what contributes to community. There are so many other things, which contribute to the vitality of a community that are outside the measures of gross domestic product.

The second measure is democratic engagement. The goal of democratic engagement is high levels of citizen participation that is meaningful in our decisions. Of course, we've gone through several processes recently, and I have faith that this government is listening to Islanders. That we are not just simply going out and asking for their opinions, but that we are incorporating those ideas in our policies going forward.

The third aspect of well-being measurements is education. Education, of course, is a core personal resource. It's the most critical indicator of how individuals will do in terms of their health, mental and physical, and also their income potential. It's the most critical indicator. Learning, of course, is a lifelong pursuit. I'm not just talking about those who are school-age; I'm talking about learning of all age groups. I think I mentioned earlier in a response to a minister's statement about seniors being allowed to age in place and go into those schools, and learn themselves, and teach young people. Education is an enormously important indicator of well-being.

Environment is another. We have to recognize the importance of the natural world on our well-being. We somehow imagine that the word "environment" means everything else out there. That is not what the environment is. Environment is a word for everything around us. The body that I

stand in here today is a different one from which I stood here during the last session. Most of my cells in my body have been replaced. They have come from what – we all know the phrase, you are what you eat, but the reality is, we are not just what we eat. We are what we eat, what we drink, what we breath. Those cells become our body. Our cells are turned over continually. There is no separation between us and the environment. It's one continuous – it's a continuum. There is no separation between us and our environment. What we do to our Environment, we do to us. The health of the environment is critical, to not only to our physical health, but our spiritual health and our mental health.

All things in the economy come from the environment. If we continue to degrade the environment we are not doing what we need to do to make sure that we have a sustainable economy long into the future.

Healthy populations are the next metric that is measured in well-being. Are we getting healthier? The social deterrents of health, as I explained earlier, and the Chief Public Health Officer, show that clearly poverty is the major factor in influencing our personal health when it comes to both physical and mental.

Leisure and culture is another element. Do we have access to recreational opportunities in our communities? Can we express ourselves through arts and culture? Are all of those things out there? If they're not, that has a significant impact on people's well-being.

Living standards and this is related to the distribution of wealth and how important that is. It's not just the amount of wealth we create in our society; it's how equitably that is distributed. You will find that in the countries with the highest measures of well-being there is the least inequality.

There are other metrics, but I want to finish here. Clearly, a rising gross domestic product is not an accurate measure of community well-being. We need to do other things to indicate whether or not our society is heading in the right direction.

I have talked this morning about the universal basic income and what a critical

component that will be of improving the overall well-being of Prince Edward Island. It will reduce poverty. It has the potential to eliminate poverty; reduce bureaucracy. It will unleash human potential. There is no single simple solution to poverty, but this is the single most important component of reducing poverty in my mind.

Are we comfortable living in a community where so many of our neighbours are struggling? And if the answer to that is no, and we are serious about doing something about that, then we must dig deep. I'm not talking about digging deep into our pockets to give a handout to those who need it; I'm talking about digging deep into the underlying forces that perpetuate the scourge of poverty in our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. LaVie: Extend the hour, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Do we have a unanimous decision – consent to extend the hour?

Ms. Biggar: No.

An Hon. Member: No.

Speaker: No. This House is recessed until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, recognition of guests.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's two most important girls here this evening, and I'd like to welcome my wife Shelley and our friend Sage MacDonald has travelled with her. They're in Charlottetown picking up Sage's mother at the airport. Sage just had a new cousin born up in Ontario and her mother was gone up to help out with the proceedings.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Shelley's going to take Sage out to see the movie *Beauty and the Beast* this evening before they go out to the airport.

Welcome into the gallery, Sage.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, that the 6th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Order No. 6, *An Act to Amend the Archives and Records Act*, Bill No. 61, in committee.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, 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.

Okay, now I'll call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker, if you wouldn't mind coming and Chairing this bill through 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 intituled *An Act to Amend the Archives and Records Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Okay. Permission to take a stranger on the floor?

An Hon. Member: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Currie: I'd like to ask Jill MacMicken-Wilson, the Provincial Archivist, to come onto the floor, please.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Trivers: I do have a different amendment to make to Section 6.2.

Chair: Welcome. Could you please introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: My name is Jill MacMicken-Wilson. I'm the Provincial Archivist.

Chair: Welcome, Jill.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I have a different amendment I'd like to make to Section 6.2 before you continue on.

Chair: Hon. members, the Member from Rustico-Emerald – we've already carried Section 6.2, so we'll have to have a motion to reopen 6.2 –

Leader of the Opposition: I'll make that motion.

Chair: And the motion is?

Leader of the Opposition: To reexamine and discuss Section 6.2.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Myers: What section are we on?

Chair: Are you seconder? We don't need a seconder.

Members, there's a motion on the floor. Is there agreement to reopen Section 6.2?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, can I speak to the motion please?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, can I speak to the motion?

Chair: But do we have to (Indistinct) –

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: That's where we left off yesterday.

Chair: Okay, hon. members my understanding is to rescind the motion that it was already carried.

Is that what your motion is, hon. member?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, that's fine.

Mr. Myers: He should speak to the motion.

Chair: Is there an agreement that we rescind the motion that was already carried?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, can I speak to the motion?

Chair: Sure. The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

I wanted to speak to this, seeing as I'm the one requesting that we go back and reconsider 6.2 –

Chair: So you're speaking to the motion on the floor to rescind?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so I would like to rescind the carrying of 6.2, because I had introduced an amendment and during the course of introducing that amendment, found out new information and would like to introduce another amendment, and that's why I'm in favour of rescinding the carrying of 6.2, so I can go back and introduce a different amendment.

Chair: Thank you. Anybody else like to speak to the motion on the floor?

Mr. Myers: I'd like to, please.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think it's very important that we allow this process to happen. I mean, we're only in day what, three of the Legislature. Certainly, there's no – we're not trying to hold things up.

I just went through the bill book here, and in the bill book there's not – it's like the thinnest one I've ever seen since I've been elected, so we certainly have time to do this. We know the budget's coming tomorrow. We know that's going to take a big portion of our work, but this is a very serious bill and I think the minister would agree, it was borne out of the Auditor General's Report and some of the findings that revolved around the whole e-gaming scandal, I guess, for the lack of a better word.

I think it's important that we give this bill the opportunity for the opposition to give this bill the most due-diligence that we can. What we're trying to do is make sure that the bill is respectful of what the Auditor General wants, respectful of what we hear from Islanders and I think it's imperative on the House, let us bring this motion on.

I don't think – the Member from Rustico-Emerald had a motion here the other day to make an amendment. It wasn't – I don't think it slowed the House down a lot. It ended up getting voted on. We didn't drag it out. We didn't try to drag it out so that the House closed for the day. It's a worthwhile amendment. I think it's worth at least allowing him to bring it forward. All I'm asking is that everybody give him a chance to bring it forward, and it could bring some good discussion.

There's been some great discussion that has been borne out of the Auditor General's report into e-gaming and this is one of them. That's why –

Mr. R. Brown: We agree.

Ms. Biggar: We're not arguing anymore.

Mr. Myers: – a concise discussion – are we not arguing anymore?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. R. Brown: No. Go for it.

Mr. Myers: If that's the case then (Indistinct) thanks.

Mr. Currie: We didn't close schools (Indistinct)

Chair: All those in favour in rescinding our motion to pass 6.2 signify by saying 'aye.'

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to move that the bill be amended to add a section 6.23 that will read: The minister shall make available to the public electronically online including through the Internet and lay before the Legislative Assembly all records retention and disposition schedules.

Chair: Do you have copies of that for everyone?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Could we have one here first?

Thanks.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. – they're just discussing. I'll put you on the list.

Mr. Currie: It's not a game changer like the other ones.

Mr. R. Brown: Could you look at this and if it can be done officially, then put it online. Even if we vote it down (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It's the schedule of when –
Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Mr. Currie: Question.

Chair: What was your question?

Mr. R. Brown: I have a question to the chief archivist: Would you take a look at this and if you can do it, would you do it?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I think that we could take it under advisement –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: – and I would want to discuss it with the department. Then, a decision could be made.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: It's not something that has ever been discussed here before.

Mr. R. Brown: That's good, yeah. I'll take that and we can vote it down and then if you consider it, at a later date, that you can do it. You would do it cooperatively anyway.

Mr. Currie: Are you hearing this?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yeah, I'm not sure that it would need to be in the legislation.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just wanted clarification. We already have a schedule. You mentioned yesterday of how often we do this on a regular basis,

quarterly, or semi-annually, you had mentioned.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We do – the retention schedules across government vary in how long records are kept, but we do, do destruction at the end of the calendar year, and at the end of the fiscal year. That's when we do the destruction.

Mr. Currie: Twice a year.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Twice a year, yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Technically, that's your schedule?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: It is.

How long a record is kept before it hits that final disposition varies depending on the record. There are, right now, close to 2,000 schedules for different types of records across government and more that need to be created.

Ms. Biggar: You're going to go back and check all that out? You don't need, as you said, to have it in the bill.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I don't think. It can just be an operational decision. I don't think it needs to be in the legislation.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Premier, then the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, Madam Chair, it strikes me that the spirit of the proposed amendment is covered by the cross-government commitment to open data. Then, it gets to the particulars of the period of time, or the regularity through which this would be done. I guess I would wonder about the need to – if this were to be put in legislation to say: Lay before the Legislative Assembly. There are lots of things we are

opening up in the way of public records that people can access.

I think it's probably better, just in terms of environmental efficiency, if we assume that hon. members of the Legislature can access a lot of the data that is being increasingly made available to the public and, certainly, are being done online through the Internet.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you.

This may have been already answered, but with this retention and disposition schedule are we talking about the specifics, like when my email is deleted? Because does the record need to be there anymore or just in general, it's one year after the employee leaves that – up to one year after the employee leaves? That kind of thing?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Retention schedules don't deal with formats of records specifically like emails. They deal with the content of the record. When we write a retention schedule we determine how long things are going to be kept, based on their use or their – if there is legislation requirements for it, that kind of thing.

What you're asking me is more about policy around a format of a record as opposed to what a retention schedule does. They're two different things, essentially.

Mr. Palmer: The disposition schedule would be about when all of my records are disposed no matter what format they're in?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Exactly, and it probably varies depending on the types of records you create. If you have an expense claim, then that record needs to be kept for the current fiscal year plus seven because it's a financial record.

If you're writing an email about a certain program in a department then the retention for that would be based on the needs of that program.

Mr. Palmer: Does this amendment want to know the particulars related to disposition of mine, or just the general disposition schedule for everyone? How it – just what your general rules are, that's what this amendment?

Chair: Jill, would you like to speak, to update your House on your thoughts on this amendment?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think it's just what we have spoken about a few minutes ago, is that I think that deciding to put the retention schedules available online is really just an operational decision. I really don't believe it needs to be in the legislation.

It would be something that I think that I would take back to the records staff in the departments, discuss it with them; have them talk to their senior records managers and their deputy ministers about it. Then, make the decision to put them up.

It may be, in some cases, where there might be retention schedule that may be you don't want it made public because of the nature of the record if it's a restricted record of some sort. I don't know that for sure. It would depend. We would literally have to look at all of them to make sure that there was no privacy issue or whatever around putting up the schedule. I can't think of a reason right now, but I wouldn't want to say blanket that we could put them without actually looking at them closely.

Mr. Currie: You're saying there needs to be a deeper operational discussion on –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yes.

Mr. Currie: –which sounds fair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you very much, for explaining. I understand your concern.

Without looking at the details of all the different records retention and disposition schedules, you're worried about information being published online that should not be?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I don't know every detail of the almost 2,000 schedules that we have. I don't know if there would be a reason why a particular schedule couldn't be made public because there is sensitive information in it because it's for a very particular type of record kind of thing.

I would just want to be sure of that. I think that that's the normal process we would go through with open data, is that you would make sure that whatever you're putting up online there are no concerns with.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Again, the spirit this to be as open and transparent as possible and if this does fall under open date initiative as the Premier has stated and as you have stated. If, indeed, we can ensure that the intention is to make this as open and transparent as possible so that there are not records either being retained or disposed of that are sort of flying under the radar, then I would be okay with moving forward.

Obviously, I would support amendment, but your explanation does satisfy me. I'm not going to withdraw (Indistinct).

Chair: Are you withdrawing it or are we going to vote on it or withdraw it?

Mr. Trivers: I think we should vote on it.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

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

An Hon. Member: You can vote no (Indistinct).

Chair: There's an amendment on the floor –

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) roll your eyes in advance (Indistinct)

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

Mr. R. Brown: This is an important piece of legislation and the faster we can get this

legislation passed, the faster we can get these records and everything done for transparency purposes. I don't want the department wasting six or seven months studying how they can accommodate this amendment. So, I want –

Mr. Myers: We want you guys to stop deleting stuff.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: So we'll be voting it down.

Thank you.

Chair: All those in favour of the amendment please signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

Chair: Contrary minded?

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Chair: The amendment has been defeated.

An Hon. Member: Unanimous.

Chair: Members –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: Just like the *Education Act*, unanimously passed.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) close as electoral reform.

Chair: Members?

We're going to go back to 6.2. We have to carry that section again in its form. All in favour to carry the section? Carried.

And we've already carried sections 7 and 8, so now we're on section 9.

Would you like me to continue to read?

Mr. Trivers: Did we carry section 8?

Chair: Seven and 8, yes. The clerks have record of it.

Section 9 of the act is repealed and the following –

Order!

Section 9 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

9. Notwithstanding any other Act, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Health Information Act, where the Provincial Archivist is of the opinion that a public record in the custody or under the control of a public body is of archival importance, the head of the public body shall ensure that the record is transferred to the care and control of the Provincial Archivist in accordance with the applicable records retention and disposition schedule approved by the Committee.

Shall the section carry?

Question from the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Is the intent of this clause to allow the Provincial Archivist to aid the heads of the public bodies with coming up with a retention and disposition schedule that is complete and comprehensive and makes sense from a Provincial Archivist perspective?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that, please? The first (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Is the purpose of this clause to allow the Provincial Archivist – the specialist, the expert in the area to work with the heads of the public bodies to come up with a retention and disposition schedule that is comprehensive, complete and meets all the needs that you know have to be met underneath that, as an archivist?

Mr. Currie: Yes.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes. This specific section talks to that to a certain degree, but it's also – what it's specifically lending authority to is the idea that I can ask a public body, or encourage a public body to make sure that the retention that they choose for a body of records is selective retention – which means

that the records transfer from the department to the archives. It gives me the authority to make sure that no archival records are destroyed, basically.

Chair: Hon. member from Rustico-Emerald?

Mr. Currie: So, there's the accountability.

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering: Given that the Provincial Archivist is an expert in retention and disposition of different types of records – and this is just curious. I'm not saying we should do it, but why not actually have the PARO office write the retention and disposition schedule for the different departments seeing as you're the experts and could probably identify things just as well or better?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: It wouldn't be feasible for our staff to do that for everyone in government given the number of staff that we have.

But also, it's much easier and more efficient to write their retention schedules in cooperation with the people who are actually creating and using the records. That's why there are records staff in departments who work with the staff in the departments to write the schedules for their own records and we guide that process. Everything that is written as a retention schedule is vetted through our office before it goes to the Public Records Committee for approval.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

10. Section 10 of the Act is amended by the deletion of the word "records" and the substitution of the words "public records".

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

11. Section 11 of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "Sections 7-9, inclusive," and the substitution of the words "Sections 8 and 9".

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

12. (1) Section 14 of the Act is amended (a) by renumbering it as subsection 14(1); and (b) by the addition of the following after subsection (1): (2) The Committee may, on the request of the Provincial Archivist, (a) review the policies, procedures and legislation applicable to public bodies respecting the management of public records; (b) provide advice with respect to the management of public records; and (c) approve the issuance of a directive under subsection 6.1(1).

Shall the section carry?

We have a question from the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'd like to ask first how often this committee meets.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Usually the committee meets twice a year. We tend to meet in early October, before the legislature sits and then we tend to meet in early June – again, after the leg is finished sitting.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Question?

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

How long does it take for the new record and retention and disposition schedules to be approved by the committee once it's submitted by a public body?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: The departments usually submit the schedules to our office – probably about two months before the committee meets then I review them. I go back and forth with the departments to make sure that they are acceptable. That usually takes a bit of time. They need to be signed off by the deputy minister of the department. Then I forward them to the members of the committee, usually two weeks before we meet. The meeting itself is all about going through the schedules and approving them. So, they are approved or not approved at that meeting.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: Hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Do all the public bodies that currently have approved records in retention and disposition schedules – does every public body have one of them currently?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: All public bodies have some schedules. They don't necessarily have all of their records scheduled – and that's something that we're continuously working, but all public bodies do have some schedules.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Some? Okay.

Chair: Hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Do you feel that you anticipate that you're going to need to request a review of the policies and procedures to change that?

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: To change the meaning of the committee?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: To change – a review of the policies and procedures that you currently have to make sure that all bodies are complying.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yes. It was our intention, once the legislation was passed, that we would review the policies and procedures around records management – which are in the Treasury Board Policy and Procedures Manual. It was our intention to do that.

Normally, what you would do is work from the legislation and ensure the policies and procedures meet the legislation. Once this legislation is passed, we will begin the process of reviewing those policies and procedures.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. One final –

Chair: The minister has a comment before you go on.

Mr. Currie: To the point Jill alluded to was that, in respect to the responsibility and the

ability to have the public bodies current – it's about capacity. This strategy and the budget will be presented soon. In order to meet the responsibilities of the legislation, there needs to be enhanced capacity inside government and public bodies to meet those expectations and their compliance under this legislation. It's about capacity and resources.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

A final question: Are you currently satisfied with the policy and procedures the public bodies have in place?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think that there needs to be improvement, and part of that comes from the way that circumstances have changed over time.

To give an example, in the policy and procedures manual it indicates that each department needs to have two people assigned to records management; one is the Senior Records Manager who is at the director level, and the other is what we call a Records Management Liaison Officer who is the individual that does the bulk of the actual work.

The policy states that each department should have one of each of those positions. What has happened in practice is because we often have government reorgs and certain departments are very siloed in their function, that what has happened in recent years is that we've actually had cases where a department might have two or three RMLOs instead of one.

I think the practice is sound. It's just that the policy doesn't meet that anymore, so there are things like that that need to be updated.

Chair: Shall the – oh, sorry. The hon. Leader of the –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I did say that was the last one, I apologize.

Chair: No worries.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I was just following up – in a situation like that where one department has multiple RMLOs, but I presume that’s not the full scope of their job, that’s just a portion of what they do.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: In those departments it is. It varies from department to department what percentage of an individual’s time is devoted to records management activities. Some departments have individuals that work fulltime at records management, in other departments it’s about a five percent responsibility, so it varies.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: You’re welcome. Shall the section carry? Carried.

Before we move on, I’m going to give the floor to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness for recognition.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (III)

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It gives me great honour to acknowledge there’s a special guest in the gallery there today. It’s actually Bailey Burke and she’s sitting back in the far corner there under the picture there of one of the former speakers.

But the significance of Bailey’s attendance here tonight is she’s doing a history project of one of her descendants, the hon. Joseph Murphy, and Joseph Murphy was a member of the Legislative Council, which was the second, upper house of the legislature back prior to confederation.

The other part where I’m kind of connected to this is Joseph Murphy actually lived in the house that I reside in, so I’m told she’s doing a history project for the heritage fair that recognizes, actually, the house that I live in, of which there’s been three elected Liberals from that house: Myself, my father, and Joseph Murphy.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: So that’s a real Liberal house, I guess.

Anyway, welcome to the proceedings here, Bailey, and I wish you all the success with your history project.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: I’m also going to give way to the Premier for recognition.

Premier MacLauchlan: While we’re at it, Madam Chair, I’ll recognize John Ployer who’s here, a former Page and a member of the youth council, and just completed a year of studies at UPEI, and just in case he shows up I’ll do a preemptive recognition of Robert Larson who’s supposed to be along here; he’s also a former chair – former Page, but you can do it when he comes, how’s that?

An Hon. Member: Great.

Chair: Thank you, hon. members.

13. Section 15 of the Act is repealed.

Shall it carry? Carried.

14. Subsection 16(1) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted –

Shall it carry? Carried.

16. (1) The head of a public body shall ensure that one or more records retention and disposition schedules are prepared, in respect of the public records in the custody or under the control of the public body, that

(a) describe, classify and index the public records;

(b) set out the retention periods for the public records; and

(c) provide for the disposition of the public records, whether by transfer to the care and control of the Provincial Archivist, alienation or destruction.

Shall the section carry?

Mr. Trivers: Chair, a question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

It may be just my ignorance, but what does alienation mean?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: An example of alienation would be when – say a government body – there was a decision made to move the function of that government body outside of government, but the individuals doing the work would still need those records.

So, alienation basically means that you're taking the records from the control and custody of the government and giving them to this outside body so that they continue the work of that function.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I notice there's three options, right, which is: "...transfer to the care and control of the Provincial Archivist, alienation or destruction."

Would not another option be them retaining the records in their own department?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: The decision to retain them in their department is not final disposition. That would be either active use of the records or they're semi-active use, which means they've put them in storage and they only have to access them once in a while. But disposition means: What do you do when the lifecycle of the record is up?

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: If they chose to keep the records in their department, would they still be accessible, for example, by the Auditor General?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Even if they were sort of – they kept them but didn't destroy them, type idea? Kept them on file but didn't officially destroy them? Like, if they were found

laying around on a desk somewhere, or in a box in the corner.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Until final disposition is carried out, then they would still be in the possession of the department, if I'm answering that right.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Minister, something we haven't heard here in the last little bit – I just clicked into it: How do we actually track the records? Or, as far as what is the actually – the system that is used to track the records at the archives of stuff that you (Indistinct).

Is that a manual system? Is it a computer system? What is it?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Do you mean the archives specifically, or do you mean government departments with records under their –

Leader of the Opposition: Your department. How do you keep track of all this different – all these different records and stuff?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: In the archives itself, we do have a computerized system. Not everything – not every archival collection that we have is in that system yet. It's kind of a work in progress. That is an electronic system for the archives itself.

Within the department, it probably depends on which section of the department you're in, and they would probably have their own system in place. Some people would track – might have maybe an electronic spreadsheet where they keep track of where files are. Other departments it may not be – or in other sections, it might not be electronic, it may be still manual.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: It leads me to ask the question: Why would we not have a universal same system across all

departments of government of how documents are tracked or recorded or whatever?

If you're telling me that some are written or some are actually manual and some are computerized, why would we move all of government to electronic system or whatever?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We have been looking at – especially with electronic – we've been looking at different ways of implementing an electronic records management system, but it is costly to do that.

I guess the short answer is: We don't have a universal system because it costs a lot to implement a universal system.

Leader of the Opposition: That's the decision by the department, but not as a government whole to implement one system?

Mr. Currie: That would be – the investment in upgrading in – what we're talking about would be – that would be through – talking about the process. That would be an investment that would be granted to IT Shared Services.

The system that Jill's referring to is extremely costly obviously, IT Shared Services, and I can't speak to it. It's not my department, but I do know that they have been making upgrades and we're moving towards that because their capacity and their storage capacity – because of the volume of records that we're dealing with is just, the magnitude is overwhelming, and with even more so coming forward with the strategy that the retention and the security of those records, it's just going to continue to grow and expand, so that's –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Currie: – costly.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm wondering, actually, what the cost analysis would be to continue the way we're going or to make the plunge and move into an electronic system (Indistinct) to make it more efficient into the future, because if we keep on doing it the same way at what point are we going to finally say: We've got to do this.

Mr. Currie: Well, I think there has been significant investment in the last year. I think, we don't – we can bring that information back. That would fall under IT Shared Services. They would, sort of, lay out and present what that capital cost would be. Anytime we've been venturing into systems of that nature there is a significant price tag to them.

Leader of the Opposition: Can I put a suggestion that maybe government and the department or the archives section look at maybe what this would actually cost going forward?

Mr. Currie: I think that is mapped out, but we'll bring that back to the floor.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

I just had some question on, I guess, if you're looking for records, and I'll use two different examples. A lot of times people get a request to get their school transcripts from maybe when they were in school 30 years ago for whatever reason. Or you might need a health record for some reason.

How do you keep track of where you can find those records?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: If the records are under the control of the Public Archives and Records Office, and we do frequently get requests for school records, we have the school – not all, but we have many of the school records up, until consolidation in 1972. We get those requests probably on a weekly basis. We have a very clear system in the archives about where things are located within the archives. It doesn't take very long, at all, for us to go to the exact location; find the record, if it still exists, and provide that information to the member of the public.

Very few health records, like patient files, would ever come to the archives. It's not something that we keep. They have a very long retention. For the life of the patient and

then some. It actually can vary depending on the type of health record. Those records would be controlled by Health PEI. They are not something that would ever come to the archives.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, that's what I was wondering.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I was wondering, right now, when you receive a, I'll call it a hardcopy of a record, is it your policy to convert it to an electronic version and then store it that way? Or are you still storing hardcopies?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: It actually costs more money to store, to create and store electronic records than it does to keep the paper.

At the Provincial Records Centre, I can store a Banker's Box of records, which has about, roughly, 2,500 pages. I can store that box for a little bit over \$6 a year.

If you digitized a box of records and created all of the metadata that goes with that it costs about \$250 to digitize that box of records. You would actually have to keep those records for about 40 years before you get your money back.

Mr. Trivers: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm just kind of curious, now. What kind of technology are you using to digitize that? Because that seems like a heck of a lot.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I guess because most people think that when you think when you digitize you just kind of put it on the scanner and it's done. But there is a lot of work that has to go into that because you actually have to set-up a process, whereby, it's verified to make sure that you haven't missed anything.

Especially, if you're scanning multiple documents it's very easy for pages to get stuck together and you miss them. Someone has to manually verify everything.

You have to enter metadata because if you – I mean, how many people have drives where you have hundreds of records but you can't find them because they're not labeled properly.

Mr. Trivers: It would be the same thing if it was stored in a Banker's Box.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Banker's Boxes are in by – you usually have, your paper is not an individual piece of paper, usually. When you file paper it's in a file folder that has a subject. You might only have 10 folders in a box. That's a very short list compared to, maybe, an individual image for each piece of paper.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: This really interests me because it seems to me if you're only labeling the box with metadata, because basically that's what you're saying.

It's like in the hardcopy version you're writing a note and you're labeling that box with a certain amount of metadata describing its contents. Then, to label every document in that box, when you convert it electronic, with that same metadata but plus a number indicating the number of the page wouldn't be –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We –

Mr. Trivers: – that much extra work. I mean, I'm not missing something here?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We would label the file folders in the box, but we wouldn't label every single piece of paper.

Mr. Trivers: Right.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: That would be too time-consuming.

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to state for the record, I think given the advances in technology recently, I think that decision needs to be revisited.

Following up to the Leader of the Opposition's questions, and possibly a newer – an updated cost analysis done. I know that technology has advanced to point where, if you were taking a Banker's Box worth of documents and you wouldn't have manually enter the metadata for each page as you converted it to an electronic format. You could enter it once, and then you could take the images and store them with the metadata attached.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: The quote I have for \$250 a box is from last spring.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: From a company that would digitize for someone. That's what they estimated it would be, is \$250 for the box.

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

Ms. Biggar: It's a technical, I guess, question, as well.

When you're converting documents that are meant to be stored in place of paper documents and they're meant to be there to access in maybe 20-years time. With the changes and compatibility of records from one type of system to another that must entail a more complicated type of system to make sure that those are able to be converted and accessed 10 years from now, or 20 years from now. I would imagine that would be a factor that has to be considered.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes, in the archival world we actually refer to the time period we're living in as the dark ages because everything that we've been creating electronically for the last – since the early 1990s is not likely to survive.

Whereas, I have a map in the archives that's 250 years old; in 250 years from now, I'm pretty sure it's still going to be there.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I'm not at all confident that anything we create electronically here will survive.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: If you are creating to electronic records, you have to make sure – one of the dictates of the legislation is that the head of the public body has to ensure that they're useable and accessible.

As you said: If you have a retention that is 50 years, it's your responsibility to make sure that in 50 years' time someone can open that record.

Ms. Biggar: They can click on and open it.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Exactly.

In government, when I first worked in government in the early to mid 1990s, we used a program called Word Star instead of WordPerfect. Then we went to WordPerfect, now, we're progressing into Word.

There are still documents in government that were created in Word Star that should still be accessible, but I don't know where you would ever find a computer system that would open them up.

Ms. Biggar: That's my concern.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: When you're putting pictures online and all those – everything — not just documents that are very important documents from the Legislature, that we want, we're in our 150th year of Canada, never mind the history of our Legislature. In another 100 years time we want to be able to –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Exactly.

Ms. Biggar: – and click on that if we don't have the paper, and to be able to have that capacity and technical capability.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

Has there been any kind of a cost-benefit done on this to suggest that the cost to double-checking, triple-checking just to make sure that the metadata is there; to double-check it to make sure that everything was scanned properly.

That it's actually money well spent, but we're looking for something in 30 years or 50 years that we can't find because two pages were stuck together or whatever it happens to be.

Has there been that cost-benefit? Is it material by the time we're going looking for something, we spend \$250 on a box, and if there is one page missing, how many times do we ever notice the one page? Maybe that cost has been done and that's important.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I have not done a cost analysis in that way.

To a certain degree, it's hard to do that because the technology hasn't been around long enough for us – like someone back in 1990 would have had to decide: We're going to scan this material and make it available and we'll see in 2017 if someone can open it. We can try certain things now and hope that they're going to work in the future, but we can't know that for sure. I guess my answer is: No, there has been no cost analysis done with that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Could we – if we were to do kind of a best practice review and looked outside of government to a large corporation, as an example, do they maintain their records the same way? Do they have

that responsibility similar to what governments have to their shareholders to hang onto those records for a long time? Or is there something similar to it?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I think it, probably, greatly varies. For example, when 9/11 happened the companies that were affected by 9/11, the ones that actually survived and functioned afterwards were the ones that had business continuity management practices and had good records' systems so they were able to access the records and start up their companies right away. Those that didn't have good practices did not.

It really, greatly varies depending on – I know that our practices, we try to keep in pace with other provincial and territorial governments because we're dealing with the same types of records that they are.

Mr. Palmer: Right.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair. I know there's been a great amount of discussion on this bill already, and some amendments that have been discussed, but fundamentally, I guess what I want to get back to, is why this has come to the forefront, and that has to do with primarily the Auditor General's Report, particularly around the egaming and what happened to some email accounts and government documents.

I guess what my first question would be is: With regards to laying out strict regulations and rules around retention periods for public records and documents, when are we going to see something there, so that whether it's an MLA or whether it's a civil servant, that it's clear and concise that people know what needs to be retained? We have people that have said: Look, I save things electronically. I have very organized files within my emails or within my electronic management system. We have other individuals that say: I print everything. Every email, every document I

get, I print. I save it and it goes in a Banker's Box. We have an MLA in the Legislative Assembly that's one of the newest members, great member, but he told me the other day he is now up to three Banker's Boxes and that is extremely time consuming for this individual when, possibly, he could be doing other great constituency work.

I guess what I'm looking for –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: – is there something designed to tell everybody that's responsible that fall underneath this legislation, what the expectations are for them?

Mr. Currie: The whole premise of this legislation is to exactly do that. The reason why this – this is not just about the Auditor General's report. This has been an issue with governments because government systems have not (Indistinct) this from a legislative perspective in a resource perspective to build a capacity to do the work. As a result, the training wasn't done.

The work that is currently going now in the department is we're working very closely with departments. That training has started a while back. We're moving towards exactly what you're talking about. But, in order to do that – in order to have the work done appropriately to meet the legislative responsibilities and compliance and accountability, there needs to be the resources to do it. There lies the challenge.

To your point, which is a good point, that's exactly where we're going to. I'll let Jill make another comment on that.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: The three-year strategy that we developed, I think, will address those issues. We knew the areas that needed work. We have the support to do that work and part of the strategy is to provide more resources so that we can do that work. As the minister said, we have been making progress in some of the areas of the strategy already.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I think that's great, and I'm glad we're moving in a direction that we need to be going in because these records and information need to be retained, so that if there is an issue arises we can go back and look to see where things went off the rails.

I was elected in 2011. I was never told; I was never instructed: You need to save this. You need to save that. There's a certain timeframe – I know from my own personal experience in the corporate world previously, that you need to save your files, your documents for at least seven years. I probably exceed that because if you came to my house and you saw my tax returns, well they are there for much longer than seven years.

What's stopping us right now from making sure that all of the documents are being saved? I know you say there's a three-year strategy and we need to identify the resources in order to do this, but as elected officials, I mean –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I guess the point of you being an elected official is that until this legislation comes in; my role in assisting the Legislature has been very informal because you're not covered under this legislation.

Mr. Aylward: Yes.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: As part of this legislation, one of the things we wanted to do was to solidify that relationship, which is why it states that we can create an agreement with the Legislature and with the courts, so that not only can we help the Legislature develop retention schedules around the records of the Legislature itself, but part of that agreement could be us providing services to the members in the – in giving training so that when new MLAs do come into the Legislature, we can get together with the new MLAs and help you figure out how to organize your records. But, that relationship wasn't there before and that's what the legislation will help us do.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Chair: Good?

Mr. Aylward: That's good for now.

Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

15. Section 17 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

17. The head of a public body shall

(a) ensure that the public records in the custody or under the control of the public body are

(i) protected and maintained so that the records are accessible, legible, understandable, usable and transferable throughout the life cycle of the records, from creation to final disposition,

(ii) maintained in formats, media and conditions that ensure the retention and preservation of the records, and

(iii) retained and disposed of in accordance with the retention and disposition schedules approved by the Committee in respect of the public records;

(b) comply with any directives issued under subsection 6.1(1);

(c) respond within a reasonable time to a request for information under subsection 6.1(2); and

(d) take reasonable steps to ensure that officers and employees of the public body do not contravene subsection 19.1(1).

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct) question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: 17(d) where it says: Take responsible steps to ensure that officers and employees of the public body do not contravene subsection 19.1(1) – can you give me an example of what that would be?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Basically, it means that the head of the public body should ensure that employees are given the opportunity to have proper training about what their records

management responsibilities are. That would just be an example. Make sure that the resources are in place within a department, again, to make sure that records management activities can be undertaken. Make sure that the staffing is there, and doing all of those things would hopefully prevent there being an incident of someone mistakenly destroying records before they were meant to be destroyed.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: I guess I'm just trying to get my head around it. So, to ensure that officers – what would the definition of an officer be? I'm just trying to get an example of what would take place, why this would be in there.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think – officers and employees –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yeah, I guess, that would be a good one. An executive director would be an officer of a public body as opposed to being strictly an employee.

Basically, it's just saying that the head of the public body ensures that anybody, at all, regardless of level, that's working for that public body, follows their records management policies, procedures, retention schedules.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

Mr. Currie: This is the accountability piece and responsibility, the onus on the public body, which is the minister.

This is where you get into the appropriate retention records management and it ties back into that document that will be – will expose government departments on a yearly basis that are not complying, and are falling behind on their responsibilities. I think that's –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yeah.

Mr. Currie: This is all about accountability.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I noticed that this section, section 17 starts off, “The head of a public body shall...”

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: But then the different duties they have in there seem to be a mixture of what I thought would be more under the responsibility of the provincial archivist.

For example, 17(a) (ii), “maintained in formats, media and conditions that ensure the retention and preservation of the records...”

I’m just curious as why that’s the responsibility of the head of the public body as opposed to, they hand off the record and then it’s the responsibility of the archivist to make sure it’s the format, media and condition that it could be retained and preserved.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: The head of the public body – departments own their records and they are ultimately responsible for the records they create and maintain. That’s under the head of the public body, which is the minister.

While those records are under the control of the department, the department is responsible for making sure that they are maintained in a way that they can be used.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: If you have an x-ray, because you’re in Health PEI and that x-ray might have a lifecycle where it has to remain in the control of Health PEI for 50 years. During those 50 years, it’s the responsibility of Health PEI to make sure that it’s accessible. If that x-ray was transferred to the archives then we would take over the responsibility of maintaining its format.

All this is saying is, while the records are in the custody of the public body, it is the head of the public body that’s responsible for making sure that they are in a format that can be used.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

In the new section 6.2(1): The provincial archivist shall make an annual report in writing that looks at the degree of rate of compliance with public bodies on various things like what you’re talking about in number 17 here.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: If the records are under the control of the public body, how are you going to provide that annual report?

In my mind, I thought, the records were actually turned over to the –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: No.

Mr. Trivers: – provincial archives and then you would obviously be able to report whether they were –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: The –

Mr. Trivers: – how does that work?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: – records only come to the provincial archives when they reach the end of their lifecycle, and they’re deemed to have historic value. Then, they come to us. The period of their lifecycle before that, it’s all controlled by the departments and they maintain them. We don’t maintain them. We provide guidance.

The way that we would report on the activities of the department is we would ask them specific questions about what they’re activities are and that’s what we would report on; what they’ve given us information on.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Really, if the head of a public body decided they were going to dispose of a record not in accordance with the retention and disposition schedules, there is no way to police that.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think that we would deal with that in the offence provision that comes later in the legislation.

Mr. Trivers: Would you agree there is no way for you as a provincial archivist to police that?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We would see the disposition schedules when records are destroyed in accordance with the retention schedules. That's how we would know if something is destroyed or not.

Mr. Trivers: Can you give an example of that?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: In the Provincial Records Centre, we provide free storage for governments, or government departments that only need their records for a certain amount of time, and perhaps they have to keep them for 10 years, but they don't have to access them all the time, so we keep them at the Provincial Records Centre.

If the particular record has a disposition where it comes up for destruction we actually – we have a data base that tells us when it comes up for destruction. We actually send a destruction order to the departments and tell them, this is –these particular records are up for destruction. Is there any reason why we can't proceed to send them to the shredder for supervised shredding?

They would check to make sure that there are no outstanding legal issues, FOIPP requests or any kind of a hold that would prevent us from destroying the records. If there wasn't, they sign off on it and then we send the records to the shredder.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

If we look at section 17(3), which is: "...ensure that the public records in the custody or under the control of the public body are... retained and disposed of in accordance with the retention and disposition schedules approved by the Committee in respect of the public records;"

If there were records that were in a Banker's Box that were sitting on someone's desk that were important and they were shredded, really, there is no way to know that they were. If someone decided they would shred them one day, there would be no visibility to be policed by, for example, the provincial archivist.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I would not necessarily know if they've destroyed them or not.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, sorry, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: My thoughts, and I've, obviously misunderstood this, was that, when you identified records that needed to be retained, I thought the whole idea was you took those records and you transferred them –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: – to – I know you've said that this is not the case, but you transfer them to a spot for a body like PARO to then become responsible for retaining those records and protecting them and making sure that all of the things in section 17 don't occur.

I'm a little confused with this legislation because basically it says, all the things that a head of a public body shouldn't do, but really there is no way to police it as far, as I can tell.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We can monitor compliance better with this legislation than the previous one. There is an offence provision put it in

so that if it is discovered that some has, with intent, destroyed records there is a way to – for criminal prosecution of that.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, just one last thing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: One final question, sorry, Chair.

It just seems to me that there would actually no way to tell when that happened unless there was a whistleblower, for example, within a department, or something of that nature.

Would you agree with that?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yeah. It would be impossible for us to completely police records.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to take two seconds to recognize Robert Larson, who is here in the gallery. Robert is a great resident of District 19. He's a great advocate for 4-H and the things he has been involved in with that.

Welcome to the gallery, Robert.

Premier MacLauchlan: And the Premier in the youth parliament –

Chair: Youth parliament.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, that's right.

Chair: Perfect.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to look at section 17(d) mainly because it refers to 19.1(1), which is the section on intentionally destroying records.

The wording is: "...take reasonable steps to ensure that officers..." I'm just wondering how you define 'reasonable'.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think that in – I would define reasonable in that the head of the public body has provided the resources, the training necessary for people to understand what their records management responsibilities are so they know what they're supposed to do. And the minister, or the head of the public body, has provided them with all of that information. They know what they're supposed to do, the resources are there. To me those would be the reasonable steps.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Carried.

Oh, sorry. I didn't have you on the list.

Mr. Aylward: That's okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I guess my questions would have more to do with around, let's say minutes from meetings with, say, the PEI Lotteries Commission or something like that which still should fall underneath, I believe, this jurisdiction, or even oral conversations.

If we have a minister, a deputy minister, or a CEO or an ED that's having oral conversations and there's no electronic or written record of these communications, how can we assure that all communications are being maintained?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I'm not sure that there is a way to do that without some kind of – I don't know.

When I have a conversation, I might write notes down about it, but unless you want to record everybody's conversations I don't know how you would capture that. I think

that if decisions are made usually they're captured in other types of records. If a decision is made, there's usually a lot of conversation around it before it's made.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I don't know if it's – it's a lot of conversation that's held around a decision. Maybe the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy wants to get involved in this conversation, because she seems pretty keen to –

Ms. Biggar: I'm talking to the Premier, not you.

Mr. Aylward: No? Okay.

Again, my concern is that the public's faith in elected officials has been eroded substantially over the last number of years because of what's happened, particularly around the egaming file, and it's been identified by the Auditor General repeatedly. That's why we're going down this measure –

Mr. J. Brown: Nothing to do with the questions like yours yesterday.

Chair: You're not adding to the conversation, thank you.

An Hon. Member: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Ten years (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: As per normal.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock has the floor.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair. So, I –

An Hon. Member: See, it's not just (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: Again, what I'm trying to get to is there's so much cynicism out there and distrust of elected officials present and prior that I just want to make sure any legislation, any regulations, any rules that are coming in are going to ensure that nothing happens like

has happened in the past, and that's why we're asking these questions.

Mr. Currie: What you're saying is that you were talking about tracking oral conversations –

Mr. Aylward: Chair?

Mr. Currie: – between – is that just (Indistinct) can you articulate that a little more so we understand?

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Sure.

I understand that oral conversations would be extremely hard to track, that Big Brother can't be watching everything, but I want to know I guess specifically around agendas, minutes – to ensure that minutes are recorded – that these things are put in place to ensure if there are committees struck, if there are meetings or summits held that any discussions are recorded.

So, it's not just oral, because I understand that oral conversations cannot be maintained, cannot be filed away, but what I'm asking for is that when the regulations are drawn up around this bill that there's strict guidelines in place to ensure that there's strict adherence to anything that's done within government business as it relates, particularly, to taxpayers' money.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: There are retention schedules and what we called the CPRS, which is for administrative records, and there are retention schedules in that that cover things like committees, minutes, and agendas. So, the retention schedules are there to capture that material.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Chair, thank you.

If we have a committee struck or a committee set up such as the gaming commission or the PEI Lotteries Commission, is there strict guidelines in place that the individuals within that committee know that they're bound by law that all of their discussions need to be

recorded and maintained to ensure that we have full transparency?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: There are not guidelines around the creation of such records. There are retentions around how long they need to be kept.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: I guess my question then would be if we have a committee that is set up, can they have meetings and discussions where there's no record of what was discussed behind closed doors. Can that happen today?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: There's no – I don't think there's anything in the Treasury Board Policy and Procedural Manual that dictates the behaviours in meetings, or the activities.

Mr. Currie: I'm sure that you have lots of conversations that you probably with the constituents that would be – that you're doing your work, that would not be appropriate to take, to have a record.

There's certain conversations that – you know, I think the whole mandate of this is around the retention, it's the scheduling. I think that it's very appropriate, very well done, and it's going to be a resource (Indistinct) in order to do it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, I'd like to just kind of have a little reality check here, and in terms of this line of questioning and the suggestions, and perhaps if we wanted we could get Ms. MacMicken-Wilson to go back and talk about the purpose of all this in the first place.

But, it happens reasonably often – probably more often than any of us would like to acknowledge – that government gets chastised for the amount of bureaucracy that's created. In fact, there's a lot of that that happens over on that side of the floor from time to time in terms of chastising the

level of bureaucracy, and here we are. We have another example tonight of the opposition carrying on, pushing for additional layers of bureaucracy –

An Hon. Member: For accountability, so what happened in the part doesn't happen again?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: You can call it whatever you want. You could literally go around and –

Mr. Aylward: Just let him talk –

Mr. J. Brown: – and have everybody have to have a Dictaphone in their pocket and record every word they say all day long.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton has the floor.

Mr. J. Brown: How far ahead are you going to get by that? And to the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot's point, you have to look at the cost-benefit of doing all this stuff and recognize that we could be spending this money getting autism assessments for children in our schools, or whatever.

It's a direct tradeoff – one for the other. There's only so much money to go around and the more money we spend doing this kind of stuff, the more we slow people down, the less they can actually put towards productive frontline services.

I think we all need to have a little bit of a reality check here if this is what we're going to be carrying on at and looking to put forward as the priorities coming out of here.

Thank you very much, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Point of order.

I think we shouldn't need to call back the Speaker. I take offense to what this member

just said about reality checked by us. We're trying to do our job as opposition to ensure that bills that come on this floor are adequately put in place for Members of the Legislative Assembly and also for the people of PEI.

And for this member to say for us to have to take a reality check, I take offense to that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Holy smokes boys, (Indistinct).

Mr. Currie: Well, just – I just – I mean, honestly –

Chair: Just a second.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) point of order once in this (Indistinct) –

Chair: Sorry, hon. Member from –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Order!

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, do you have a response to that, to the point of order?

An Hon. Member: Yes, he does.

Mr. J. Brown: Is it a point of order or a point of privilege, what are we talking about here?

Chair: A point of order.

An Hon. Member: Who was questioning you?

Mr. Myers: You questioning the Chair?

Ms. Biggar: No answer, he's not out of order, so –

Mr. J. Brown: I'm asking the question. I don't think it was out of order in any way, so I'll just say that I guess if we want to start from that point.

Mr. Myers: Apology accepted.

Chair: Thank you.

All right, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, do you have a question?

Mr. Aylward: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Better than your members give.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton for raising the issue around autism tests and psychological assessments for children in our school systems, albeit he discussed the cost for that and identifying dollars and how they can best be spent in, I'd have to say, maybe a roundabout way.

The minister, just a few minutes ago, spoke about recorded conversations, oral conversations and so on, so forth. Minister, I completely agree with what you're saying there.

Mr. Currie: I was just looking for some clarity in what you were asking.

Mr. Aylward: Yes. No, and that's fine.

Chair, I guess what I'm just trying to determine – and you know this yourself as well as every elected official here – is that we've just gone through and we're still going through, as a matter of fact, an exhaustive review of some of the Auditor General reports – special reports on the e-gaming file, the GeoSweep, as well as her annual report and there were some very serious issues that were raised.

What I'm trying to ascertain, is that when we finally get to the end of this bill, that there will be regulations put in place to ensure that we don't have a rogue committee out there somewhere that are just going off and doing their own thing.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy can raise her eyes, but we had a finance minister that signed a guaranteed letter authorizing a loan which was actually a grant because it was never to be paid back on this failed venture –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: – and he had absolutely no authority to do so.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Chair: Hon. member, Jill has a response.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Currie: Jill wants to respond to you –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct). I can't even look at him.

Mr. R. Brown: We're going to have to put a veil on you.

Ms. Biggar: I'm not allowed to look, I guess.

Chair: Order, order!

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I guess I would make the suggestion that the *Archives and Records Act*, the purpose of it is to determine how to deal with records that are created – after they're created.

The *Archives and Records Act* does not speak to how they are created or what is created. The purpose of the act is to deal with them once they have been created. So, I'm not sure that this would be the place to deal with those guidelines.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Jill, I appreciate your patience. I know this is arduous and we seem like we're just going around and around and around. You're the archivist for the province and I know you take your job extremely serious and that's what we're doing here as well, and that's why we're asking so many questions. We want to ensure the public interest is protected and that we finally get the respect and faith of the electorate back in this Legislative Assembly.

So if I'm looking for an answer with regards to a commission or a committee and how they're mandated to ensure that their meetings are recorded, the minutes are taken, agendas are recorded and so on, so

forth – I mean we have that at Public Accounts; we have that at all of our standing committee meetings. It's common practice in the corporate world as well. What will be in place to ensure that that takes place with everything that government has their hand in?

Mr. Currie: Just a comment. I'm the minister responsible of records information management.

Mr. Aylward: Yes.

Mr. Currie: I don't oversee IT Shared Services and that's where a lot of questions came last fall about emails, which really, a lot of those questions fell under IT Shared Services. I know in my conversations with Jill and Kathleen Eaton and her team, they take this work very seriously. They're –

Mr. Aylward: Yes – which I just stated.

Mr. Currie: I'm extremely proud of the strategy and government is here with a piece of legislation to sort of elevate the compliance and accountability and also to build capacity in order to take this legislation and to modernize. This has been the practice of governments for decades. This has been an area that has not seen a lot of priority.

Jill can make a comment if she likes, but the reason why there's inconsistencies from department to department – there's a reason why departments are falling behind on their responsibilities – is because there is no legislative authority/compliance or ability to hold government departments accountable.

The other thing about this legislation is there will be an annual report, which will expose government departments and public bodies who are not taking their responsibility. There are enforcement measures in that to hold people accountable that are doing – and mismanaging files in government.

Mr. Aylward: I'm fine for now.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

16. Section 18 of the Act is repealed.

Shall it carry? Carried.

17. Section 19 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

19. A public record is the property of the Government, regardless of whether it is in the custody or under the control of a public body or has been transferred to the care and control of the Provincial Archivist.

Shall it carry? Carried.

18. The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 19:

19.1 (1) No person shall, with the intent to deprive a public body, the Public Archives and Records Office or the Provincial Archivist of the custody, control or use of, or access to, a public record,

(a) destroy or damage a public record;

(b) erase or remove information from a public record or make a public record illegible;

(c) remove or conceal a public record from the public body or the Provincial Archivist; or

(d) direct, counsel or cause any person to do anything mentioned in clause (a), (b) or (c).

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply with respect to the disposition of a public record in accordance with a records retention and disposition schedule approved by the Committee.

(3) A person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$10,000.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Minister: No person shall. I notice it doesn't say in there, but is there anybody that that would be an exemption to? If a minister of a department or a department fails to comply, could – in theory – the minister be charged?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes.

Mr. Currie: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: He could?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Why did you, chair –

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Why do we have a no minimum listed, but we have a maximum?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I'm sorry?

Leader of the Opposition: On the penalty side –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: – we have a maximum – offence (Indistinct) and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$10,000. Why is there no minimum?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: In our discussions with legal counsel and with the Legislative Counsel Office, we decided that the – up to \$10,000 was in keeping with other provincial legislation – so that's what we did. It's similar to the FOIP legislation.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So with that, who would be the body that would be charged with enforcing the section?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: If there was a determination that there had been activity that was illegal, then that would go to the Attorney General's office and the Attorney General would then contact law enforcement.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So with that, if a complaint was laid, the complaint would go

to the Attorney General, he himself – or the deputy would lay a summary conviction ticket or any information before the court?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: They would inform the law enforcement for them to undertake an investigation.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I take it – would they write a summary offence ticket under the provincial regulation? What would they lay any information under?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I'm not sure how to respond to that. I don't have a law background, so I'm not sure.

Leader of the Opposition: I think it was a question that needs to be asked.

Premier MacLauchlan: If I may, Chair?

It would really be at the hands of the police if they lay a charge, then it goes –

Leader of the Opposition: So with that, Premier, if they lay a summary offence ticket and in the other section where – there's a section in the centre – which lists all the different acts who apply to a summary offence ticket, there is a block there for other – where I take it they would write in the *Archives and Records Act* and they would quote the section of that, but what would they put in for a fine? If there's no fine to be leveled on a minimum, because usually there's a minimum levied – then it would have to go directly before the court.

Chair: Hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: It would go before the court and the question of the sentence, or of the fine, would be determined in proportion to the offence.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: So with that, if the complaint goes to the Mounties, they lay the summary offence ticket, they put the date on it, they don't put the fine on it, but Jamie Fox wants to plead guilty to that offence and doesn't want to go before the

court, he has really no option but to go before the court because there's no minimum fine attached.

Premier MacLauchlan: This would not – I don't envisage this as being a situation where there'd be a ticket, (Indistinct) in the sense of highway traffic or whatever. We might have other situations where there would be a ticket. There'd be a charge laid, and it would go before provincial court and if the person didn't want to go to court you could plead guilty.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: With them pleading guilty then, he would have no way of going to the wicket and just pleading guilty to the offence and paying a minimum fine.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct)

Chair: Premier?

Premier MacLauchlan: In fact, it wouldn't be a matter of going to the wicket. You'd go before the provincial court judge; and given the nature of the offence, I'd be surprised if it's not a matter that – even if you're pleading guilty – where you wouldn't have a prosecutor and defense council and be treated as a – this is a pretty serious offence we're talking about here.

Leader of the Opposition: I understand that, Premier. We're talking summary conviction here. We're not talking indictable or anything like that. We're talking summary conviction under provincial regulation.

Premier MacLauchlan: We have lots of summary conviction offences to go before provincial court.

Leader of the Opposition: But I'm –

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm wondering why we wouldn't put a minimum in of, say, \$5,000 and a more increased penalty on the maximum.

Chair: Jill?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think that we're following similar jurisdictions in other provincial legislation, and I think it would be up to the courts to decide what that fine is.

Leader of the Opposition: So do all – how many provinces in the country don't have a minimum? Do and provinces in the country have a minimum?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Not that I'm aware of, no.

Leader of the Opposition: And the normal was \$10,000?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Some jurisdictions it's higher than that.

Leader of the Opposition: What was the highest?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Fifty.

Leader of the Opposition: Why would we not look at that, or more in between?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: We decided that we should be in keeping with other of our provincial legislation, and the FOIP provision is up to \$10,000 and that was – we thought we should be in keeping with our own legislation.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

The word 'intent' – so basically if somebody went in and physically destroyed the public record, I'm reading this right, there could only be a fine of a maximum of \$10,000?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: And they would be convicted of that offence and then fined, yes.

Mr. MacKay: Right.

In my opinion, and this is just my own personal opinion, \$10,000 is – it should be a lot harsher fine of some sort. If a public servant or somebody from government went in and deliberately destroyed a public document, they should no longer have a job. They should no longer have a pension. There should be – up to \$10,000 is not near harsh enough with the word 'intent.'

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think the – with intent there is a very high threshold that would have to be proven, and if the intent was proven and that, the conviction would stand with the \$10,000 fine.

As far as employment goes, I think that that would depend on what the – if there are regulations around, you know, if someone in government has been convicted of a crime, can they be employed by the province? I don't know the answer to that.

Mr. Currie: The other thing, too, is that the whole approach on this part of the strategy is about – there's a pretty strong training piece in this. With training comes education. I think that it's safe to say that in government departments there's a clear message that there's a renewed focus on retention and records management. We are backing that up by putting the resources in, which will cost money.

I think that, since the strategy was tabled in the fall, there's work going on in all government departments that – I think training is a very important part of this, and I think from what I understand that the departments are taking this work very seriously. They know that there's an accountability piece. They know that this work will be tabled a report to the Legislative Assembly which will highlight our target, public bodies that are not in compliance, and the deputies and ministers will have to be accountable then.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: I realize the 10,000 come from other jurisdictions, but in fairness, over the last few years there probably hasn't been any other province that face some of the scandal that's happened in this province with the deletion of records. So as far as

following what other provinces other provinces do, if anything we should be setting an example for other provinces so this doesn't happen somewhere else in the country.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think there have been incidents in other provinces. We're not the first to have an issue. BC and Ontario both had quite significant issues around the destruction of records. I believe that they brought in fines or had fines for the same reason that we're looking at it.

Mr. MacKay: That's exactly what I was – what did happen in those cases?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I don't think the BC situation has been settled yet. I think that's still before the courts. In Ontario, I do believe that there were people prosecuted and convicted.

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: So in prosecuted – so them employees no longer had jobs?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: Great. I'm good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, if this act was in place, given the recent Auditor General findings, what would have happened to those people if this act was in place?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: If the legislation was in place and there was indication of wrongdoing, then it would have been – the process would have been followed; and if a complaint was made to the Attorney General, then the Attorney

General would then decide whether the complaint was valid and if it should be sent before the – or handed over to the RCMP or whatever law enforcement.

The legislation is not retroactive. It's only for – you know, we can only move forward with –

Mr. MacEwen: Right.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: – implementing these processes.

Mr. MacEwen: Right.

Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: So the Attorney General – that's the Premier, right?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: So then, if the Attorney General had of put it forward, what would have happened under the old legislation?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: There was no provision in the old legislation for any kind of a conviction, or there wasn't an offence provision in the legislation. That was one of the reasons we opened up the legislation.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay. Chair?

Chair: I think the Premier has a response to that.

Premier MacLauchlan: I just wanted to clarify it.

It's certainly not essential if there are complaints being made of wrongdoing that they go forward through the Attorney General. People can pick up the phone and talk directly to law enforcement. So there are lots of ways in which this could be drawn to the attention of the police, who then sort of move in and do their job.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Minister, I have a question directly for you.

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: The exact same thing happens. You've got your new act. Will you send it to the police? The exact same situation that happened, that the AG reported, happens under this legislation, will you send it to the authorities?

Mr. Currie: This changes the game. This is –

Mr. MacEwen: I understand that. It sure does.

Mr. Currie: Well, yeah, (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacEwen: So will you –

Mr. Currie: This is why, this is why –

Mr. MacEwen: – if it happens again –

Mr. Currie: That's why we brought the strategy in. This is –

Mr. MacEwen: Because you couldn't do anything last time.

Mr. Currie: This puts a – let me – if I can finish, please?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes, you can.

Mr. Currie: This puts the offence provision. This puts the protocol. This puts the accountability into the public bodies. This puts the accountability into all of us as an Assembly, that this gets modernized.

You know, this is not – this has been a practice that has been developed over decades, and this is an investment. This is a pretty significant piece of legislation that now gives the authority and the protocol around the compliance.

So yes, in my role as minister I would be very accountable and under my responsibilities to respect this legislation. No question about it.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

So minister, you must have been extremely frustrated over the past year when we're going through public accounts and the AG report, knowing you're the minister and knowing you couldn't do anything to hold these people accountable that the AG identified. It must have been pretty frustrating. There's nothing that you could do to hold them accountable because –

Mr. Currie: My –

Mr. MacEwen: – you're saying now that we have this new act that yes, we're going to.

Mr. Currie: My focus has been, particularly in this work, has been the Auditor General report, which I've seen numerous Auditor General reports in my role as a minister –

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Mr. Currie: – with government, and you know, the Auditor General made it clear. We, as a government, put – the finance minister was responsible, was assigned the duty to make sure that ministers and government departments were complying to the expectations that were made clear and we responded.

I'm very pleased with this strategy. I spoke about it often in the Assembly. From where we were with the Auditor General's Report to where we are today, is a clear message that we are responding to the Auditor General's Report, but most importantly, we're modernizing records information management.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

The fine – so we're going through creating the legislation and we're trying to decide do we keep with other acts and maybe keep it at \$10,000 because the other acts say it, or do we get more severe? Like a place like Ontario, where there are more severe penalties.

Where does that conversation happen? Does that happen around Executive Council? Does that happen with the legislative people? Does that happen in your department? Where does the buck stop with the final penalty as far as job loss; small fine; maximum fine? Is that – did you talk about that at Executive Council, or is that more just local in the department?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Those conversations happened with Executive Council, sorry, not with Executive Council, but it happened across, with our Legislative Counsel, it happened within the department. We talked about it. It was discussed with deputies. I guess, sorry – I'm trying to remember who else we talked to. And Cabinet, I think.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: The deputies were involved –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: The (Indistinct) sorry.

Mr. MacEwen: – Cabinet was involved, and the legislative people –

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: – were involved.

Mr. Currie: And there are jurisdictional scans on –

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Mr. Currie: – what legislation from across the country, as well.

Mr. MacEwen: Right. One of my concerns is the fact that we've seen this happen. The AG has said it's happened. We have fines, currently, in other acts that would be similar. To me that doesn't seem like a deterrent because it's the same as other acts.

Why wouldn't we, maybe, punch above our weight, and say: No, let's – you said your department is taking it serious, you're not happy with what happened before. We have

put a major investment into this act, into all of the new records and archives.

Why wouldn't we back that up with saying: No, we had better come pretty hard with this?

Not just what we've had, which we have seen – we've had people not pay attention to what we've had. There is so much effort and expense and resources, you said, put into this.

Why wouldn't we punch above our weight here and say: You know what? Let's get serious about this. Let's talk about job loss. Because as I read this right now, he or she, who does this, pays a \$10,000 fine, or probably a significant civil servant, who makes a very decent wage, pays the fine and show up to work the next morning.

Mr. Currie: I mean, obviously –

Mr. MacEwen: That's what – sorry to interrupt, but you have to understand where we're coming from here. That's what people have been saying, and you guys are hearing. That's what they're saying to opposition MLAs. They say that every day when you go to the rink; you go to the Co-op; you go wherever you're going. They're saying: Are you kidding me? Nothing? No fine? And now when I go back them and say: We're in the Legislature. We're coming up with ways to deal with this is. They're going to say: You're going to give them a fine? It won't be \$10,000. You know darn well it won't be \$10,000. It's going to be a lot less than that.

Mr. Currie: Who says who?

Mr. MacEwen: Says every fine that's ever given. Seriously.

Mr. Currie: Are you challenging –

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, I'm not challenging the judges. Don't get like that with me –

Mr. Currie: No, I mean –

Mr. MacEwen: – I'm saying we need a serious consequence and I don't see it there because when I go back in and I tell someone that if they're going to be held responsible. They're going to say: So they

pay a fine and they show up for work the next day and everything's fine.

You know that, minister. That's what we hear. You hear that on the street. We need to show –

Mr. Currie: What Jill just described, if it has been identified that a department official, whoever that may be, is – it contradicts their responsibility, and they're – the legislation that we have, or are currently working towards, their name will be, obviously, that will be forwarded to the Attorney General and the police will be called in for an investigation of that.

At that point in time, police would be involved in their procedures and their protocol in determining charges according to the legislation and placing that before the courts. That's –

Mr. MacEwen: You're comfortable –

Mr. Currie: – (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – (Indistinct) the deputy ministers –

Mr. Currie: Am I comfortable?

Mr. MacEwen: – the Executive Council is comfortable with that level right now?

Mr. Currie: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, minister.

Chair: Premier, you have an intervention?

Premier MacLauchlan: I'd just like to follow-up on this. I mean we can't write into legislation that someone will lose their job, but I don't want it to be left as a given that someone will pay a fine and go back to work the next day if someone is convicted for a criminal offence in relation to their duties. There is a very good chance there is going to be a consequence –

Mr. MacEwen: A very good chance there's going to be a consequence. I understand what you're saying, Premier –

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – but there is not necessarily that chance because nothing – we have seen that happen –

Premier MacLauchlan: But you can't –

Mr. MacEwen: – you would have thought, that would, even though it's not in the legislation (Indistinct) happen this time.

Chair: Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: You don't think it means anything to say, a very good chance, but I'm saying a high probability.

If someone commits a criminal offence in relation to their duties, they're not likely going to keep their job. That comes down to employment relations and what's involved in dismissing a person, but chances are that that's what is going to happen.

And, there is a reputational piece to this. In many ways, the fine, which is substantial, compared to all kind of fines on the offence books, is one part of what is the consequence that comes with bringing in this penalty clause.

The kind of people that you're talking about, many of them haven't got too much job security. If they commit a criminal offence in relation to their job, chances are somebody is going to be telling them to find something else to do.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Madam Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment to section 18 of Bill No. 61 here. I'd like to add in a section 19.1 (4). There are copies. I believe the clerk has it there.

I'd like to read the amendment here for the Hansard.

Section 19.1 (4) would read:

Where any person employed in the public service to protect, manage, or administer records

(a) conspires or colludes with or assists any person to illegally destroy records;

(b) knowingly permits any violation of the law relating to the protection, management or administration of records;

(d) willfully makes or signs any false entry in any book or willfully makes or signs any false certificate or return in any case in which it is his duty to make an entry, certificate or return;

(e) having knowledge of the violation of any law relating to the protection, management or administration of records or of fraud committed against the province under any such law fails to report such knowledge to a superior officer; or

(f) demands, accepts or attempts to collect any sum of money, or other thing of value for the compromise, adjustment or destruction of any record, the Minister may suspend that person from their employment.

Chair: Jill.

Mr. Currie: Jill is going to speak to the motion – or the amendment.

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial

Archivist: I think that the first, like (a), (b), and (c) of your amendment, I think they're already covered by what's already there. You've used different words, but I think you're basically saying what we've already said.

We cover, if someone directs councils or causes any person to do anything mentioned in this clause, you've basically just have re-said that.

Section (e), I think, is really, would be more whistleblower legislation, not *Archives and Records Act*.

I'm not sure that what's here is really any different than what we already have, or it's part of another body of legislation, not the *Archives and Records Act*.

Speaker: Would anybody else like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think that, it says: the Minister may suspend that person from their employment. I, as a minister, do not have authority to suspend my employees. That is the public – these are Public Service Commission employees that also have rights to be represented by their union.

I, as a minister, do not have the authority to suspend them from their employment. Therefore, I will not be supporting this motion.

Chair: Would anybody else like to speak to the amendment?

An Hon. Member: Question.

Chair: All those in – oh, sorry. Okay. The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, are you speaking to the amendment?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Thank you very much.

I'm sitting and following this, all of this very close, right from before the last election and even when Robert Ghiz was still premier, the whole thing that – the whole trail that has brought us down to this path today.

One of the number one things that I hear from people all the time about this is that they don't feel like anybody got punished. While this government likely will at the polls in the next election, there's really been no other significant punishment for anyone. People were able to destroy records, ignore the Auditor General, not give up any information, pretend things didn't happen that did, and the people who talk to me about this are upset.

When you were at committee, minister, we talked about this and I said there has to be something significant to show people – there has to be a significant deterrent, and there has to be – we have to show people that you're not going to get to keep your job, that we're not – it's not like the Premier says, maybe he won't come or he or she won't

come to work the next morning. That's not good enough.

If we really want to put respect back into government from the outside, if we want the public to respect government, elected officials, if we want to put some sort of honour back into the system, there has to be punishment.

Because what you guys did, put us here, it wasn't us over here. We wanted action way back before the last election, and it was continually blocked – yep, it's about somebody losing their employment.

We were continually blocked at Public Accounts from being able to get any significant traction on this, and it wasn't until the Auditor General was called in that we even got a fifth of the way to the bottom of this, and I still think there's more to it. But the fact that nobody was punished for all the things that happened really gives people this feeling that – you know, I read the courts. You see what Nancy Orr does every Thursday down in Georgetown? People go to jail for way less than what you guys did – for way less every time.

Every time people – read what Nancy Orr does. People go to jail. That's it. You go in front of Nancy Orr, you break the law, you go to jail. If you're friends of you fellows, nothing happens. But that's how people feel.

We have to be able to show people that we're here for them. It's what the populism uprising is. They're sick of it, and they're sick of being treated – like they'll go to jail for every law that they break – and well, they should; I'm not suggesting that they shouldn't – but this kind of stuff goes unpunished, or it's a \$10,000 fine by somebody who has \$10,000 and who may or may not lose their job.

I'm quite disappointed in this bill, to be honest. I'm significantly disappointed in this bill. I don't think a monetary fine is enough, I really don't. I think, given what this province has been in through and with the embarrassment that this government and this Premier has dragged us through, people need to go to jail, and I don't see \$10,000 as a deterrent from the type of things that you guys have allowed to happen, I really don't.

I think that, at the very least, that losing their employment, but I would suggest when this bill hits the floor on another day that we should be adding clauses to say: You're going to jail. Because Nancy Orr puts them in jail for way less than what you fellows let these guys away with.

Chair: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Currie: Just a quick comment. I mean, obviously, I've been briefed and paying close attention. Jill and her team have done a lot of extensive work in respect to what's going on across the country. One thing that is noted is that the report which is presented to the Assembly, we're the only jurisdiction in Canada that brings that level of compliance to their Assembly across the country.

I have confidence in this legislation. I have confidence about where it goes. There is a process when an individual be identified, but that would be handed to the Attorney General which would then reach out to law enforcement for the criminal system to be involved.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

I have to agree with the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters. I've dealt with the law for over 25 years, and I have to say that I was actually expecting more in the bill than what there is, but I will give thought to the – your work that you have put in this.

But we need to put legislation in place to prevent people from doing this in the past, and I'm actually wondering about a comment that you said.

You said that in drafting – if I took it right – in you drafting this bill that you spoke to deputy ministers. I want to know what deputy ministers you spoke to, and if the same deputy ministers were involved in the egaming scandal was the same ones you talked to?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: We presented the legislation to the deputy ministers' council. I'm not sure –

I don't remember everyone that was around the table that day, and I'm not sure that there was someone there in the room that was associated with the egaming.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, I'm curious on something on this amendment, and it's something the minister said. Maybe you can clarify this.

You said you do not have the authority to suspend somebody. So can you please tell me and the House what happened in Summerside at the Government Garage with the four members that, my understanding is, you suspended them, minister, for actions that were done or stuff that happened at the Summerside garage.

So, who suspended them if you don't have the authority now?

Chair: Let's talk about (Indistinct) –

Leader of the Opposition: Well, it goes to this, because we're asking that the minister may suspend that person from their employment, and the minister is saying that she doesn't have the authority –

An Hon. Member: She said she wouldn't support the amendment.

Leader of the Opposition: – or she wouldn't support the amendment.

Can you explain that?

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

Ms. Biggar: Anything to do, hon. member, with human resources goes through our human resource department and union. It doesn't go through me.

Chair: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition, are you finished?

Leader of the Opposition: Okay for that for now.

I'm interested in the person with authority. I'm trying to understand why in this bill we wouldn't give the power to remove from a position of authority if a complaint or an

allegation is made against somebody. Why would we not have that in there, minister?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I think that if there are allegations because the employees are employed through the Public Service Commission, that there are union contracts in place and everything would have to be honoured, so I don't know that we could put the authority in the legislation to deal with those things, because there are other bodies of regulations that deal with that employer/employee relationship.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, I would agree with that, but what about – Chair, what about a person that's in authority as the deputy minister?

If a deputy minister breaks the act, then why would we not look at having him removed from a position of authority as a deputy minister until the matter is dealt with or investigated?

Jill MacMicken-Wilson Provincial Archivist: I'm not sure that you can handle that within a body of legislation, because that's still an employer/employee relationship.

Leader of the Opposition: Appointed at the pleasure of the Premier, right?

Mr. Myers: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Right?

An Hon. Member: Or it's through the (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Exactly.

Chair: Actually, let's come through the Chair. If you want to be added to the list, I'd be happy to do that.

Leader of the Opposition: The Premier appoints people to the Executive Council, and the Premier appoints deputy ministers, so I'd have to wonder why we wouldn't – if somebody's in a conflict or an allegation is made against the deputy minister who is in a position of authority, why we would not

want to have that person removed from that position.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I think what we're – let's recall what we've got here, which is the *Archives and Records Act* which is being brought forward with very significant modernization beyond anything we've had.

We've got an offence provision which has not previously been attached to this legislation. We've had public records in this province for a couple of hundred years, the first time this has been done, let's not minimize what this is all about.

But now what we're being asked to do is to mix employment law with the offence provision of the public records act, and there are various ways in which you have to move according to certain standards and through certain processes, and none of this said that there aren't going to be consequences. There could well be consequences; but you can't start stipulating them in legislation that sets out in the first part to create a summary conviction offence.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct) that the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Currie: Thank you. Thanks, Jill. Great job, as always, and we'll see you tomorrow.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intitled An Act to Amend the Archives and Records 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.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, April 7th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good night, members.

An Hon. Member: You too, Speaker.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.