

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature met at 10:00 a.m.

Point of Privilege

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

Yesterday during Responses to Questions Taken as Notice, the Premier stated to this House that the RCMP made the decision to attending the Public Schools Branch meeting; however, members of the press gallery were told by this government that the Public Schools Branch requested the RCMP to attend.

It appears this government has told the media one thing, and this Premier told the House yet another. I would submit that this a clear *prima facie* case of privilege, and I am prepared to move the following motion to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Opposition House Leader, that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges for further investigation.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader. I will be taking that request under advisement.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the fourth day and the end of our first week of the sitting. I wish everyone a great weekend.

We've got a lot of friends in the gallery: Ronnie and Claretta MacWilliams from greater Hockeyville; we've got John and Elizabeth MacLean, not too far away from Hockeyville; Dale Biggar and grandson Xavier; Wayne MacMillan, Lorne Yeo, and Peter Meggs and Darren Mullen. It's a great day to be in this House.

Tomorrow I'll be attending a volunteer awards ceremony at the Red Cross

headquarters to recognize volunteers who helped during the fires in Alberta in May of 2016. Conrad Sauvé, who is president and CEO of the Red Cross, will be there; as will others, to congratulate and give out 13 awards to Prince Edward Island volunteers who worked tirelessly during that effort.

Tomorrow afternoon I'll be taking part, along with some people who've been playing crokinole all winter, in the Island crokinole championships. It's at North River Hall and I appreciate their patience in recognizing that I haven't been at it as much as they have, but I can still complete a shot.

On Sunday, a big day for this country and for our province, the 100th anniversary of the commencement of the battle of Vimy Ridge, an important commemoration service here at the Charlottetown cenotaph on Sunday at 2:00 p.m. to recognize the importance of that battle and its outcome in our history, and in particular to recognize the 2,000 Island soldiers – a very significant number when you think about that – 2,000 Island soldiers who participated in that battle.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I also want to talk about April 9th, this Sunday, which is a special day in Canada, especially with Vimy Ridge and the victory that our troops brought forward. With that, we have a very large contingent of students coming from Kinkora high school and traveling to Vimy Ridge along with Jennifer Murray, a good friend of mine that works at DVA.

I'd like to give a shout-out to Morgan Bernard, Ally Dwyer, Mya Farris, Rebecca Green, Amber Harvey, Maggie Linkletter, Dakota MacWilliams, Brooke McCardle, Isaac McKenna, Maddie Moffatt, Ross Paynter, Katie Pearce, Alex Pickering, Payton Reeves, Jamey Smallwood, Callie Thomson, Victoria van der Velden, Riley Warren and Olivia Mullins. May they enjoy their trip and have a good time.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back here this morning and send greetings out to all my constituents of Tyne Valley-Linkletter, and again say hello to my mom, Pauline Dymont, in the Stewart Memorial Home.

I would like to welcome to the gallery today my husband, Dale, and my grandson, Xavier Gallant. He's one of my biggest fans and I know he enjoys politics, he especially likes going to the rallies. So, I welcome them here today and I'm sure we'll have a little time to get together for lunch afterwards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I welcome our guests to the gallery. I'd like to acknowledge Peter Meggs, former educator, and an educator who is extremely committed to children with special needs during his career and now a councilor with the town of Cornwall. I do get to see him at the gym, not as often as I'd like to see him.

Mr. R. Brown: You look (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: Yes, I go to the gym. It's all about wellness.

I'd like to also acknowledge tomorrow the home and school – which is a great partner to education in this province and who does wonderful work, particularly on our district advisory councils, showing their leadership and sharing their voice – will be meeting – their AGM is in Charlottetown here.

I want a big shout-out to Stu and Wilma MacLure, who are watching today, who are constituents of mine, who raised their family in the community of Parkdale. I wish them well as they head into the weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today, especially Ron and Claretta MacWilliams from West Cape – that's where my grandfather was from – that's a good area to be from, I guess. Lorne Yeo – it's good to see Lorne with us – he's here every day – and the extended, the Biggar family. I see Peter Meggs is with us today. I'd also like to welcome Darragh Morgan, who's the musical director of the Canada Remembers Chorus. The chorus will be celebrating Canada 150 with a special concert on this Sunday, April 9th, in the atrium of the Daniel J. MacDonald building from 6:45 to 7:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. start. It's going to be the hundredth anniversary of Vimy Ridge. It's open to all, it's free admission and I encourage everyone to attend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, especially Shirley Dickieson in Hunter River. I know she likes to tune in. I wanted to welcome everyone to the gallery, as well, and especially Ronnie MacWilliams. We met the other day at the water act consultation – he did a great presentation there. And, of course, John MacLean as well, great to see you here.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to point out that Burger Love, for the first time, has come to District 18 Rustico-Emerald at the Harmony House Theatre with the pure harmony burger and The Mill In New Glasgow with the Glasgow burger. So, it's fantastic – have it there. And I wanted, lastly, to say there's a great new venue in North Rustico called The Eagle Nest and they really make an effort to support Island musicians and tonight, in fact, Vanessa Clements from O'Leary is the featured artist. I recommend, if you're looking for some good music, head to North Rustico to The Eagle Nest tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome all those to the gallery, especially Ronnie and Claretta MacWilliams – they come from West Cape, as it was mentioned earlier – but that's in the great riding of O'Leary-Inverness. Ronnie and Claretta are great community people in my riding. I know Ronnie's been active in a lot of farm organizations, but right now him and Claretta are quite active in a new organization in the O'Leary area – community care committee and they're trying to develop a new community care facility in the O'Leary area and I know Ronnie's been – I get lots of feedback that Ronnie's been very active in pushing the agenda. Ronnie's also on our O'Leary-Inverness Liberal Association. I think they might be down like I am – a little later on we're going to the PEI Women Institute is having a fundraiser and this year, the funds are going to the hospitals in the western part of the Province. I know they're here to advocate for the good causes and good work that those people do in O'Leary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all the good folks in the gallery here. The Biggar family and Ronnie and Claretta – who possibly could be after this boundaries commission comes back – could possibly be in the Alberton-Roseville district.

Mr. Henderson: I'm not giving them up.

Mr. Murphy: I'd also like to welcome all the good people of Alberton-Roseville that may be home watching on the computer or the TV. And I must also say: I'm pleased to announce that we have our first Burger Love up in District 26 – at the Mill River. They're doing Burger Love there this year. The first time it's been that far west.

I'd also like to put a plug out there for the Alberton Peewee Regals, who are still in the running – they're in second place and they really need your support so if people could get out there and vote for them in the Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup, it'd be great to see them win – some more money coming to West Prince and Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Myers: I'll vote right now.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today and all those watching at home. There might be the odd young person watching today, as today is a PD day and the teachers are hard at work doing their professional development.

I'd like to say hello to John MacLean, who's in the gallery today, who lives in Morrell. John is a strong advocate for disabilities in the Province. He's a pretty smart guy, but today, he's trumped because he's brought someone even smarter here with him today – he's got his daughter Elizabeth with him today, who's in grade 2 in Morrell with my own son, Mason. It's exciting to have Elizabeth here on her day off, too.

I'd also like to send out a congratulations to Marylou Parkman, who is the newest councilor in the community of Morrell, so congratulations to her, too.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise again today in the house. Welcome everyone here in the gallery. A shout-out to everyone in District 4 watching at home. I'd also like to mention the Spring Fling Dinner for the Women's Institute this evening. I will be attending. I look forward to that.

Tomorrow there's a spring luncheon at the rec centre in Belfast for the Mount

Buchanan-Point Prim Women's Institute. Tomorrow evening is the Standardbred Horse Owner's Association awards banquet, and for all us horse owners, hope springs eternal this time of year so I have a mare with foal. There's a great story on CBC today about Bill Andrew and the surrogate mare he found for one of his foals – which was a good news story.

Also on Sunday, the Vimy Ridge service that I'll be attending in Montague and just a shout-out to all the legion members in Montague and I hope you all have a good weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Brett Gallant curling championships

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to recognize the outstanding achievement in the sport of curling by Brett Gallant.

Brett has accomplished so much in the sport even though he is only 27 years of age. During his junior career he has won: 5 straight Provincial curling titles, a bronze medal at the Canada Games in 2007, he has participated in the Canadian Junior Curling Championships where he won bronze, silver, and was the Canadian Junior Champion in 2009. As skip of Team Canada at the World Junior Curling Championships, he won a silver medal after going undefeated in the round robin.

You could say that Brett is a thoroughbred curler as his proud parents are Kathie and Peter Gallant former Canadian mixed curling champions. Brett has also won the Canadian mixed double championship with Jocelyn Peterman.

In February of this year, Brett was named the Bell Aliant Senior Male Athlete of the Year and was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's award presented to the top overall Island athlete. He has made five Brier appearances and is the first Islander to win a Brier while playing second stone for

Team Gushue of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This week Brett is at the 2017 Ford World Men's curling championship where Team Gushue is currently in first place with an 11 and zero record and have secured a spot in the 1-2 page playoff.

I would encourage all members of this House to join me in wishing Brett Gallant and Team Gushue continued success at the Ford Men's curling championships this weekend.

I know as soon as these championships are over that Brett will be turning his focus to qualifying for the 2018 Olympic Games in Pyeongchang. There is no doubt in my mind that he has a real chance of adding an Olympic podium appearance to his curling resume.

Brett, Prince Edward Island is extremely proud of your achievements in curling and wish you continued success in reaching your curling goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rotary Club of Charlottetown celebrates 100 years of service

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very proud to rise and congratulate the Rotary Club of Charlottetown on the distinction of celebrating 100 years in service to the public. In the fall of 1917, the Rotary Club of Charlottetown was chartered. There were originally 21 charter members and it has now grown to hundreds of community members consisting of 3 clubs in Charlottetown, 1 in Summerside and 1 in Montague. I have been a proud member of the founding club here in Charlottetown for the past 36 years and served as president twice during that time.

This organization is a place of community outreach and connection, friendship and serves as a place to develop acquaintances as an opportunity for service.

Rotary conducts the Easter Seals fundraising campaign on Prince Edward Island. The centennial milestone will be commemorated with special community projects to celebrate the anniversary during 2017.

Rotarians will be planting trees at a number of locations, which are provided by the City of Charlottetown and the provincial government. There will be a special Island youth exchange student event in August. There is also a charter night dinner that will take place in October attended by the Rotary International president.

To observe the anniversary the Rotary Clubs will be releasing a publication outlining the history and projects of the six Island Rotary Clubs.

I would like to wish all PEI Rotary Clubs continued success in service to the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Battle of Vimy Ridge 100th Anniversary

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured today to rise to recognize the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. It will officially be this Sunday, April 9th.

The battle, which lasted for days, claimed thousands of lives and left many more injured. There is no higher calling than serving your country. More than 650,000 Canadians would serve in uniform by the end of the First World War.

The conflict took a huge toll. More than 66,000 Canadians sacrificed their lives and 170,000 were wounded.

There were many Islanders, who served in World War I and the Battle of Vimy Ridge. I know veterans from Souris, who have all since passed and fought in that horrific war. We are truly thankful to them.

These are people who left their families

behind to fight an enemy, who was against everything we stood for. I attend the Remembrance Day service every year and I remember those, who fought in this war, and all those who served and have had served our country.

Almost 100 PEI students from Island schools will join thousands of Canadian youth for the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on Sunday. They will get to see firsthand, Canadians fought and died for our freedom.

I am always honoured to recognize our veterans and their selfless contributions. This battle is known as a defining moment for Canada. A historic moment, which helped define Canada and the people we are today.

This weekend, please take a moment to remember; we should be all very proud of our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

E-gaming records destroyed

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

This week we have been discussing amendments to the *Archives and Records Act*. The amendments stem from the Auditor General's report on the e-gaming scandal where records of key government executives were illegally destroyed.

Question to the education minister: How will these changes prevent a repeat of these outrageous actions by senior levels of your Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm very excited as the minister to raise the bar in respect to our role as government in response to the Auditor General's report.

We've had good discussion on the floor of the Assembly over the last day in respect to the legislation and we will continue to have more discussion as we continue to debate that legislation.

Our mandate is to continue to raise the accountability and also enforce the compliance and the level of accountability in the work we do in records information management.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Penalties for government officials

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

The minister talks about raising the bar. Electronic and written records on e-gaming for key deputies and Premier's Office staff were destroyed, violating the laws of the record management.

Question to the minister: Why aren't there harsher penalties for senior government officials and executives and elected officials, who violate the law, as has happened in your government's e-gaming scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Auditor General was very clear and in my time as a Cabinet minister for the past 10 years, we take the work of the Auditor General very seriously. Clearly, she executed and demonstrated a clear direction for our government. Records management does fall under the responsibility of the Provincial Archivist, Jill MacMicken, is doing an outstanding job.

I have all the confidence in that legislation and her work after a very extensive jurisdictional scan, and comparing what this legislation means to Prince Edward Island compared to other jurisdictions, and have full confidence in that legislation and the work under her leadership.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

E-gaming records destroyed (further)

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

What we heard there is nothing about harsher penalties. During a review of this bill it came to light that a group of deputy ministers provided advice on developing these amendments.

Question to the education minister: Did any deputy ministers or senior staff, who had a hand in the e-gaming scandal, have a hand in developing these same amendments before the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I have confidence in the provincial archivist. I think that she has clearly demonstrated her level of commitment; her level of focus and professionalism. I've got confidence that they've done an extensive job to look at provinces and territories and how we will enforce, through stronger legislation, and certainly very proud, as the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, who is responsible for records information management, that we will be one of the top provinces in respect to our compliance and our accountability, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Never even touched the question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Leadership of Liberal government

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, last year the Finance minister told the House he consulted the Auditor General on a bill, which he told the Public Accounts Committee that he did not. Clearly this has been proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is obviously, otherwise occupied this morning and we'll look forward to hearing what he has got to say when he arrives, but I have terrific confidence in the Finance minister and his standards and his integrity. I also have a lot of confidence in his leadership in our economic management in this province and we look forward to hearing what he has got to say shortly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, time and time again, members of this government promise Islanders they would not bring HST in. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party kept expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we said, in the spring of 2015, that there were no plans to increase the HST and we brought

forward measures last fall to do so by 1%. All we heard from the other side is, we're going to bring the economy to halt.

At the end of January, January 31st, 2016 to January 31st, 2017, the Prince Edward Island retail sector increased by 10.8%, which led the country, and the next after that was British Columbia, way behind at 6.6%.

When we hear this Chicken Little talk from the other side it's because they don't understand the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) wouldn't have to (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Born a rich man and (Indistinct) rich man –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. Myers: You have no idea what people are going through.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque has the floor.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to remind the Premier that it was an election promise in 2008 by his government, HST wouldn't come in and it certainly did. We see what it's at now.

Last year, this Premier campaigned on a promise to restore elected school boards. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islander to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we came to power, and it was clear here in the spring sitting of 2015, and it was clear to

everyone in this House, that we have a dysfunction in our educational system between the school board and the department of education and the need to bring greater clarity and greater citizen engagement to the governance and the leadership and the policy development of education in the province.

We brought an *Education Act* for the first time in 40-plus years that was approved by all sides of this House. That's what we're acting on and it's for the betterment of education and a learner-centred approach in education in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like another broken promise to me.

Mr. Myers: Yes.

Smaller Cabinet

Mr. MacKay: This Premier also campaigned on a promise to have a smaller Cabinet than his predecessor.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) stacked on top of each other over there.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we did start up with a smaller Cabinet.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) started out.

Premier MacLauchlan: We were eight or perhaps nine the first time. We got up to 10, and we're getting so much great work done that we're now up to 11 and you're going to

see the evidence before the day is out of what we're accomplishing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Poor little rich boy – Richie Rich.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to point out we seem to have a theme here of broken promises taking place.

This government promised to remove Liberal Party backbenchers from Cabinet committees.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Great question, that's a great question.

Mr. MacEwen: Another one.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we're working together as a team over here. I'm not sure he's right about that point about whatever he called that promise, but in any event we are moving forward with this government. We've been at it two years and we've got a long road ahead of us –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: – and as we go, we're doing better for Islanders, and that's exactly –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) what the polls say.

Premier MacLauchlan: That's exactly what we promised Islanders. We're going to work together and we're going to keep going forward together, and if the opposition doesn't like that, that's why they're going to stay in opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: You're Alex Campbell.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Plebiscite results

Mr. MacKay: Here's another one for you, Premier. You'll love this one.

Mr. Speaker, last year this Premier held a plebiscite whose results were supposed to guide electoral system reform –

Mr. Myers: What happened?

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question. They can't be trusted.

Mr. Trivers: Say one thing, do another.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this has been discussed at length in this House, and it was in the sitting of the fall.

Mr. Myers: He's getting his arms moving, he's angry.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct).

Premier MacLauchlan: We want to have the true support of Islanders before we make this major decision –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) in a second.

Premier MacLauchlan: And we're also looking forward to finding out what the Conservative Party actually thinks about electoral reform, and maybe be the time you get a leader we'll know more about that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That's (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, broken promises – we're losing track how many broken promises we've discussed here already.

Mr. Aylward: I've got seven so far here.

Increased taxes and fees

Mr. MacKay: This Premier campaigned on a promise to not increase a single tax or fee.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Great question, that's a great question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

An Hon. Member: I wasn't too tired this morning, was I?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'd be interested to see exactly what the phrasing of that promise was, but I invite the member opposite and I'd like all members of this House to hear what the finance minister has to say before we finish up this morning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Compton: Magic beans.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Island-wide high-speed Internet

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, more broken promises from many members of this government repeatedly promised Islanders proper high-speed Internet Island-wide.

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

An Hon. Member: Oh, really?

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Mr. Myers: What happened?

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) to do it?

Mr. MacKay: Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it may be the opposition that's getting tired, because they haven't been paying enough attention to the progress that's being made –

Mr. Myers: Because there hasn't been activity.

Premier MacLauchlan: – on connectivity and on broadband delivery in this province, and there was a study released the day before yesterday by the Conference Board of Canada that rates Prince Edward Island near the top of the country for connectivity, and –

Mr. Myers: Tell that to the people who live in the country.

Premier MacLauchlan: – we're doing better –

Mr. Myers: Turning your back on rural Islanders.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we're doing better, Mr. Speaker, and we intend to keep improving broadband connection throughout this province.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Turning your back on Islanders!

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. LaVie: Eighteen percent.

Replacement manors

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier likes to talk about progress. Here's one that'll fit in there.

Replacement manors in both Tyne Valley and Montague –

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: – have been promised over and over again –

Mr. Myers: Since 2007.

Mr. MacKay: – by Liberal members. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Great question, that's a great question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, this province has the third-most manor beds per

capita of any province in the country. When we –

Mr. LaVie: Looking for the 18%.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) bait and switch.

Premier MacLauchlan: When we do those replacements in Tyne Valley and Montague, we'll be even further ahead, and those are going to get delivered and they're going to get delivered –

Mr. Trivers: We've heard that before.

Premier MacLauchlan: - on terms that are fiscally responsible and where (Indistinct) we're sharing that cost and where the people are going to get the best service that we can give them, and you just wait. It's getting done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: We've waited for 10 years.

An Hon. Member: The APM fund.

Mr. R. Brown: Work, work, work.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, a broken promise – the only person that is excited about these promises is the guy that's making the signs, putting them up in the landing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: In 2011 and 2015, this government campaigned on a promise to establish a land bank for young farmers. Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Premier MacLauchlan: Finally got a question.

An Hon. Member: Finally got a question.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

I thought maybe they had deleted agriculture and fisheries; they never asked a question on it last time. We were up until –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: Rural PEI.

Mr. McIsaac: – the last day of the first week here.

Mr. MacEwen: I asked hundreds (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: In the agriculture area, we have developed a lot of great things.

Mr. Myers: In your opinion.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: We're putting 67% of our budget back into the farms.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: Many programs that are working very well.

We brought in a program similar to the old LDC which just dealt with the land piece, and it was helping for young farmers or older farmers who wanted to transition out. That program is in place right now. It's working very well for those who have taken part of it, and it's going to continue working in doing great things for the farmers of our province.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. J. Brown: You need to start asking about the good work.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, another broken promise – I've just pointed 11 broken promises out and we haven't even started yet; all kinds.

Mr. Myers: Well, there must be more.

Doctor for every Islander

Mr. MacKay: For years, former premier Robert Ghiz promised a doctor for every single Islander.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

And, supposedly you have a new government, but there's 14 of your 18 elected officials over there that were under Robert Ghiz.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Broken promises.

Mr. Myers: He's a hider. I told you he's a hider.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I can say that we have – within our department we have a recruiting and retention strategy and we are working hard at recruiting physicians, and in fact we have I think about 246 practicing doctors in the province.

Mr. LaVie: That's working well.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, we have a few vacancies that we're working on, and we continue to take people off the patient registry, and we're seeing that patient registry at lower numbers than we've seen in some time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) want the old minister back.

An Hon. Member: Must have ran out by now.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

E-gaming scheme

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, another broken promise.

For years, former finance minister Wes Sheridan told this House –

Mr. Myers: Oh, that guy?

Mr. MacKay: – told this House that his government had not a hand whatsoever in the egaming scheme.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh.

Mr. MacKay: Clearly, this has proven not to be true.

Premier, why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe what this tired government says?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Come clean.

Mr. Myers: Wes the Cat had more (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the reason Islanders can believe this government is because they can see the results of what we're achieving.

Mr. LaVie: Eighteen percent.

Premier MacLauchlan: What we're achieving fiscally, what we're achieving economically, what we're achieving in health, education, family and human services, and in delivering good government to Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Give us Robert Ghiz back.

Mr. R. Brown: I think you're better off (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre

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

Yesterday during Question Period, the Government Whip and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy stooped to a new low. They prearranged a series of questions designed to blame our province's rape and sexual assault centre, which is an NGO, for shortcomings in the important services that they provide.

Will the minister explain what exactly her and her Government Whip were trying to accomplish with their finger pointing exercise yesterday?

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I have great communications with the rape and sexual assault centre, with Anderson House, with a number of other providers that provide services for women –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) blame them.

Ms. Biggar: - right across Prince Edward Island.

My comments yesterday in regard to questions was in support of the great work that these organizations across PEI do, and if that wants to be misconstrued by the member across the floor of the great support that these organizations give women across PEI, then I think you'd better read the Hansard again with my answer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The minister said it's an NGO, it's not within my department. Victims can call 911 or go to the ER. Clearly she did not listen to the brave, heartbreaking personal stories told at the Island Mothers Helping Mothers presentations.

Minister: Why is this how your government treats victims of sexual assault?

Mr. Trivers: Shame, shame.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as the member across the floor well knows, I sat in on those meetings and I shared with them and I heard their personal stories and I also appreciate the work that the Island Mothers Helping Mothers does with women across Prince Edward Island. We have a varied list of organizations across PEI that we support through funding, but they are NGOs and they do great work for women across Prince Edward Island, as does our ER departments, our mental health centres, our police services, our Victim Services, Catholic Family Services Bureau and on, and on, and on – the organizations across PEI that help families and victims of violence.

Mr. J. Brown: The ambulance is going down the street. Why don't you chase that too?

Speaker: Hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I do agree. This minister sat in on these presentations. She sat beside me, but I don't think she actually listened to these stories. If this minister would only go on to social media today and look at the comments that are coming back from these individuals – these women that poured out their hearts and told their stories at these presentations and

the response to the statements made by this minister in the house yesterday.

Mr. LaVie: Shame.

Mr. Aylward: She would quickly realize and go back to her department – go back to her Cabinet table to ensure the services are in place. She talks about the ER. Yes, the ER doctors do a great job, but did she listen to the lady that told the story about being directed to go to the ER and the ER was closed? I don't think she heard that story.

I do applaud the great work of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre for all they do with the limited resources they have. This government has ignored this issue for 10 long years.

Speaker: Hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, do you have a question?

Mr. Aylward: I do.

Minister: Why is this Liberal government so quick to blame others rather than doing the right thing and providing much needed funding and support across this system for sexual assault victims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as the member across the floor very well knows, and again I encourage him review the Hansard, that my comments were in support of the great work that the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre does and in support of the women who struggle across PEI with the results of being victim to violence and sexual assault.

Our department of family services, of health and wellness and my department, through Interministerial Women's Secretariat, work hand in hand to work together with the great organizations across Prince Edward Island that do help women who need those services.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, MR. Speaker and that you minister for that statement.

What I've heard from these brave presenters was a cry for help – help with the traumatic events which they are victim to. Minister, we both attended these presentations, but again, clearly, you didn't listen. Your broken system needs more frontline resources to support these victims.

To the minister: How do you fail to recognize the huge wait times and gaps in counseling, psychological services facing all Islanders, including sexual assault victims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, government continues to make strides in supporting women's wellness and one of the big challenges that we are facing with is trying to make sure that we provide the services when they're required. That's why this government has made the announcement of a women's wellness centre that's going to be located in the Prince County Hospital. At that particular location, we're going to be providing lots of counseling services as it pertains to postpartum depression, as well as all the other services that we have for general mental illness issues that are out there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Cost of mental illness

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following on from the hon. member – last week Island Mothers Helping Mothers drew attention to what they describe as a mental health crisis on Prince Edward Island. Their core message was that government is not doing enough to protect and help Islanders suffering with mental health problems.

Question to the minister of health and wellness: How much does it cost the

provincial economy every year in lost productivity as a result of the effects of mental illness?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, mental illness is a challenge that many individuals and many families face by times and we certainly, as a government, understand the toll that mental illness can have on families. We are working at trying to build a continuum of care that can provide and meet the Islanders' needs.

Once again, when we talk about some of the issues as it pertains to women – that's where the women's wellness centre is going to work and focus on a lot of postpartum depression issues. We do provide services and we cross-train a lot of our Public Health nurses to identify and pick up on particular mental health challenges – as well as the other services that we do provide all Islanders at our locations.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

New health clinics and staffing

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

According to a recently released federal mental health strategy, it costs the Canadian economy over \$50 billion annually, which equates to \$250 million on Prince Edward Island every year. This is budget day. \$250 million it costs the economy, and that's, of course, beyond the human costs of mental health.

The minister recently declared, with great fanfare, that there will be three new clinics opening in Prince County. He said they provide an opportunity to talk with a professional when they are in crisis – when help is needed right away. However, these clinics are only open for part of one day each week.

A question to the minister: How many new staff members were hired to staff these clinics?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Aylward: Great question.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed that is a good question and it comes to it – once again as we are working towards trying to meet the needs of Islanders when it comes mental illness and issues of that nature. We are trying to provide services that are immediate in that regard. So, yes, we have a number of opportunities and we have opened three different clinics in western PEI that are scheduled – you don't require any appointments. You can walk in and you can get immediate service and then they will refer to where you might have to go from there.

If it's a situation where a crisis exists, you have the services of 811, 911, emergency room doctors family doctors. There's a number of services that people can get immediate attention and –

Mr. Trivers: Please say you'll come back to the answer.

Mr. Henderson: – they will be referred to there to work on the counseling that is required.

Mr. Myers: Afraid to call 911, what kind of advice is that?

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Psychiatry treatment outcomes

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

I have no idea whether new staff are being hired for these clinics after that. Prince Edward Island places a heavy emphasis on psychiatrists as the first point of contact and for ongoing care for many people suffering from mental health problems. That's an extremely expensive way to provide services. Last year, one single psychiatrist billed the Province over \$1 – compared to, for example, psychologists, counselors, social workers, or even group therapy.

Can the minister provide this House with performance outcomes that would support the predominance of psychiatry as the preferred treatment option?

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: One of the things that we deal with when we deal with individuals requiring certain, particular needs, we have, once again, a continuum of care. We have – a lot of our Public Health nurses are trained and cross-trained in mental health issues. We have our psychologists in this province that provide services, we currently have 10 psychiatrists practicing and we've also added a psychiatrist to the emergency room at the QEH.

We're trying to meet all those needs, but it is a continuum of care, so we have nurse practitioners that do provide certain levels of training and, once again, it's about taking the existing resources that we have. But, we do have, once again, more issues that we're going to be dealing with the federal government and the new health accord has allocated money for mental health and we'll be taking those investments and investing them soon into Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

Former Prince Edward Home property

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Could the minister inform the House as to whether the department of health or Health PEI has any future plans for the old Prince Edward Home property?

Mr. Trivers: Heard this one before.

An Hon. Member: That's a good question.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The former PEI home has been a vital part of the health care in this province and it was remained active until March 2015, when the new Provincial Palliative Care Centre opened. There's still some property on the site that is being stored there. Once the building is declared surplus, my department has to set a process in place, which includes consultation with First Nations, discussions with other levels of government and consideration of the public interest in this property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, it's my understanding that departments and agencies must declare any property surplus and convey the property to the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy before that department can dispose of the property or determine an alternate use. In the case of the old PE Home, this has not yet occurred.

Could the member inform the House whether the department of health or Health PEI are actively considering the status of the old Prince Edward Home with the view of conveying it to the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Trivers: No plan.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated, Health PEI does have some property still at the PE Home building. However, we have been having discussions with Health PEI and they have indicated to us that they no longer have any interest in retaining that building. Once the documents are in place, we can begin that process of consultation and move forward towards a decision about this property.

We do want to make sure; we know there's a great interest in this property, that all options are considered with the best public interest in mind.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thank you, minister.

Minister, it's two years since the old Prince Edward Home was vacated, and time is beginning to drag on. Minister: Will you commit to communicating with officials in the department of health and Health PEI, that the consideration of the status of the old Prince Edward Home property be given high priority?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have been in constant communication with Health PEI, with the other departments across our government, as to any interest in that building. The property has not been formally declared process. That is an EC memo that has to go through government, but we have also been having discussions with the City of Charlottetown and we recognize, again, this is a great interest in this property and we'll work with the city and all interested parties to come up with the best solution for the use of that property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Rezoning of schools

Mr. Dumville: Many schools will be impacted by rezoning. One example, which is largely talked about, is Stone Park and Birchwood. Minister: How many schools will be impacted by rezoning?

An Hon. Member: That's a good question.

Mr. LaVie: Who wrote that question?

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

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

Good question. We will see 12 schools impacted. The reality of the situation – a number of months ago we identified that over 10% of the population of our students were out of zone. What we're seeing through the very well presented and considered recommendations for rezoning is we'll see 12 schools that will be better utilized to strengthen school cultures.

If you look at – Donagh capacity will increase from 50% to 86%. Stone Park capacity will decrease from 113% to 84% and Birchwood capacity will increase from 38% to 77%, to create stronger, healthier school cultures in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: How and when will families be informed of which school their child will attend?

Mr. R. Brown: Another great question.

Mr. LaVie: Hope you didn't email that.

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

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

I must remind the Assembly that transitions in the public school system are not new. We transition children from our early years' sector to our kindergarten programs. We transfer our grade six's into the intermediate schools and we transfer our grade 9s into grade 10. Schools in this province are very used to welcoming students and very familiar with appropriate, respectful, compassionate transitions.

Updated zone maps will be on the Public Schools Branch website. There will be communication to the schools and the principals that I have talked to are excited about holding open houses, barbecues and celebrating their new students as they come into the new school cultures.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Teaching positions in upcoming school year

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: With school starting in September, when will teachers know in advance? Will they know in advance a month or two of which schools they will be teaching in?

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

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

Every spring we have a contract with the PEITF and as a government, we respect our obligations and those contracts. Teachers are reassigned every year based on population distribution, which will be no different moving into the next school year.

The current permanent and probationary teachers will be assigned based on their qualifications, suitability and seniority – very well laid out in the PEITF and we'll be

working very closely with the Public Schools Branch.

We're getting excited about the changes. We're getting excited about embracing and creating new school cultures, and I'm excited that our government has committed to all FTE teaching positions for next September and I look forward with hope and optimism that this government will present a very positive budget in the next little bit.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Balancing budget

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures. In 2008, Wes Sheridan told this House, as I have said many times in this House: This government is very dedicated to getting this budget balanced. History proves otherwise. In 2009, Robert Ghiz told this House: We were also able to essentially deliver a balanced budget last year. History proves otherwise.

In 2010, West Sheridan told this House: –

Mr. Myers: 2010.

Mr. Trivers: We will show how we are going to reach that balanced budget as we promised last fall and we'll show how we'll get to zero.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: History proves otherwise.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Myers: Good job.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have been in government for two years in our –

Mr. Myers: 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: We presented a budget in the spring of 2015 that we improved upon with the year's results. We presented a budget in the spring of 2016 that would have been balanced if it weren't for the HST setback and we're going to be presenting –

Mr. Myers: You created (Indistinct) setback.

Premier MacLauchlan: – a budget shortly in the spring of 2017 and I invite the hon. –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) revenue.

Premier MacLauchlan: – members to eat some crow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Caw, caw.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You can't balance a budget. You (Indistinct) revenue.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) last eight months.

Speaker: Okay, members –

An Hon. Member: Broken promises (Indistinct)

Speaker: Members, let's have some order. The Member from Rustico-Emerald does have the floor, so go ahead, member.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I think I'm going to go for some Burger Love instead.

This tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures. In 2011, Wes Sheridan told the House in 2011: As we move forward, we remain committed to achieving a balanced budget in 2014.

Mr. Myers: Oh.

Mr. Trivers: History proves otherwise.

In 2011, Robert Ghiz told the House: By 2014 we'll be in a balanced budget situation. History proves otherwise. In 2013, Robert Ghiz told the House again: We're on a plan to make sure we get our budget balanced by 2015-2016.

Mr. Myers: Oh, no.

Mr. Trivers: History proves otherwise.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired, tired government?

Mr. Aylward: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I see the hon. member there turning his pages and turning his pages. I hope he's going to keep turning them and tell them about the good news that we delivered to Islanders in 2016 and 2017 –

Mr. Myers: Which was what?

Premier MacLauchlan: – and in the coming fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Ignore the electorate.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker –

Speaker: Order, order!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) the good news yet?

Speaker: Hon. members, the Member from Rustico-Emerald does have the floor. Give him a chance to ask his next question.

Broken promises

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I keep turning pages because there are so many broken promises here –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: – this tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures.

In 2014, Wes Sheridan, told the House: Next year, we will present a balanced budget. History proves otherwise. In 2014, Wes Sheridan, told the House again: We are continuing to implement our plan to achieve a balanced budget by 2016. History proves otherwise. Once again, in 2014, this government issued a press release saying, a balanced budget was on the way. History proves otherwise.

In April, 2015, this Premier was serving as finance minister and publicly pushed out, yet again, a government balanced budget promise to 2016-2017.

Premier: Why does the Liberal party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, while I was finance minister, and in the two subsequent budgets, soon to get the subsequent one for when the current minister serves as finance minister.

We have made promises and we've improved on them –

Leader of the Opposition: You haven't kept them.

Premier MacLauchlan: – we've improved on them. That's what we're going to continue doing, is delivering good fiscal management –

Mr. LaVie: Eighteen percent shows it.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and delivering benefits to Prince Edward Islanders.

An Hon. Member: I don't believe you're doing it right, at all.

Mr. Myers: Least popular Premier ever in this province. No, Catherine Callbeck was just (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Catherine Callbeck.

Speaker: Hon. members.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures.

In the first session after the election in 2015, the current finance minister told the House: We will remain as much as possible on balance to move toward a balanced budget in 2016-2017. History proves otherwise.

In July, 2015, this Premier told the House: We would, through 2015-2016, on into 2016-2017, arrive at a balanced budget. History proves otherwise.

Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the recycled budget talking points of this, oh so tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member must have turned one page too soon. Because the balanced budget that we promised is in 2017-2018, and we haven't yet heard about that, but –

Mr. Myers: You have no credibility though, (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – I invite the hon. members to stay tuned about that –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) your credibility is gone.

Premier MacLauchlan: We brought in a Budget for 2016-2017, and as I've said, it would have balanced, but for that \$30 million setback, and we dealt that. We have addressed it, and Islanders have every reason to have total confidence in the fiscal management of this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: You're on the ropes.

An Hon. Member: He is on the ropes (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, hon. members.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, final question.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, Islanders are losing confidence very quickly –

Mr. Myers: Are they ever.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: Polls show (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – almost doesn't count. This tired Liberal government has a long history of budgetary failures.

Mr. Myers: So tired.

Mr. Trivers: In February, 2016, the Liberal party issued a propaganda piece under the Premier, which claimed: Government is on track toward a balanced budget. History proves otherwise.

Last spring, the Premier was at pains time and time again to tell this House he had achieved a virtual balance, he just referred to it –

Mr. Myers: A virtual balance.

Mr. Trivers: Whatever that means.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, Catherine Callbeck style.

Mr. Trivers: Premier: Why does the Liberal Party keep expecting Islanders to believe the

recycled budget talking points of this tired government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the opposition keeps talking about Islanders and confidence. Maybe if they read some of those polls they would have seen –

Mr. Myers: He believes the polls.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that the consumer confidence in Prince Edward Island, among Prince Edward Islanders, is at 1.06.7 –

An Hon. Member: Unheard of (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – that compares with Atlantic average –

An Hon. Member: You guys will be looking for a new leader soon.

Speaker: Members, I think we're lacking a little respect here, now.

Finish up, Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, consumer confidence leading the Atlantic region by a wide margin –

Mr. Myers: Ask Catherine Callbeck for advice.

Premier MacLauchlan: – confidence in the strategic direction of this province – highest that's in history.

When the opposition (Indistinct) asking about –

Mr. Myers: We know you're leaving before the election.

Premier MacLauchlan: – is our fiscal management. Islanders have very good reason to be confident –

Mr. Myers: Never be re-elected.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in the fiscal –

Mr. Myers: Never be re-elected.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and economic leadership of this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) don't like you and you know it and your party knows it. I see it on their faces every day.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) the leader.

Mr. Myers: Yeah. Come on, Richard, let's go talk.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Battle of Vimy Ridge 100th Anniversary

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, my statement is about Vimy Ridge, so I'll cover some of the ground that was addressed by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Of course, I rise to recognize in this Assembly, and throughout our province that this weekend is the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the commencement of that battle on April 9th.

I may say that I've covered some of the ground personally. I was at Vimy Ridge on the 90th anniversary and in some of those trenches, and on that hallowed ground. In fact, it's considered to be Canadian territory by the French government; a beautiful monument and a place that we can all honour.

Although this seminal First World War battle took place a century ago, the legacy of the Canadians who fought there lives on. This was a first time that all four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together as one unit.

It has been said, with good reason, that Canada came of age as a country on those harsh April days in 1917. Out of approximately 100,000 Canadians who served at Vimy Ridge, there were more than 10,600 casualties, including nearly 3,600, which were fatalities.

I encourage all Islanders to remember the sacrifices and achievements made by those who served and who continue to serve our country.

This Sunday at 2:00 p.m., four Army Cadet units on Prince Edward Island will parade in commemoration of the Canadian Corps successful assault on Vimy Ridge. This parade is in partnership with Veterans Affairs Canada to acknowledge our veterans contribution and sacrifice for securing democracy that we have today.

The parade will be held at the provincial Cenotaph, and afterwards there will be a reception at the Queen Charlotte Armory and all are welcome to attend.

I'd also like to recognize the nearly 90 Island students, who are currently in France, and will participate in the Canadian National Vimy Memorial Cemetery, led by Three Oaks High School's social studies teacher, David Chisholm, and to recognize that the Canadian delegation will be led by our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

The group will return on April 11th, and on behalf of the province, I wish these students safe travels and a memorable experience that will last a lifetime.

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 don't know what the protocol is for this, but actually, I'd like to ask that we exercise a minute of silence and all hon. members of the House join us and we exercise one minute of silence in thought of Vimy Ridge.

Speaker: Of course, we can do that.

[There was a moment of silence]

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

As a trumpet player, I get to play every year at Remembrance Day services and that silence that falls between the two calls that you make is always the most poignant moment of the year for me.

With this 100th anniversary coming up and the guns of war, of course, blazing once more over Syria, it's time that we all reflect on the horrors of war and of how victories and losses are defined by, as in this case, Vimy Ridge, geographic landmarks; Vimy Ridge, Beaumont-Hamel; Ypres. A few metres of muddy ground gained or lost at the cost of tens of thousands of lives.

We have to continue to ask: What's it all for? Why? Because the anguish of our combative exploits is always enduring and it's always unbearable.

None of us, of course, could know how the world would look like if things had ended differently in the Great War. We must always pay homage and give thanks to those, who made the ultimate sacrifice. Also, we must always never give up on seeking more peaceful, less destructive ways to resolve our differences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development for Recognition of Guests.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker for your indulgence.

I'd like to – it's not very often I get a constituent from up in the Alberton district to attend the House here. I'd like to welcome Louise Wilson to the public gallery, welcome Louise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the activities of the PEI Advisory Council of the Status of Women for the period ending March 1st, 2016 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Family and Human Services, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

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

While the Clerk is reading it, I would ask everybody to stand, please.

Clerk: Hon. Mr. Speaker; His Honour, the Honourable H. Frank Lewis, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Prince Edward Island, hereby transmits the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure required to carry on the public services of the Province for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2018, and also until the passage of the estimates for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2019.

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

By Command,

signed

Paul T. Ledwell,
Clerk of the Executive Council and
Secretary to Cabinet

Also signed by
His Honour the Honourable Lieutenant
Governor, H. Frank Lewis.

Speaker: Thank you, Clerk.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I present herewith the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Province of Prince Edward Island for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that said estimates be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that consideration of the Estimates in Committee of the Whole House be added to the Orders of the Day until such time as they are despatched.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that Motion No. 90 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:
Motion No. 90

The hon. Minister of Finance moves,
seconded by the hon. Premier, the following
Motion:

BE IT RESOLVED that this House gives its support and approval to the overall budgetary policy of the Government.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance

Mr. Roach: Could I have the podium?

Speaker: Yes, hon. Minister of Finance, you may have the podium.

Mr. Myers: Is it a long speech?

Ms. Biggar: We'll be out of here by 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Roach: Get a glass of water.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: The Budget Address

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a fiscal plan that effectively responds to our Province's social, economic and fiscal challenges.

Our plan is precise - and it confirms our commitment to families, health care, education and enhanced employment opportunities for Islanders.

Furthermore, our Budgetary roadmap reflects Prince Edward Island's growing economic strength and diversity.

I am proud to announce that this year's Budget will be balanced. In fact -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: - in projecting a surplus of \$600,000 for 2017-2018.

Mr. R. Brown: Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, the return to balance has been a steadfast goal of the Premier and our Government since we first took office - and is built around a deep respect for the resources of Island taxpayers.

At the same time, the Premier is consistent in his desire to invest in areas that are important to Islanders.

For that reason, our plan for the current year will include:

The largest increase in health care spending in nearly a decade;

An additional \$5.4 million dedicated to the education of Island children and youth;

An increase of \$6.6 million in support of families and Islanders in need; and

A reduction in provincial income tax that will help out 85,000 Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: In fact, there are no new tax increases that will be part of our 2017-2018 Budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Additionally, we are investing in our future through new investments in resources for skills training, post-secondary education and programs designed to expand both traditional and emerging economic sectors.

Notre plan pour 2017-2018 est responsable, réceptive et fiable. Il s'agit d'un cadre d'action de développement social et économique, faisant preuve de discipline financière.

Our plan for 2017-2018 is responsible, receptive and reliable. It is a framework for social and economic development, showing financial discipline.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Our plan for 2017-2018 is responsible, responsive and reliable. It is a blueprint for social and economic expansion, and it does so in a manner that is fiscally disciplined.

The Island Economy – Growing and Diverse

Over the past year, I have been encouraged by the hundreds of conversations I have had with Islanders in all parts of the province.

Mr. LaVie: Where was that? In your office? You weren't outside of your office.

Mr. Trivers: Thursday afternoons in the pre-budget consultations, 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Roach: All of us should be pleased with our growth in gross domestic product last year, which is pegged by private sector economists at 1.4%. Over the next two years, we will stay on pace with that growth – with GDP increases of 1.3 and 1.2% respectively, over 2017 and 2018.

Several highlights across our province include:

Improved lobster prices increased the landed value to \$193 million, an increase of 28.5% compared to the previous year.

Potato yields increased due to ideal growing conditions.

Mr. Myers: You're taking credit for that?

Mr. Roach: The good weather also helped boost tourism, where over-night stays increased 10.2% to reach a record high.

Mr. Myers: The rainmaker (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: The value of manufacturing shipments increased 5.8% in 2016 to reach \$1.7 billion, also a new time high.

These economic results are growing the economy in all parts of Prince Edward Island, rural and urban, and helping to drive income growth for Island workers.

Average weekly wages grew 2.3% in 2016, which was the second fastest growth among all provinces in Canada. This is very important. When people and businesses earn more income, we see increases in consumer spending and investment.

As a result, the value of retail sales increased 6.6% to lead the provinces, all provinces in 2016.

Additionally, the value of new motor vehicle sales increased almost 17% at 16.9%.

Non-residential investment in construction increased 13.9%, the fastest amongst the provinces.

Residential investment in new homes and renovations saw an expansion of 5.2% in 2016.

A new contributor to our growing success lies in the realm of intergovernmental cooperation.

Last year, the Premier and his regional counterparts reached an historic economic development agreement - the Atlantic Growth Strategy – with the Federal Government.

A key piece of this strategy is how to grow the population through immigration. As of July 1st, 2016, Prince Edward Island's population was estimated to be 148,649 people, which is an increase of 1.3% over 2015. It is a source of pride that this is the fastest growth in the Atlantic region.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Working With Our Federal Partner

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard in collaboration with our federal government partner in the interests of Prince Edward Island. During the year federal/provincial agreements were reached to:

Strengthen the Canada Pension Plan that, when fully mature, will see retirement benefits rise by up to 50%;

An increased federal funding for home care and mental health, which over the next decade will see an additional \$45.1 million invested in those important areas;

And extensive co-investments in important public infrastructure valued at over \$140 million over the next two years in capital and operational expenditures.

Government is also actively involved in negotiations with Ottawa to ensure the Island receives its share of the \$11.2 billion housing program announced in the recent federal budget.

The key priorities for this funding are: Affordable housing; establishing a National Housing Fund; making surplus federal lands available at low cost; and extending the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

In our Government, we are pleased to have a new partner with Ottawa. In many ways, our policy priorities align with one another. For that reason, I am confident that a new level of cooperation between our governments will result in further economic diversity and enhancements to social programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) shepherd (Indistinct)

A Renewed Commitment to Health Care

Mr. Roach: In 2017-2018, the budget for Health PEI will go up by 5.8% to \$640 million.

Mr. Myers: Thanks to the shepherd.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: This is the largest increase in the health budget since 2009-2010.

This investment of \$35 million in health care reflects government's understanding that providing high-quality and accessible health care is a fundamental obligation.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) fix the problems.

Mr. Roach: In part, the increased investment in this area is in support of physician services and hospital care.

And in keeping with the changing health needs of Islanders, the Budget includes:

Funding for a geriatrician to support the Seniors' Strategy;

Additional emergency room doctors to reduce wait times;

And neurology services to support those with nervous system disorders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: This will reduce services required out-of-province, as well as wait times.

As a result of the Federal/Provincial Health Accord, new expenditures of \$1.2 million in 2017-2018 will be budgeted for mental health and addictions, as well as home care.

These investments will result in better mental health care for children and youth, reduce the number of patients in the hospital, and assist seniors to enjoy an independent quality of life in their own homes and in their own communities.

This Budget will provide funding to implement a Universal Influenza Immunization Program at a cost of \$600,000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: This will expand the immunization program which is currently for children, to include adults. The universal program will help to reduce the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases.

The Women's Wellness Centre began operations in January with further services to be added over the next few months. Expenditures of over \$1 million are budgeted for 2017-2018 for this program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: This program will be offered through hospital and community-based services.

In addition, I am pleased that \$5 million has been allocated over the next two years in the Capital Budget to renovate the Prince County Hospital. This work will accommodate the Women's Wellness Centre, and expand Ambulatory Care.

There is new funding of \$443,000 to support the Cancer Strategy. This funding will be invested in support of:

A Palliative Day Care Program and an Out-patient Clinic;

Prevention and health promotion initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of cancer;

And improving access to screening and early detection, to allow diagnosis of cancer on a timely basis.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Health PEI continues to improve the Provincial Renal Program with an additional \$370,000 to finish repatriating the dialysis program from Nova Scotia. Islanders can now access dialysis treatment in Alberton, Summerside, Charlottetown and Souris.

Another important initiative in our plan for health care renewal will be to increase the comfort allowance for subsidized residents in nursing homes and long-term care facilities by \$20 per month.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: This will result in additional expenditures of over \$200,000 in the coming fiscal year.

Mr. LaVie: Putting you to sleep now, putting him to sleep.

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Ms. Biggar: You're (Indistinct) so then –

Educating Our Children and Youth

Mr. Roach: In keeping with government's commitment to help Island youth excel in a changing world our educational plan will see an increase of \$5.4 million in 2017-2018.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: As a result, the total budget of the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture will be \$256 million – an all-time high.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: An important component of this investment is student well-being.

Our plan will expand and enhance well-being supports in schools through an additional investment of \$400,000. This investment will help to ensure better access to high-quality services. There will be five key areas of focus:

Establishing core service delivery in schools, beginning in the Westisle and Montague Families of Schools, so that programs are more equitably provided;

Improving coordination of community services to make them easier for families to access;

Addressing identified service gaps in rural communities;

Investing in prevention and early intervention; and

Increasing collaboration between schools and agencies that serve children and families.

Furthermore, new resources will be used to fund:

A mental health therapist to provide assessment, therapy and clinical coordination;

School nurses to focus on health promotion and education;

Youth workers to help with issues related to behavior, social skills and alcohol and drug awareness; and,

A school authority counseling consultant to provide case planning support for students.

Government will also continue to respond effectively to changing dynamics in Island classrooms. For example, the education system continues to see increased demand as a result of children with special needs entering the classrooms.

Additional educational assistants were required in 2016, and our plan will increase spending by \$600,000 in this critical area. This is in keeping with government's record over the past two years. Twenty-three educational assistants have been added to our schools.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Due to a growing number of new Canadians, schools were also challenged in the past year to provide English and French as additional language

resources. This required an additional 10 new educators, who help our youngest newcomers to become successful learners in the classrooms.

Our education plan will also increase Early-Years Autism grants by \$100,000. This will provide additional early-years educational support staff for children with autism, who are under five year of age.

The Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture has also added two occupational therapists, one in the east and one in the west as an expansion of the current pilot program offered in the central region of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Supporting Island Families

Mr. Roach: The Family and Human Services budget has been increased this year by \$6.6 million, to total of over \$103 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: These increases reflect government's commitment to the Disability Support Program, increased cost for social assistance benefits, and an increased investment in children needing support from the Child and Family Services Division.

This Budget will also include increases in funding of \$75,000 to support independent case reviews and staff training as recommended by the *Child Protection Act* Review.

As part of the five-year commitment with a total cost of \$2.8 million, food rates will increase for social assistance clients. The comfort allowance will be increased by \$20 per month for subsidized residents in community care facilities, as well as other clients of the department currently receiving the allowance, with an annual cost of \$300,000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Additional funding for the Child Care Subsidy Program will result in more Island families being eligible.

Support for Habitat for Humanity will be maintained at \$50,000 to assist with further housing for low-income homeowners. Further, government will continue to fund shelter renovations to support victims of family violence.

The Department of Family and Human Services will continue to partner with Workforce and Advanced Learning and other departments, as well as organizations outside government, to support social assistant clients in their efforts to enter the workforce.

The Department of Justice and Public Safety has added a parenting coordinator which is an innovative child-centric program that establishes post-court order supports to mediate or arbitrate disputes. This is a process that will decrease the costs to the system and families through consensus building, outside the court process.

This Budget also includes funding for a children's lawyer to provide legal services to protect the needs and interests of children.

This Budget continues the commitment of over \$5 million in grants to support Islanders wishing to stay in their homes through programs such as Seniors' Home Repair and Seniors' Safe at Home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: As Ronnie MacKinley would say: Great clappers (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) special warrants (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: Clap on, clap off.

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, let's –

Jobs and Youth

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, a well-trained and adaptable workforce is a pillar of growth for our provincial economy and the backbone of many successful Prince Edward Island businesses. Offering young Islanders imaginative new programs to help them excel in a changing world is a central priority of this government.

For example, I would like to point to the Graduate Mentorship Program. Last year, we invested \$2 million in this initiative – that tripled over previous funding. We will maintain our commitment to this highly successful program this coming year.

This program has two goals: Helping young Islanders get their first experiences in jobs relevant to their training, and assisting the private sector with identification of new talent.

Additionally, the Graduate Mentorship Program is specifically designed to encourage educated young Islanders to stay here at home and take advantage of all the opportunities this Island has to offer.

And I am pleased to say that last year, the program expanded to nearly 300 recent graduates. In the coming year, we are confident of further successes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Similarly, our Supporting Youth in Careers program expanded significantly in 2016 and provided 85 young Islanders with employment experience in key sectors like aerospace, information technology and construction. I am pleased to announce the program will be expanded this year to include the renewable energy sector.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Another venture paying dividends, is the Team Seafood Initiative, which helped provide educational support to young Islanders working in the fisheries sector. This year, we will continue to work with Ottawa on this program, and support up to 250 students to gain experience in the seafood sector while earning funds for their future studies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: In addition, government will support similar pilot projects in the trucking and construction sectors to expand opportunities for students to learn about careers in these sectors and gain works experience.

Our efforts over the last two years are paying off. From 2014 to 2016, the unemployment rate among those aged 20-24 has dropped by more than 2%.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: This was partly due to government's continuing efforts to provide training supports needed by youth to gain employment in their chosen fields. In more general terms, government continues its partnership with Ottawa – to develop a new generation of agreements that will assist Islanders to get the training they need to find and keep meaningful employment and continue development of our workforce that is one of our province's most important competitive advantages.

We are also encouraged by recent changes to the Employment Insurance Program, which permit Islanders to maintain receipt of benefits while getting the training they need to secure good, well-paying jobs.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Mr. Roach: In keeping with government's commitment to workers, our new Population Action Plan is designed to recruit, repatriate, and retain a skilled and talented workforce.

WorkPEI will play a key role for former and new Islanders, students, and mature workers trying to re-enter the labour force, as well as employers looking to hire talented job seekers. A new community engagement officer has been contracted to build the WorkPEI brand and to improve use registration and retention through WorkPEI. There are currently close to 450 employers and nearly 2,000 job seekers registered through WorkPEI - which testifies to the growing public interest in this initiative.

Furthermore, government is working to develop a more-sophisticated understanding of our labour market. To that end, a Labour Market Research Unit has been established to examine the wide range of challenges facing our work force - and the economic demands of our province.

Another source of advice to government is the Youth Futures Council, which has been invaluable in helping to identify priority

areas for action. In particular, the council identified issues of workforce attachment and educational opportunities as prime areas for further work.

Last fall, YDAY brought together more than 170 young Islanders and community leaders for wide-ranging discussions. This active dialogue will continue this year – leading up to YDAY 2017.

In terms of direct support, government has increased the budget for student aid to \$7.2 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Elements of this commitment include:

An increase to the weekly maximum student loan;

Extension of the grace period for student loan repayment to one year – which offers young Islanders more time to attach themselves to the workforce;

Introduction of the Severe Permanent Disability Benefit – which removes the amount owing for those with a severe and permanent disability, and;

Increased supports to students for community engagement and research.

And, of course, government continues to be proud of the George Coles Bursary and Graduate Scholarship, the Island Skills Award and Island Student Award – which all provide more-affordable education to Islanders.

Government's commitment to young Islanders is a source of great pride. I am very happy to report that over the last five years, \$24 million has been distributed to our young people through 17,000 provincial grants and bursaries.

Further, in keeping with our commitment to post-secondary education, operating grants for the University of Prince Edward Island, Holland College and Collège de L'Île will increase by 1% this year.

And through the Strategic Investment Fund, a combined federal and provincial

investment of over \$20 million will be made at the University and Holland College over several years. This investment will improve the research capability and energy efficiency at the institutions, while improving the learning environment for students.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Growing Our Primary Industries

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, our primary industries of agriculture and fisheries remain the foundation of our province. In fact, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture contributed approximately \$700 million in economic activity to our province last year.

Our government celebrates the contribution of these sectors and the hardworking Islanders that make them so successful. And we will continue to support the growth and development of our primary industries.

In particular, I would like to point to the success of Growing Forward Two, a five-year federal and provincial cost-shared agreement worth \$163 million to our province. As a result of that program, the Island's agriculture industry has been equipped with the tools and resources needed to maintain a tradition of innovation.

While we are in the final year of the agreement, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is working with the federal government on the next policy framework for agriculture.

Government is also pleased with the recent announcement of a new Atlantic Fisheries Fund, which will help our fisheries and aquaculture sectors meet growing demand for our world-class products.

While the details on this \$325 million investment across Atlantic Canada are still being finalized, our province is ready to work with the federal government to identify, prioritize and cost-share projects that will improve seafood quality and sustainability. In turn, these efforts will help the sector grow – and make our communities more prosperous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: There is little doubt that our reputation for high-quality products will serve us extremely well in the years ahead.

Generally-accepted forecasts suggest that there will be a massive demand for food over the next two decades - with an estimated 3 billion new middle-class consumers in the world. Our growing reputation as Canada's Food Island means that we are well-positioned for growth as a trusted, global leader in safe, nutritious and sustainable food.

One of the ways in which we support the agriculture industry is through farm business risk management programs. Over the past two years, crop insurance premiums have been reduced by 24%. I am pleased to say that this year crop insurance premiums will drop another 10%.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: At the same time, we will be increasing the unit price for potatoes by 50 cents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: In aquaculture, we have seen increased demands for oysters. This demand has allowed for the establishment of a new hatchery owned and operated by Lennox Island First Nations. The province has helped support the operation through the provision of equipment required to produce juvenile oysters and other shellfish species. The province continues to work with Abegweit First Nations to encourage economic development opportunities in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture.

Prince Edward Island's finfish sector is also expanding with a new salmon hatchery under construction in Cardigan, plans for a new salmon facility in Rollo Bay and a halibut hatchery under construction in Victoria. As Prince Edward Island's finfish industry is export-focused, a provincial veterinarian position will enable the industry's continued growth by ensuring Island companies meet the fish health requirements to transfer their product.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is developing a Food Security and Food Education Program. The food security

component will allow community organizations to work on food security projects that will benefit all Islanders. The food education component will build awareness about where our food comes from and how it is produced, and increase understanding of the nutritional values of foods. The province, through a partnership between Agriculture and Fisheries; Health and Wellness; and Education, Early Learning and Culture, will launch a pilot project in schools to increase access to local food products.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great program.

Mr. Myers: Is that what you guys were growling about Donald Trump?

Fueling Entrepreneurship

Mr. Roach: Entrepreneurs are the life-blood of the economy –

Mr. Myers: Exact same thing.

Mr. Roach: – of our Mighty Island. Their hard work, creativity and perseverance bring new ideas and new products to the fore. They help shape the current and future directions of our economy.

But even the best entrepreneurs, with the best products, often need support to move from an idea, to a product or service, to market.

With this in mind, the province, through Island Investment Development Inc., will make a matching investment of up to \$2M dollars toward a new Angel / Seed Investment Fund being established by Island Capital Partners.

This new fund will invest in Island start-ups developing innovative products and services, that have significant growth opportunities in export markets.

The province's investment will leverage private sector capital and expertise that is critical for those new and expanding businesses to grow to their full potential.

Small and medium enterprises are the backbone of our economy. These

investments will complement government's initiative to advance our entrepreneurship ecosystem along with the creation of our micro-loan program and the Start-Up Zone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Advancing Rural and Regional Development

Mr. Roach: In order for Prince Edward Island to thrive and for Islanders to benefit, all regions of our province must be strong and work together to seize potential opportunities for growth.

The Department of Rural and Regional Development was created to place increased focus and commitment on government's collaboration with communities to better build growth opportunities in all parts of our province.

To help support the work of the Minister of Rural and Regional Development, four economic advisory councils will be established across the province. The councils will guide, develop and help drive economic growth, and provide advice to government.

The four economic advisory councils will allow for the diversity, opportunities and challenges of communities to be recognized and prioritized. At the same time, there is an interconnection between our communities, that can be strengthened and leveraged, to ensure prosperity for all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Supporting Communities

Mr. Roach: In 2017-2018 Municipal Grants will be increased by \$1.1 million. The province, in consultation with the various municipalities, is in the process of developing a new tax credit system for 2018- 2019. In addition, \$2.5 million has been allocated for a Provincial Infrastructure Fund which will be delivered by the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

The department will also be investing in physical infrastructure for economy and

community development. This Budget includes over \$43 million for Infrastructure spending, \$28 million of which is allocated to Clean Water Wastewater –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: These fund projects are going to be in communities across the Island. In addition, municipalities will spend almost \$10 million on these projects. Over the next three years, provincial, federal and municipal contributions to water and wastewater projects will cost approximately \$90 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Clean Energy and Climate Change

Mr. Roach: Our recently-released Energy Strategy provides a 10-year roadmap that will allow us to develop better energy solutions for Prince Edward Island, including more emphasis on renewable options. The Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy continues to emphasize the importance of energy efficiency in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.

The mandate and structure of efficiencyPEI is being updated to create a one-stop shop for Islanders looking to access energy-efficient programs and resources.

To this end, efficiencyPEI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Efficiency ONE in Nova Scotia which will allow for more-effective design of a robust suite of energy efficient programs that will reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels, reduce energy consumption and keep money in the pockets of Islanders.

Our climate is changing; it is the reality that we face. In December 2016, our Government joined the Pan- Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. This was an historic step for humanity, but it is not our first step. Prince Edward Island has always been a leader in addressing climate issues, with a focus on utilizing renewable energy and building a smart economy. Our wind regime is world class. Our bio-mass initiatives have been innovative, building energy while reducing waste. Islanders have transitioned in large

numbers to heating their homes with electricity. These efforts have helped reduce our dependence on carbon emitting fuels. More steps are required to meet our targets to reduce carbon emissions by 2030.

Last month Communities, Land and Environment released the Prince Edward Island Recommendations for the Development of a 2016 Climate Change Mitigation Strategy. This document, along with the PEI Energy Strategy, is currently being used to determine the mitigation efforts the province will focus on in a climate change action plan that will be released in the fall of this year.

Our climate change action plan will include a pricing mechanism on carbon pollution, consistent with Federal requirements, while recognizing PEI's economic and social circumstances. We will work with our regional neighbours to ensure an approach that is aligned. The pricing mechanism will be developed in the coming months and introduced beyond this current fiscal year.

Transparency and Modernizing Government

Over the last two years, our government has made considerable progress to ensure the public receives more, high-quality information.

To this end, we have made information available through open data on the government website; improved the public disclosure of travel and hospitality expenses, which is now required of ministers and senior officials –

Mr. LaVie: He was falling asleep.

Mr. Roach: – provided an ethics and integrity commissioner; and implemented a whistleblower policy.

The Budget will allocate almost \$600,000 to improving records information processes across government. This is in addition to the \$390,000 which was included in the Capital Budget to improve the electronic storage of records.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: The funding will support the three-year strategy to ensure records are properly retained and stored, including new records information staff in the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Adjusting Tax Measures

The Budget will also include the following revenue measures. During pre-budget consultations, this government has heard the call to increase the Basic Personal Amount. Last year, the amount was raised 3.8 per cent to \$8,000. This Budget proposes to raise the Basic Personal Amount by a further two per cent for the 2017 taxation year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: The spouse and equivalent-to-spouse amounts –

Mr. LaVie: Put it in one pocket; take it out of the other pocket.

Mr. Myers: Trained seals.

Mr. Roach: The spouse and equivalent-to-spouse amounts will also be adjusted by two per cent. It is anticipated that these measures will reduce provincial income tax by a total of \$1.5 million to approximately 85,000 Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, the federal government and many provinces produce information on their tax credits that is useful in determining the cost and effectiveness of these measures.

During this year, I am requesting my department officials to prepare a report on the existing income tax credits. This information will help guide a more thorough review of provincial tax credits in future budgets.

In the mean time, Mr. Speaker –

Mr. LaVie: Kids are going to pay.

Mr. Roach: I will also propose a technical amendment to the *Income Tax Act* during this session that will preserve the existing

provincial education amounts for the 2017 taxation year. This amendment is necessary due to the elimination of the Federal amounts effective this year.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I am proud of this Budget.

As a government, our plan is simple to articulate.

We believe it is vital to make appropriate social and economic investments.

And we believe it is equally important to be fiscally disciplined and respectful of taxpayers' resources.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) funding in place.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I believe that our plan for 2017-18 achieves the goals of social and economic progress, while controlling our spending.

As a result, our plan will move Prince Edward Island forward with increased investments in health care, education and supports for families and Islanders in need.

We achieved this goal while:

Reducing provincial income taxes for 85,000 Islanders, and;

Keeping a balanced Budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, our Island is increasingly diverse, both in terms of its economic activities and the people who call our home their province. As we move forward, that new diversity will build new confidence and we believe our 2017 plan will help move our Island forward and help to ensure future prosperity for all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: Here comes the truth.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you very much.

Ms. Compton: Great. Great news for Islanders. Great news for Islanders.

We try to be positive on this side of the floor – we try.

An Hon. Member: Not very hard, but you try.

Ms. Compton: We're pushed all the time to be told to be positive, but I turn the first page of the Budget and I see an increase of tax revenues of \$57 million.

Mr. Myers: Who pays for that? Who's paying for that?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Compton: Where are they coming from?

Mr. LaVie: Your kids are paying for that.

Ms. Compton: I keep looking in the Budget – did we hold our spending? No. It's a tax and spend Budget – very disappointing.

What a tale Islanders have been told by this finance minister and this 10 year old, tired Liberal government. Yet again, 10 years and 10 deficits, but the 11th time is the charm. We promise, again, but this time we really mean it. How can we believe anything in this document? Anything?

Mr. LaVie: Now you're paying attention.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Compton: Question period today – broken promise after broken promise. How do we believe anything in that book?

We just concluded an eight-month saga around the schools review. Now it appears this government is launching into another political game. The Liberal government has, time and again, made promises on budget day that never pan out when the books are finally reconciled.

Mr. LaVie: 18% – election coming.

An Hon. Member: I don't believe it.

Ms. Compton: This Liberal government intends to find an extra \$80 million in revenues in one year when we're down over 4,000 jobs.

Mr. LaVie: You never said that.

Ms. Compton: A \$57 million hike in provincial tax revenue, but the minister makes sure to promise in his speech that no taxes would be raised.

Mr. Aylward: That's right (Indistinct).

Ms. Compton: Islanders are left scratching their heads.

Mr. Aylward: Government's going to (Indistinct).

Ms. Compton: Where is that \$57 million going to come from?

Mr. LaVie: Chase the Ace.

An Hon. Member: Islanders.

Mr. Myers: Chase the Ace.

Ms. Compton: Where is this money coming from?

Mr. Myers: Chase the Ace?

Ms. Compton: – and from whose pockets? It's coming from the tax-payers of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Myers: The Premier's Chase the Ace.

Ms. Compton: – and it's rather rich of this minister to claim anything else.

Mr. Myers: Should be the joker.

Ms. Compton: A true balanced budget shows we are living within our means – not tax and spend.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Tax and spend Liberals.

Ms. Compton: Last year, this minister missed his revenue target by \$17 million. And I might add: Revenues were up this year. Increased lobster prices? Yes. Higher potato yield? Yes, and good weather.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Compton: It did help the economy, but it had nothing to do with you folks across the floor.

Mr. Myers: I guess it didn't.

An Hon. Member: Yes it did.

Ms. Compton: I have right here, from the month of March alone this year, special warrants of over \$24 million.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Ms. Compton: Money that will never been seen on a budget book. Money that your government spent.

Mr. Myers: That's how Liberals operate. Liberal times are tough times.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: Over \$24 million in special warrants in one month.

An Hon. Member: You're way behind.

An Hon. Member: I didn't hear that.

Ms. Compton: It was the Auditor General of PEI this year, in her report, who pointed out that this government has long inflated their revenue projections deliberately. Deliberately –

Mr. Trivers: The AG said that.

Ms. Compton: – by choosing the CRA estimates, rather than the returns – that you also have access to.

Mr. Myers: Not fair? They know it. Look at them. Nobody's chirping now.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Now you're paying attention.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) lawsuits.

Mr. LaVie: You're paying attention now.

Ms. Compton: At the root of this budget, the minister is taking more money out of the pockets of Islanders.

Mr. Myers: Yes.

Ms. Compton: In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to note something that is very important and I will admit, it is an historic moment and this Premier and this finance minister will go down in history as the first government in Island history to tax the people past the \$1 billion mark.

Mr. Myers: Shame on you.

Ms. Compton: Over \$1 billion in provincial own revenue – source revenue from this province. The first –

Mr. Myers: Where's Catherine Callbeck?

Ms. Compton: – time in history of over a billion dollars of tax.

Mr. LaVie: Shame.

Mr. Myers: Bring back Catherine Callbeck.

Ms. Compton: The billion dollar budget.

Mr. Myers: The billion dollar budget.

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Didn't expect anything more.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until April, 11th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Enjoy your weekend.

Ms. Biggar: They can't take it. They've got to go home.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, April 11th, at 2:00 p.m.