

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Third Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker (Watts): Okay, once again we'll take another go at this.

I want to welcome all members back to this, to this the Third Session of the 65th General Assembly.

Members, I certainly look forward to again, working with all of you for a productive and a collegial session of this Legislature, and I'm sure that's what will take place.

I also want to welcome members of the media. I don't know if they're here yet or not, but anyway, we like to have the media in here too. Also, to all the staff of the Legislative Assembly, and for all the background work that they do to make this Parliament function.

So without further ado, the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise and make the following motion: I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the following students be appointed Pages for this Third Session of the 65th General Assembly.

They're making their way in and we'll introduce them by name and by their school, and maybe if you could each kind of do a nod so that we'll associate the name with the face.

Abby Griffin from Morell Regional High School; Berry Genge, Montague Regional High School; Alyx Hodson, Charlottetown Rural High School; Rebecca Proctor, Three Oaks Senior High School; Zach Wilson, Bluefield High School; Dakota Williams, Kinkora Regional High School; Shona Arsenault, Ecole Francois-Buote; Ellen O'Rielly, Colonel Gray High School; Emily Ching, Souris Regional High School; and Emily Maxfield from Westisle Composite High School.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

I, too, would like to – certainly want to welcome all Pages, and I want you to enjoy your tenure here.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to rise to welcome everyone back to this fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly. Colleagues here as members of the House, you, Mr. Speaker, the staff, the Clerk – great to have another sitting with you, Mr. Clerk, and, of course, the Pages who've just been introduced. We look forward to their joining us for this sitting.

There are many who are joining us in the gallery today, and welcome everyone who's here, including some who are here as family of our incoming Pages. Welcome representatives of the media who are with us and recognize the fine work they do in our role here in this Legislature.

I note that throughout our province, including here on the adjacent square for the provincial ceremony, there was an impressive turnout of Islanders on Sunday to mark Remembrance Day across the province.

I note that tomorrow is 'Take Your Kids to Work Day' and I'm sure that will involve a lot of young people across the province, and in fact, I have a group that will be coming in with their parents who are part of the public service and I'll be meeting with them tomorrow morning.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who's thinking about our Island potato farmers, their work that some of them continue to do with a high degree of collaboration and supporting each other to complete the 2018 harvest, after what has been a challenging year from the perspective of the weather.

I may reach beyond the rail to recognize the nomination to the appointment to the Senate of Canada of Chief Brian Francis and the great response that we've heard throughout

Prince Edward Island of the significance of his appointment to the Senate of Canada and to the great work that people anticipate with real confidence that he will do on behalf of Islanders.

Finally, I'm sure I'm not the only one to notice, that our chairs have been refurbished. That may be the first time in a long time, perhaps someone will tell us the first time since the 1840s, but very fine work been done and it's my understanding, done by the talented hands of Prince Edward Island furniture makers and refurbishers, so we can all be thankful for that and thankful to be back here with the chance to sit and enjoy each other's company.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the Legislative Assembly once again and I'd like to welcome everyone back and as the premier said, particularly the staff.

It's also great to see the media here and family members of some of our new Pages – always wonderful to welcome a new group of Pages into the Legislative Assembly.

On November the 11th, I also had the tremendous privilege to attend a spectacular Remembrance Day service in my hometown of Stratford.

It's really heartwarming to see how the attendance grows year after year and we see more younger people coming out and families coming out to observe this very, very important day.

I'd just like to acknowledge Islanders for how respectful that they are of our history and our past and for those men and women who fought so bravely for our freedom and for our democracy.

As the Premier said, our Island potato farmers have had a very hard harvest in 2018. They had a particular hard growing season this summer as well with the lack of

rain and unfortunately, when the rain did decide to come, it came at harvest time which has been very difficult.

I'm sure many of us have spoken to family members or friends that are involved in the industry and we've heard and we've seen the deplorable conditions that they're having to try to get the remaining crop in. It's not only hard on the families because the harvesters are certainly away from home for extended periods of time and in some cases, over night, when they need to be in the fields to try to get their crop in.

It is heartwarming, however, to see communities come together and to support one another and actually, to see people that aren't even involved in the industry, to come out and to help those that are actively employed and working in the industry.

Again, I thank Islanders for their caring and their support.

Of course, again as the Premier said, it was wonderful to see Chief Brian Francis named to the Senate of Canada – a wonderful appointment for Brian. I don't think there's an Islander anywhere that would dispute his qualifications and his dedication to the betterment of PEI and I wish him all the best as he represents us in the Senate.

Just in closing I also want to thank the Islanders, particularly over this past summer and into the fall, for the consolations that not only myself have had with them, but all members of the opposition have had as we've travelled the Island and talked to Islanders about the concerns and the issues they will feel that we should be bringing up here in the Legislative Assembly.

I just want to assure them that we will continue to be their voice here in the Legislative Assembly and do it proudly.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you so much Mr. Speaker and welcome back to the fall session.

I want to welcome all of my colleagues back to the fall session of the Legislature, and of course, everybody watching in the gallery today; a special welcome to the clerks, and to the new Pages who were just installed a few minutes ago.

I would also like to pass on my congratulations to Chief Brian Francis from Rocky Point in District 17 on his appointment to the Senate. I've seen Brian since, and like everybody else in this Legislature, I have no doubt that he will be a fantastic representative of this province in the Senate of Canada.

I also want to pass on my special thanks to everybody who put their names forward a couple of weeks ago, to the municipal elections here across our Island. Running for office and connecting with your neighbours and your friends, talking about issues, hearing concerns, is what democracy is all about. Whether you won or lost, that was a real contribution to public service here on the Island, and I want to thank each and every one of them who did that.

I think it's also appropriate, of course, that we recognize the struggles of our primary producers here; the farmers who, for all kinds of reasons, right from the get-go of this growing season, have had difficulties and that's ongoing and it's important that we remember them.

Also important, as my colleagues have already stated, that Islanders remember the sacrifices that were made over the wars in the past. And I, too, attended ceremonies – so well attended and that always makes me so proud to be an Islander. We do not forget and that people were there to remember those who had fallen and given sacrifice.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too, would like to welcome everybody back – all my colleagues, it's great to be back at it. I also like to welcome you and

your staff, and your Pages for another successful session. It's great to see the media here and a guest today here. I welcome them all – but I will single out a couple. Eddie, as always a faithful, is back again this year; Joe Byrne, Joe Killorn and J. Kevin Arseneault. I would like to welcome them with us here today.

I would like to speak about Wheatley River and the fantastic Remembrance Day that they put on; they honour the soldiers that actually left Wheatley River. They call out their names and then they go and they have a service at the hall next door, then after that, they have a lunch. They put an awful lot of effort into remembrance. I'd like to give a shout-out to them.

Also, I think Brian Francis – he was a great choice for senator for this province. Also, I would like to send out our best wishes and hope the farmers can come out as best they can with this difficult season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everybody back today, especially to say hello to everybody in District 19 Borden-Kinkora.

I want to specifically mention Anita Cenerini, who is this year's National Sliver Cross Mother during our Remembrance Day service. It was recently that her son, Thomas Welsh, was finally honoured with memorial cross; a memento of loss given to loved ones of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty, or whose death was a tribute to such duty.

My thoughts are with this family. The young soldier was deployed in Afghanistan in August 2003, and it was his first mission overseas. At that time he was 21-years-old. He was a C9 gunner, of the Third Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. He completed that tour and he came back, but his family noticed a change in his life. His mental health had deteriorated to the point where everything became painful and

brought out much anger in a young man who had never expressed anger before.

Ms. Cenerini is the first Sliver Cross Mother, a legion tradition dating back to 1936, whose child died by suicide. I give greetings to that family, and what they went through and the effect that PTSD has on everybody's lives that have come face-to-face with an event.

I would like to also say hello to members of the fifth Canadian division, and specifically the fourth engineer support regiment and all soldiers that are here from Gagetown participating in exercises across the province and helping with projects that are so important to us.

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 folks in the public gallery. I saw a spectacle here today that I never thought I'd ever see, and that's Emily Maxfield's dad, Michael, here with us today, and Charlene.

I would like to welcome Emily to our Page Program and actually, the Maxfields are a great family – well, I guess they are not family friends, they are actually family of ours up home there and we spend a lot of time together. I'm glad to see them here today. I'm glad to see Emily participating in this program.

I would also, while I'm on my feet, I'd like to congratulate all of those that were successful in the recent municipal elections and I'd like to send out a big thank you to all those that served and either, weren't successful in re-election, or decided not to re-offer. It takes a lot to put your name on a ballot, and it's not an easy thing to do and we certainly appreciate it.

While I'm on the topic of election, I attended the Remembrance Day service in Alberton, and it was a huge service. There were a lot of people there and, I guess, in one of the statements that I would like to say, is that the results of an election are never important, but the opportunity to have

one is vital. If it wasn't for those folks before us that laid their lives down so that we could enjoy that privilege, we wouldn't be having elections here today and I don't know if we'd be here in the Legislature today.

So, a big thank you and to all those that organized the Remembrance Day services; and lest we forget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a great opportunity to be back here in the provincial Legislature again. I certainly welcome all the colleagues back, great to see you all again.

It's a great opportunity here to be – and I'm very proud to have Emily Maxfield as the Page for Westside. Emily is a great girl and she's from the great community of Forrest View in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness, and I'm thinking you might be the only Page that's ever come from Forrest View, Emily. Also, her parents are here, Charlene and Mike Maxfield. So they live in Forrest View, obviously, on the Smallman Road – and I might note the newly-paved Smallman Road, so their trip to get to this area would be a little smoother than before –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) make sure she could get here.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, that's right, exactly.

Anyway, I also want to acknowledge – I know Bethany McNab is here and Bethany also has roots in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness. I'm quite certain her father, Harvey and Carol Anne, would probably be watching the proceedings here today, so a big welcome to her, and a good hi to Harvey.

Obviously a number of comments have been made about the potato harvest and harvesting in general this fall. I sort of said I spent most of my summer wishing for rain and I spent most of my fall wishing for it to stop, and the farmers in PEI have had an extremely challenging harvest, both for soy

beans and potatoes, carrots as well. I know in my district, I was by O'Leary produce and they're still trying to get their carrots out and these are some of the challenges that many farmers face, but they do a great job of doing their very best.

I know we're down into the thousands of acres, not ten thousands of acres anyway, that are remaining and I'm hopeful that they'll get the remainder by freeze up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome back all colleagues, of course, in the House and the press and everybody in the gallery; Kevin Arsenault and then Joe Byrne, it's great to see you all and all the rest of you.

I just wanted to stand up and, first of all, thank all of the hard-working Islanders in District 18 Rustico-Emerald. We have, of course, farmers and fishers and tourism operators. The farmers and fishers have been going for decades and decades and built their business to where it is today, and of course tourism operators have as well. We have – and I'll talk about this later – businesses celebrating their 60th anniversary, 50th anniversary, and 20th anniversaries; they've been working hard. So I want to thank all of the hard-working Islanders for the great work they did this summer. We even have a new restaurant, the Route 2 Diner. I'd encourage everybody to get out there. They have a real high-end chef there for the winter.

Of course, the watershed groups; I wanted to recognize them because the summer is when they do their work – and as we all know they're recognized as really contributing a ten to one return on every dollar put into those watershed groups. So every bit of money/funding we can give them, it's well worth it. Especially, if we can make sure that they get their student allocations earlier, like April, May, not June, July; that would be great.

Of course, the summer is the time when our roads get worked on. We did see some work

on our roads; as usual, not enough and probably not in all the right places either.

An Hon. Member: Election year.

Mr. Trivers: But I do want to thank the government for the work that was done and thank those that worked on the roads.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to congratulate all the municipal leaders who really, truly are at the heart of communities and put their names forward; and do so with very little compensation.

Lastly, thank the North Rustico Lions Club for the dinner that they serve all veterans and their families on Remembrance Day every year in North Rustico. There was a bit of a controversy this year whether the service should have been indoors or outdoors. People in charge made a decision. But the key thing is, everybody remembered our veterans, because we should never forget and never see that kind of war again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to express my gratitude to be back here for the fall session of the Legislative Assembly. I'm really looking forward to it; over on this side we got a lot on our mind and we're going to get some answers from government.

I want to welcome all the new Pages here today. Hope you enjoy the experience. I'm sure that you'll be entertained, if nothing else. I'd like to say hello to Karen Jackson who is here from UPSE. Karen, not only is president of UPSE, but she's also a very crucial volunteer for the Plowing Match in Dundas, which is one of the great events that rural PEI puts on in the summer.

I want to say a shout out to Kevin Arsenault who is here today. Kevin has also been doing a great job holding government to account by way of writing and he's grown a great big following through some of the writings that he has done. He's also a

candidate for leadership of the – hotly contested candidate for the leadership of the PC Party of Prince Edward Island. It seems like it's the job that everyone wants, which is good.

I want to give a shout out to the Cardigan Bay Foggers, the defending champs of the Kings County Old Timers League. On a bit of rough start – it's been a rough start. A lot of us are getting older and we're having trouble getting our legs under us but give us a little bit of time.

I wanted to also to give a shout out to Blaine Hackett; Blaine who works the parking lot over here is going through some health troubles and he's in the hospital, but hopefully he'll be out soon and back working the booth. I want to say get well Blaine, looking forward to seeing you.

Finally, I want to give a shout out to an old colleague of mine who I saw early this morning at the gym, Dougie Currie. I'm telling you, boy, there's a guy that's looking good when he finally got the weight of the world off his shoulders. I just want to say: there's hope for all of you. Whenever you get clear of this job over here – which is going to come soon – you'll all look good like Dougie Currie looked this morning. If I could coin the phrase, I think I heard it in Ontario: help is on the way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Did Dougie pay you for that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I, too, would certainly like to rise today and welcome back all my colleagues to the Legislative Assembly. I'd also like to welcome all the new Pages that are here for the first day today and I'm sure they'll feel more comfortable as time goes on.

Also, a warm welcome to all that are in the gallery today; I see Cheryl MacLean is back over here. It's always good to have Cheryl in as well as others. There are many – I'll say aspiring politicians that are in the gallery

today – it's great to have all of those folks in with us as well.

But what I would like to draw a bit of attention to, is I would like to commend and congratulate all front-line health professionals, the doctors, the nurses, all the allied health professionals who, I had some time to meet over the summer and see the conditions they're working in and their days. I want to thank them very much for the efforts they put in.

Karen Jackson is with us today and Karen is one of those allied professionals. Thank you to each and every one of you for the work you do day-in and day-out.

I'd also like to draw a few comments to the wonderful Remembrance Day ceremonies that were held here in Charlottetown just outside the front of this building, and as the member from Borden recognized in his area, the other day on Sunday, Diana MacDougall was the Charlottetown's Silver Cross Mother who laid a wreath in memory of her son, Scott MacDougall. Scott had some years within the service; came back to PEI. He, too, suffered with some PTSD and ended his life in suicide as well.

Scott was working on a cottage, and the family and his friends are going to continue on in fixing up that cottage out in the South Shore area so that others who are in the military and suffering from PTSD or other health concerns, will be able to come and request to spend a week at that cottage on the beautiful south shores of Prince Edward Island. I thought that was something that needed to be recognized on the floor of the Legislature.

To the MacDougall family, thank you for doing that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline

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

A few weeks ago I had the delight and privilege to attend a memorial concert in honour of the great Island musician, Nathan Condon, who took his life by suicide last year.

Trinity Church in Summerside was packed with appreciative people who were treated to some fabulous music and every cent of the money collected went to Lennon House, a very special project created by the ever inspiring Dianne Young.

Lennon House is a healing place and sanctuary for Islanders with mental health and addiction issues. During the concert I had an opportunity to speak with Wendell Cameron who had opened the evening singing with his group “Not all there”.

Wendell was distributing decals for which he had gathered financing in the community with the words “Suicide Prevention Lifeline” on them and the 1-800-218-2885 number boldly displayed on these eye-catching stickers.

It’s worthy of note that two members have already mentioned that the Silver Cross Mothers who presented the wreaths today were mothers of sons who had died by suicide.

As we chatted, Wendell pointed out to me, that this number is listed simply as the “helpline” in the phone book.

As he said, it has no reference whatsoever to suicide and indeed you can’t find any specific reference to suicide in PEI’s phone book at all.

It is Wendell’s wish that one of these decals be put in every single washroom of every single Prince Edward Island school from tip to tip.

He gave me the twenty or so that were left and I urge every member of this House - as many as can – to take one. But more than that, I hope that this cheap, effective measure will be adopted and paid for by government to publicize to young Islanders a potentially life-saving resource that they can access in a private place and know that they have someone to reach out to in a moment of crisis or hopelessness or helplessness.

I think Nathan – and I know that Wendell and Diane and everybody else associated with Lennon House, would be advocating for this simple step that could well save many young Islander’s lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member for Kensington-Malpeque.

Kensington Legion Ladies Auxiliary

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I’m honoured to rise today and recognize the Kensington Legion Ladies Auxiliary for the service they provide to Kensington and surrounding areas.

Ladies Auxiliaries across Canada originated during the First World War when women were asked to help wounded veterans returning home and to provide supports for their families.

Jean Burt and Velma Blakney, both from Kensington, are two of the charter members who laid the foundation for the Kensington Legion Auxiliary, which was established over 60 years ago.

For the past 60 years, women from the Kensington and surrounding areas have served the Legion through the auxiliary. There have been countless hours put into the preparation of community events, banquets and other functions to assist in raising funds to help with region expenses.

These women have also worked hard to create a scholarship for the Kensington Intermediate Senior High School which has benefitted many local students. On top of all, they make donations to various community organizations across the province and each year they sponsor a family at Christmastime.

Our community is proud to have such a hardworking group of volunteers giving back to their communities and I want to thank all of them for their hard work and support to the Legion and the rest of the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member for Borden-Kinkora.

Bridgette, Maggie and Charlotte Linkletter

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to recognize three outstanding athletes from the Bedeque area who were recently recognized during a special ceremony at the Callbeck Centre in Bedeque for their sports achievements.

These individuals are Bridgette, Maggie and Charlotte Linkletter. Yes, they're all sisters.

Each year the community recognizes significant achievements for its young folks and it is something they are proud to do each year. Bridgette, Maggie and Charlotte all played out of the Bedeque and Area Recreation Centre.

This past year, all three sisters have been on an Island winning hockey team. They were the Island champions in each of their divisions, the Maritime league and a silver runner-up in the Atlantic championships.

Maggie played at the Esso Cup, national level and Bridgette played in the Atlantics, her biggest year yet in her hockey career. Charlotte has been signed for the Canada Games 2019 and will travel to the city of Red Deer Alberta in February.

Their mother Kathy Linkletter says: Wayne and her are very proud parents and that hockey has given their girls many life skills, great opportunities and special friends.

Charlotte put it well: I cannot count the friends, the memories and the life experiences that I've gained just from this sport.

I want to congratulate Maggie, Bridgette and Charlotte on their accomplishments over the past year and wish them all the success in their current seasons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We all know that government spending is out of control, taxes and federal transfers are at an all-time high.

Last year, for the first time in Island history, this government collected over one billion, that's billion with a 'b' – one billion dollars in provincial taxes. Yet Islanders still keep the least of what they earn, in all of Canada.

Government and Islanders hard-earned dollars

Question to the Premier: Premier, why is your government being so stingy about letting Islanders keep more of the money they work so hard to earn?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our government started in 2015 with a series of credits that were followed by, for the first time in many years, by a series of changes to the basic personal amount to the point where today, more than 52,000 Prince Edward Islanders pay no provincial income tax compared to the numbers that paid provincial income tax in 2014.

We have made tax changes – the basic personal amount, the small business tax, we have been spending prudently, let me say, and I congratulate all public servants on this that we were within \$9 million of our total budget for 2017-2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think the Premier needs to look around and he'll quickly realize that many of the individuals sitting with him were actually

elected prior to 2015 when this Liberal government actually came into power back in – what are we looking at – 2007.

The basic tax exemption that the Speaker – sorry the Premier talks about – actually works out to 27 cents a day, 27 cents of extra income that Islanders can keep a day.

Furnace oil today at the pump is 91.2 cents a litre, so that extra 27 cents a day won't help Islanders struggling to heat their homes and make ends meet.

Question to the Premier: Why are you collecting record amounts from Islanders in taxes, but only giving back 27 cents a day?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Twenty seven cents a day translates into more than \$100 a year –

Mr. Myers: No, it doesn't. It's \$98. Do the math.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we may, in the course of this sitting, have an opportunity to increase from what was \$500 adjustment to the basic personal amount to make that \$1,000, all in the year 2018.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) \$196.

Premier MacLauchlan: Another opportunity to leave money in the pockets of Prince Edward Islanders who are working hard, more working all the time, there are 7,000 –

Mr. Myers: Twenty minutes in a parking metre in (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – fulltime jobs in Prince Edward Island today that we didn't have in 2016. That's why Islanders are doing so well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier, off the top, spoke about the Island being on its tear. The only tear I see is Islanders, unfortunately, tearing out to the food banks; Islanders, unfortunately, going to the local service station to fill up Jerry cans to take oil home because they can't afford home delivery.

Twenty-seven cents a day is cold comfort for Islanders struggling to get by. In fact, it's a slap in the face after 10 long years of tax increases, and the higher costs of living by this Liberal government. Islanders want to get ahead and not just barely get by.

I have long advocated for the personal basic tax exemption be tied to the consumer price index to put Islanders on a more equal footing with workers in other provinces.

Personal tax exemption and CPI

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to tie the basic personal tax exemption to the CPI so that Islanders can better keep pace with the rising costs of living that your government has forced on them?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that the Leader of the Opposition has advocated for tying the basic personal amount to the cost of living, which as of the September report from Statistics Canada increased by 1.7% in the past 12 months.

Since we came to government, the basic personal amount has changed by 33% which is a lot more than CPI –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, why would (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: I have no appreciation for why the Leader of the Opposition is talking about tying it, in fact reducing or limiting the increase or the change that our government has made and will continue to make, and we're going to make further in the course of this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Now your math is perfect. A few months ago (Indistinct) what the cause is, it's you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's set something straight right off the bat. I just received this message at 2:15, Mr. Premier, and it flies right in the face of what you've been talking about.

I want to explain to you how important a bus is to us. We are on a tight budget. Today an emergency came up; we've been waiting for a doctor since 9:00 a.m. I bought groceries yesterday this means we have food at home. I have four kids with me and it's 2:15 and they haven't eaten. I have to decide between feeding them something that will deliver to the PCH today or having gas money to get them to school the rest of the week. A bus would make this decision much easier.

As the Leader of the Opposition has stated, this government keeps on nickel and diming.

Rise in cost of driver's license

Question to the transportation minister: Could the minister explain why the cost of a driver's license has gone up 40% in the last six years?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are always working on ways –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that we can make things more affordable for our residents, our drivers. We have 110 registered cars on our registration who do those renewals on up to three years now. When we change that we have the fees that they can do it on a three-year basis.

We're always looking at ways that we can help Islanders save money. We'll continue to look at those registration costs and see where the need is and we'll continue to explore those opportunities.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, going up 40% in six years is a huge increase, but you're giving back 27 cents.

Question to the transportation minister: Regional procurement has lowered the production of driver's licenses, so why did the cost go up 40%?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have gone to an Atlantic procurement model, which requires us to – the individual to come in and renew their license and their picture is taken, but it's sent to a central office for processing. They have 10 days that it comes back to them during that time. They do have a receipt that they can produce.

In regard to how we have amalgamated those services together, it actually involves a new technology that will ensure –

Mr. Myers: Camera, a camera and a printer.

Ms. Biggar: – that their licenses are protected from fraud. There is also ability within that license to add other technologies to it. So, we are working on new technology which we think will help Islanders in the long run.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I just got a headache, but that's all right because we're giving back 27 cents.

Rise in cost of motor vehicle inspection

Question to the transportation minister: Could the minister explain why motor vehicle inspections and the fees associated went up over 50% in the last six years?

Mr. Myers: Oh, good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll take that under advisement and bring that back to the member.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, let's continue, Mr. Speaker.

Let's not forget about the 27 cents.

Question to the transportation minister: Did the motor vehicle inspection itself increase by half or just its cost?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we work very closely with our inspection services stations to ensure that the inspections that are happening there are carried out in a way that is most effective way for Islanders. Those costs are borne by the inspection station, and come back to the individual who was getting their car inspected.

So we want to ensure that those costs that are associated with that are getting the best service that they can and we will continue to work along those lines with the inspection stations, and ensure that when they are incurring those costs that Islanders are assured that when they're getting inspections done that they are doing it to the best of their ability.

Mr. R. Brown: Great; great answer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, don't blame the gas station and the garage owners for the inspection fees going up. You put them up.

Since 2012, the cost of to register a utility trailer has gone up by 50%.

Government tax grab on Islanders

Question to the transportation minister: What's the justification for this tax grab on Islanders?

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

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as statistics have shown there are more and more vehicles on the road, and during that time, because of that, we do have to incur more cost to make sure that our services provided to the travelling public are efficient.

So, all of those fees or those dollars that you're talking about go back into providing services to Islanders to make sure that the roads that they're travelling on are the most efficient they can be. —

Mr. Myers: Or a \$75 million surplus.

Ms. Biggar: — to make that transportation connection for those trailers to ensure that when they're travelling, that the roads that they're on, that our farmers are on, that our fishers travel, that our products go to market, they're all incurred in those costs to ensure that we can provide the best services that we can.

We're spending over \$8 million just on that, on just paving alone. We did 120 kilometres of paving on those connector roads this year. All of those trailers travel those roads.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we've hit four things now that the fees have gone up over 40%-50%. Since 2012, the cost to register a snowmobile, which doesn't affect the roads, has gone up by 50%, but that's all right they give back 27 cents.

Question to transportation minister: What's the justification for this tax grab on Islanders?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, the fee in regard to snowmobile registration all goes back to the snowmobile association except for \$10.

They have requested that we process those fees for them, so the fee that they incur for that processing is for the time that the staff is working on doing those processing. The snowmobile association gets back all of their fee except for that \$10 and we have worked with them on providing them materials –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – providing them equipment to help them on the trails, keeping the trails upgraded for them.

It all, technically, goes back into ensuring that the snowmobile association has a great trail system for their enjoyment.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) finance minister (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Great.

An Hon. Member: Great job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) no.

Mr. Fox: They're given back 27 cents. Every fee I've talked to has increased by 40%-60%, and since 2012, the cost to take a novice driver's course has doubled.

Cost of novice driver's course

Question to the transportation minister:
What changed in the novice driver's course to double its cost to young drivers trying to get ahead?

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

Ms. Biggar: Ms. Speaker, we work very closely with those young drivers coming into the system to ensure that the training that they get is the best training that they can receive.

We are investing in those young people to ensure that when they are on the roads, that they have the best knowledge that they can and that they have services provided to them that are going to ensure that they have the best education that they can in regard to safe driving because we want to ensure that all of our drivers out there have that training, and we'll continue to work with them in improving that training and safety programs.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci Monsieur le Président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

La semaine dernière, une membre du Conseil des ministres n'a pas respecté la Loi sur les services en français en matière de correspondance avec le public. Plusieurs Insulaires ont d'ailleurs trouvé sa réponse impolie.

Last week, a member of Cabinet broke the *French Language Services Act* regarding correspondence with the members of the public in a manner felt rude by many Islanders.

Training in French services for Cabinet

Question pour le premier ministre et ministre responsable des Affaires acadiennes et francophones:

Question to the Premier and Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs:

Quelle formation ont reçue les membres du Conseil des ministres au sujet du respect de la Loi sur les services en français?

What training and guidance have been provided to your Cabinet around respect and compliance with the *French Language Services Act*?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: *Monsieur le président.*

Mr. Speaker.

En tant que premier ministre et aussi en tant que ministre responsable des Affaires acadiennes et francophones, je suis fier des mesures que ce gouvernement a prises pour étendre, pour ajuster les domaines où la Loi sur les services en français s'applique. Justement, depuis l'an dernier il y a cinq domaines qui ont été désignés sous la Loi pour donner des services en français.

As Premier and Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs, I am proud of the measures this government has taken to expand, to adjust the areas where the *French Language Services Act* applies. In fact, since last year, five areas were designated under the act to provide French services.

Since last year we have added five areas of service – important areas of service – on the advice of the *French Language Services Act* advisory committee when the *French Language Services Act* is designated to offer service in French. We as a government are very proud of that, and the French community and the Acadian community are very appreciative of that and we continue to go further, Ms. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

La lettre envoyée par un membre du public demandait l'appui du gouvernement à faire des rénovations à l'École Évangéline à Abram-Village, une école qui a maintenant 60 ans.

A letter sent by a member of the public to seek government support for capital repairs to the Evangeline school in Abram Village now almost 60 years old.

Priority rank for Evangeline school

Question à la ministre des transports:

Question to the minister of transportation:

Où se trouve l'École Évangéline dans la liste des priorités de rénovation des infrastructures?

Where does Evangeline school rank on the priority list for school capital repairs?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. J. Brown: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chaque année, les deux boards prennent des décisions de mettre des priorités capitales en ordre de préférence chacun.

Each year, the two boards place capital priorities in order of preference for each.

We get those. We look at them. We submit them through the capital budgeting process. We look at them across all of the 62 schools on Prince Edward Island and we are doing that this year. We expect that there will be a capital budget put before this Chamber at some point during this session and we'll have to look at what the capital priorities are going forward.

But, let me say, we take that job very seriously. We take the job of being discerning and of determining where the greatest capital priorities are across this province regardless of whether that's in the French first language system or in the English system, and we wish to see all of our students treated equally.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: *Merci, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

L'École Évangéline a été construite en 1960 et n'a jamais eu de rénovations majeures. Les problèmes comprennent le toit qui coule et le chauffage déficient dans les salles de classe.

Evangeline school was built in 1960 and has never undergone a major renovation. Issues with leaking roofs to classroom heat are common.

Timeline for repairs to Evangeline school

Question à la ministre des transports:

Question to the minister of transportation:

Quand l'École Évangéline sera-t-elle rénovée adéquatement?

When will Evangeline school be adequately renovated?

When can the community expect to see these badly needed repairs take place at Evangeline school?

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

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

This hits right to the core of what I was talking about just a moment ago and as I indicated, there is a responsibility in each of the public school boards to consider their capital requirements for the upcoming future and to put those forward in an order as they determine them, every year.

The issues that the member has spoken about did not arrive overnight, but they did just come to the top of the CSLF's priority list for this year. We will endeavour to determine where those fit in the overall capital priorities for the province, but let me say that the job of prioritizing those capital requirements is a very important job and it's not a wish list that needs to be put before the department and government each year to arrive at capital priorities for our school board.

The list has changed so much from one year to the next from the CSLF that one has to wonder where their priorities lie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

In 2016, this government signed onto the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. One of the key principles of the framework is that carbon pricing should be a central part of any plan in order to reduce carbon. It also recognizes that carbon pricing is the most effective and the most cost-efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

However, this government has shifted its tune in recent months. The Premier no longer believes in carbon pricing.

Means to reduce carbon emissions

A question to the Premier: Your government is now intent on using less effective and more expensive means to reduce emissions. How is this fiscally responsible?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say that our government has been from the Pan-Canadian framework, and going back earlier to our participation in the Paris conference, and earlier than that to our first ministers' conference in November of 2015, committed to reducing our carbon emissions.

We know precisely what those targets are. We know that Prince Edward Islanders will meet those. We know that Prince Edward Islanders, as of today, have installed almost 2,500 heat pumps in their homes, taking us up on programs that encourage them to meet our targets. We are not of the view, as apparently the third party is, that Islanders should be taxed solely for the sake of punishing them when they in fact are meeting their targets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Just not for punishment.

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

I suppose to be fair; I should acknowledge that this government has in fact implemented a partial carbon price, though they've done their best to make the policy as ineffective as possible by reducing the price signals, which is the only thing that would incentivize Islanders to actually reduce their emissions.

Mr. Trivers: – (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – Question to the Premier –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Carbon tax plan and carbon emissions

Dr. Bevan-Baker: A question to the premier: How will your hollowed out carbon tax plan help to reduce carbon emissions?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me speak about a price signal, a price signal of \$1,200 to Islanders to acquire and install a heat pump; 2,473, as of today, have taken us up on that. It's practically a revolution; when you think about the oil, or the carbon that's being by those heat pumps by the money that Islanders are saving in their own pocket, the further price signal – by the work that it's creating throughout our economy, and meeting our carbon reduction targets. That is our program. That is the program that Islanders are accepting and responding too, and reducing their carbon footprint and we are proud of that –

Mr. LaVie: – on the ropes (Indistinct) –

Premier MacLauchlan: – and we thank Prince Edward Islanders for responding to our price signal, to our programs, and to the challenge of reducing our carbon emissions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Indeed, there is a revolution underway, but it's not because of this government's policies, it's in spite of this government's policies –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – where HST was taken off oil, but not off electricity –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – where is the incentive for Islanders to buy –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – to buy heat pumps in that policy? This government could have simply adopted the federal backstop, which would be a decent fair and effective policy. Instead, they are acting like climate action deniers –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – they refuse to take the decisive and the rapid action that is needed – that we all know is needed – to avoid catastrophic climate change in the next decade.

Tax on carbon pollution

A question to the premier: Why are you afraid of putting a tax on carbon pollution?

Mr. Myers: Why do you want to starve everybody?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – let me correct one point in the hon. member's question, when he made the assertion that electricity is still subject to the provincial portion of the HST. We sat in this House in the spring sitting and in fact, through the action of the finance minister and his budget, we reduced and removed that provincial portion of the HST to the extent of \$10 million.

Mr. Trivers: Whose platform was that from?

Premier MacLauchlan: And let me say that that \$10 million, which is directly in the hands of Prince Edward Islanders, in their pockets, contrary to some of the assertions from the other side, is to the benefit of Islanders. It is an incentive for them to use renewables, not only electricity, but propane, wood, and other renewable and that is why Prince Edward Islanders are responding to our price signal, to our program and to our commitment to reduce our carbon emissions, to act on climate change.

It's also because Islanders believe, and we believe, that climate change is real, that we must take action. We will meet our targets, and they are showing every day that they are doing so, and we're proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Among most economists, carbon pricing is considered the most effective and efficient way to reduce carbon emissions. In fact, Yale professor, William Nordhaus, shared the Nobel Prize in economics this year for his groundbreaking work on carbon pricing.

Mr. Trivers: Read the email.

Ms. Bell: According to the royal bank, carbon pricing has been implemented in 46 national jurisdictions, and 25 sub-national jurisdictions. Yet, whenever the Premier talks about implementing a carbon price, he calls it: green tape and funny money.

I find it shocking that a man with the Premier's academic credentials has not reviewed the literature so he can engage in a meaningful debate.

Carbon pricing plan

A question for the premier: Would you like me to provide you with a reading list on how carbon pricing works?

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker

I'll tell you how carbon pricing works in the style, as presented by the third party; is you walk down the subway and get on the subway in Toronto, or Vancouver, where they're getting their policies from. This is Prince Edward Island; these are people who are in rural communities with jobs who are trying to keep up with everything –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – who believe that we have climate change problems, who can see it all around us. Islanders are responding in the most efficient manner and probably in the highest priority manner that we can by changing the built environment. I mentioned the reduction on the rebate of the provincial portion of the HST, our program, which is now in the several million of dollars for rebates to encourage Islanders to have heat pumps.

Let me mention another area where I'm really proud of what Islanders are doing and what our government is supporting them to do and that's in home renovations. Four thousand homes – 4,000 homes have been renovated in this province with support and grants from our province and they're more energy efficient.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, when you compare your plan to other plans, you say yours is the only plan that won't cost taxpayers. This completely ignores the fact, that both the made in PEI green plan and the federal backstop are revenue-neutral, and would actually put more money back into the hands of 80% of Islanders to use as they choose.

To the Premier: When you taught –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: – law at UNB –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: To the Premier: When you taught law at UNB–

An Hon. Member: Funny money, funny money –

Ms. Bell: – and a student argued a position while completely disregarding most of the facts, would you give them an A or an F?

Speaker: hon. Premier.

Mr. R. Brown: We're getting an A.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Plus.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker.

In the previous question, the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, used the words: green tape and funny money. Those were words that she repeated that I had said earlier, but I'm glad to hear that they've been understood and repeated in this Chamber.

It's very simple, what our governments approach to pricing signal for carbon is, it's to leave the money in the pockets of Islanders in the first place. We're proud of that. At the same time, as we are providing very significant incentives– very significant incentives– and Islanders are taking up those incentives – what we call: carrots not sticks. Islanders are voting with their feet, they are changing their homes, they are changing their behaviour, and they are improving our climate change record and meeting our targets. That is precisely what we're committed to do and what Islanders are committed to do.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Climate change is the most pressing issue facing humanity, and the best the Premier can come up with are denigrating slogans that don't fairly represent other policy options.

Conduct debate on climate change

Premier, will you stop playing games with our children's futures, and begin to conduct the debate on climate change with the seriousness it deserves?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our province, including our government, has made commitments in the pan-Canadian climate change framework to reduce our carbon emissions. We will meet those targets. They are very serious commitments. They do indeed involve significant change on the part of Islanders; and working with Islanders and working with sectors of our economy as further opportunities present themselves as innovation and technologies evolve.

Islanders take climate change seriously, and I have to say, to hear the member opposite, pretending that Islanders – because that is what you're saying– that Islanders don't take climate change seriously –

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Premier MacLauchlan: – because they are putting in heat pumps. Because they're innovating, because they're improving their homes, because they're taking up our rebates and voting with their feet – it's an insult – to Prince Edward Islanders. I hope that she is going to consider what she's saying and support our legislation when it comes forward in this sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like most of the MLA's in this room, I've been asked by numerous individuals about the possibility of opening adoption records and I've asked about this in the past because

I believe this is something we should strongly consider.

I know that a committee has been tasked with the weighing in on both sides of the discussion.

Opening of adoption records

So, my question today is to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Minister, has the *Adoption Act* review advisory committee completed the report on opening adoption records?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank you for that question, hon. Member.

Yes, the committee has completed the report and has delivered it to me; after a lengthy consultation process with Islanders both on the province, as well as elsewhere.

We heard differing viewpoints, but one thing that came out clear in the report, was that: adoption is an intensely personal and emotional subject for people who have experienced it and not everyone's experience is the same.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Islanders for opening up their hearts and sharing their stories with us, as well as the *Adoption Act* review committee, for their leadership on this work and engaging Islanders on this important topic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great news to know that the report has been completed.

So now that you have the report, what's government going to do with it?

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

Mr. Myers: They usually put them on a shelf.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Throughout the process, again, we understood that attitudes are changing and increasingly Islanders want greater access to their personal records and to openness of the adoption records.

Again, there were wide-ranging views, both for opening adoptions records and keeping them closed. However, our government has made the decision to open adoption records, both going forward and going back.

People who have been affected by adoption in the past will have an option to protect their identity through (Indistinct) and details will be worked out in the coming months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

That's wonderful news, especially to those Islanders who really have been advocating to have these records opened and I thank you for the work and I thank the committee for the work that they have done preparing this report.

Tabling of *Adoption Act* review report

Is it possible, Minister, that you could table this report and also when might these changes occur?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently my department is working on legislative changes that we do plan on bringing forward for the spring session, as well as a public awareness campaign, so we will be unrolling details very soon.

However, we will need, once we have passed the legislative changes, we will need a year for public engagement so that we can make sure that we reach out to all those parties who are affected by adoption to make sure that they are aware of their rights and how we will be moving forward – and the records being opened for the past.

However, in the meantime, there will be a full range of post-adoption services available through my department and I do encourage anyone whose lives have been affected by adoption to reach out to my department and see what services that they might be able to obtain.

Certainly hon. member I would be most pleased to table that report, however I do not have that with me today, so I will table it tomorrow, if that's okay.

We will also post it on our website through Family and Human Services.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Financial impact to potato growers and province

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, our potato industry has had a difficult year with weather-related issues. The indication is that possibly 10% or 100,000 acres may be still in the ground.

What financial impact will this have to our growers and to the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just correct the hon. member; we would have about 85,000 acres of potatoes that would be planted in Prince Edward Island and we're probably around that 10% that's not harvested, so just to correct the numbers a little bit there, not to create panic out there in the industry.

Obviously, it has been a very challenging harvest season; we've had rain just about every second day and we've had extreme wind conditions and from that perspective, farmers are going to be challenged.

On the positive note is that farmers have taken up some of the safety programs that are implemented by both, our government

and the federal government. A little bit over 90% of the crop is actually under crop insurance.

There are some farmers that aren't under crop insurance that also are under the AgriStability Program and some of them may tap into that particular program.

As you might be aware, we did extend the application date for the AgriStability Program.

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

Crop insurance pay-outs for potato growers

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Minister: Will the crop insurance cover these losses or will government be required to top it up?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: On the question of crop insurance: farmers are given many alternatives when their crop insurance agent actually comes to the farm in the spring of the year to determine what level of coverage the farmers are willing to purchase – and/or what risks they're willing to take.

Farmers can choose between 70% coverage, 80%, 90% coverage and they can also take a price-point on those coverages as well.

At this point in time, it's a little too early to tell what kind of numbers we're talking about as far as crop insurance and what kind of pay-outs –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – are going to be occurred, but we do anticipate there will be pay-outs.

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second question and this will be the final question.

Mr. LaVie: You know how it works.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deep-water wells and land acquisitions

Minister: will our major processor, will they be using the results of today to either revisit deep-water wells, or further land acquisitions?

Mr. Henderson: Obviously, farmers are challenged by many of the elements that Mother Nature can provide to them and obviously there were some locations – really struggled with water issues, we didn't have enough moisture, especially in the western end of the Island and some in the very far east end of the Island.

As you may be aware, that under the Department of Environment, there is a study that has been ongoing by Dr. Mike van den Heuvel regarding the impacts of irrigation and impacts that might have on our river systems. I believe our government is awaiting the results of that particular report before any decisions be made as far as land holdings – that's once again under the Communities, Land and Environment and I'll pass that to that hon. member for future information on that.

Speaker: Now, hon. members, I know some of you might have nodded to me and said: do we get more questions?

Time is up. I will no longer break the rules of this House to extend Question Period no more – so judge yourselves accordingly.

Mr. LaVie: Somebody broke a rule.

Statements by Ministers

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

Support and Protection for Island Workers

Mr. Gallant: As Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. I am pleased that our department serves to support and protect our Island workers and our post-secondary students.

Today, I am tabling amendments to three bills and introducing a new act that will enhance that support.

As our workforce and student population continues to grow and evolve, our

legislation must also change to reflect that. It's important that government get it right when it comes to legislation that affects Island workers.

Since last spring, my department, in collaboration with the Workers Compensation Board, has met with many organizations, groups, partners, unions and student unions, to hear feedback on this legislation. We also held online consultations and received a high volume of responses.

I would like to thank Islanders for participating in the consultations and providing their input.

Your voices were heard and contributed to the following legislation I will table today:

The first piece of legislation is an amendment to an act and it is named the Eric Donovan Act, *An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

These legislative changes are intended to provide a better outline of the responsibilities of employers to prevent harassment in the workplace and protect employees.

The next amendment is *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*. The amendments of this act will better align employment standards provisions with the employment insurance coverage, and also, further amendments that will benefit Island families, such as job the protection for parental leave with EI leave, reduce qualifying period for sick leave, and extend unpaid compassionate care leave.

The third amendment is *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*. These amendments will provide enhanced coverage for firefighters, injured workers, families or injured workers and Workers Compensation Board clients in general and will bring people in line with benefits provided in other jurisdictions.

Finally on legislation, our *Post-Secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act*; this legislation will require post-secondary Institutions to have a standalone sexual violence policy to enhance awareness and

prevention efforts, and provide supports for victims of sexual violence.

My department believes promoting safe, positive workplaces and protecting worker's rights is a big part of making sure our Island workforce can thrive. And these amendments are intended to just do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So these are welcome changes. I know that many of these topics have been talked about for a number of years and I know the Leader of the Opposition has talked, in particular, about one of them.

I want to give a shout-out to Lisa Donovan, who is here today. I think that – I was doing some door-to-door late this summer, and I ran into Lisa who is a new constituent of mine and we had a conversation about this very topic. This is something that I'm very supportive of and I think it's high time that government make these changes and looking forward to debating the bill when it comes on the floor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, too, are very pleased to be seeing this Legislation coming forward, both the amendments and new legislation and ensuring through our debate and discussion in the House, that these reflect the input from community and stakeholders.

We know that we need to continue to review and update our legislation to reflect the realities of our workplaces and our world around us. These are very important steps, too. We really commend government for bringing these forward and the work that has gone into preparing them and look forward, as my colleague said, to getting into details and debating on the floor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Nurse Practitioners Week

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nurse practitioners play an increasingly important role within our health care system. Nurse practitioners, commonly referred to as NPs, are registered nurses with advanced training who have the capability to assess, diagnose and treat common, acute and chronic health conditions.

NPs are providing health promotion, disease prevention, counseling and patient education to help Islanders understand their complete health picture. They can order tests, prescribe treatments and medications, and refer cases to other health care professionals.

Three years ago, our government committed to increase the number of nurse practitioners working in our health care system with a goal of having 20 NPs. I am pleased to confirm today that we have surpassed that commitment and that currently, we have 30 nurse practitioners working with Health PEI. In total there are 38 NPs on PEI providing services to Islanders of all ages in primary care, educational institutions, specialty care, home care, palliative and long-term care.

This is National Nurse Practitioners Week, and I would like to recognize some of our NPs and leaders in nursing who are here with us today in the gallery: Erika Bradley, Marv Catherine Connolly, and Chelsea Rogerson, who is the President of the PEI NPA. Welcome.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: These individuals provide invaluable care and guidance to Islanders each and every day and I want to thank them for the important work that they do.

NPs are vital members of our health care team as we continue to build a stronger, more sustainable health care system that provides Islanders with the right care by the right provider in the right place. Our department will continue to work Health PEI to identify opportunities to integrate more NPs across health care settings and

programs, as well as more physicians to work in consultation with them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank to the minister for the announcement. I'd like to thank all the health professionals that are here today, especially Chelsea Rogerson, who is the President of NPA and a leader from our district in District 7; we really appreciate all your work.

I appreciate the minister's, and ministers before him, commitment to increasing our NPs in PEI. Of course, it's not happening as fast as we all want, but we do see progress, especially to certain areas. We certainly welcome it in Morell with our part-time hours out there.

I would encourage the minister – we know the dedication, we know the push from the MPs – I would encourage the minister to keep that open mindset when he's meeting with the other health professions. I think that's where the stumbling blocks come sometimes. Working without physician supervision, we see it in many states across the states.

I mean, I was speaking to a nurse last week who travels north, remote areas to do work. They love doing it because they can really practice to their full scope of practice. They get to use all their tools. Certainly, PEI isn't as remote as some of these areas they're travelling to, but nurses, NPs, all our health care professionals are much more capable than what regulations allow.

I would encourage that I know there's a few stumbling blocks there: I've been trying to push that. I hope the NPs keep pushing that. You're doing a great job of doing that, and I hope that the minister keeps listening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

There was a day when almost every single health concern would be funneled through your family doctor and I'm probably aging myself by saying that that was my experience as a young child, and not such a young child, also.

Of course, there were a couple of exceptions to that: that singular unique experience, special life event of having a child – a midwife would have been available. Sadly, not here on Prince Edward Island, but back in the day where I lived, midwives were available for that event.

Nurse practitioners are, of course, one of the many allied health care professionals who now provide wonderful, first class, world class, first rate primary health care, including many of the services that previously would have exclusively been delivered by doctors, by family doctors.

That's the way that the modern delivery of primary health is going. We use more allied health care professionals to the full scope of their practice, absolutely.

Here on PEI, where thousands of Islanders are without a family doctor, including many in my district, District 17 and on the South Shore, nurse practitioners are stepping and filling that void. Indeed in the Cranaud area, a nurse practitioner is now there on a regular basis providing primary health care services where none would otherwise exist.

So, I'm delighted to see the increase and surpassing the goals of the number of NPs here on Prince Edward Island, and I want to thank them for the absolutely first class care that you provide to hundreds and thousands of Islanders every day. I welcome and acknowledge those from the NPA who are with us today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: I will call on the Clerk of the Legislature.

Clerk: Hon. Mr. Speaker and members, I wish to advise that the Office of the Clerk

nursuant to Rule 80(k), received a number of intersessionally tabled documents since the House last met on June 12th, 2018.

Included in these documents are answers to written questions from the first, second and third sessions of this General Assembly and 21 annual reports, including the 2018 Public Accounts. All documents were circulated to members on receipt and posted on the Assembly's website. A complete listing of these documents will also be included in today's journal of the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Thank you.

Reports by Committees

Recognition of Guests (II)

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With your indulgence, may I welcome someone to the gallery before I introduce this bill?

Speaker: Yes, of course.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time, I'd like to welcome Lisa Donovan to the gallery, and her friends and the union leaders that are here today. I'd also like to thank the federation of labour and the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the collaboration we had with bringing this amendment forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Introduction of Government Bills

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Eric Donovan Act, (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)* Bill No. 42, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you give us a brief explanation of this bill.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This amendment will introduce provisions, with respect to workplace harassment. The intended outcome is that employers and employees will be provided with a clear sense of what is acceptable or prohibited behaviour in a workplace. Workplace harassment is an emerging issue for employers and workers striving to maintain a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. These legislative changes are intended to provide a better outline of the responsibilities of employers to prevent harassment in the workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recognition of Guests (III)

Speaker: Hon. members, before I continue on with the introduction of bills, I want to give way to the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development for recognition.

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

When I was on my feet earlier, I didn't recognize a few more of my constituents that are in the gallery, well actually, the ones I did mention aren't mine, but I do claim them.

Some Hon. Members: Laughter.

Mr. R. Brown: You got them on your voters list.

Mr. Murphy: I'd like to welcome Paxton Caseley and her mother, Dara, and I think it's her sister, Brooke, maybe? But I'm not certain. No?

Welcome to the proceedings.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Post-secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Post- secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act*, Bill No. 41, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, an explanation, please.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This amendment is intended – the intended outcome of this act is that UPEI and Holland College be mandated to have standalone sexual violence policy in place. This will help bring PEI in line with jurisdictions that have enacted similar legislation and would align us with the harmonization – harmonize national framework being developed federally.

This legislative requirement to have a standalone sexual violence policy will enhance awareness and prevention efforts and provide support for victims of sexual violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3)*, Bill No.40, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Minister, would you like to explain what this bill is about.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These amendments will provide enhanced coverage for firefighters –

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Mr. Gallant: – injured workers, families of injured workers, and WCB clients in general, as it will bring PEI in line with benefits provided in other jurisdictions. The presumption coverage of firefighters will bring coverage for firefighters who develop primary cancer or heart injuries in the workplace. It would ensure all workers have equal entitlement to pension replacement benefits. An amendment to make a more expanded and equitable definition of impairment and to increase the current lump sum benefit amount to bring us in line with other jurisdictions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 32, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, an explanation, please, of this.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Several areas of this act were outlined as potentially needing updating. The intended outcome is to avoid confusion created by misalignment between provincial leave provisions and what is covered by the EI provisions. This amendment in this act will more clearly harmonize aspects of PEI leave with those of other jurisdictions.

Amendments be considered to better align the employment standards provisions with employment insurance coverage and also further amendments that will benefit Island families, such as job protection for parental leave, with EI leave, reduce qualifying period for sick leave and extend unpaid compassionate care leave.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 3)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 43, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you like to explain what this bill is about?

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, these amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* are housekeeping in nature. They reflect the federal changes to the Criminal Code of Canada, which will take effect December 18th, 2018. Amendments also adjust the section numbering in the *Highway Traffic Act* to match the section numbering changes in the Criminal Code of Canada; amendments also change the alcohol impaired level from exceeding 80 milligrams of blood to equaling or exceeding 80 milligrams, also to reflect the same change in the Criminal Code of Canada.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)* and I move, seconded by

the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. MacKay: *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 44, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you like to explain this bill, please.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, these changes to the *Highway Safety Act (No. 4)* will designate tow trucks and recovery vehicles as emergency vehicles. This means that Islanders must move over and slow down when approaching tow trucks working on the side of the road. This is the same requirement as for ambulances, police trucks, fire trucks, and other emergency vehicles.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Motions

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the (Indistinct) order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Motion No. 55.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism moves, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, the following Motion:

WHEREAS the provincial economy is on a tear;

AND WHEREAS this success is being driven by Islanders from one end of the province to the other;

AND WHEREAS a healthy, vibrant economy benefits all Islanders through increased employment, greater possibilities for success in business and increased tax revenue to expand services to Islanders;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island is at or near the top of the country in a number of important economic areas including new home construction, new car sales, retail sales, manufacturing sales, full time employment, building permits and population growth;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island recorded one million overnight stays for the first time ever in 2017 marking the fourth straight record year for the industry;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island just recorded its fourth straight record year for exports to international markets, and for the first time, exceeded one billion in exports to the United States;

AND WHEREAS employment grew at 3.1 per cent in 2017 which was second among all and ahead of the national average of 1.9 per cent;

AND WHEREAS more and more Islanders are seeing the benefits of entrepreneurship and are taking risks to see their business ideas come to fruition with the assistance of organizations like the Start Up Zone, Launch Pad and Island Capital Partners;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government continue to work very closely with business leaders, industry organizations, trade groups and all Islanders to identify and implement measures to stimulate the economy and maintain the momentum in our economy.

Mr. R. Brown: In short –

Speaker: Thank you.

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

Speaker: Now I'll call on the –

Mr. R. Brown: That sums it up.

Speaker: I'll call on the mover of the motion, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, to speak to the motion.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can I have the podium, please?

Mr. LaVie: On a tear.

Mr. R. Brown: He's going to need the podium. Here's the facts. We're going to get the facts.

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: On a tear.

Mr. R. Brown: We're going to get the facts.

Mr. LaVie: On a tear.

Mr. R. Brown: Lowest unemployment in the history of Prince Edward Island (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: You don't know what a tear is.

Mr. R. Brown: Put your seatbelts on.

Mr. LaVie: You don't know what a tear is.

Mr. R. Brown: Put your seatbelts on.

An Hon. Member: Don't believe a word he says.

Speaker: Do you want to speak?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Speaker: Yeah, okay.

Go ahead.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prince Edward Island is Canada's only jurisdiction to show continuous economic growth since 2008, and it's no secret that right now the provincial economy is among the strongest economies the Island has ever seen.

We currently lead Canada. We lead the Atlantic region and exceed the national average in several categories.

Entrepreneurs from one end of the Island to the other are opening new businesses, expanding existing businesses, creating new products and finding new markets and adding jobs.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: As of October 2018, employment totaled 76,900, which is an increase of 7,000 from two years ago. This represents a 3.1% increase over last year, which leads the country and well ahead of the national average of 1.3%.

And even more impressive, PEI achieved its lowest unemployment rate on record since 1976 –

Mr. LaVie: Grant Palmer wrote that.

Mr. Palmer: – with a rate 7.2%.

Mr. LaVie: You can't say that with a straight face.

Mr. Palmer: This shows that there are more Islanders working than ever before.

Our export levels continue to increase. You have heard me speak of the success of our Island businesses in the past. As they export and sell their products around the world, I'm huge supporter of growing our exports so we can bring new money into our province to help pay for roads, schools, hospitals, and supports for seniors and all the things we know are so important.

Mr. LaVie: You closed the hospitals.

Mr. Palmer: Our Island community creates about \$6 billion worth of products and services.

Mr. R. Brown: Billion.

Mr. Palmer: And we consume about \$3 billion of these. Exports account for the other 3 billion.

Mr. R. Brown: That's keeping it simple for them, good.

Mr. Palmer: I know not everyone in this House agrees with this approach to grow our economy through exports.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: The Leader of the Green Party has been wondering out loud if we should not just trade amongst ourselves. He has asked questions in the House if we should support company likes ADL in Summerside. He has suggested it would be better to just trade with ourselves, to shelter us from the fluctuations of the world marketplace. I can only include our economy would shrink by \$3 billion if we did that.

Mr. R. Brown: You couldn't do that, no.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Where would the member from Souris sell his lobsters?

Mr. Palmer: In September of this year we surpassed the \$1 billion mark in international exports, which represents a 1.1% increase, versus the same time last year. This shows that Island entrepreneurs are being aggressive and opening up new markets for their products all over the world, and they are bringing in new money to our province.

My position is clear. I support Island businesses exporting that have proven they can out hustle businesses around the world.

Mr. R. Brown: Right on.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Beyond impressive employment results, the province has also performed well in many other sectors of the economy.

PEI leads the country, or is close to the top, in new home construction, retail sales, wholesale trade, building permits and many other important sectors of the economy.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: Our GDP continues to trend in the right direction and is higher than it's ever been.

Atlantic Canada is one of the happiest regions in the country in a recent report and

a number of PEI communities ranked very well; 2017 was the fourth straight record year for tourism in the province and we reached 1 million overnight stays for the first time in the Island's history.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Palmer: It gets better.

2018 could very well eclipse last year's record visitation, and we are tracking the results very closely.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: We'll have an announcement on our September numbers a little later this week.

Mr. R. Brown: Great Liberal government.

Mr. Palmer: Again, the credit here goes to the tourism operators across this province who work so hard to make Prince Edward Island a world-class destination.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Great job, boys; great job.

Like my mother used to say all the time: Liberal times are great times.

Mr. Palmer: There are many great examples of businesses across the province that are growing and adding jobs.

Standard Arrow in Slemon Park recently announced an expansion to its test cell, which is creating up to 75 new jobs. The company is taking on new contracts and new work as the company realigns.

The former Little Christo's pizza plant in DeSable is now home to two businesses after being vacant for more than a decade.

Eastern Fabricators in Georgetown is growing and adding jobs after moving into the former lumber yard, which was vacant for many years.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, Tories shut it down.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Silliker Glass in Borden-Carleton has expanded into a new space and has added jobs, Somru BioScience Inc. opened a new facility in the bio commons, and right next-door there's a major expansion taking place at Canada's Island Garden with one of the biggest building footprints on the Island.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: No, that's the truth.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: There are many, many more; too many to mention here today.

To support this incredible growth, our government offers a variety of supports for all sizes of the business in all sectors of the provincial economy.

Our loan portfolio supports over 1,000 clients across the Island with over \$360 million in financing. The majority of those clients are primary producers, farmers and fishermen.

They make the biggest contribution to our economy of all the sectors and just like any other small business they sometimes need support to expand operations, approving efficiency and adding jobs.

That's why our financing supports are so vital to the economic health of this province.

Despite what some might say, these supports are available to all businesses and approvals are granted based on the strength of the business plan and the ability of the client to pay the loan back with interest.

We also have a wide variety of supports available through Innovation PEI.

For small and emerging businesses we have support like the Ignition Fund, the Pilot and Discovery Fund, the Development and Commercialization Fund, and Regional Product Development Fund that help new businesses get off the ground and develop their products for market.

We also offer tax and labour incentives that allow our province to compete with all other

jurisdictions in a very, very competitive environment.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Palmer: These supports provide assistance to all kinds of businesses of all sizes, big and small.

In order to keep the incredible momentum going in the provincial economy, our government introduced two new initiatives over the last year.

A new small business investment grant will provide 15% to a business owner who is investing up to \$25,000 in their business.

Mr. R. Brown: That's good.

Mr. Palmer: That could mean as much as \$3,750 back into the pocket of the business that they can further invest. We've also introduced two tax breaks for small businesses that will save entrepreneurs across the province, up to \$5,000 a year –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Palmer: – in their taxes.

That's double what we promised earlier this year and a direct result of the \$75 million surplus announced earlier this month.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: Again, that's money that can be reinvested into the businesses to help them grow, develop new products and add jobs.

Another direct result of the surplus is a further increase of the \$500 in basic personal amount for individual taxpayers and it's safe to say that the surplus itself is a result of a red hot economy. The strength of the Islands economy is the result of the ambition and the hard work of our business community.

Prince Edward Island is mighty for many reasons but one of the biggest is our entrepreneurs and business people who dream big and turn those dreams into reality.

I give them all the credit for this success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job, great job. Red hot, red hot; Liberal hot.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't want to stand up; those chairs are so comfortable this year.

It's my pleasure to rise and recognize the strength of our provincial economy. As I have said many times, our provinces economy is booming with no sign of slowing down. Our small but mighty province continues to surprise everyone.

We are leading in Atlantic region and the country in several areas and exceeding the national average in others.

This puts us in a strong fiscal position to invest in the areas that mean the most to Islanders like housing, mental health, tax relief and supporting Island families.

A strong economy and responsible management of taxpayers' dollars is crucial to the success of our province, now and far into the future. It is Islanders that are driving this success across PEI and we want to see everyone sharing the benefits and that's exactly what we've been able to do.

The economy's success has allowed us to invest in many areas that are making a real difference in the lives of Islanders and Island businesses such as, an increase of 32 million in the health care system and more than 30 million in housing initiatives.

We're on track to exceed our goal of 275 new rent supplements, we have free tuition for more than 1,000 Island students at post-secondary's, 400 new childcare spaces, an additional 1.2 million in child care subsidies, an increase of \$1,000 in the basic personal amount which equates to 8.2 million, 10% clean energy price incentive valued at \$10 million annually, a decrease of 1% in small business tax at a rate of 4.1 million, the creation of the new small business investment grant – so we're doing as much as possible to give back and put more money in the pockets of Islanders.

More and more people are calling Prince Edward Island a home as our population continues to rise. This summer our population hit 153,244 an increase of 1.8% over 2017.

It is easy to see that Prince Edward Island is a place where people want to live, work and stay and we are making that possible.

Our vibrant business community is innovative, thriving and busy putting Prince Edward Island in the high quality products we offer on the world map.

We are generating savings for our small businesses – the backbone of our economy – so they can reinvest and continue to grow.

Thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of Islanders, small businesses growth is rapid and because of this more Islanders are working than ever before.

Partnerships with industries and initiatives such as team trucking, team seafood, team construction and harvest and prosper are helping Islanders find jobs and help companies in various sectors fill high demand vacancies.

There have been over 6,600 new full time jobs since 2016. Prince Edward Island's nominal GDP has grown over the last five years and leads the Atlantic region at 19.4% –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – it is ahead of the national rate by more than two percentage points.

Real GDP figures show PEI's economy is growing at 3.5% in 2017, third amongst all the provinces in Canada. This upward trend continues. The Conference Board of Canada outlook shows PEI leading the country by 2.8% for this year.

Last week, the Premier and I announced that PEI has a \$75 million surplus, a direct result of an economy that is on a roll and leading the country.

This is a great opportunity for us to show the success we are having and to again share the

success with Islanders by putting more money in their pockets.

We're also able to take this opportunity to pay down our net debt for the first time in over a decade.

It is important to remember that lower debt means lower interest costs going forward. To put this in perspective, lowering the debt by \$75 million will free up \$3.2 million for investments in what means the most to Islanders and reducing taxes. It is like found money.

Islanders are innovative, ambitious and hardworking and are continuing to exceed expectations. Our government knows how important it is to use Island taxpayers dollars responsibly and that is exactly what we are doing.

We must continue to work together with business leaders, industry organizations, trade groups and all Islanders to continue to stimulate the economy.

The driving force behind our strong economy is our people. I want to thank each and every Islander for contributing to our success and making big things happen on our Mighty Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

An Hon. Member: He had to leave – he's so embarrassed he left.

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

Ms. Biggar: Could I have the podium please?

Mr. R. Brown: Our whip will go out and get him.

An Hon. Member: What happened Sid?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and to support this motion and to highlight specifically, government investment in infrastructure and

how that drives our economic development. I want to recognize the work of Islanders and our public service who have helped contribute to that and to the work that we've been able to put together.

Government continues to build and maintain strong, stable infrastructure. Strong, stable infrastructure fosters economic growth, provides access to resources and markets and allows for the safe efficient transportation of goods to world markets.

Reliable and innovative infrastructure leads to business growth, provides job opportunities, and results in long-term economic development.

From building schools and health care facilities, to improving our roads and highways, it is clear that government's investments in infrastructure are paying off. Prince Edward Island is Canada's only jurisdiction to show continuous economic growth since 2008.

Compensation of employees has grown by 4.1% through the second quarter of 2018, tied with New Brunswick for the fastest growth in the Atlantic region. Employment has grown 3.1% on a year-to-date basis through October; the fastest in the country and well ahead of the national average of 1.3%.

Growth in employment through October is 4,100 jobs. The seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate is 7.2% for October, which is the lowest on record for PEI since 1976.

Investing in infrastructure generates jobs and economic growth; 7,000 jobs have been created since 2016.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: The Northumberland Strait power cable project, valued at up to \$140 million, is the province's largest capital project in recent years since the Confederation Bridge.

Since 2015, government has tendered over 300 capital building projects, totaling \$90 million. We have 14 major capital projects under way at the moment this fiscal year, including manors in Tyne Valley and

Montague, Three Oaks renovation, school additions and hospital improvements.

We have 13 more major capital projects under design, including improvements at Western Hospital, KCMH, manors, schools, seniors' housing, with an investment of over \$45 million.

PEI successfully negotiated with Ottawa to include collector roads or our roads to resources, under the New Building Canada Fund. PEI has allocated \$277 million in federal funding under the provincial-territorial infrastructure component of the New Building Canada Fund.

Previously, only Routes 1, 1A, 2 and 3 were eligible. The change means many of PEI's 830 kilometres of collector roads are now eligible for support and we oversaw funding for nearly 300 infrastructure projects. This includes water and wastewater improvements with provincial, federal and community funding for North Rustico, Souris, Kinkora and many other Island communities from tip-to-tip.

There have been almost \$88 million given to 47 projects across PEI, to improve water and wastewater management. There has been more than \$1 million in investments in public transit, in partnership with the federal government in communities serving three municipalities. There have been investments to expand the runway at Charlottetown Airport, increasing transportation options for Islanders and helping businesses get their products to market. It's a significant financial investment for the airport and significant economic impact across PEI.

There have been investments to expanding docking stations at Port Charlottetown, allowing more vessels to dock at once and increasing time passengers can spend ashore. This is an opportunity for exponential growth to the economy throughout the province. Half of the passengers will walk around Charlottetown looking for places to eat; visit and shop, and the other half will go on land excursions across Prince Edward Island. The passengers all eat somewhere and they all spend their money. The average cruise ship passenger spends \$100 in each port.

There's also an economic benefit in the form of commercial shipping to the expansion of the port. When there aren't two cruise ships docked at the same time, a commercial ship can also dock there, thanks to this expansion.

It will mean \$16.5 million in savings for Islanders, from cheaper fuel, fertilizer and gravel. But most of all, it means more opportunities to share with the world why Prince Edward Island is the Mighty Island.

We've negotiated the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program bilateral agreement with the federal government, which we just signed this year, enabling \$367 million in new federal funding to be allocated for PEI infrastructure over the next 10 years.

Working with local watersheds, we led the creation of the Bonshaw Hills Provincial Park, which is a great tourism and recreation action centre. The park now includes 20 plus kilometres of multi-use trail, wheelchair-accessible natural playground, and protection of more than 400 acres of land under the *Natural Areas Protection Act*.

In collaboration with the Town of Souris, we completed coastal management restoration along the Souris causeway beach and tourist area. And government has recently been recognized with an environmental award for this work. And this is just one example of government working with communities to mitigate against climate change.

And speaking of climate change, government has 29 buildings that used biomass heat during the winter of 2017-2018, and we are working on 15 to 20 more installations over the next three years. Biomass is an environmentally, responsible, renewable energy source that will reduce our carbon input, limit our exposure to rising and falling energy prices and supports our provincial energy strategy and local economy.

Biomass heating supports our local industry and will result in hundreds of thousands of dollars, traditionally spent on imported fuel, will now be spent locally on a renewable homegrown energy source. Biomass at PEI government buildings is now displacing approximately 4 million litres of fuel oil

annually with an associated GHG reduction of approximately 11,000 tonnes.

More broadly, our efforts to fight climate change, while protecting the pocketbooks of Islanders, has helped residents save over \$10 million on their energy bills, while reducing CO₂ emissions by 25,000 tonnes and saving \$1.5 million of home heating fuel and helping Islanders who are in the most need to save dollars on their energy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Ms. Biggar: PEI's electricity has increased by 15% in its use since 2015. Thanks to provincial infrastructure investment, this is offset by clean, renewable, locally-produced wind energy.

Together, the province's four wind farms generate more than 220-kilowatt hours of energy for Island users. Our Island wind farms generate annual revenue of approximately \$20 million for the province.

The PEI Energy Corporation supplies approximately 24% of the province's electrical energy requirements with wind energy. And we're working to expand this capacity by adding 30 megawatts in 2019 and 40 megawatts in 2025.

We've invested more than \$120 million in capital road and bridge improvements since 2015. This includes repairing more than 16 bridge structures and completing more than 120 kilometres in paving projects in order to facilitate rural transport and market access and to improve traffic safety.

We have completed \$42 million worth of capital road and bridge projects in 2018, including the Oyster Bed roundabout, the Murray Harbour bridge, the Newton roundabout, and the Trans-Canada Highway extension.

The Trans-Canada Highway extension project is anticipated to create over 500 jobs directly, and generate 400 million in domestic – gross domestic product within the provincial economy during this construction phase.

Twenty-six hundred and forty vehicles travel the TCH from Maypoint to York Point Road daily at peak periods. Seventeen thousand two hundred vehicles travel on the TCH from York Point Road daily at peak periods. The new route will make these areas safer.

Greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced along a more efficient highway alignment that includes roundabouts.

Mr. Trivers: Relevance?

Ms. Biggar: Roundabouts are proven to save lives and reduce serious collisions.

As part of the TCH expansion, we have been, and will continue, to be working with the Central Queens Wildlife Federation to reconstruct two sections of the Clyde River to improve fish habitat.

There's a building boom going on in Cornwall, thanks, in part, to the infrastructure upgrades to the TCH.

Mr. Trivers: Must be speaking to a different motion.

Ms. Biggar: Cornwall is growing fast in the past number of years.

Throughout the province, the value of building permits has increased 19% on a year-to-date basis through September, when nationally, the value of building permits has grown by 15.5% over the same period.

Mr. Trivers: Now if only people could get (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Housing starts are up to 3.6% through the third quarter of 2018; the second fastest growing growth amongst provinces.

Mr. Trivers: Minister must be asleep at the wheel.

Ms. Biggar: This is compared to nationally where housing starts are down 2.5% over this period.

We're getting people to work. We are getting our exports to world markets. We are saving money for Islanders on electricity that runs our local businesses and homes.

Most importantly, we're making sure our schools, communities –

Mr. Trivers: Great PC (Indistinct) right there.

Ms. Biggar: – health care facilities are in great condition to ensure all Islanders can live their lives best they can.

Our investments in transportation, energy, public buildings, upgraded water and sewer systems, not only boost economic growth, but they improve the lives of Islanders. Infrastructure is a key driver to that economic growth.

Mr. R. Brown: That's right.

Ms. Biggar: Just to highlight: our Prince Edward Island infrastructure commitments from 2015 to present, the electricity cable \$142 million, water and waste water, again, \$88 million for 47 projects in 17 municipalities, the gas tax fund, \$58 million for 227 projects in municipalities across PEI.

The New Building Canada Fund, Small Communities Fund, \$8 million for 13 projects in various communities, the Provincial Infrastructure Fund \$3 million for 34 projects in various communities.

Provincial road and bridge projects funded by the New Building Canada's Fund national and regional projects program, \$111 million for 12 projects or project bundles. Provincial manor projects funded by New Building Canada's national regional projects program, \$24 million dollars for a bundle of two projects; the Riverview and Tyne Valley Manors. Charlottetown Airport, \$18 million dollars for main runway rehabilitation. Charlottetown Port, \$12 million for birth expansion. Public transit, \$1 million for two projects serving three municipalities. Total of those values since 2015 is \$465 million and 330 projects.

Mr. R. Brown: 465 (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: [Hear, hear!]

Mr. R. Brown: Haven't seen that since the 70s.

Ms. Biggar: Our provincial buildings, including health and education, there's been over 300 capital building projects tendering a total of over \$90 million. The roads and bridges we invested in was 120 million in those.

We are continuing to work on those projects that are driving the economy, putting money in the pockets of Islanders, helping our businesses grow and get their products to market, and our government is committed to making investments that reflect the priorities of Islanders – investments in our future, investments in public safety, housing, health care, schools.

We will work closely with business leaders, industry organizations, trade groups, and all Islanders to maintain this momentum, not only in infrastructure, but throughout our economy.

For that reason, I'm proud to be part of this government and proud to support this motion.

Mr. R. Brown: Haven't slowed down a bit.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard one perspective on the Prince Edward Island economy and how it's doing. There are some definite pluses to how the economy has been doing.

Some Hon. Members: [Hear, hear!]

Mr. Myers: They like you.

Mr. Trivers: There are two sides to every story, and there's a lot, a lot of information that's being omitted from the other side.

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Trivers: – For example, and don't just take my word for it –

Mr. R. Brown: We're not.

Mr. Trivers: – I'm going to go right here to our reliable press on this Island. I'm going to look at an article right here posted

September 28th, 2018: "PEI Wages Down in 2018".

An Hon. Member: Oh.

An Hon. Member: A wage increase (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: We're talking about in July they were \$832 a week is what the average wage was in PEI, which was the lowest wages in the country. Not only were they lowest in the country in July, they were down. They decreased from the January before.

There's conflicting messages here. Apparently the economy is on a tear, but people's wages are going down. How is that the case? Where is this money going? I know exactly where it's going. This money is going to taxes that are going to this government so they can give out the money to the people that they want to receive it.

I want to talk to you about another one. Not only do we have the lowest wages in the country, right here, but if you look at another article in the CBC from October 15th, 2018 – this is new data, this is not old data. I'm not going back to 2007 here, like the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism did when he was speaking, or 2008. I'm talking about current, recent data.

This is about the new jobs that are being created. We've already established we have the lowest wages in the country. Now, what about those new jobs being created? Well, if we find out here that job seekers on PEI are being offered the lowest wages in the country, as well. The new jobs that are being created are for the lowest hourly wage in the entire country.

How much lower? Six dollars an hour lower on average than what the new job offerings are in the rest of the country. That's – not only that, they are also trending downward.

If we look at 2016 on Prince Edward Island, the average hourly wage was \$16.30, and do you know what it is today? \$14.40 – almost \$2 less per hour is being offered for these new jobs that are being created than there was in 2016.

The jobs on PEI that are being created are \$6 below the national average, and they've gone, on average, down \$2 an hour in the last couple of years. So the economy supposedly on a tear, by the measures that this government is using, but who is benefitting? It's not the people that are getting the new jobs. It's not the people that are in the current jobs.

Mr. MacDonald: Are you criticizing the private sector?

Mr. Trivers: It's the government that is benefitting because they're getting the taxes and they're choosing to spend it and give the money to the people that they want to give it to.

Mr. Myers: They want it for their rich friends.

Mr. Trivers: All you have to do is go into any establishment on PEI that the hard working people of this province go into.

When I go into a Lions Club, and people are there after work, grabbing an after work drink, in that sort of place, they come up to me and they say: we are so frustrated; we are the ones that are doing all of the hard work in this province. I'm a trades person, they say to me. The best I can hope for is maybe 20 bucks an hour and I've got 25 years of experience, but more often than not, they say they are making \$16 an hour or \$18 an hour – which is above this average wage of \$14.40. But they are saying: I don't understand what is happening. These contractors are charging \$40 and \$50 an hour, but I'm only making \$16 an hour.

Something is wrong with this governments plan, and the way this economy is growing. We are seeing a split – we're seeing the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer, or at the very least, staying in the same place. That's a problem. That's a problem with the way that this economy is going.

One of the reasons this is happening is because it's a fundamentally different approach in philosophy between Liberals and what we would do as Progressive Conservatives.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: And Liberals – what they like to do –

Ms. Biggar: Tell us.

Mr. Trivers: – what they like to do, is they like to tax and tax and tax some more. We've heard today in Question Period just some of the areas that the taxes have gone on –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Careful, careful. You have apologized enough this week.

Mr. Trivers: – when the taxes come into government, they like that. Because then, they get to decide who gets that money. And then they get to buy their way, use peoples own money to buy their way back into power. That's the Liberal way.

The Progressive Conservative way, is we let people –

Mr. Roach: Speak to the motion.

Mr. Trivers: – keep their tax dollars, we let the free market decide where that money goes, that's the Progressive Conservative way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: So –

Mr. R. Brown: At least you got a philosophy (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – this government–

An Hon. Member: Legal advice (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – this government is using methods to get their revenue that have nothing to do with the economy being on a tear.

For example, they've got a flawed PNP program, that the feds finally started to clean up after the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism claimed there some nothing wrong with it and everything was great –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – and now we've had to shut them down and change it–

An Hon. Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Trivers: \$18 million dollars a year, from defaults and PNP. That's how they are getting their money. It has nothing to do with the economy being on a tear. And if it is on a tear, it's an artificial tear –

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Trivers: – it's a rip in our Island's fabric, caused by their poor policies on PNP.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: Tell that to the five thousand (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – another example of the way –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: The five thousand you signed in one afternoon?

Mr. Trivers: – they pad the numbers, is they take things like the crop insurance premiums that our farmers are paying; and there'd at least \$8 million that are counted towards their \$75 million surplus. This government crows, like: this is our money because of our great policies –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Carry it over (Indistinct), when we need it.

Mr. Trivers: – so, \$8 million, that had been counted right there –

Mr. R. Brown: We're here for the farmer, when the farmer needs it.

Mr. Trivers: I mean, it's really incredible and what I hear when I'm in the hockey dressing room, or when I'm out talking to people door to door, is: how could this government ever have under estimated a surplus so much?

I mean, it was estimated originally at \$600,000; then it was changed to \$1.2 million and then when it came to the actual, came in at – yes – \$75 million.

Mr. R. Brown: Great economy (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: And you got to wonder, what's going to happen in the next year because there's something – we're still digging into it – we're going to find out exactly –

Mr. R. Brown: You'll have to (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – where that \$75 million came from, because there's something that just does not add up.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: And I'll tell you one thing. It sure is a good thing that we actually have a law, here in this province that you have to take any surplus and apply it against the debt, because I can't imagine if we didn't, where that money would have gone.

Mr. R. Brown: That was under the Tories (Indistinct) –

Mr. Trivers: And it's a good thing we do. That \$75 million against the debt– this is a good thing. It's going to save us, what, approximately \$3 million a year in interest that we are paying. So, that is a really good thing, and I will give you credit for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: So we were paying around –

Mr. R. Brown: We have a seat over here for you

Mr. Trivers: – around \$125 million a year in interest, hopefully that will come down to \$123.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Yes, Mr. Speaker, \$340,000 a day, give or take, in interest. So, let's get that down, that's good –

Mr. Roach: Wow (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: But, what we are seeing now, is this government puts forward motions like we're speaking to you right now. Recognizing the strength of the provincial economy, basically saying –

Mr. Roach: Cut him loose.

Mr. Trivers: – I smell an election coming up. It's time to open up the coffers –

An Hon. Member: What do you say to that?

Mr. Trivers: – and take this surplus that we had last year was already applied to the debt –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) last year.

Mr. Roach: And the year before.

Mr. Trivers: – and we're going to spend, next years' surplus that we claim is there, to try to buy your votes in the next election.

An Hon. Member: No.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: That's what's going on. That's what this motion is all about. This motion is misleading Islanders, to think that this government is doing the work that hard paying tax payers are doing, and that they've got the money that they can spend on all of these promises we are rolling out, when we don't even know if we actually do.

Mr. Roach: I think the Auditor General (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I wanted to talk about some of the infrastructure projects that the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy –

An Hon. Member: Great.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – I mean, she and her department are really great at building roundabouts. And we know how much Islanders love them.

Ms. Biggar: Saving lives.

Mr. Roach: Safety.

Mr. Trivers: There are some decent roundabouts, yes. Like the one at Oyster Bed Bridge, I've heard good things about. But there are some that –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – people are really scratching their heads on.

Mr. Roach: So why (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – down at Scales Pond and Newton Road, they're going: Why is there a roundabout there?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct), thank you very much.

Mr. Trivers: The Cornwall Bypass was one of the absolute biggest infrastructure projects that this government has put forward in their mandate; \$65 million, plus. We're not sure what it's going to end at –

Ms. Biggar: 34.

Mr. Trivers: – with all of the overruns. And the provincial portion is what? Half of that.

Ms. Biggar: 34.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. But you know what, I was on Twitter today and the Town of Cornwall, what are they doing?

Mr. Roach: Where you live isn't it?

An Hon. Member: Careful.

Mr. Trivers: They're putting on a bus, to send people over to Moncton to do some shopping trips. That's the payment they get. That's the economy on PEI –

Ms. Biggar: So they're not allowed to (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: The Town of Cornwall is sending buses over to Moncton now that they got this great –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – The Cornwall Bypass is bypassing Cornwall. It's bypassing the

whole Island and sending people right over to Moncton.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It's going through Kinkora, it's going through Albany, and it's going through (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I'm not too sure about these infrastructure projects.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) going to apologize but (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: If we want to see infrastructure –

An Hon. Member: We know who you're going to be apologize (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: We want to talk about high-speed internet. So this government is really confused on their high-speed internet plans. Apparently, we were going to have a \$30 million high-speed Internet backbone that was cancelled.

And now, we're finally seeing the action that we over here, in the official opposition, suggested initially, which was: let's go out to existing ISP's, local ISP's, and let them actually build the infrastructure.

An Hon. Member: You get that from (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: But you know what, I still think this government is a little misplaced. They are talking about giving grants, as far as I can tell. Although, it's a little unclear what they're doing. What we need to talk about, if this government would give loans to ISPs, to build high-speed Internet infrastructures, in the same way they do to their friends of government in the fog bank, then we would have already seen high-speed internet across this Island a long time ago.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: I don't know.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) government politics.

Mr. Trivers: When I see this motion, I think to myself, A – and it does give credit here–

Ms. Biggar: “And I think to myself, what a wonderful world”.

Mr. Trivers: – to a bit, but not enough. Hard working Islanders are the ones that have built the PEI economy.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Mr. Trivers: It hasn't happened in the last three years, it's been going on for decades. We're seeing the results of Islanders hard work over many decades; the New Glasgow Lobster Suppers 60th anniversary, Chez Yvonne's Restaurant 50th anniversary, Fairway Cottages 20th anniversary –

Ms. Biggar: They all hire people.

Mr. Trivers: – and these are businesses that have been working for decades to build our economy. It's through corporate taxes –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – that this government is getting its revenues, and that's why they're claiming this economy is on a tear. It's not their win to claim, it's a win for the hard working people of Prince Edward Island.

Speaking of which –

Mr. R. Brown: Take your time, there's a big list of great things to get.

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Sum 'er up.

Mr. MacEwen: Small business tax –

Mr. Trivers: – that's exactly what I was going for –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: That's exactly what I was going for.

So, we saw that this government raised the small business tax, and raise it, and raise it. And of course, heard from organizations like the Summerside and the Charlottetown Chambers of Commerce and now, you're giving little wee bits back, half a per cent at a time.

I think that you'll probably see coming out, the real numbers on the taxes – how much this government has collected, versus how much they gave back.

The Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce commented on it immediately and said –

Mr. Roach: Applauded it.

Mr. Trivers: – okay, if the economy is really on a tear and you really believe that it is the small businesses of Prince Edward Island that are doing it – which I certainly hope you do – then why don't you give them back all of the tax money that you've been taking from them?

All those increases – instead of just a half per cent at a time, that's what we need to see.

If you want to see the economy really continue to grow, that's what you need to do.

Mr. R. Brown: How would you pay for your roads –

Mr. Trivers: In conclusion –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Just give him time.

Mr. Trivers: I would like to maybe suggest that instead of resolving that the provincial government continue to work very closely business leaders et cetera, that the provincial government – let them operate on their own, given them back their tax money and let them do what they know how to do best in a free market economy and keep their hand – keep the government hands out of their pockets, that's what I would suggest.

There are just so many ways that this government has raised taxes, for example, we saw back in a previous administration the HST was brought in even though it was

promised them not. There's a lot of folks over there that were in that administration that brought in the HST at 4%.

Then there was a promise made that it wouldn't be raised again and one of the first things this government did was raise the HST again – another consumption tax raised.

When you keep raising taxes, that's what I'm talking about this difference in philosophy. Tax and tax and tax and tax and then when you start spending, you claim that it's all the government that's doing things well.

If you let that money stay with the businesses – let the money stay with individuals on this Island and let them decide where the money should be spent as opposed to the government taking it in.

Anyhow, I'm going to conclude there –

Mr. LaVie: Oh no, no no –

Mr. R. Brown: No, no (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I hope that we hear some more from the Progressive Conservatives on this side about the philosophy that really should be used to stimulate our economy and what should be done with tax revenues –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – ie: give it back to people.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm proud to rise and speak in support of this motion and to recognize the strength of our Prince Edward Island economy, where that strength comes from and what we are able to do with it as a province, as a government and as Islanders collectively.

The growth is there, in the three years: 2015, 2016, 2017 that we've been in government, Prince Edward Island has the third highest

growth among the provinces after British Columbia and Ontario.

The Conference Board of Canada has its projections for 2018 and 2019, indicating and forecasting that Prince Edward Island will lead among the provinces in those two years.

What we have as an Island economy, and we can be very proud of this, is an economy that is diversified, that is integrated and that is on a sustainable footing. Prince Edward Islanders can be very proud of this.

We've heard about the evidence in terms of job creation – 7,000; 7,000 new full time jobs since 2016.

When we came first to office we heard during that first year from the opposition: jobs, jobs, jobs is all we heard. Now, since we got to that first year in and got on a real take-off point, we haven't heard them say anything about jobs –

Mr. Trivers: Lowest wages in the country.

Premier MacLauchlan: – But when they do – I'm glad you said that because let me pick up on this; we have an economy that is integrated, that's diversified and let me speak about the diversification of our economy.

Statistics Canada measures 20 sectors of the economy. In 2017 in Prince Edward Island they reported last week, Prince Edward Island had 3.5% real growth in 2012 dollars, that's a phenomenal achievement, unheard of.

Mr. Trivers: Where's the money, who's got the money?

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me say that what we also saw in 2017, was that we had real growth in terms of jobs, we had real growth in terms of the areas of the province, all parts of our provinces have benefitted and the sectors of our economy – of the 20 sectors that Statistics Canada measures, Prince Edward Island saw growth in 18 of them.

The sectors that didn't see growth, and they weren't far off though, minus one, 1.5% were in crops because we had a dry summer.

That says a lot about the diversification, the split between service industries and goods producing industries, about 75 – not quite 75% service, to slightly over 25 or around 25% in goods.

It's another way of understanding where all of this growth is coming from and some of it may not be visible but let me –

Mr. Trivers: The number of Islanders living in poverty is going up.

Premier MacLauchlan: – let me take this particular point that the opposition seems to love, which is to talk about the lowest average wage.

There's a reason why Prince Edward Island doesn't have the highest average wage in the country because we don't have in the top 20% of our income earners, people making millions of dollars and that's exactly how you get an average –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Averages –

Mr. LaVie: It's all right when you make it.

Mr. Myers: Just a couple of you.

Premier MacLauchlan: Just let me say, Mr. Speaker –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me say, Mr. Speaker because I hope they'll go home and think about it, I expect there are four people of the eight over there who made more than I did last year because they've got more than one job.

Let me come back to what Islanders are making, what Islanders are making –

Mr. Trivers: 20% live in (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: They are making real dollars for doing real work –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – 7,000 new full-time job and let me tell you, guess which

province has the second highest average wage in this country, Newfoundland and Labrador. They've got people with big salaries and they've got people who have no jobs.

If the opposition is saying they'd rather have the highest average and trade spots with Newfoundland and Labrador, I don't think you can sell that to Prince Edward Islanders.

This is not about averages, this is about real people with real lives doing real work and earning an income.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Real (Indistinct), real Islanders.

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me tell you what the jobs are that those people are doing because the opposition is belittling, belittling those jobs and the work that those Islanders are doing.

Last year, the growth that we're talking about, 700 new jobs in agriculture between 2015 and 2018, our primary sectors; construction – it says here 400 new jobs, I expect it's significantly more than 400 new jobs; manufacturing – and let me tell you there are provinces in this region that would love to be able to say this. We have in three years 1,400 –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – new jobs in manufacturing, in quality manufacturing. In manufacturing that is going to world markets and it is putting our province on the map as the province that is growing in exports.

In two years alone –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – and this is why I want you to stop talking about the average that factors in the fact that somebody in Ontario makes a whole lot of money.

In 2015 and 2016, labour income in our province increased by \$225 million (Indistinct) pockets.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: I'm calling on the opposition to stop belittling Island workers, to stop –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – to stop belittling the employers that are creating those jobs and to stop comparing yourselves to the rich kids in Ontario, because that's not what we're doing, we're building an Island economy through the work of Island workers and through the investments of Island businesses.

Let me tell you something else –

Mr. Myers: You chased around an unpopular premier in Ontario for a (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – and let me tell you something else –

Mr. Myers: You went everywhere she went for a little while.

Premier MacLauchlan: – something else, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about what this government does with some money when it has the chance, when our economy grows.

The first thing we did, when we came to government, was the generic drug program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: The generic drug programs, more than 21,000 Prince Edward Islanders have signed up, have registered, because they see the benefit. That's an example of what we're doing.

What we have done, as a government, is identify the ways in which we can go where Islanders will know that they will get the benefit. 21,000 Prince Edward Islanders

who didn't previously have any drug coverage.

We talked earlier today about the heat pumps, Islanders are voting with their feet. We talked about the home renovation program, 4,000 Prince Edward Islanders benefitting from those home renovation programs that were cancelled by the previous government.

Mr. Myers: Robert Ghiz?

You guys just started in 2015, (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Prince Edward Islanders are seeing the benefits.

Let me tell you about what we've done in the whole area of social assistance. Five consecutive years of increases in the food allowance, and a major increase now announced to take place on the first of January of 2019. That's real progress for Islanders. Two big increases in the personal comfort allowance.

We have increased the lodging or the shelter allowance with another big further increase to come in January. These are two programs that I want to really draw to your attention because it's again, it's on this whole philosophy that we have which is: you go where you're needed. You grow the economy and you take those resources so that Islanders benefit.

One is the rebate or the reduction – the automatic reduction that Prince Edward Islanders will see in their student loans. \$3,500 a year; \$3,500 a year for four years at a stage in people's lives when they are setting up homes, they're getting careers started, they've got other bills to pay and it's up to them to do what they want with that money. It is tax free and it is automatic (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me tell you about another program that we're really proud of and it is our rent supplements. People are saying: oh we're the (Indistinct) why don't you build something. We're going where the people are with rent supplements that are in the hundreds of

dollars a month – hundreds of dollars a month for Islanders who need the most.

We said in April, the finance minister said, because he was encouraged by the Minister of Family and Human Services and all of us to act in this area. That we were going to have 275 rent supplements in 2018-2019. Well guess what? Because of the hard work of public servants working with developers, working with people who are in need of these supplements, we're now on the verge of having the 275 out the door in the hands of people and we're going to keep going. We're going to keep going because we know that Islanders are benefitting.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: But let me tell you where some more of those jobs are: in professional, scientific and technical jobs – 500; health care and social assistance, 200; information, culture and recreation, 600 jobs; transportation and warehousing, 400 jobs.

Those are real people, real Islanders with real lives who are building their families, they're building their communities, and they're paying their taxes. –

Mr. LaVie: What about the ones you fired (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The reason that we have the surplus is because Island businesses are doing well.

The number one contributor was corporate taxes. The second contributor was consumption taxes. Any economist will tell you this is the way it should go. Third was personal income taxes, and that's the sign of a diversified, healthy economy where people are producing – where they've got money in their own lives, and in their own pockets, and in their own families. That's why this province is doing as well as it has.

We didn't over estimate last spring. I know when we said 600,000, I think the opposition had it spent about 80 times in the next three or four days.

One thing that people need to understand, and I think especially across the floor, is that it does take a while to, in particular, on the

revenue side of running a government that's on the order of just under 2 billion dollars, to understand exactly where that revenue comes from. It's calculated by various formulas, in some cases over as many as six years in the case of the HST.

Mr. Trivers: Don't forget the federal government (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: You can't start counting your chickens before they hatch. Let me tell you about the federal government. Of the increase of 130 million, 10 million came from transfers, 120 million came because Islanders are profiting, doing well, and in a position to pay taxes. That's a (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Let me tell you something else because actually – and I am glad it was brought up by the Member from Rustico-Emerald and that is, we did pay down the debt. We did pay down the debt.

Listen to this, between 2015 and 2018 the debt the GDP of this province, which is the most important –

Mr. Myers: Oh. (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Let's hear this, let's hear this, let's hear it.

The debt ratio, if you can't handle the GDP just go with the debt ratio that'd make it easier for you, went from 36.5% in 2015 to 32% this year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Just in case that's too difficult for the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to understand, let me put it in these terms –

An Hon. Member: Oh.

Mr. Myers: The GDP's way over my head.

Premier MacLauchlan: Prince Edward Island today, in terms of our debt ratio – just call it that for simplification – has the fourth lowest debt ratio of any province in this

country. Guess where the other three are – Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC. We have the lowest debt ratio east of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: [Hear, hear!]

Mr. Myers: And still nobody likes you. (Indistinct) no credibility and no poll numbers. Your own party wants you to resign (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: So that is – and the Member from Rustico-Emerald is right, it does put future generations on a sounder footing. It does enable a government that is in a position to invest where Islanders will benefit from it to benefit, to invest.

Since coming to government, we've had a 20% increase in investments in health. We've had between 18 and 19% increase in investments in education. We've had investments, current and future, in family and human services on the same scale. Those are our priorities.

The Island does well, Islanders do well if you're embarrassed about the fact that the wages they're earning – they're doing well, they've got jobs. I guess you'd rather they didn't have jobs by the sound of it, we'd have a higher average wage.

We're investing in health, and education, and family and human services, and in Islanders where they can take the fastest advantage, including – and the Minister of Finance spoke about this – in reduced taxes. That is exactly what we stand for, we'll continue to stand for, and we're able to do that because our Island economy is, as the minister who introduced this motion said: red hot.

His reason why he said red, because it's Liberal policies, Liberal government, Liberal (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: No green tape and funny money.

Mr. Myers: Oh, you're done. I missed the end, was it good?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: That's a hard one to follow, Mr. Speaker. I'll do my best.

I'm extremely pleased to rise and speak on this motion.

Many experts will tell you that health performance and economic performance are totally interlinked. Health care is a large and essential recession-proof part of our economy, creating more than 10% of the country's total GDP annually, and supporting more than 2 million jobs according to a Conference Board of Canada analysts for its Canadian Alliance for Sustainable Health Care.

The World Health Organization says that: Better health is central to human happiness and well-being. It also makes an important contribution to economic progress, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive, and save money.

Many factors influence health status and a province's ability to provide quality health services for its people.

A strong economy and a strong public purse means that we can invest into our health care system which is a major benefit for all Islanders.

I recently toured our new Provincial Renal Clinic, which has just opened its doors last week. This is an example of our strong economy leading to improvements in our health care system.

We've expanded programs like our student well-being teams, our CPOD clinics and our 100 new long-term care beds.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: These enhancements in health care are only possible if we have the financial backing of a strong vibrant economy.

The health care sector is a major source of spending for governments. Yet, it is also an important driver of economic growth – a perspective that is quite often overlooked. The health care sector continues to be our provinces wealth by improving health outcomes and creating jobs.

Health care facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes provide jobs and income to people in the community. As these employees spend their income in the community, a ripple spreads throughout the economy creating additional jobs and income in other economic sectors.

For employers, effective health care means that their employees are missing less work for health reasons and our citizens are properly immunized and we have preventive health supports in place to promote a healthy society.

I strongly support this motion to continue our work with business leaders, industry organizations, trade groups and all Islanders to identify and implement measures to stimulate our economy.

This year, we have recruited 20 new doctors to PEI and we have another six signed on to come to join our system in 2019.

Having a strong economy is absolutely vital to our recruitment efforts as we reach out to attract new physicians, NP's and other health care providers to our province, our strong economy is a testament to our resilience, our stability and our determination.

Health is where as a province, we spend the majority of our dollars, so it is so very important for us all to see that a strong economy has a fundamental impact on the health and well-being system that we all provide to our citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard a lot of numbers, a lot of percentages but there are a couple things that (Indistinct) to provide some context, which is that taxes are how we pay for programs and services without taxes, there are no programs and services.

When we look at the amount of taxes that we're getting, what are we doing with that

and are we actually getting the programs and services that those taxes require?

We shouldn't be surprised that we've seen such an increase in taxes in the resulting surplus, because we have for awhile been seeing, not only the pressures on health care, housing and education, but also the increase in population and economic growth as a direct result of provincial strategies.

So it's surprising that the government is surprised when we have been planning and working towards these outcomes for so long.

The \$75 million surplus announced as being applied against the debt, but also funding some other programs – so a little bit of funny-money perhaps – is tax revenues that directly come from that increase in our population, both from income taxes, corporate taxes and other general revenues.

The estimates presented in the spring did not reflect these increases and increases of this extent don't happen overnight.

So as good fiscal managers, we shouldn't wait until the end of a fiscal year to look at trends and the ongoing state of finances. In fact, we know and have had the population numbers and our business numbers for over a period of a number of months and even years, and therefore the surplus is to be expected and planned for.

What this tells us is that not only is our surplus of 2017- 2018, but that the increase in revenues is ongoing and this government is running an undisclosed and significant operating surplus.

What is most worrying, however, rather than having money under the mattress, is that program expenditures – and this is where I'll mention GDP which will make my colleague happy – program expenditures as a percentage of GDP in the province are at their lowest levels in the last five years.

So, we have a significant increase in taxes, significant increase in surplus of revenue, but we do not have an increase in the expenditure on the programs and services that those taxes are meant to support. This is extremely troubling because it shows that government investment in Islanders is not keeping pace with economic growth.

Where we see those pressures in places like health care, housing and education, it is often those who are the most vulnerable that feel it the worst.

We are hearing daily from vulnerable Islanders who are left behind by our red hot economy on a tear and this increased revenue could mean increased program spending in critical areas of need, including; housing, health care and education.

We are beginning to see some hints of this with the release of the strategies around housing and poverty long awaited for and very welcome, but it is very, very troubling when we have 23,000 Islanders who are low-income. One in six Islanders who are in food security, either moderate or severe, which means they are not eating appropriately on a daily basis, that we are also needing to wait until the fall of 2019 and even 2020, for most of those poverty reduction strategy measures to actually be spent.

We have the money now, we have a surplus and an on-going operating surplus, there is no logical reason when we have a clear operational plan and a clear statement of need and a clear indication that the community supports and actually is desirous of the poverty reductions plan to take effect immediately – that we are making people wait for over a full fiscal year for basic things, like increasing how much they get to spend on food.

From that surplus we see that we are able to increase through the poverty reduction plan, food rates, which are currently only 70% of the nutritious food guide lines which were mandated to increase on a yearly basis and that the increase is being reflected does not actually bring that up even to the mandated level.

I'd remind you that we have in our social systems rates, \$200 a month for food for an individual.

We have an increase in shelter rates, so we'll still leave a gap for our average rent of a \$150 a month for the lower rental rate, and up to \$350 a month of a gap in how much rent people get between what they get and what they need for their market rent.

The rent supplements of which we have seen being chaired and they are fantastic that they are going up, but they do not create new spaces. They give money to the people for the spaces they already have – phenomenal, because it means they stay in the spaces, but it is not creating new ones. We cannot continue to call this: new housing spaces when it is not creating new housing spaces. We recognize that you can't create new housing spaces out of thin air, but please call it what it is.

Ideally, if we have additional revenue and additional surplus, then increase those rent surpluses, while still continue to think about how we can invest to help those low income Islanders and those who effectively don't own their home, can barely pay their rent and certainly cannot afford to install a heat pump when they are worried about whether they're actually going to be evicted next month.

We are very pleased to see that many of the key items that are identified in the poverty action plan, which do reflect investing in Islanders where they need it most, are items that have been championed by the Office of the Third Party including: women's shelter, income assistance rate increases, supports to those with disabilities, the community sector network, multi-year funding for that community sector and support for social enterprises.

We would strongly urge the government, if it truly is wanting to recognize the value of all Islanders, that all Islanders should be valued and the 23,000 Islanders who are low income, who are not able to participate in this economy on a tear who are not getting jobs at \$14 an hour or \$18 an hour or even \$11 an hour, who are worried about whether or not they're going to be able to feed their children, pay their rent – would actually benefit and should not be ignored and made to wait until fall 2019 to benefit from this economy, which is as hot as you say.

Finally, a green carbon plan would not only have put money back into pockets of Islanders right now from this rich economy to spend where they need it – including perhaps on food, clothing or shelter allowances – but it would support and develop a green economy through

investments in renewable energy infrastructure, innovation and technology, strong and future proof economic growth and good paying jobs.

We have the opportunity to continue to grow our economy into an economy with a future, recognizing the value of all Islanders and recognizing that our future is changing and we should change along with it.

I hope in that way that what we see is a green hot economy, not only a red one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Deputy Speaker (Casey): Good evening, everyone.

It's nice to be back in the chair.

Orders Other Than Government

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

Ms. Compton: Madam Speaker, we have some bills to introduce.

Speaker: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 3)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 120, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a brief explanation?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

So this bill to amend the *Municipal Government Act (No. 3)* adds a new subsection to section 14 of the *Municipal Government Act (No.3)*, and this allows small municipalities, like ones that don't meet the population or property value criteria in section 13.1 of the act, and also rural municipalities that are grandfathered in, to request that the minister get the government to provide services they don't want to and/or can't afford.

So this allows the minister to provide services for the municipality that the access must be provided, and let the province do it, instead of having the municipality dissolve or raise taxes to an unsustainable state.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Madam Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Innovation PEI Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Third Party, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Innovation PEI Act*, Bill No. 123, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a brief explanation?

Ms. Bell: A brief explanation, Madam Speaker.

An Act to Amend the Innovation PEI Act would add creative and cultural industries and clean technology to the list of Innovation PEI's economic sectors to reflect the diversity of our economy.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Government Advertising Standards Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Rustico-Emerald, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *Government Advertising Standards Act*, Bill No. 124, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a brief explanation?

Mr. MacEwen: I do, Madam Speaker.

This bill is not perfect, but it's certainly symbolic as it's a bill from our former premier and a leader of the Liberal Party of PEI, along with the member of the current Liberal Caucus, I believe.

It was tabled in the Legislature to stop the partisan or inappropriate advertising that we've seen from government. Ironic, since, you know, we've – it's ironic because at that time the Caucus did it because they felt they had started to see this type of partisan advertising at the end of a government and we certainly hope that's not what's happening here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 4)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 121, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, a brief explanation.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Right now in the *Municipal Government Act*, a municipality has to be open, have an office that's located in the municipality and has to be open a minimum of 20 hours a week.

This just allows a municipal office to be open for less than 20 hours a week, and not necessarily be located inside the municipal boundaries.

Speaker: Thank you.

Anybody else?

Mr. Trivers: I have another one, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Madam Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 5)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 5)*, Bill No. 122, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, a brief explanation.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

So, right now if a municipality fails to appoint a chief administration officer, then the minister can go in and appoint a CAO, but they force the municipality to pay the salary of that CAO. This amendment just means if the minister appoints the CAO, they can also choose to have the province pay the salary of the CAO.

Mr. MacEwen: That makes sense.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

Are there anymore?

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Opposition calls Order No. 6, the *Public Intervener Act*, to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 6, *Public Intervener Act*, Bill No. 104, in committee.

Ms. Compton: I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Rustico-Emerald, that this House now do resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'd like to call the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to Chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Public Intervener Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the Bill be now read clause by clause?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Chair: So this was in the Committee of the Whole, and it has to be brought back anyway. We weren't finished speaking – the presenter of that time was giving an overview of it. We will now – did you want to finish you overview? Or do you want to –

Mr. Fox: Maybe we should just be clear where we were, Chair.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Fox: When we actually ended, Chair, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment was finishing up some questions that he had in regards to IRAC and their job in the role.

Ms. Biggar: We could start over, it doesn't matter.

Chair: So the general was already completed, so we will start now, reading it clause by clause.

Mr. J. Brown: Chair, could we have an overview?

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, you might want to refresh our memories.

Chair: Presenter, would you like to give an overview again?

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Basically, going back to page 1823 of Hansard, Bill No. 104 *Public Intervener Act* would allow Public Intervener to be put in place by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to place a lawyer, to intervene on behalf of the public in matters regarding to the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission.

We presently know right now that the Auditor General is conducting a comprehensive review and this would basically be in preparation if she comes forward with recommendations, this probably could assist or will assist, if she so recommended or felt that a Public Intervener should be put in place.

Chair: Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Hon. member, the PEI Energy Commission, back in 2012, did a report, it was called: *Charting Our Electricity Future*. I think the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment was the energy minister at that time. But it had given a lot of recommendations; I know the government at the time promoted and touted it a lot.

I'd just like to quote a few things from it, again I am reading from the final report, *Charting Our Electricity Future* from the PEI Energy Commission, September 2012.

They had mentioned about energy advocates – I'll read a few things on page 24, it talks about "...the legislation in Prince Edward Island makes no reference to the possible appointment of a consumer advocate or public intervener in electricity rate case applications before IRAC. The other three

Atlantic Provinces all have provisions in their respective legislation that not only allow for such an appointment, but also make provision for the funding of an effective intervention by the consumer advocate or public intervener".

I know in section 2.3.2, they mention, and again I'll quote "...In the absence of other interveners with the available technical and financial resources necessary to challenge rate, capital budget and other IRAC filings by Maritime Electric, the Division and/or the PEI Energy Corporation has fulfilled this role for Government in the interest of Island ratepayers. While this has been effective to the extent that it has required Maritime Electric to clarify and justify its position on many aspects of its regulatory filings, neither the Division nor the Corporation is mandated or staffed to serve as an intervener".

There is a whole lot of mentions in this, hon. member and I'll just go to a final recommendation. I think the Deputy Minister of Finance, David Arsenault, was one of the people who were on this commission, too. He would remember this well:

No. 9, provision for appointing a consumer advocate or public intervener. If a consumer advocate public intervener is an integral part of the regulatory process, then the procedure for appointment should be part of the legislation.

Legislation might also spell out the qualifications for such a position, the authority to make the appointment to situations that represent conflict of interest, the ability to engage experts on how the costs of the office are to be recovered.

I raise all of this hon. member, is this basically what you were talking about from the spring? Does this strengthen the case for legislation for this public intervener?

Ms. Biggar: No, I don't get it –

Mr. Fox: Chair.

Ms. Biggar: Do you have a copy of that we could have?

Mr. MacEwen: No, it's online.

Mr. Fox: So, yes it does.

Mr. Myers: Not allowed a computer anymore.

Mr. Fox: The PEI Energy Commission did come out with a report, it was a final report *Charting Our Electricity Future in 2012*, September and it basically follows what this legislation would do, in providing a public intervener, and it supports it in this report, which was submitted to government, but, it was never acted on.

I think you're right, in the very end, it gives the power to Lieutenant Governor, to appoint a public intervener to deal with matters and electrical rates before the commission and before IRAC.

Ms. Biggar: We are (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. Fox: No, you're not.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

The minister of transportation was asking for a copy –

Ms. Biggar: Can you table that, at least?

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah, no, I'll –

Chair: Please direct your conversations through the Chair.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Chair: Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: I'll get you a copy of it.

Ms. Biggar: I have a copy, I just (Indistinct)

Chair: Member from Morell-Mermaid, you got the floor.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, I will get the minister a copy. You probably spoke of this at length back in 2012 – probably.

Anyway, I just wanted to raise that because I think it makes a really strong case from members of this government, especially the minister at the time. And now, we have a duty minister, as well, that pushed for this role, so I think it strengthens your case hon. member.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Fox: Chair.

Chair: Yes.

Mr. Fox: I think hon. member, this report – paragraph 3.3, *Facilitating a Public Involvement*; the recommendation was to establish a consumer advocate for electricity to represent individual rate payers and help facilitate the participation of other interested parties (Indistinct)

The report goes to the point that, not only this – not only do we need a public intervener for electrical, but I think also, gives weight to requiring an intervener, in regards to other matters that are before IRAC.

I think, with that, if we look back – I think it was in the last two months that there was a matter before IRAC, and there was no involvement, of my understanding, in regards to rate increases to housing and apartments and the *Landlord and Tenants Act*.

Basically, there was a rate increase requested, but there were no submissions that I could find, in regards from a third party, or somebody from the public intervening against them rate increases and how they would affect low-income Islanders or seniors, or anybody that's involved with renting a property.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just in regards to the report, I just want to clarify that I was not the minister back in 2012, when that report was done. But I certainly have seen it; I just thought it would be helpful since it's been awhile that it was out there, to have it.

I would like to note, though, hon. member, that the PEI Energy Cooperation is an intervener – is designated as a public intervener. We made changes to the act, so I'm not sure if you are aware of that. We do have public intervener's status at IRAC in regard to electricity hearings. I just want to make that note.

I'm just wondering, you mentioned the Auditor General. Have you – that she's doing a review, so do you not feel that this contravenes what work she's doing, or have you had any kind of communication with her?

Mr. Fox: No, I have not.

I don't think it contravenes what she's doing at all. It's no different than a matter being before the court. The legislative branch of government can still debate a matter that basically can run in parallel with the matters before the court in the House. So, it's no different than this here where the legislative branch can deal with the matter or bring legislation forward. Why another branch of the government, in that case being the Auditor General, while she's doing her review.

I will point out that, I'd have to ask the question of the hon. member, that she mentions that the PEI Energy Corp. acts as an intervener. Well, can the hon. member tell me if the energy corporation has actually contacted any woman's organizations or Women's Institute on any matters that are before them or any matters that they were looking at?

Ms. Biggar: Just for clarification, when I mentioned the energy corp., they are an intervener in regard to electricity hearings.

Mr. Fox: Electricity (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Just for clarification.

Mr. Fox: That doesn't still mean that we do not need an intervener in regards to the other matters that are before IRAC, that IRAC oversees.

Ms. Biggar: That's all I have.

Mr. Fox: I think what we – the key point of this is, at the end of the day, IRAC is

supposed to take in the interest of the public in regards to all their decisions. However, how can IRAC take into consideration how the senior is impacted or a low-income Islander, or any member of the general public, if they don't go out and talk to them?

So, I would have to ask the question: Can IRAC provide proof to the House, or to anybody, that when an application comes before them they have actually gone out and contacted different groups of the public to find out whether or not the application before them will impact that individual or that group?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So, just a couple of questions on the act. I guess for me coming out of a situation in my district where there was a forced amalgamation and the only group that really had a say was the people who had representation at the municipal level prior to the whole debacle. How would you see the intervener process working for somebody who came from an unincorporated area who didn't have that level of representation through amalgamation?

Mr. Fox: I think it was noticed very highly in that process because they took the vote from within the municipalities, but they did not accept the vote that came from the unincorporated areas, or the people that actually lived outside the incorporated area that was taken over and expanded area.

If we're – who actually looked at the submissions that were put before IRAC against that amalgamation or that process and were they considered to the fullest? I don't think they were.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

No, I don't. I think there was a feeling there that they weren't considered to their fullest. There were a lot of objections filed and, at the end of the day, they were just paper in the IRAC office. A lot of people don't feel like they were given a fair shake by IRAC.

Even when IRAC did have a public meeting, what it was the group who put forward the proposal, it was their opportunity to present the proposal to the public, which had happened like five or six times through the process. Through their own public meetings, they had had the opportunity to do that.

Other than there was microphones in the middle of the floor where people could get up and present what their objections were, which I did personally, but even at the time I didn't feel like they were being valued at all. Clearly by their decision at the end of the day, they put absolutely no value into the objections that people filed on paper, and the objections that people filed publicly at that public meeting.

So, what I said at the time was they need somebody that they can go to they can – that could take their quarrel, I guess, for lack of a better word, with government and make sure that it's rectified in the manner where they actually got a say. I don't think there's anybody out there who had any expectation that they were going to fight government and win, but I think there was a perception out there that they were going to fight government and be heard and they didn't feel like they were heard.

Will that process – will a public intervener give us a mechanism to keep that from happening in the future?

Mr. Fox: I think it would because it's almost like a disclosure within a criminal court system where you've got a prosecutor and a defense attorney. The defense attorney is entitled to all the information that's put before by the Crown. In this case, if we had a public intervener and a company or a community or whatever, put it in an application for IRAC, then any information that was put forth would be reviewed by the intervener and considered.

So, if IRAC or if the commission or if the body that was trying to do whatever they were trying to do being the municipality doing a forced amalgamation or annexing an area, then any submission that went to them for or against would have to be released to the intervener. Would have the opportunity to review it and then bring that information

forward to the actual tribunal or the actual court.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So, I'm sure you recall, member, that in the spring when I proposed changes, amendments to the *Municipal Government Act*, we produced a flowchart of the whole process, and very specifically, I think a public intervener would apply in the case of unincorporated areas as the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters was saying.

When it comes down in the flowchart, if you're part of a municipality and you make an objection and the municipality makes an objection, then the commission actually appoints a mediator within 30 days of receipt of objection. But if you're part of an unincorporated area, and not part of a municipality, and there are many objections in the case of Three Rivers – there were many, many, many objections – then all there is is a public hearing and there's no mediator appointed.

So, that would be a clear case where a public intervener would perform a similar role, almost as a mediator, to act on the public's behalf or could anyhow. I wanted to point that out that I think the *Municipal Government Act* would clearly benefit by having a public intervener partake in the process outlined in it.

Mr. Fox: It's a good point, but I think one point we must consider is that if an organization or a company puts an application before IRAC, they might be in possession of information or evidence that goes against what they are trying to put before the commission. So, they would hold that information back or they would not submit it on the fear that it might hurt their application.

With a public intervener, then the company or organization putting the matter forward would have to release everything to the intervener, so nothing would be not submitted or held back by the company putting the application forward.

I think that's something that should really be considered, because in the courtroom, as we know, if the prosecution has evidence, then

they're bound to release that information to the defence.

Well, it's the same way, would work in the same way as a public intervener because that person, that lawyer would have access to all information. And I'm looking over at minister of justice, and I think he's agreeing.

Mr. J. Brown: Keep going. I don't know about that.

An Hon. Member: Keep going.

Mr. Fox: I think – to answer the question, I think –

Mr. Roach: That's your bill, isn't it?

Mr. Fox: I think the answer to the question is that with the intervener, there would be less chance of information being missed and not be put before the tribunal or the court or the board.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to bring up a few points and ask some questions that I hoped to ask today in Question Period to the Attorney General.

I want to thank you for bringing the bill to the floor, and it's a way of strengthening the voice of Islanders and I think there are a number of members of the public who are interested in the proceedings of IRAC and if they have a vested interest in what's going on.

They're hesitant because they're not professionals. They're not a lawyer or an accountant or an engineer, and so the idea of having a public intervener – it would be a great independent voice for all Islanders and I'm just wondering how you feel about – how it would improve the public confidence in the decisions that IRAC is making.

Mr. Fox: Well, back in the spring we spoke about live streaming of IRAC hearings, the use of social media during proceedings, or the ensuring that an application that's before them is more readily available to the public.

Now, one thought that was mentioned to me was that Island access – or information PEI, or where somebody can go into Access PEI and get information on whether it be an energy program or a rental program – any type of those programs we see in the province that there's no, basically, the same type of mechanism in place outside of IRAC to assist Islanders.

I think that the public intervener, in his office, would have the capabilities to make sure that an application that is before IRAC is not missed by the public.

Chair: I have an intervention from the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) and I'm not sure if I mentioned this before – this is long before I was ever into politics as a member of our community.

There was an application that went towards IRAC in regard to a subdivision development in our community that the community was very upset about and didn't feel that it was necessary to have another subdivision, cottage development, on the waterfront along where the oysters are farmed in the Bideford River.

I guess I'll say I was the chosen one to go before IRAC and stand before IRAC as a private citizen on behalf of my community and make our case. You can do that. You don't have to be a lawyer. You don't have to be an accountant. I certainly appreciated the opportunity to be able to appear. I will say we won the case and I felt that we had a voice by going there on our own, and the that the process was in place for us to be able to put our objections forward and to be heard.

Again, we didn't have a lawyer with me. We didn't have a lawyer prepare anything to go with me. We wrote our letter of objection and a request to appear before IRAC to hear when that case came up. I just would point out that I felt, at that time, that our community did have a voice and that we were able to do that. It is something that is possible, is all I wanted to make a point on.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for the intervention, minister.

I'd just like to point out that some people might not have the confidence that you would going into a meeting like that.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) a lot of confidence.

Ms. Compton: Yeah.

Just to change track a little bit; I know there are public interveners in some of the other provinces and I think New Brunswick is one of them.

As far as NB Power goes, the decisions that would be made for the price of electricity, that would affect Prince Edward Island and I'm just wondering, again, the benefit of having a public intervener to protect Island consumers with the price of electricity and how that would piggy back what is happening in New Brunswick.

Mr. Fox: I think one thing that we must think of here is – you're right. In the Province of New Brunswick they have an intervener and as the minister mentioned, here we have the energy corporation who acts as an intervener in regards to electrical rates and things that Maritime Electric does.

But, we also must remember that in some ways, the energy corporation is in bed with Maritime Electric, and this was seen on the last agreement that the province signed on the energy increases. That was a three-way deal between the province, the energy corporation and Maritime Electric. So, on one hand they're siding with Maritime Electric and working with them on whatever energy accord, but then on the other side how can they actually properly be an intervener to intervene on the behalf of a low-income or senior citizen when they're involved in putting that deal forward to be approved by IRAC?

I think in New Brunswick, if you look at their intervener and how it works in regards to the petroleum issues, they're very aggressive to ensure that the consumer is getting the best deal actually for a litre of

gas. And in this province, we're seeing IRAC make decisions on a two-week sliding scale and sometimes with interrupter clauses with no warning to the public.

Well, why are we not using the exact same model between New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and PEI when it comes to petroleum pricing when all gas comes from the exact same refinery, is subject to the exact same production costs except for transportation? There is a prime example of how the public intervener in New Brunswick is actually more involved in the process than in Prince Edward Island.

Chair: We have an intervention from the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, I just want to ensure anyone listening is clear on the relationship between the energy corp, Maritime Electric and New Brunswick Power.

Under section 12.2 of the *Electric Power Act*, Maritime Electric is obligated to involve the PEI Energy Corporation in negotiations for supply of electric energy. However, to be clear, we're not a signatory to the agreement. The agreement is between New Brunswick Power and Maritime Electric only.

Our role is to be there to ensure that we have the best interest of Islanders in mind during those negotiations, but we are not a signator to that agreement that was just signed. I want to make sure everyone knows that.

Mr. Fox: So, my question is: When was that agreement signed?

Ms. Biggar: There was a recent agreement – the one that I referred to – in the summer.

Mr. Fox: Exactly.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: So, prior to that agreement they were a signator with Maritime Electric on the previous three-year deal.

Ms. Biggar: There's an agreement –

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

There's an agreement that ends March the 1st, 2019.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Ms. Biggar: That's in place and at the present time, there will be hearings for any new rates, which will be public hearings, but we are not a signator –

Mr. Fox: On the new one.

Ms. Biggar: – on the new one. I just want to make sure everyone is clear on that, which is why when I was asked to produce the agreement, my response was, as it is: We are not a signator to the agreement so we do not even have a copy of the agreement.

Mr. Fox: So, I would have to ask the question: Does the PEI Energy Corporation sell electricity to Maritime Electric?

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

Ms. Biggar: I'd have to get those details for you.

Mr. Fox: We know they do.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Fox: We know they do so –

Ms. Biggar: We sell a lot of wind energy. Yeah.

Mr. Fox: Yes right. So right there, by the PEI Energy Corporation having a resource and selling that product to Maritime Electric automatically puts them into a conflict of interest.

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

Ms. Biggar: The fact that we have energy to sell is a fact that we are able to keep our energy costs down, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Fox: And don't get me wrong, I think if we have energy to sell that's a great thing for the energy corporation and I think it's a great resource to the province.

Ms. Biggar: So I just wanted to make clear the relationship –

Mr. Fox: They would be a conflict of interest –

Ms. Biggar: I think we could get a ruling on that if you're really concerned about that hon. member –

Mr. Myers: Let's do that.

Ms. Biggar: – I can certainly have that. Not in this Chamber but I certainly will ensure that that is brought up as to whether or not the energy corp. is in conflict of interest.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Compton: I know the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment – they've been looking at land issues so something that – land issues in the province over the past year especially and it's become quite a mixed bag of concerns. The committee heard from several Islanders and community organizations about how IRAC and maybe Cabinet are involved in the decisions about land ownership, especially with large corporations.

I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about the public intervener and how that would strengthen the oversight of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*

Mr. Fox: Well, land uses in PEI and the land ownership, I think are a concern to everybody. I think it's where PEI doesn't have – our land is our resource in one way and I think we have to take care of that.

I think that the public intervener would ensure or be able to investigate, or take into account – the same with power or anything else – that all information is before Cabinet or Executive Council and not just the information put forth by the company organization putting an application or the transfer of your own land.

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

Mr. Dumville: Just to the member, just clarification. It says: may appoint a public intervener.

Is this one person, is this a permanent position?

Or is it case-specific and you could call on an intervener for a particular case and then maybe another case: would there be more interveners going at the same time?

Just trying to get the logistics down here.

Mr. Fox: Well in some provinces they actually – it's a part-time office, but as applications are put before the regulatory body, then an intervener is appointed or say, (Indistinct) pull from a pool –

Mr. Dumville: Okay.

Mr. Fox: – and then that intervener would intervene in that matter. You're right, it's: may appoint.

Mr. Dumville: Yes.

Mr. Fox: What they have found in other provinces is that where an intervener is in place, that the actual matters before a regulatory board had actually lessened and the information before the regulatory board was actually found to be more complete – because of course it could possibly face scrutiny by the intervener.

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

Mr. Dumville: Would they be different qualifications for different interveners?

Mr. Fox: It could be, yes.

Mr. Dumville: Now, would they have to get accreditation to go into that pool?

Mr. Fox: Well it's the same as if you look at a law firm. You have some lawyers who are experts in the field of property or wills or each one of them has a different specialty.

A guy that practices criminal law might not actually deal with another matter of criminal so it would be around the same.

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

Mr. Dumville: So there would be categories and there might be say, half a dozen in a pool.

Mr. Fox: That could be an option, yes.

Mr. Dumville: So how would they identify these qualifications?

Mr. Fox: It's like an engineer, right? You have a bridging engineer that doesn't comment on general engineering or mechanical engineering, right?

Mr. Dumville: Okay.

Mr. Fox: So we would make sure that the intervener – or regulations, would make sure that the intervener brought forward would have knowledge and expertise in that field.

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

Mr. Dumville: So they're going to appoint an intervener, they'd look at what the qualifications for this particular case would be, they would go in and pick the best one out of say, half a dozen in that pool and then they would assign it to a case – so the case would be specific it'd start and they'd be an end to the case?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

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

Mr. Dumville: How long – the case would depend on the circumstances of –

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Dumville: – how complicated it would be, how long the case would be.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you Chair.

Chair: You're very welcome.

Mr. Dumville: I'm finished.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

You were speaking a few minutes ago and you had said that if there was an ongoing court case, there would be nothing in the court involving an issue and there would be nothing to prevent that from being debated in the Legislature at the same time.

Mr. Fox: No.

Mr. Roach: Can you qualify that?

Mr. Fox: Yeah no. Just because a matter is before the courts does not mean the legislative committee or the House cannot be debating something of similar nature or something involving that law or that act.

Mr. Roach: But not the same event, is that correct.

Mr. Fox: Not the event itself, no.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you Chair.

How many provinces in Canada have an intervener?

Mr. Fox: I believe there's three. I haven't got those notes with me now – I believe there's three.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Could you tell me who they are?

Mr. Fox: If I can – if you give me a second to scoot through this.

New Brunswick for sure, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Newfoundland. Ontario, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: I was of the understanding that there was only one province that had a

public intervener with respect to energy and that was the province of New Brunswick and that refers to energy only –

Mr. Fox: They have them in different forms –

Mr. Roach: As I understand in your request here that you're asking for, pretty much all of IRAC, electric power, *Environmental Protection Act*, *Heritage Places Protection Act*, *Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission Act*, *Petroleum Products Act*, *Planning Act*, *Rental of Residential Properties Act*, *Roads Act*, *Unightly Property Act* and *Water and Sewerage Act*.

Is that correct?

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Fox: I think with that, hon. member; that just goes to show how much actually, authority or power that we've entrusted in IRAC.

So, we need to make sure where they deal with so many different acts and so many different pieces of legislation that the consumer – or Islanders are actually represented to the best of the ability.

Mr. Roach: So are you suggesting that other provinces don't have a number of different acts –

Mr. Fox: Just because –

Mr. Roach: – and things to look at –

Mr. Fox: Just because another province does something does not mean that we cannot be a leader in a matter.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

So can you make it clear to me why the bill here refers to so many non-energy matters when it started off – I think at least in

conversation you and I had that it was energy matters?

Mr. Fox: No we are dealing with – it goes to show – I can't remember the conversation you and I had unless you want to jog my memory, but it goes to show how much stuff is before IRAC and energy is just one part of it. But I think we need to look at – as the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters said: what was seen in the municipality of Three Rivers, that there was voices down there that put information forward that were not heard from just because IRAC deals with, you know, more than the *Petroleum Products Act* does not mean that there shouldn't be an intervener in regards to other matters before them.

One, right off the bat that I'm looking at and thinking about would be the *Rental of Residential Property Act*. If a company goes in and decides to raise their rates, then should not the landowners or the tenants of that property be heard or should we not as a government make sure that their opinions or how that's going to affect them – or is going to impact them.

I think that you would agree that we're living through it right now, right? We have a matter on the floor and we're debating the matter. Are we for 100% sure that a low-income Islander or a senior citizen is having his voice heard before the commission or the board when they meet? I think we need to ensure that their voices are heard or how it affects them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Can you briefly describe to us what kind of policy work was done prior to bringing this to the floor?

Mr. Fox: Basically, looking at two things: first thing was looking at what I saw and heard from Islanders and how I've dealt with IRAC in previous in regards to petroleum regulation. Then secondly and when you get into this job, and then you have constituents come to you and they express their problems that they've had and how matters that IRAC – how their decisions affect them.

Right off the bat, I'm thinking about the senior citizens and those groups that have approached me. I know other members that: When IRAC makes this decision on 2.3% rate increase on three years that this is how this is affecting me. I think we must ensure that if we're legislating in or IRAC is saying they're approving is 2.3% each year for three years – what actually is the money out of the Islander's pocket?

As you said, I read today that email that I received from that woman during Question Period. Well there's a true life story of how a woman is sitting in the ER and she's making a decision on – because her – on what to eat. So are we ensuring that matters going before IRAC, that they're actually hearing how these decisions are impacting them and what decision IRAC makes how that's going to impact that individual?

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Have you sat down and met with IRAC to discuss this bill?

Mr. Fox: Yes, I did sit down and I actually mentioned that in Hansard. I did have a conversation with Mr. Scott MacKenzie back – it'd be over a year ago, prior to the bill actually getting drafted. We had a conversation on a whole bunch of topics about IRAC. One thing he mentioned to me at the time was how he would like to see more of the public engaged and in the process of matters going before IRAC.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: In that conversation did he have any suggestions as to how that would be or should we wait to hear from him?

Mr. Fox: He basically said that they were looking at or he at the time, in my understanding, was looking at – he was new to the position, and he was looking at all of IRAC and that kind of thing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Have you had, subsequent to that if that was that far along ago – subsequent to that have you had any further opportunity to speak with him specifically?

Mr. Fox: No, he's never reached out. IRAC or Mr. MacKenzie has never reached out to me to discuss the bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Where I think where you're presenting it, don't you think – do you feel it should be you who should reach out?

Mr. Fox: In actual fact we've had actually – there's another bill coming to the floor where actually people that the bill will affect have actually reached out and requested meetings. So, I would say that the options also are available for Mr. MacKenzie. If Mr. MacKenzie wants to reach out then we're open to that.

Chair: I have an intervention from the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: You had mentioned that Mr. MacKenzie said he wanted to see some changes there.

Mr. Fox: Yes, and that was over two years ago.

Ms. Biggar: So, did he give you anything in writing that you could put that forward as part of your bill that he wanted to see change?

Mr. Fox: No. I remember one specific thing was again the public to be more engaged in the process or matters that are before IRAC.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

I note that – have you given consideration to bringing any of this before infrastructure and energy?

Mr. Fox: Actually IRAC doesn't stand – doesn't actually fall under education or infrastructure and energy. IRAC falls under the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

I think that's not really my question, I guess, because under the committee for infrastructure and energy they deal with energy. I believe that there are items that are coming up and some of those, I believe, may – are going to include, I think, priority on energy with the next – once they move away from the school buses.

So, have they given any consideration to that and then perhaps having IRAC there as a witness?

Mr. Fox: No, the matter – I never thought about bringing the – never considered even, bringing the matter before the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy because the actual responsibility of IRAC falls under the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Has it changed?

Chair: I have an intervention from the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to be clear on what our role is with IRAC.

IRAC's budget line item falls under our department. The Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission is an omnibus regulatory and appeals body. We are the only department in government that would not have any natural conflicts with IRAC. So, they are a separate entity, kind of like the courts are a separate entity here. We essentially fund their operation. It's not for us to, you know, kind of call their tune, if you will. I think the hon. member's suggestion would be act if there's an issue related to energy. That would be probably be dealt with in the energy committee, not

education just because it falls within education's budget.

Mr. Fox: And I would agree with you too, minister, on what you're saying.

But you must remember, we're not only talking about energy. We're talking matters about unsightly property, the *Planning Act*, the rental agreement act – that falls under community, lands and environment. We have the, of course, the petroleum act, the electrical act that falls under the minister of transportation and energy. We have an organization of body that falls under two or three different standing committees.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

I guess where I'm trying to get to is that it's very specific, at least in New Brunswick they have the only intervener. It's very specific to energy, and I'm trying to drill down to the rationale and that's why I had asked the question about what policy work was done to from the energy issue to such just well let's do everything.

That's a pretty broad perspective, and I think when you go to things like the *Roads Act*, the *Unsightly Property Act*, *Water and Sewerage Act*, I guess I'm trying to see where with certain bodies that would be involved there what the outcome would be with respect to public interest, with respect to any FOIPP that may come as a result of that if you have private bodies – people at large that are intervening there that would, I would think need to be dealt with.

So, I'm just looking for a strong rationale as to why we'd go from just from energy to everything.

Mr. Fox: I think the biggest one would be all the members of *Rental of Residential Property Act* – that's a prime example. A company can go in and make an application to increase their rates. So there's one right off the bat that affects anybody that lives in an apartment or a senior in a building or whatever. That's one right off the bat.

We're talking about lands protection – IRAC makes decision on land protection and

how land can be sold or transferred which goes to Executive Council. Could there be some of these that are withdrawn or taken out? I don't really see any because water and sewage – you've got a municipality that puts an application before it to have the water and sewer rates increased. Well, it's IRAC who makes the decision. Yes, infrastructure has to be paid for, but should a person who is on his own private well and septic, even though the line runs in front of him, should he be forced to pay a water and sewage rate if he's not connected to it? If he's connected to it, yes, I can see the rationale, but is the water and sewer rate that's imposed by IRAC – should that not be considered if the person is not even hooked onto the system?

Chair: I have an intervention from the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Just on that particular topic, because I'm from the Tyne Valley area and they do have a utility where part of their residents are on the system, and for those that are not on the system, they do include service of having their septic systems pumped because they pay their taxes towards – so they do get a service.

Mr. Fox: They get a service.

Ms. Biggar: They get a service, but I just wanted to make note of that.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, you're right, minister.

That is in place up there, but I know in the municipality of Borden-Carleton, I know the Dickie Road, the water and septic go down that road and there are people who are not hooked onto it and I believe also Cornwall, that the line goes in front of the house but they're not connected, but yet they have to pay the water and sewer rate.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, and as I mentioned –

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

Ms. Biggar: Sorry.

That was my point with Tyne Valley. They have to pay it, but in lieu of that –

Mr. Fox: In Borden-Carleton they don't get any service.

Ms. Biggar: Well, that's, I guess, something that the residents of the area could go back to the council and say: Look, we're paying this. We should at least get our sewer systems pumped once a year or – that's what's in place in the Tyne Valley area.

Mr. Fox: Actually, in Borden it was actually done in two phases. The first phase was the sewer line that went down and then the second time it was the water line and they had the option of hooking onto the water. Yes or no; the same as the septic.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, anyway.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, I have a lot more questions but if I could just ask one more and then –

Chair: Sure, I'll put you back on the list.

Mr. Roach: – I'll give way and come back later.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Roach: I wonder if it would be possible if you could bring back or file here with us what takes place in New Brunswick and the other provinces that you referred to with respect to interveners and on energy.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

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

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

I have a number of questions related to this. With your indulgence, I'll ask and some of them relate to particular sections, and perhaps I'll point that out when I go through, we can ask them there if that's the preference.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. J. Brown: But, they all relate back to the overall intent to the legislation and how it's set out.

I guess I would – on behalf of – or in my capacity as Attorney General, I would voice some of the concerns that appear to be raised by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir in terms of the bill being as broad as it is.

I'll just give you an example of the issues that that can create. You mentioned the rental of residential tenancies act and your desire to have a public intervener there, and not to pick at you, but I will say you showed your hand in terms of which side of the scale of justice you'd want to have it on.

In the legislation, there's a reference to public interest. The public intervener effectively takes up the public interest and I guess what my question would be to you in a situation like that, or in any situation set out in the act or mandated pursuant to the act where you're dealing with 10 different bills, how's the public intervener to determine what's in the public interest?

Mr. Fox: That's a good question, minister.

I think the test would be how the application is going to affect the actual public itself. So, if an application is put forth, is there an actual impact, whether it be financially or real, to the general public that are involved in that service.

So, what I'm thinking of is, if an application is put forth and somebody objects to it, that objection might be warranted or it might not be warranted, because in actual fact, there's no financial or impact on them. I guess for an example would be, if an amalgamation was going to take forward or if the community – well I'll use the example – say the community of Borden-Carleton wants to annex or amalgamate a non-incorporated area and a person from down in Montague-Kilmuir says: No, this shouldn't happen. Then, what real right does that individual down there have in interjecting on an application which is not going to affect him or her?

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

Mr. J. Brown: I guess that hits the nail right on the head because the question gets to be: If you're the public intervener, you have a – we're setting out a duty to the public in the legislation, how does the public intervener determine what that public interest – like, it's the public interest. So, it's the public interest of every citizen on Prince Edward Island, but you have to determine the collective public interest and then it becomes particularly relevant.

I'll give you another example that you gave to us –

Mr. Fox: So –

Mr. J. Brown: But, just let me finish because I want you to understand what I'm driving at here.

You had mentioned if a landlord comes in to make an application to raise rents, and there's a process set out right now in the legislation to do that, there are two countervailing interests, we'll say, there and both of them represent larger subsets of the public.

The landlord represents the interest of landlords on mass in having commercially-viable tenancies that they can rent out to members of the public and thereby, the public has an interest in having tenancies to be able to rent. Vice-versa, the public wants to be able to rent those tenancies at a reasonable rate and they want to be able to ensure that they're protected against an oligopoly or the big, bad landlord that's coming there.

But, if you're the public intervener, how are you to pick which side of that debate you're on in any given situation?

Mr. Fox: I would agree with you.

The landlord has to be able to get a rate of return on their facility to ensure that the bills are paid and the operating costs are covered and there is a rate of return in their pocket.

I think, in that case, of course, the intervener must ensure that the information put forth by the applicant is justified by the information being put forward, and that there's no

information that is not being divulged to IRAC.

If I'm a rental – if I'm a person that owns a rental property, or if I'm Maritime Electric, to use them, and I'm putting an application forward, a public intervener would make sure that all information that is relevant is put forward and nothing is held back.

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

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not going to go further down that road with you.

I think there's a problem there and I'll be honest in saying, the answer that's provided doesn't provide me with enough clarity to get past it, but I will kind of go back and just draw your attention back – I'll say outrightly, I could be wrong in this.

As far as I'm aware, the only public intervener in Canada is in New Brunswick and there would be interveners enabled in other legislation that would be similar to IRAC. There's interveners enabled in courts as well. But, they're not a public intervener, quote-unquote.

That's different for the reason that I just set out here today. But so, the way the bill is set up, it mandates that a public intervener participate in matters related to the *Electric Power Act*, the *Environmental Protection Act*, the *Heritage Places Protection Act*, the *Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission Act*, *Petroleum Products Act*, the *Planning Act*, *Rental of Residential Property Act*, the *Roads Act*, the *Unightly Property Act*, and the *Water and Sewerage Act*.

I just want to – I gave you the situations from the *Rental of Residential Property Act*. It's probably a good contrast to, let's say, the *Electric Power Act*, whereas you pointed out, we have – depending on how you want to look at it – one or two public utilities. Well I guess if you count Summerside, three public utilities on Prince Edward Island. By their very nature, public utilities – there is the utility and then there's the public. So, it's easy to understand – public intervener represents the public's interest.

I get what you're saying there. But when you go to some of these others, like the

Rental of Residential Property Act, the *Unsightly Property Act*, it's a perfect example because you have an individual or individuals collectively – and you know, we had great input here last year from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, as an example, where individuals live out in their own unincorporated areas that they want to be able to do whatever with their property. Well, that might not jive necessarily with the expectations of the public en masse might be.

So, you get into a more refined interpretation of what the public interest is in, I'm going to say the bulk of the legislation that appears in this act, that would be regulated or where the public intervener would be mandated to intervene. To me, that causes a problem that requires, at least, further policy work and further definition of what the public interest is, and how the public intervener is to determine that.

I'm not trying to tell you what you need to do here, or whatever, but I think there is more work needed on that, or more to convince me that I'm comfortable with what's there – if you get me?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: So, I just want to bring that up to you.

The next related question could be, in terms of the – Chair, sorry, I don't know, I'm kind of just going on here, I don't know if that's okay or not–

Mr. Myers: Normal. That's normal for you, Jordan.

Mr. J. Brown: Pretty well. Anyway –

Mr. Fox: You're doing fine.

Mr. Myers: You're okay.

Mr. J. Brown: The public intervener is to fall under justice and public safety, under my department's purview. With the different acts that fall under this, in my mind, in a number of them, link back to what constitutes the public interest. There is a big potential for a conflict. In other words, if we're sending a lawyer in to represent the

public interest, and we're effectively the Attorney General, the department that is the Attorney General, there is kind of a role there that you can see in a lot of circumstances, that would quite easily overlap, if you will.

Mr. Fox: So, I'm just wondering why you would see the public intervener being attached to the department of justice.

Mr. J. Brown: That's what it sets out in the act. It's the legislation that sets that out. They're appointed by LGIC and then it falls in under the department of Justice and Public Safety. In your Bill – the way I understand it, I could be wrong on that.

Mr. Fox: Continue. I'm listening.

Mr. J. Brown: I'm just saying, that may be an issue, too, that needs to be covered off in whatever the bill is. In other words, I'm not sure how the public intervener would relate to government.

Mr. Fox: But wouldn't – what I'm trying to understand – yes, it falls under the minister responsible, as the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, but would there not be the same with the child lawyer that was put in place by the government?

Chair: Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you.

So, the child lawyer has a very specific – this is what I'm getting into here – the child lawyer has a very specific mandate in relation to situations where the child lawyer literally will intervene, on behalf of a child and will carry the best interest of the child forward. They have a very specific client, a very specific mandate in the different actions they're involved in, whereas, the public intervener is representing the public interest: the child's lawyer, one person; public intervener, 153,000.

Mr. Fox: I see your point. But would it not be the same type of rational?

Chair: Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: I don't believe so, but I'm going to leave subject to the comments that I just made. Really, they're comments for everybody to kind of have and absorb and do what they wish with. And if you want to think about it, the first time I piped up tonight, it was to say: that IRAC falls under my department in education, only because it's the one department that there wouldn't be a conflict in. If you were going to do it, you may think that that might be a more appropriate fit than – I don't know. I don't know the answer to that, but I think that's a relevant consideration that's not addressed in the – or, it is addressed, but it –

Mr. Fox: It needs to be considered.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, exactly.

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

Mr. J. Brown: Related to that, there is a budgeting question as well. I don't think the pieces require that we typically see for a budget isn't set out in the legislation either. But beyond that, you can see that there would be a concern, I guess, depending on who the public intervener was in any given situation, like you had mentioned a pool, and you'd draw out and take the expert in that relevant area. The question would be: how do you compensate them or what's the set up in order for them to be compensated? You wouldn't want to be writing a blank cheque –

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. J. Brown: – to go into some of these, and so I think you'd have to kind of set out a reasonable –

Mr. Fox: But then, would you not agree that can be set out in regulations?

Mr. J. Brown: It possibly could be, but you'd have to set up powers to set that in regulations. I don't think it is set up that way currently.

Chair, maybe if you want to go on to somebody else, we could come back. I do a few more questions.

Chair: An intervention from the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: It just occurred to me, like when you are talking about one person, who would be the intervener in all of these subjects; it would be pretty unusual, I would think, to find somebody on PEI that would not, in some way, shape, or form have some sort of conflict in regard to any of those topics. And to say that – just a minute. To say that there is one person on PEI that could intervene in all that area without any kind of conflict – I'm just curious in that.

Mr. Fox: You're right minister, and I think that goes to the comment made by the Member from West Royalty-Springvale. I think you got to think about what you just said, too, in the fact that we have a board of roughly three commissioners with no previous experience in any of these acts, and they're making decisions or rulings on all these matters that are going before them.

I understand what you're saying, minister, and you're probably right. You know, how would you find one individual to intervene in all these different things at any one time. I'll give you that, and I'll agree with you. But the same argument can be said against the commission that is in place right now. All three of them individuals, I do not believe have expertise in every matter that is put before them, covered by all these acts.

Chair: Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: I guess, for clarification, I wasn't referring to having expertise in it. I was referring to –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the fact that it's very hard to find someone, in regard to the present commission, when you have a number of people making those decisions, one person doesn't have that power to make the ultimate decision, that's why a multitude of people have a chance to hear the hearing and have their opinions on it and have their vote on it so that one person isn't the one making all of the decisions there.

But when you're talking about the public intervener, that's – what occurred to me is – when you are saying this one person should be the one person to intervene in all these

things – you have to be pretty removed from every one of those pieces that you're referring to. You can't have a relative that's a garage owner, you can't have a relative that's a landlord, you can't have a relative that owns a piece of land – so I guess that's all I'm – I'm being the devil's advocate here –

Mr. Fox: I agree with you. I agree with what you're saying. But I think if you look at a law firm like Cox & Palmer, or Stewart McKelvey – right? They have a pool of lawyers that are experts or deal with one part of the law. So if Bill comes in with something, well then, they go to Ted; or if Jane comes in with something else, they'd go to Frank. Basically the same thing, but I understand your point.

Ms. Biggar: So you're suggesting the public intervener would be a law firm, not one person?

Mr. Fox: No I'm just using that as an example.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you for bringing the bill back to the floor hon. member.

I know we had a long discussion in the springtime. I'm really interested – I really appreciate the goal of what you're trying to achieve here, that we have a – to provide the advocacy on behalf of Islanders and public interest.

I also really appreciate the contribution of the minister of justice a few minutes ago and that phrase: the public interest – it's a tricky term.

I just wanted to say I really appreciated the contribution of the justice minister in pointing out the problem with that term and the role that we are putting this public intervener in. I just want to clarify a couple of things hon. member.

You just recently referred to the conversation you had with West Royalty-Springvale about the number of public interveners, but I see in the act 3.1, it's very clearly a singular intervener.

It talks about a barrister, a member in good standing, the public intervener. Clearly there's not provision in the act as it's written here for multiple public interveners.

So would you imagine an amendment would have to be made there?

Mr. Fox: That is a possibility yes.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I'm also concerned about the cost effectiveness of this, I want the goal that you're aiming towards but I want to do it in the most cost effective way.

I'm wondering why the restriction in the bill to the public intervener being a solicitor, being a lawyer?

Mr. Fox: I think we have to look at the composition of IRAC and its acts quasi-judicial organization, so correct me if I'm wrong minister of justice, but basically the principals of law are adhered to and how that – you know its run basically like a court, right?

So the solicitor or a barrister would have expertise or have the knowledge of how a courtroom is run theoretically, and how to put evidence before the court or before the commission in a way that is accepted by a tribunal or a court.

Chair: Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

So, we've talked about a couple of other provinces that have versions of public intervener: New Brunswick, which is specifically energy related. In Nova Scotia the *Public Utilities Act*, it creates a consumer advocate and it also creates a small business advocate – they're are two different people with two different mandates and I'm going to go back to something that I think the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir brought up a few minutes ago about the wide array of expertise expected of this individual.

I'm wondering where, in other jurisdictions, they have a very limited mandate for this public intervener or consumer advocate or small business advocate, whether you really feel that this is a job that one person can possibly do – especially where the bill as crafted says – I'm going to section five here and I know we haven't even started reading the bill yet, hon. member.

You say: the public intervener shall intervene in a proceeding. It's not – there's no – this is a mandate in every – as I read that, in every proceeding in front of the commission.

That's an enormous – with those nine statutory areas, that's a mind-blowing amount of work, is it not?

Mr. Fox: It could very well be; it could be a full-time job. I think with some regulation, some matters might not have to be – the service of an intervener might not actually have to be used. At least matters that are put before the commission are applications. There would be an opportunity there for the intervener to look at it, review it, to see whether an intervener – that status is needed to intervene in a matter put before the commission.

Chair: Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

So, again I appreciate the goal of what you're trying to achieve here, hon. member.

I'm wondering whether – clearly there is a lot of questions on both sides, all sides of the House, actually, regarding the bill.

I'm wondering whether you would consider referring it to a standing committee for further research and debate there?

Mr. R. Brown: Good idea.

Ms. Biggar: There you go.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) be agreeable.

The only question I would have to ask with that is: what would be the best committee?

Where the act or IRAC deals with so many different bills or different acts and

regulations, I would almost have to suggest that it would be Community, Lands and Environment.

Chair: Okay I'm going to give way for a moment for the Leader of the Opposition to give recognition of guests.

Recognition of Guests (IV)

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

I just thought it would be appropriate, I know there was a lot of talk this afternoon in greetings about municipal politics and I'd like to recognize Mr. Steve Gallant is with us here this evening –

Mr. R. Brown: Tough election.

Mr. Aylward: – councilor-elect –

Mr. R. Brown: Tough election.

Mr. Aylward: – for the Town of Stratford. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: I have an intervention with the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Since we're doing greetings I'd like to recognize Gord McNeilly who's with us here, the candidate for Charlottetown-Lewis Point and welcome to the Legislature and we hope you'll be on this side very soon.

Mr. Myers: For which party?

Chair: The Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm fine thank you.

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

An Hon. Member: Thanks Chair –

Ms. Biggar: Well, we're waiting for a motion.

Chair: That's the other side of the House, we can't do it in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. R. Brown: You can't?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Chair: Right Emily?

Chair: Yeah. The motion would have to be made outside Committee of the Whole. So when the Speaker comes back to the Chair, the motion can then be made.

So we can either call back the Speaker this time if you want or continue with questions for another four minutes.

Ms. Biggar: He's got a question, Richard has a question.

Mr. Palmer: It doesn't matter, we can call back the Speaker if you want to.

An Hon. Member: I have a question.

Chair: I have several on my list.

An Hon. Member: Who has a question?

Mr. Palmer: So here's my question: is it around – this intervener are they specifically giving legal advice or is it just a voice or is it both of those? I guess it could be both but do you have to have that legal –

Mr. Fox: It's both, I think, I think, it's both. As I see it, the role of the intervener is to make sure that as the minister said: the public interest is considered, right?

People must be ensure that if a matter has been put before a commission, then what impact does that have on the community? And I use that in a broad sense.

Is there going to be an impact on the community by this application put forward?

So the intervener would look to see if what the actual impact is to ensure that who is impacted – voice is heard.

There is also I think, credit to the minister, when she did go before IRAC you were probably scared, you were probably very nervous.

Ms. Biggar: Not really.

Mr. Fox: And I have to ask the question – probably you were, right?

Mr. Palmer: She should've been, maybe.

Mr. Fox: But she could be and did she have the support back then of having somebody assist her in –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Exactly, so you never. So this would be a manner in making sure that somebody that wants to make a submission before IRAC, actually has the knowledge of what they're expected.

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

Mr. Palmer: So would this intervener be a sign, or if I was the person, do I get to pick who I have as the intervener from a pool or how does that –

Mr. Fox: Basically the application will be put before the commission on a matter and then that information would be forwarded to the public intervener to consider.

Mr. Palmer: What kind of delays do you think this would have in kind of getting the issue heard, or do you think there would be any delays? Does that happen pretty quick?

Mr. Fox: The research I found has actually speeded the process up.

Mr. Palmer: Faster? Okay.

Chair: Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. Palmer: Then the kind of final one that goes back to what the minister of education was talking about of the definition of really who the public is.

If I take the rental side of rental rates are going up 1%, could the landlord go to the intervener to say: Hey this isn't – I want it to be 3% or whatever it is so the public is not defined.

How is the public defined? Is that part of the problem that we have?

Mr. Fox: In actual, from what I've read is that in actual cases an applicant has worked with the public intervener's office or an

intervener's office saying this is what we're going to put forth and that's how it, in some cases, speeds it up that way there because the intervener or the public has the knowledge of it prior to actually getting towards the board or the commission.

In those cases, the actual applicant is actually either changed submissions or applications or put more information forward to support or not support the matter.

Chair: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Madam Chair. –

Chair: Mister.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Orders Other than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to make a motion that Bill No. 104, the *Public Intervener Act*, be put before the Standing Committee of Communities, Land and Environment for further debate.

Would that be appropriate or what?

Speaker: Hon. members, that normally requires notice and we would need to have unanimous consent for that.

Mr. R. Brown: Nope.

Speaker: Thank you.

There's no unanimous consent, thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

I now request that Motion No. 71 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 71, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale moves, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, with the following motion:

WHEREAS The right to adequate housing is embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and major international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

WHEREAS Housing First is an evidence-based principle used successfully in Canadian jurisdictions resulting in over 80% of those who received Housing First remaining housed after the first year.

WHEREAS safe, affordable housing is directly linked to the health and well-being of the population.

WHEREAS the Charlottetown Youth Housing Report provided the community with 6 recommendations for consideration.

WHEREAS challenges exist for community capacity in delivering transitional and low-barrier housing for vulnerable Islanders suffering from complex mental and physical health needs.

AND WHEREAS government recently asked the public for their input to be included in a Provincial Housing Strategy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to apply the 'Housing First' principle in developing future housing policies and strategies.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion this evening.

Safe and stable housing is one of the cornerstones of a secure life with dignity. Without a place to live it is almost impossible to achieve all other needs: access to food, physical safety, mental health, physical health, education, and employment.

Yet, sometimes we forget that. Whenever the issue of homelessness comes up on social media forums, someone invariably says: Get a job.

So, maybe so, but first the homeless person needs a place to live, a safe space to deal with any physical health issues, they may require mental health or addiction services, and others may need employment training. Let's not forget access to a computer and Wi-Fi, since most applications are electronic these days, and a phone so potential employers can call. Getting a job the ultimate goal, but to suggest that someone who is homeless should get a job and then get a place to live is unrealistic and backwards.

A lack of housing stops everything else. Day-to-day life is reduced to a few questions. Where will I sleep? How will I eat? Will I be safe?

Housing strategies are more than just policies and funding – they are people working together to build better lives, create stronger communities and lend a helping hand to people in need.

It is helpful if we think of housing as continuum that ranges from homelessness and temporary emergency shelters through transition housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, market rental housing or market homeownership.

All of these housing options are urgent in PEI. Some people are especially vulnerable to becoming chronically or episodically homeless. For example, women and children escaping domestic violence, men and women recovering from addictions, men and women recovering or adapting to mental or physical illness, individuals released after incarceration and youth aging out of the foster care system are all those who are in danger of homelessness. They face extra

challenges beside that challenge of homelessness, and they often require additional supports and services.

One of the common themes among these groups is how at risk they are after their time in temporary or transitional housing. Housing first is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed.

The national nonprofit Housing First in Canada says in its report, *Supporting Communities to End Homelessness*: “Housing is not contingent upon readiness, or on ‘compliance’ (for instance, sobriety). Rather, it is a rights-based intervention rooted in the philosophy that all people deserve housing, and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery.”

Housing first means doing things differently. For too long in the homelessness sector we've had to rely on emergency services to deal with homelessness, and assume that people need to be ready for housing, by dealing with their mental health or addiction issues first.

Housing first takes a different approach that says that doesn't make sense. Everybody deserves housing, it is a human right. And, in fact, peoples' recovery can and will improve once they have housing. It is actually the experience of being homeless that can exacerbate the mental health and addictions issues.

There are five core principles of housing first. They are immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements; client choice and self-determination; recovery orientation; individualized and client-driven supports; and social and community integration.

Within a housing first model, participants are encouraged to take control of their lives by being given control of their recovery.

The body of evidence that shows that housing first works is overwhelming. The recent *At Home/Chez Soi* project in Canada, which is the largest project on housing first ever done, shows conclusively that you can take the most hardcore, chronically

homeless person with complex mental health issues and addictions issues, and you can put them in housing. And you know what? Not only do they stay housed, they do better.

For example, a study published in Psychiatric Services in 2015 finds that there are significantly greater chances that participants in housing first programs in five Canadian cities will remain in housing after one year, compared with treatment-as-usual groups. Studying 950 homeless with severe mental illness, the reviews showed that 69% of treatment-as-usual participants relapsed and were not stably housed after one year, while only 27 % of the housing first participants were back on the streets.

Participants also reported greater gains in quality of life and demonstrated greater improvements in community functioning compared with participants in treatment as usual.

Advocates for Housing First also claim that the program costs taxpayers less because participants are less likely to use expensive services, such as emergency shelters, hospital day beds and jail.

The Colorado coalition for the homeless, a non-profit, calculated in 2006 – so over 12 years ago – that Housing First saved almost \$16,000 per person per year in health-related expenses.

We may feel in PEI that homelessness is not an issue here, but homelessness is an invisible issue in PEI. Just because we don't see people, hundreds of people, sleeping on the streets like we might do in a major city does not mean that they're here. They're on peoples' couches. They're in tents in peoples' backyards. They are staying with friends, or they are staying in dangerous situations with abusive partners or with friends and relatives who are giving them choices that are not healthy for their mental and physical health.

We need to recognize that homelessness is a problem of scale in PEI and one that we must recognize in our approach to addressing housing issues. The Housing First approach provides an opportunity to review how we help those who are most at

risk of being chronically or episodically homeless within our own communities.

For that reason, I am asking all members of this House to support this motion calling on government to apply a Housing First principle when developing housing policies and strategies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Politicians love to talk about priorities. We use the word freely every day, and quite literally the word 'priority' means 'prior to'. What must be done first, what creates the foundation for whatever comes afterwards?

We all know how pressing issues like mental health and addictions, poverty, access to food, joblessness or being underemployed, poor overall health and access to health care – all of these are really tricky, complex issues, all with multiple causes and with no definitive answers or solutions.

How do we tackle such pervasive and multi-faceted problems? What do we do first? What comes prior to everything else? What is the true, literal priority? It is housing. Housing First.

For people to lift themselves out of whatever rut they find they may be in, the security and dignity provided by shelter is the priority. Decency and human kindness demand it, and many studies support its efficacy.

Madam Chair, I'm proud to stand in support of this motion and I encourage all members of the House to do so.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion here this evening.

Government recognizes that safe, affordable housing is vital to the health and wellbeing of Islanders. Our government is already currently embracing the spirit of the Housing First model in many different ways; releasing the housing action plan, making record investments in affordable housing, and fostering collaboration across government departments, responding with complementary services including those who may be most vulnerable.

We currently work very closely with the John Howard Society, who on Prince Edward Island, delivers the Housing First program, as well as many other community partners, such as Canadian mental health, who work with vulnerable populations to overcome barriers that keep them from attaching to housing, so that they can belong and thrive within their communities.

Through our poverty reduction action plan, we are collaborating with many other community partners to support vulnerable populations with unique housing needs to ensure successful house placements.

Our government released Prince Edward Island's first housing action plan in July of 2018, a forward-leaning plan with input from Islanders, other levels of government, and community organizations. It lines up well with what is happening in other provinces and territories, and it is also a made-for-PEI action plan, one that relieves immediate house pressures while addressing what we need to do together to grow PEI's housing capacity.

The plan is based on a housing framework that focuses on five overarching goals: availability, affordability, sustainable communities, collaboration, and leadership. The housing action plan is a foundation to build from, addressing a range of support services that those facing housing challenges need to have successful housing placements.

I am proud to report that in the short time since our housing action plan was released, our government took action, to both address today's pressures, as well as improve the Island's affordable housing capacity for tomorrow.

An additional 275 affordable housing units, a \$2 million investment, available the fiscal 2018-2019, which is part of the 1,000 new units announced in our 2017-2018 budget, with 230 of these affordable units already added as rent supplements to offer immediate affordability relief for those Islanders who are in safe, appropriate housing; 76 new senior units, with 44 located in Charlottetown, which are currently in progress, and another 32 in Summerside that will be available in the spring of 2019.

Home ownership is now in reach for more first-time home buyers with a down payment assistant program providing interest-free loans, to which we announced on October 9th.

We are supporting Islanders with mental health needs as they transition back into community life with 10 new transitional housing units in partnership with Canadian mental health.

We've added an additional 20 transitional units for vulnerable Islanders, including children who are aging out of care – youth who are aging out of care.

We have access now to 100 new long-term care beds for Island seniors.

On October 2nd, we issued expressions of interest for immediate and long-term housing social rentals with proposals currently being evaluated for appropriate action, and that's just what we're doing lately.

This action is in addition to the \$17 million increase to the 2018-2019 budget committed to sustaining affordable housing in the province.

There are also a number of program enhancements that I want to highlight that we are making to provide Islanders, with both affordable and adequate housing to meet a variety of needs.

Government is upgrading affordable public housing units to ensure access to quality and safe housing.

We are investing \$750,000 per year over the next five years for renovations to public housing for seniors across the Island. Renovations include new roofs, sidewalks, heating systems, windows and doors.

We are meeting specialized housing needs, for example, with Island seniors. The Seniors Safe @ Home Program supports Island seniors who require accessibility-related modifications, such as ramps or renovations to kitchens and bathrooms which will help enable them to stay in their home.

Since the program began in 2015, there have been more than 400 applications supported to date. The 2018-2019 budget is \$330,000 which will support approximately another 60 households.

The Seniors Home Repair Program is enabling seniors to stay in their homes through support for structural renovations. More than 3,100 grants have been provided to seniors, an investment of over \$3 million directly to homeowners and over \$8 million into the economy.

Additionally, the PEI Senior Home Renovation Program provides options for Islanders who prefer and are able to stay in their homes and maintain their independence and have access to affordable housing by providing Islanders with a \$6,000 grant for electrical, structural, heating, plumbing, and fire and safety. And, an \$8,000 grant for individuals with a permanent disability to renovate their home to accommodate their disability.

Since 2013, government has invested \$6.2 million to support over 1,200 Islanders and help them remain in their homes in their community. Last year, government also implemented the Seniors Independence Initiative to provide Island seniors funding with practical services such as light housekeeping, snow removal, grass cutting, landscaping, meal preparation and errands. This was an investment over \$1.65 million. This helps them support their independence and remain in their communities.

We are also in the process of extending expiring affordable housing agreements with developers to protect the current affordable housing stock. I am very pleased about these

investments, which show our government's commitment to helping with housing needs for those who are most vulnerable.

Additionally, our poverty reduction action plan has many action items, including continuing to transform the social assistance program to improve the social and economic wellbeing of Islanders by better supporting those who can attach to the work force, and those who are facing multiple barriers and complex barriers to employment, through enhanced employment supports and increased rates.

Speaker: Hon. minister, I would ask you to adjourn debate. We've reached the agreed time for this Motion, so I would ask you to adjourn debate.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would be pleased to adjourn debate.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If I could have the podium?

Speaker: Would you like to call the motion and have it read first?

Mr. Roach: Yes, I would.

Motion 74.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 74.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the following motion:

WHEREAS it can be difficult for young people to understand and cope when a tragic event happens;

AND WHEREAS children and youth need guidance and support to deal with the finality of death and feelings of sadness, guilt, and fear;

AND WHEREAS the way adults manage their feelings and express their emotions

influences the reactions of children and youth;

AND WHEREAS Island teachers and school staff play a vital role in helping children and youth deal with a tragic event;

AND WHEREAS Islanders are fortunate to have many caring professionals working in our school system, who go above and beyond to support students and staff in times of crisis;

AND WHEREAS school psychologists, social workers and councilors, know that death – especially the death of a young person – can be frightening for young people;

AND WHEREAS these knowledge and caring professionals work with teachers and administrators to help students share and understand their feelings and distinguish between children who are able to manage their distress and those who need more help;

AND WHEREAS when teachers and school staff are struggling to manage the pain of grief, they also benefit greatly from the extra support provided by mental health providers and grief councilors;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly recognize the vital role of teachers, school staff, and councilors, in helping students, staff and community members, get through a time crisis;

THEREFORE IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that government continue to support these valued professionals who provide needed support and guidance through difficult times and reduce the potential serve effects of traumatic events.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, you have the floor.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is with a heavy, but optimistic heart, that I bring forward, seconded by the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, this motion.

The reason I say my heart is heavy is because I felt the need to bring forward this motion in recognizing those who help students and staff through traumatic events.

I don't think it's any news here this evening that particularly in the eastern end of Prince Edward Island over the last number of years, we have seen too many tragic events that have taken place; we have seen too many families – parents, moms, dads, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, who have seemed to suffer grievances with a family member dying too often.

Now, I understand that all of these traumatic events don't always happen on eastern PEI, or in the general area, but there is not a person in this room who can't relate to it, in one way or another.

Just this year, Montague lost an ambitious, friendly, smart, kind young man from a rugby incident; a leader amongst his peers and in the community, a tremendous loss to his family.

His loss in the rugby community was felt across, not only our corner of the province, but right across the province and indeed was felt right across the country.

Grief counsellors were sent to every Island high school after this incident. I think that only goes to drive home the impact that these traumatic events and accidents – what they have in the small community of Prince Edward Island.

A boat accident, earlier this year, took the life of a Nova Scotian man, as well as a young man from our area.

Four years ago, you and all members of this Legislature, will remember a fire that happened in Charlottetown that took the lives of three young citizens – three young men from Montague area. Shortly after this, another young man went to school at Montague high also lost his life.

A dedicated bus driver in the eastern end of the province – his life ended too soon as well. He had a tremendous impact on young lives daily as he took our province's future to school for many years.

We had yet another boating accident this summer. Not in our area, but certainly here on Prince Edward Island, that took the life of another young man.

We all know it can be difficult for young people to understand and to cope with tragic events. Children and youth need guidance and support to deal with the finality of death and feelings of sadness, guilt, fear – the way adults manage their feelings and express their emotions certainly influences the reactions of children and youth. Certainly, we know that all of us react differently to grief and to traumatic events.

Island teachers and school staff play a vital role in helping children and youth deal with these tragic events while very often – and too often – dealing with their own grief at the same time.

Here on Prince Edward Island, Islanders we are all fortunate to have many caring professionals working in our school system who go above and beyond to support students and staff in times of crisis. School psychologists, social workers, and counselors know that death, especially the death of a young person can be frightening for young people and for those around them.

As these knowledgeable and caring professionals work with teachers and administrators to help students share and understand their feelings and distinguish between children who are able to manage their distress and those who need more or extra help with that.

When teachers and school staff are struggling to manage the pain of their grief, they also benefit greatly from extra support provided by mental health providers and grief counselors.

Indeed, communities at large grieve and have difficulty with the ‘why’.

I’d like to just briefly mention some of those that I think we need to acknowledge: doctors, parents, teachers, school staff, school counselors, nurses, mental health providers, grief counselors, police and first responders. I think that between the words I’ve said and what I’ve said there, I’m hoping that there haven’t been any that I have forgotten.

I know from my own personal experience, there’s been too many evenings that as a policeman, I’ve gone home having dealt with a traumatic event and I know how hard

it is just for my peers who have to deal with that sometimes way too often.

Madam Speaker, this motion calls for the Legislative Assembly –

Speaker: Hon. members, the hour has been called.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

Speaker: Hon. members, before I go to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning to close, I’m going to give the floor to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy for an important announcement.

Ms. Biggar: Members, I’ve been in touch periodically here over the last little bit with my dispatch office across PEI and I just caution you to use extreme caution. If you don’t have to travel, I would advise you to stay. We have had a flash freeze on top of that more than expected amount of snow has occurred. All equipment has been dispatched, private and government equipment is out there. But because of that extreme freeze and that extra snow, it is very treacherous. There are certain areas in Hunter River, Kinkora area, Crapaud area, that are experiencing a lot of issues further west and east. Just for your own safety, I just want to make sure that you’re aware that that is the present situation in speaking with my dispatch offices.

Drive safely, and if you don’t have to go outside the city, I would advise you to stay.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road requested some time.

Mr. Perry: (Indistinct) before we close for the day, to say how nice it is to see you back in the Chair again and wish you a very happy 40th something birthday.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that this House adjourn until, Wednesday, November 14th at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The House adjourned until Wednesday, November 14th, at 2:00 p.m.