

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: Hon. members, I just raise on a point of privilege. I just want to welcome Mike Trainor. Mike Trainor is a teacher from Three Oaks High School, and his political science class will be watching proceedings today from their classroom.

So we expect all members to be on their best behavior and setting a good example for this class who are watching today, as you always do.

I will call on the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone back to a Wednesday afternoon sitting; further productive work in this fall sitting, and of course those who are tuning in by television or Internet.

We got some folks here from my district: John TeRaa, Eddie Lund, (Indistinct), Shane Hennessy, who used to be a resident of my district and his brother, Mike; Margaret McKay, who doesn't mind sharing advice and I always welcome it. Margaret, Wilf Richard and Josh Underhay here too.

I'm sure others will be welcomed in the course of the afternoon.

I want to congratulate Gary MacDougall on the launch this evening of his biography of Forbes Kennedy. I know it's been a work of love for Gary. *Forbie* tells the life story of one our province's best known athletes, hockey players, and he's also known for his charity work and decades of coaching, both junior hockey and minor baseball.

I know that later we will have in the gallery Basel Alrashdan and his father and family. They'll be recognized by the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

I wish all of our colleagues a good afternoon and continue good work.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

On behalf of the opposition, it's also a pleasure for me to rise today in the Legislative Assembly to welcome those that may be viewing in via EastLink or the Internet.

As I alluded to yesterday, there's a very special retiree and actually at 2:30 p.m. today there's a retirement reception taking place at Beach Grove Home for her. I couldn't be there personally, so I did send my best wishes to Marilyn. I'll leave it at that.

I'd also like to recognize some of the individuals that have joined us in the gallery today: Margaret McKay, Shane and Mike Hennessy of course, Josh Underhay, Eddie Lund, John TeRaa and also, of course, the political science class from Three Oaks. It's great to know that they're out there and engaged and watching us.

There's something happened here in Legislative Assembly last night that makes me pause. I've been elected just shy of eight years, and it's probably one of my proudest moments in the Legislative Assembly.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid brought an extremely important bill forward to the floor with regards to support for families and children with autism diagnosis. There was a lot of research done, there was work behind the scenes, I know between senior bureaucrats and the opposition office and government members as well.

What makes me so proud is that we actually broke down any political barriers – everybody in this House came together, to work together, to make improvements for children with autism and families that are trying to navigate the many silos here in PEI in regards to autism.

Again, never since I was elected have I or our opposition office received so many comments – positive – with regards for thanking us for bringing this forward. I have to tell you, we've heard from parents, from individuals from one end of the Island to the

other with regards to the wonderful work that was done here last night. I just really want to thank all of the hon. members here, and everyone responsible for making this bill a reality.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody today, and also, particularly Mike Trainor's class, who are watching; I met Mike at the Rotary Youth Parliament that was held just a couple of weekends ago, I had a lovely chat with him, and it was nice to put a face to the teacher who has been training these students for years now. Every year, I'm sure other members of the Legislature get emails from members of his class – always very thoughtful questions. So thank you for the work you are doing, Mike, and hello to the class.

I would also like to welcome some people to the gallery today; to Margaret and John TeRaa; and also to Nick Arsenault and Josh Underhay, who have spent some time with us this morning and it's lovely to see you here in the gallery.

I look forward to another constructive and collaborative day here in the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome Mike Trainor's political class that is viewing in today. I'd also like to welcome a few people here: Joe Byrne the NDP, he's making a habit of this – just jump over there, Joe, and you'll be all set; Eddie Lund; and it's great to have Tim Keizer back, I felt really safe now having Tim back and all the great work he does out there in the school with our youth; Josh Underhay, a great friend of my daughter's, teaches with her – it's good to see you, Josh.

I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his great words about what happened here yesterday. It was absolutely wonderful; I thank him for bringing that up here again today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all welcome to all of those that have already been mentioned in the gallery, certainly to the students at Three Oaks High School, many of whom come from my constituency area; I hope you enjoy the proceedings and I know it's an interesting process. I've been a part of the Rotary Youth Parliament in the past, and I congratulate Mike Trainor for all of the work he's done in his leadership on that as well.

I was proud here last night, as well, to be a member of government that worked together with opposition to bring amendments to the bill that we were all able to work together on in regard to autism coordination and I, too, and our members of government have received a lot of emails from parents in regard to that. It does prove that we can work together for the good of all Islanders, and I'm proud that we were able to do that last night.

Today, I would like to send condolences out to the family of Leonard McNeill of Richmond, who has passed. Leonard and his family have been great supporters of me since day one, and I spoke to them today because I'm not able to be with them, but I respect the support that they have given me and will always remember the many tubs of fudge that were given to me during the last three elections to get me through the many hours. So, I'll always have that in my heart, thinking of Leonard and May, and today, I send my condolences to the family and know that I'm with them in spirit and offer my condolences again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to acknowledge Mike and Shane Hennessey. Mike's suggesting to retirement, he looks a little young to retire – him and his wife Darlene live in my district, that's good.

Also, just a note on Forbie Kennedy, when it was mentioned about his book and what he's done to the sporting world on Prince Edward Island. I remember as a young child, almost, attending his hockey school at the old Forum on Fitzroy Street. During that time, his instructors consisted of people like Errol Thompson, Rick Vaive, Hilliard Graves, Bobby and Billy MacMillan, Alan MacAdam, Bucko Trainer, (Indistinct), Jamie Kennedy and Peter Williams – to say a few. It goes to show you back then, they weren't making a whole lot of money, they were actually supplementing their income by working for Forbie.

His acknowledgement to the youth on Prince Edward Island certainly goes back to the late '70s, early '80s. I wish him all the best and he has done a lot for the sport and he is one of the toughest that ever left the Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to say hello to Mike Trainor and his class who are watching the proceedings today, and I'd like to thank Mike Trainor for his long-time support of the Rotary Youth Parliament. His students are always well prepared, especially in the area of parliamentary procedure.

Mr. Speaker, I know you and I like to give the kids who participate in the Rotary Youth Parliament the most authentic experience possible, so to those students in Mike Trainor's class who are watching the proceedings today, I hope they recognize the orders of the day and enjoy the proceedings.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome and say hello to Mike Trainor and his political science class at Tree Oaks. I'd also like to welcome everyone to the gallery; I see some people here in the gallery in my future new district of Evangeline-Miscouche and my present district of Evangeline-Miscouche. I'd like to welcome Margaret MacKay and Nick Arsenault to the gallery, nice to see you here today.

I'd also like to pass along my condolences to the McNeil family on the passing of their dad, Leonard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I guess in advance would like to welcome Basel Alrashdan to the gallery, and his family – more on that later. We'll also be joined by Tom Hilton, Elder Morris, and Charlotte Stewart later. And also to Mike Trainor's political science class, welcome and thank you to the members for their participation and their efforts every year.

I'd also like to recognize that The Guild is holding a fundraiser this evening, so anybody that's looking for anything to do this evening, they may wish to take that in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today, and welcome to all of those in the gallery, the media, and my colleagues back to the Legislature. I'd also like to give a shout out to Mike Trainor and his political science class, and I hope they enjoy the procedures, I hope we're all on our best behaviour.

And also, if I'm not mistaken, this is about the time of years when the political science students start writing us MLAs letters and asking us questions like: why we decided to enter politics. So, I encourage all of us, if we do get a letter from one of the students, to

please take five or 10 minutes to answer those questions because it means the world to them and it might actually inspire one of them to enter politics one day and change our world.

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 everybody watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, of course, and everyone in the gallery, it's great to see you all here today.

I wanted to recognize Emerald Isle Property Management, celebrating 10 years in business this year – Paul MacKinnon, Stacey Wyand and staff. Also the Cavendish KOA Holiday Campground, so that's Victor and Kay Hryckiw, their celebrating 25 years in business this year.

Finally, I wanted to give a shout out to the Pleasant Valley 4H Club. I'm going there to judge their speeches and demonstrations at their communications night tonight; I know it's going to be great. They had – the Cavendish 4-H Club one already, and my daughter Annika and her partner Charlotte managed to win for their demonstration; my son Alex, with his speech on; You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take, managed to come in runner-up as an alternate. So, the 4-H communication night is an excellent thing, and as always, I'd recommend 4-H to any family that's looking to give their kids a jump start.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody into the gallery too, especially those at home watching from EastLink.

I just want to remind everyone about the 38th annual Souris Christmas parade being held this Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and I hear Santa Clause is coming, and I also hear that the

Whoville fire department is also going to be there. That's a big step up from last year.

Also when I was going home last night it was very dark and it was raining very hard and the wind was blowing. A few years ago I had the opportunity to work with the former minister of transportation, Robert Vessey, and we worked together on getting the reflector tapes on the highways. It's a very good safety feature and I hear lots of good complements about it. I was glad to be able to work with the former minister of transportation on getting those. But, it was brought to my attention where there are long gaps – and the people understand that wintertime with the plows and the blades scraping them and some of them are missing, so I just took extra caution going home last night to see where the gaps were. I know the transportation minister, your department is busy this time of year, but can you just make sure that – and I'm sure they're aware of it – that these gaps are there and people are depending on them now.

They probably won't do it until the spring because of the winter months, but can they have a look at these gaps where the reflective tape is missing and see if they can replace them?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone here to the gallery today and especially Mike's class in Three Oaks in my district in Summerside. I know they are watching from the newly-renovated Three Oaks school which is a wonderful addition in our community and I know that Mike really stirs a lot of interest in his students and they really look forward to the proceedings and I really hope they enjoy themselves today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Stars for Life

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have never been more encouraged to stand in this House to talk about the future of the Stars for Life Foundation.

Last night in this Legislature there was unanimous commitment to offer more determined coordinated leadership for families with autism spectrum disorder. The Prince Edward Island coordinating committee was established, consisting of relevant deputy ministers reporting to our relevant minister responsible for autism. This is great news for Island families.

The Stars for Life Foundation was founded in 2001 to assist families with their children with autism spectrum disorder when they left the school system and their vital daily supports disappeared.

During last night's debate the minister of education stated that there are currently 422 students with ASD in the Public Schools Branch and the French language schools branch.

All of these families will be reaching out to the Stars for Life Foundation when their child exits the school system. This puts immense pressure on the Stars for Life Foundation. They are currently working with over 30 clients and have over 40 on the waitlist.

They are grateful for the \$150,000 they received from the Department of Family and Human Services, but this money only covers overnight and weekend staff for five clients who require 24-hour care. The funding has nothing to do with day programming and they are in desperate need of long-term core funding.

The Stars for Life programs have proven that clients with ASD have a chance to lead long and successful lives. They are a valuable resource for families right across Prince Edward Island.

When I announced I would retire following this mandate, I was concerned that I had unfinished business in obtaining long-term sustainable funding for programming for the Stars for Life Foundation. Last night's debate gave me hope and peace that there

would be determined coordinated leadership to do better for families and organizations like the Stars for Life Foundation to assist Islanders with ASD, to not only survive, but to thrive.

Well done everyone.

Thank you.

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

Northern Pulp

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to express my support for four Maritime senators who are demanding a full federal environmental assessment of the plan to release treated pulp mill effluent into the Northumberland Strait.

Those senators are Mike Duffy, Brian Francis, Dianne Griffin, and Dan Christmas.

Paper Excellence, the owner of Northern Pulp in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, cannot be allowed to discharge 70 million litres of treated effluent into the strait every day.

This project is of environmental detriment to the strait, and will damage the fishery in the Maritime Provinces and in Quebec's Magdalen Islands.

Fishermen and residents of Pictou County say the estuary that once support a variety of marine life has become a toxic lake and a national disgrace, on par with the poisoned (Indistinct) ponds of Alberta and North Sidney. One resident described Boat Harbour as being the colour of Pepsi.

As I brought forward in questions to the Premier last week, we all need to keep this issue on the radar to pressure Ottawa for a federal environmental assessment.

Everyone wants to see job increases in the Maritimes, and we are empathetic to the concerns of the mill employees. However, we cannot risk potential environmental disaster despite Northern Pulp's assertion that the effluent will be non-toxic.

I stand with the senators in insisting that only clean solutions should be considered in

assessing the problems presented and call upon the federal government for a full-fledged environmental review of this project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question asked yesterday by the Member from Souris-Elmira regarding payouts for crop insurance in 2017, the number is 28.9 million and the unit price offered for the 2018 crop year for potatoes to farmers for their guaranteed yield is actually 7.50, eight and 10 cents per pound.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

For a long time now we have raised concerns about government's chronic mismanagement of the Provincial Nominee Program and government has continually denied anything was wrong.

Mismanagement of PNP

Question today to the minister responsible for immigration: What happened this summer to cause you to change your story so abruptly?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This summer we nominated a number of new people to come to PEI and we're very happy we did that. It continues to help with our population growth, our economic growth, and our bringing new culture here to PEI, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

When we pointed out the many troubling issues with how immigration programs were being run, government denied them and accused us of fearmongering.

Question to the immigration minister: Do you now regret not leveling with Islanders about the scale of PNP mismanagement by your government?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, there was no mismanagement of our program.

Our program was working well. There are lots of improvements that we could make in it, and we did that. Over the years, we introduced new measures to encourage more people to come to PEI, to better understand their intent when they come to PEI, and we're happy with the changes that we've been making, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

For over a year now, the way that this government has managed immigration program has generated negative headlines often ending up in national newspapers.

A court case begins later this week following investigations by the Canada Borders Services Agency.

Reputational damage to PEI re: PNP

Question to the immigration minister: What is the cost of reputational damage being done to PEI by your government's handling of the immigration file?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our immigration program was not operating as well as we wanted it to. We weren't

meeting expectations of Islanders and we weren't meeting expectations of our government so I closed it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the topic of not meeting expectations, yesterday I asked the minister a number of questions about a business that went into receivership here this week in the province, when I thought the questions were extremely straightforward and the minister's answers were all in circles and all over the pond, requiring government staff to go into the media room later in the day and straighten it out.

Government assistance to DME

Question to the minister: Why did you refuse to say that your government had discussed assistance with this company yesterday when you were on the floor rather than make your staffer go into the media room and straighten out your mess?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to make sure that everybody understood that we're here to support employees.

What we did over the weekend was we understood that there was potential of the company going into receivership. We worked with the local owners of DME; looked at a financing option; recognized that was not going to be enough and wasn't going to help, so we quickly turned our attention to the workers and that's what we're continuing to do, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What a difference a day makes when the minister has an opportunity to be briefed by

the Premier's staff who appears to be the only one that's in the know on this.

This is a troubling pattern when it comes to this minister. He says one thing in the House only later to be contradicted by facts, and usually by his own staff.

Back in May when the Sherwood Motel caper was on he was saying the same type of things in here. He was all over the pond, offering all different kinds of excuses on what was going on around him.

Question to the minister: Why was it such a struggle for you to get your story straight about the facts going on in your department back in May?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The theatrics in here today are worth the price of admission.

Well-placed words like 'secret' and 'hidden' and those types of things to try to let folks think that there's a different meaning to what is happening here – we're working hard for Islanders and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure that I said 'secret', but I'm about to so it's like you read my mind.

Our office filed a freedom of information request on your department over emails concerning the Sherwood Motel and the Provincial Nominee Program over a 20-month period. We received 49 pages of heavily redacted emails from May and August of this year.

Redacted emails re: PNP and Sherwood Motel

Question to the immigration minister: What was going on in all of these emails flying

back and forth that required so much of the information to be redacted?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The border services investigation is important. We are cooperating with border services and delivering any information that we have because we don't tolerate that kind of behaviour that folks are charged with and we're going to do everything we can to help border services get to the bottom of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's the exact kind of stuff I would have expected to see in these emails. I would have expected to see details of explanations of how the program worked, how they were monitoring compliance, the data and the stats that supported what the government was saying in the House at the time; the very claims that he was making in here saying that the program how the program was being run.

There was little to none of that in 49 pages of emails.

Mismanagement of PNP (further)

Question to the minister: Why did government seem to have such a poor handle on what was going on in the very program that they managed?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the emails talked about the other 85% of our program that brings workers in to fill skills gap in our community that helps fill jobs here.

I know the opposition members don't want to talk about that, but that's the largest chunk of our immigration program and we're happy to continue it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, the minister is wrong. That's not what was in the emails. It looks like Mary is going to be in the media room later today correcting all of your answers that you made so far.

Based on what wasn't redacted, these emails paint a picture of frenzied crisis communications at the highest level of government; emails largely focused on local and national media requests and trying to script together a believable story.

Question to the minister: Why were these bad headlines a bigger preoccupation than figuring out whether or not your program was working properly?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what headlines they're talking about but it could be where PEI is leading the nation in a number of economic factors.

It could be where we're leading the country in population growth. There's lot of things that are going on well here.

Mr. Trivers: Lowest wage.

Mr. Palmer: And there are things we can do better, and we're here to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Casey: Great answer.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Quite similar to yesterday, the minister chooses not to answer the question, here; instead he goes on with a whole bunch of rhetoric that does little or nothing to improve Prince Edward Island.

Reading the emails, you can see how the government's story keep changing as more facts come to light from questions here in Question Period and questions that come from the media.

Program officials, communication staff, the minister's office, even senior officials in Executive Council and the Premier's office are all back and forth in multiple emails, sharing links and trying to cobble together a somewhat believable story for the minister to tell the media.

Management of files from fifth floor

A question to the minister:
Do most of the files you deal with as minister involve such a hands-on management from the fifth floor?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Everything that my department does comes from the fifth floor, that's where my office is –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Palmer: – and we're there to make sure (Indistinct) continues to grow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure the minister will be laughing later when I table these 49 emails and sees how incompetent that he actually is when it comes to doing his job, or how the Premier thinks you're so incompetent, or how all the communications staff thinks your incompetent or how Executive Council thinks you're incompetent.

But, back to the questions –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: The emails show that media requests sent off a flurry of activity among top officials, apparently, trying to get their stories straight to live through another day of the news cycle.

Routine media requests

A question to the minister: is this a typical response to routine media requests?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe when the smoke comes off that gun he had over there, he could table all of that so that we could all understand what he's talking about, or if there's pieces that are not really in there that maybe were stretching a little bit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's no surprise the minister knows nothing of what I'm talking about; same as yesterday, same as the entire month of May, for that matter. But, it's because he wasn't included in any of the emails because none of the communication staff or the Premier's office trust him with the information.

One of the email chains involved an email from Billy Dow, of the e-gaming fame, detailing developments happening down at the courthouse.

Bill Dow re: Legal Counsel for IID

A question to the minister: is Billy Dow still a Legal Counsel for IID?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we engage a number of legal experts whenever we need them for various files and I believe that Mr. Dow is one of those.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

An Hon. Member: No one is clapping for that one.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yeah, there wasn't one person banging their desk for that one. I wonder why.

All that Billy Dow has done to drag your reputation down how you could ever still give work to Billy Dow, is more than I could possibly imagine –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) today (Indistinct) carrying on or?

Mr. Myers: What's that Jordan?

Mr. J. Brown: Did your mother have to stay in today?

An Hon. Member: Oh.

Mr. Myers: Pardon, Jordan.

Mr. J. Brown: Was your mother able to get out of the house today?

Speaker: Order. Order!

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Brighton can talk all he wants when he gets to his feet here later.

On May 8th, the minister told this House: so, those 583 were not applicants to PEI and we would have no knowledge of them coming to PEI, it was an address they used for an application going to a different province.

PNP applications and addresses

A question to the minister: Do you still believe that statement that you said?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker.

Freedom of mobility in Canada is a right that everybody enjoys, and if you are

nominated, you can move across the country to whatever you would like to live. I believe the charges that come from here are boarder services as people are reentering the country and they're giving different address than they had given us on the application.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well it's very strange and I think what's strange about it is, according to the departmental emails that I have here, the CBSA officials briefed your department the day before May 7th, about the charges being laid in the Sherwood Motel case. So, your staff all knew the entire details.

CBSA officials and briefing to department

A question to the minister: Why would you give an answer like that when your own staff knew the actual fit facts in this case?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker.

We were working with boarder services then, we're working with boarder services now; we're there to make sure that if there is any wrong doing, we're there to support the federal government in any of the charges that they have laid.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's stranger still, because the same staff briefed the minister the day he said those things. According to one of those emails, the

minister was briefed before making those comments in the House.

A question to the minister: Why would you have such an absurd answer in the House, when you knew the facts stated otherwise?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, I almost don't know how to answer that – with the accusation of absurd – coming from the other side. But, I will tell you that we continue to work with boarder services, we continue to make sure that we share as much information as we have to get to the bottom of this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make the question simpler then. A question to the minister: Did you not get briefed by your staff before you answered the question the way you did?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker.

I don't recall the date in question, but I will tell you that my staff are very good to brief me, that we make sure that we're working together as a team, to continue to grow business in PEI, and to do everything we can to help businesses here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So again, I'll ask my second question, which was: If you were briefed by your staff like you say you were, that they always keep you briefed, why would you give an answer in this House that wasn't true?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker.

I think I'd like to start taking about some of the employment growth that's happening here on PEI –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: Of course you would.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – because that's the important part of our immigration program, is we're filling important gaps – I know nobody over there ever wants to talk about that, all they want to talk about are some of the issues that we're working really hard with boarder services to address and we've changed our program because it wasn't meeting expectation of Islanders and it wasn't meeting expectations of this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too, am getting frustrated because I'm not getting any answers from this minister. And what I will say is this – the minister says he was briefed by his staff, so if the minister was briefed by his staff, he knew full-well what was happening out at the Sherwood Motel because they were briefed by boarder services prior to briefing the minister. It all shows up in the emails here.

If that's the case, then the minister came to this House and that minister told this House something that he knew not to be true.

A question to the minister: why would you do that? Either they didn't brief you properly, or you came to this House and said something that you knew not to be true.

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker.

We're working with boarder services, we're giving them all the information that we have, their sharing information with us, and

we're happy to do that and we're going to continue to do that. This program was not meeting our expectations, so we closed it and that's something that a good government can do. It's about action, not standing around and talking about foolishness all the time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, this is exactly what happened back in May when we talked about this, the minister stood and talked about two or three things. Actually, you're going to find in the emails, that those two or three things were vented through communications and they decided what the minister was telling the House. You're going to see that, and you are not going to be impressed with this minister at all, when these emails are tabled here later today.

So, I'm going to go back and ask the question again: Why if you were briefed – if boarder services briefed your staff and your staff briefed you – why you would say something in the House that you knew wasn't true?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker.

The truth is we continue to work with boarder services, we continue to share information, and we're going to continue to do that. This matter is in front of the courts, and we're here to help boarder services in anything we can because that's not the way we run business over here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: So, four times I've asked the question. I'll move on to the next question seeing as the minister doesn't want to answer it.

The next day on May 9th the minister corrected his original answer by clarifying: All files reviewed by border services were provincial PNP clients from the 2008 program which no longer exists. The federal charges filed two days before earlier stated that some of these individuals arrived on the Island as recently as 2015.

Government staff briefings

Question to the minister – you knew this wasn't true too, because your staff was briefed and you were briefed by your staff: Why did you come to this House and say it anyway?

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

Mr. Palmer: Like I said, we continue to work with border services.

Our system does not connect with border services' system so there always is some back and forth that we have with the feds to make sure that we can get this right; that we can bring the very best people to PEI to help fill important labour gaps that we have in PEI.

We know that our good workers on PEI are the ones that help grow our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation released its rental market report today, and things are not looking good.

Charlottetown now holds the dubious honour of being the city with the lowest vacancy rate at 0.2% of any major municipality in the country.

You know it's bad when you make Vancouver and Toronto look like healthy rental markets.

Our recent economic growth has been predicated on quick and explosive immigration population growth and as a recent Scotiabank report notes, the provinces

population act plan seeks to grow our population 4.4% higher than the current levels by 2020.

Rental vacancy rates

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: How is this economic growth economically sustainable if we have nowhere for people to live?

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

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

Our economy is doing very well and thank you to the people who have come here and work in our workforce and create business and yeah, my figures show .3% not .2% and yes we have some concerns and our construction industry is doing the best they can to keep up with it, but you know, we can't fix this over night. It's something we've been working at in collaboration with my Department of Economic Development and Tourism and we'll continue to work at it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On one hand, government is actively exacerbating the housing crisis with its population action plan. On the other hand, government is trying to solve the crisis is trying to solve its housing action plan. In other words, government is trying to solve a problem of its own making.

Housing action plan

Question to the minister: Were you or your department consulted on the housing action plan and are you involved in its execution?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All of our departments across government work together and may I add and inform this house that 7,000 new jobs created over two years here in PEI. Our unemployment rate was the lowest in the history since they've been keeping records in 1976.

The economy is flourishing – our housing, there is an issue. We cannot fix this overnight but I'll just mention to the hon. member, UPEI had 1,150 students apply for 444 beds. There were 706 students that had to get accommodations elsewhere.

Everything is booming on PEI.

Ms. Casey: (Indistinct) residence.

Mr. Gallant: We're working on fixing it across government and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: It has become abundantly clear that the population action plan is having serious and unintended consequences on the Island housing market to the point where the crisis will soon become a barrier to population retention and immigration if it has not already done so.

Population action plan

Question to the minister: Will you put the population action plan on hold until this housing crisis has been dealt with?

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

Ms. Casey: Premier.

Speaker: Oh, the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think it's most regrettable that the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale is standing in this house and blaming our population action plan for the housing crisis.

We have a demand for housing. We have a supply that's being met on the order of

1,000 new units being built this year and we have 7,000 new fulltime jobs in two years.

That's where the demand is coming from. It's from prosperity, from an economy that's flourishing, as the minister said, and we should all be proud of that and work to keep up with it and that's what Islanders are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My questions today are for the Minister of Family and Human Services.

Minister, last night we had a very informative discussion on autism.

First, I'd like to thank you for your support provided to me over the years on my many questions related to autism, and more specifically the Stars for Life Foundation.

The debate was very encouraging about the future coordination and navigation of services for families with autism. You spoke of the programs your department is already doing to provide support and services for families with autism spectrum disorder.

Community connectors

Would you expand on the hiring of community connectors you referred to in last night's debate?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for that question, I'd be pleased to let you know a little bit about the community connectors and what their role will be.

We are in the process currently of hiring three community connectors, one for each region. Their role will be to build on and enhance the community capacity on the front line as well as to help families and individuals navigate the many government departments and the many government

programs as well as help focus on solutions to common issues as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the debate last night, you also spoke about collaboration with the University of Prince Edward Island on collaborative communication for families with disabilities.

Collaborative case management

What is this program about and when does it start?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very pleased to be working with the University of Prince Edward Island on a new certification program on collaborative case management.

This will involve a holistic approach and it will bring together all the supports in an individual's life, which will include their family, their community as well as government and it will ensure that there is a standard of delivery that will incorporate the individual's needs, their family and community in the delivery of the process.

We're looking forward to rolling that out in the latter part of 2019.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the debate last night, the minister of education informed the house that there were currently 422 students with ASD in the public schools and the French language schools branch and eventually these students are going to the leave school system and seek programming with the Stars for Life Foundation.

Soon we're going to have a new mandate in how the province deals with families with autism.

Minister: will your department ensure the Stars for Life Foundation going forward has the necessary core funding for programming – to allow those exiting the school system – and I'm going to use Peter Rukavina's words from last night: That those with ASD can not only survive, but thrive.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do thank you again for your advocacy for the Stars for Life Foundation and people with autism on Prince Edward Island over the years that I have been sitting in this ministry.

We value Stars for Life Foundation, they provide a tremendous service to individuals and families with autism. They provide community supports as well as residential supports and as always, and it will be my commitment to you hon. member, that I will sit down with the Stars for Life Foundation and see if we can work on sustainable funding for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today my question is directed to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

In the federal budget this year, the government established an advisory council on the implementation of national PharmaCare. The council was directed to provide independent advice on how best to implement national PharmaCare in the manner that is affordable for Canadians and their families.

National pharmacare program

Minister: Where are we with the national pharmacare program?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the hon. member for that question.

Our government strongly, strongly supports discussion on national PharmaCare and what it would look like for Prince Edward Island.

The hon. member is right, back in April of last year the House of Commons standing committee released recommendations on what a national pharmacare program could look like. As a result of that, Dr. Eric Hoskins was tasked as chair of this advisory council and Dr. Hoskins is the former minister of health from Ontario.

That led to a couple of meetings on Prince Edward Island. A really good discussion, but honestly quite frank discussion with Dr. Hoskins and to how this could be a financial burden on Prince Edward Island to meet a national standard, unless the federal government came to assistance in that. So those discussions went on.

I look forward to further discussions with Dr. Hoskins and his advisory council when he releases his report.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your first supplementary.

Mr. Roach: Minister, the federal standing committee on health tabled a report recommending that Canada establish a universal, single payer public prescription drug system.

National pharmacare system

Are we going to be waiting for the federal government to implement a national pharmacare system, and if we are, what is your department doing now to address the need of Islanders in the meantime?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, I look forward to further discussions at FPT Tables of ministers of health all across Canada as to what this new program could look like, but we are not waiting, obviously not.

This year alone we invested \$3 million in adding 28 new drugs to our formulary right here in PEI. Those 28 drugs included drugs for: 13 for cancer treatments, there was new drugs for cystic fibrosis, and other ailments for Islanders.

We will continue to make those investments. We will work closely with our Provincial Drugs & Therapeutics Committee to determine priorities of new drugs that will assist Islanders all across our wonderful province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your second supplementary question.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well that's great to hear that we're having more drugs added to the formulary continually.

Islanders benefitting from drug programs

How many Islanders are currently benefitting from our province's drug programs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As of today, we have 27 drug programs that exist on our province here; 57,000 Islanders are assisted by these programs. To date, we have 21,400 Islanders registered in the Generic Drug Program, almost 5,000 in the Catastrophic Drug Program, as well as another 250 Islanders that are participating in our Hepatitis C Drug Program that was recently released.

We will continue to work with Islanders to ensure that their health care needs are met when it comes to drugs, when it comes to funding drugs, and when it comes to getting drugs at the lowest prices possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While not many of us are thinking about beaches these days, but my seatmate here from Kensington-Malpeque asked some questions last week about a beach in his district. This summer, Points East Coastal Drive saw many tourists embracing the 50 beaches brand. This initiative exposes tourists to the beauty of our Island beaches ensuring they get the most out of their stay on PEI.

Site reviews and plans for Island beaches

Question to minister of tourism: What site reviews and action plans have this government undertaken to support these Island beaches?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know tourism is a very important economic driver here, and we continue work with RTAs and DMOs right across PEI to further enhance the regions and the products that are available there. We also work with TIAPEI on a five-year strategy plan. We continue to work in this ever-changing dynamic industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well I think my questions are a little bit easier than the questions received earlier. I asked you what support has the province given to these beaches. There are 13 of the 50 beaches in District 4, and many of my constituents are expressing concern at the lack of facilities implemented to support the influx of tourists, as there are no disposal locations for the excess litter and the complaint is coming to me that the residents are picking up the litter.

Waste disposal sites for litter on beaches

Question to the minister of tourism: Will you commit to providing locations for waste disposal on the various sites to keep our beaches clean?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad Islanders are doing their part in helping to clean up the beaches, but we need to help with that as well. So I invite the member opposite to reach out to my office anytime whenever we're having issues and we're there to support communities right across PEI so that our product stays as one of the best products there is in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well litter is not the only issue that we're facing with the 50 beaches brand. Due to lack of environmental signage and designated parking, visitors are parking on the marram grass at the visiting beaches. Marram grass is essential to maintaining the dunes and holding together the dunes during storms and high winds.

Designated parking areas on beaches

Question to the minister: Will your department commit to providing designated parking areas to prevent further damage to the natural ecosystem of our beaches?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, beaches are one of the very important pieces of our product here in PEI, and if the member wants to reach out to me at any time we'll certainly work with communities to make sure that those beaches are protected.

I know even this past summer we worked to put a number of signs up to make sure that our tourists were aware of how vulnerable

our dune system is and the grasses and to keep people off.

We're happy to work with all communities across PEI to make sure our product stays great.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well this is a huge initiative: 50 beaches in Eastern PEI. So we would assume that the department would be involved in this. In District 4 alone, we've got Big Point Road Beach, we've got Beach Point Beach, Machon Point Beach, MacLeod Road Beach, Panting's Shore Beach, Point Prim Beach, Ponds Road Beach, Poverty Beach, Seal Cove Campground which is privately owned, and Simon's Beach, and we have three provincial parks. We know that the parks are being looked after with waste disposal and signage, because they are provincial parks.

Continued success for 50 beaches brand

But for the other 10 parks in the district, minister will you assure that your department will look into providing what is necessary to ensure that the 50 beaches brand is more successful and continues to be successful?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm so glad this came to the floor today, because we will work with communities to protect those beaches because we know they're so important. Anytime if anyone wants to give me a call to help protect their beaches, we're happy to do that because we know it's very important here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know the industry is doing a great job of promoting our Island beaches, but getting the word out to tourists is only the first step. What is needed is proper management and support going forward.

I've had this discussion with people from eastern tourism about, you know, be careful about the success that we're having because you have to ensure that when the tourists go to those beaches, which are fairly secluded, that they're not experiencing litter, that they're not getting stuck – and that's happened in the marram grass because they don't understand the impact that that will have.

Question to the minister: Will the minister's department commit to having his department do the legwork and release the funds to support and protect and maintain our Island beaches?

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

Mr. Palmer: We certainly don't want to try to shrink the greatness; we want to grow the greatness. So if there's anything that our department can do to continue to highlight the important beaches that we have, the great asset that we have here in PEI, we'll do that.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And again, these are not timely questions because we have snow outside, but come the spring these questions will be coming forward again to me and a number of my colleagues because the beaches are in their districts.

As I said, 13 of those beaches are in District 4. Many constituents coming to complain, and I'm confused and frustrated to see such an important initiative as the 50 beaches go forward without adequate support from our government.

Minister: Can you explain to me what back and forth you've had with the eastern tourism association to ensure that the 50 beaches remain successful?

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

Mr. Palmer: We work with the regional tourists' associations all the time. We provide funding to help promote the area, to make sure that we have great products in the area and yearly, we are in contact with the RTAs and we're in continuous discussions with them through the seasons to make sure that everything is focused the way that it should be, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, your final question.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to that work being done next summer.

Conflict of interest disclosure of government member

Question to the Premier: Which senior member of government did not file their conflict of interest disclosure?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered this question about 10 days ago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Using E-health in Mental Health and Addictions

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, strengthening mental health services is a priority for this government.

As I said in the House yesterday, our government has put forward a capital budget which includes the most significant investment ever into mental health and addictions for this province – \$100 million over the next five years.

Part of this \$100 million investment will focus on establishing e-health solutions to support mental health and addictions.

Work has been underway for quite some time to find innovative and evidence-based approaches to providing the best possible care for Islanders faced with mental health issues.

Currently our health system participates in the computer based training for cognitive behavioral therapy. We use online and telephone supports including Strongest Families mental health care for children and families, 811 telehealth, and the Island helpline.

Clinicians are encouraged to share different evidence-based apps and websites with their clients such as those developed by the National Centre for Addictions and Mental Health.

Looking forward to our plan for enhancing e-health supports over the next five years includes elements such as: online self-scheduling portals; virtual therapies and peer counselling; and tele-mental health services.

Online self-scheduling will allow clients to schedule community mental health appointments via on-line or app-based solutions. This will make the appointment process easier and faster for clients.

Additionally, research shows us that virtual therapies and peer counselling are very effective treatment options for mental health and addictions clients.

Work is underway right now on a new mobile app to provide mental health and addiction supports for families and parents. We hope one of these new initiatives will be developed over the next few months.

Rural health care is a priority for us, so we will be establishing enhanced tele-mental health services for the rural regions.

These supports will allow people to be quickly assessed by a qualified mental health provider in both primary and emergency care. This will speed up service and reduce unnecessary hospitalizations for clients who can be safely helped in the community.

We know the toll mental illness can have on a person and their entire family.

I encourage anyone who is struggling with mental health or addictions, to reach out for help either through a primary care provider, a walk-in clinic, community mental health centre, the help-line or talk to a friend.

Nobody should struggle alone. Help is available.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd like to thank the minister for this ministerial statement today and some of what he spoke about I would be remised if I didn't stand and thank him for it and say that I do support some of these initiatives.

But, some of the initiatives that we've seen tried here on Prince Edward Island over the last couple of years have simply failed.

I go back with regards to a family that I have been advocating for for several years now. They have a young son, pre-teenager, that has severe mental health issues along with PTSD and unfortunately, with the lack of a child psychiatrist here on PEI, the only solution left was to have a Skype session with a child psychiatrist out-of-province.

I can tell you right now, as I said in this House before and it's on record in Hansard, that the experience that this family and this young child had was worse than dismal.

While we talk about e-health solution and evidence-based, there is truly nothing better evidence-based – especially when we're dealing with an individual, an especially a child who is experiencing severe mental health issues – to have a face-to-face, not a face to a video screen via Skype, but actually a face-to-face in a room so that the professional health individual, a psychiatrist, can truly get a –

Leader of the Opposition: An individual and especially a child, who is experiencing severe mental health issues to have a face-

to-face, not a face to a video screen via Skype, but actually a face-to-face in a room so that the professional health psychiatrist can truly get a feel for what this child is experiencing.

Again, I applaud the government's announcement the other day on the mental health campus that is coming eventually.

I know there is a five-year plan right now that's being unfolded and then there's, I think \$100 million was announced, that might seem like a tremendous amount of money here to many Islanders but in all honesty, \$100 million to a system to provide mental health resources to people that are suffering and in some cases, they're on the brink – they're on the brink of any of their lives.

When we talk about funding a health support system, we have to think about: what's a life really worth?

I think we do owe it to Islanders to ensure that we have the best here on PEI and that's why I brought up here in the House here before, if we're looking at investing this much money into a mental health campus, I think we should be looking at partnering with a medical school such as Dalhousie or another institution to see if we can get some type of teaching component here on PEI as well.

We know that we have a difficult time recruiting specialists here to PEI, in particular psychiatrists and especially children's psychiatrists, and in some cases, psychologists as well.

So, I think if we came up with some kind of partnership with a teaching facilities such as Dalhousie University, that we would have a better opportunity of not only recruiting, but maintaining some of those individuals that would come here as part of their rotation to actually provide the services that are required here.

The minister speaks of the 811 number, well no – it works, but I've also heard from Islanders that have said they've called the 811 number and things are going along quite well, they're given advice, but then when they ask for their postal code so that they can dispatch the emergency services to that

address they're told: Oh, you're in Prince Edward Island, I'm sorry, that service isn't available.

One example of that is the mental health crisis rapid response team that we still don't have up and running here on PEI.

The minister also spoke about getting more e-services available and that's simply a great aspect in some cases and that's why I actually have a private members bill on the floor right now with regards to a mental health app.

I think that with the technology that we have and most people have in the palm of their hands, that we can do more with regards to scheduling or with regards to knowing what actual services are available here on PEI – not calling Nova Scotia to be told that: oh I'm sorry, that service isn't available because you live on PEI.

While I do applaud the initiatives that this government is working on and I know this minister is dedicated and has his sleeves rolled up everyday – he's in the trenches with the frontline workers.

It's just like last night when we brought the autism coordination bill to the floor. It's going to take more than government just saying what they're going to do. It's going to take government listening to opposition and working with opposition. More importantly, working with Islanders and understanding what's needed so that we can move forward and provide the relief that Islanders need that are suffering from mental health.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Of course, technology has always changed our world and it's never done at a more rapid pace than it is now.

In every aspect of our lives change is accelerating at a manner and at a speed that we've never experience before.

It's allowing things like telepsychology to become part of the armamentarium that we use in mental health.

I listened this morning to the lovely interview with Verna Ryan and Dr. Heather Keizer on CBC Radio and it certainly sounds like this has promise.

Yesterday, I applauded the minister's statement, the announcement of what seems like a move to a truly holistic approach to mental health care here on Prince Edward Island. This is another aspect of that.

Again, I welcome this in the same way that I welcomed yesterday's announcement. We do have to be a little bit weary though of telepsychology – the jury is definitely out on the effectiveness.

It certainly provides a wider range of service, it can be done with complete anonymity and those are great things, but we still have the same quality of staff to provide the service – whether it's at the end of a telephone or video screen as we do face-to-face and crisis intervention is not always done as effectively.

So, while I welcome this, I think the jury is definitely out on whether this sort of much more impersonal approach to something which is perhaps the most personal thing that one could ever enter into – which is expressing a crisis in your life.

Again, I welcome this; I look forward to, again, this more holistic approach that government seems to be bringing forward when it comes to providing the essential set of services to Islanders when it comes to mental health.

Thank you, minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Efficiency Initiatives

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased today to share updated climate change impact numbers from efficiencyPEI.

Our energy efficiency programs have reduced CO₂ emissions by 33,000 tonnes and saved more than 11 million litres of home heating oil to date.

Since opening in 2008, efficiencyPEI has also helped Islanders save over \$10 million on their energy bills. As well, we've saved over \$10 million to Islanders on their energy bills. efficiencyPEI offers many services and rebates to save money and benefit the environment.

Yesterday we announced \$7.5 million in energy efficiency loans to provide low interest financing to home owners interested in reducing energy costs.

This will eliminate the barrier of upfront cost when making energy efficiency upgrades. This builds on our incredible, successful rebates for the installation of efficient heating equipment, including heat pumps.

These rebates have been extremely popular with interest increasing 300% over last year. More than 2,400 Islanders are participating, including almost 300 low-income Islanders.

Low income Islanders receive a larger rebate and with the loan program announced yesterday, our rebate program will be more inclusive than other.

The rebates on heat pumps have generated an estimated \$2.8 million benefit to participating Islanders. Between this and other efficiency programs, we are on track to help by the end of next month 900 low income Islanders with energy upgrades to their homes this year, many of which are offered free of charge.

I'm also pleased to report that all energy equipment rebate applications from low income clients not requiring an inspection will be processed and paid by the end of next week.

Low income clients with applications requiring inspections will be prioritized and will receive their inspections as soon as possible. Each heat pump installed through these programs reduces oil consumption by 1,000 litres which is equivalent to 2.75 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. With the exiting

level of interest, efficiency PEI has move locations so they could expand to better help Islanders.

They are now open at the new larger location at 69 Belvedere Avenue in Charlottetown. We also have an office in Summerside and offer other services throughout Access PEI.

efficiency PEI is now accepting online applications for energy efficient rebate. Energy efficiency is now easier than ever to access. We are also staffing up to meet the continued demand. Our government's climate plan is working; our government is fighting climate change while protecting Islander's pocketbooks. I encourage all Islanders to check out the great rebates available at www.energycanada.ca.

We are making real change to protect our climate, reduce emissions, make our homes more comfortable, while saving Islanders money.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My actual list is actually two pages long, and one part of it I'm not going to – skip right over top of that.

Let's talk about Maritime Electric for a second. Here we have Maritime Electric has done not one thing to reduce greenhouse gases in this province. They're still on Bunker C and they should be taking examples from what Summerside Electric has done in improving green technology in the province.

This government continues to stand behind Maritime Electric and not make them be part of the equation to reduce greenhouse gases.

Mr. R. Brown: Way down at the waterfront.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Plus further on, the minister talks about what she's down for maritime – what

she's done for electrical rates. We have the highest electrical rates in the country when it comes to what Islanders are paying.

Mr. J. Brown: Teachers out here (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Forget the facts.

Mr. Fox: Now, the other day we heard in the House from this side, how long it takes for people to actually get the rebate back from efficiency PEI. So makes me sort of question how efficient they are. The only thing they're efficient at is getting a brand new building.

Mr. Myers: Unefficient efficiency.

Ms. Biggar: It's not a brand new building.

Mr. Fox: Actually, it's a building that is using ODEC technology, so there's no efficiency in that.

We need to actually look at efficiency in this province when it comes to reducing carbon, doing things that will actually help the environment, and we're not seeing that from this government.

We've said it over and over – the province needs a really good look at our reforestation plan. The minister over there, they agreed with me one day and said that it takes 20 years to grow a tree. We have not seen any movement from this government on that.

Let's talk about the carbon tax for a second. They're not talking and telling Islanders the truth about the carbon tax, that when it comes in it will apply to every piece of everything that you buy at the counter – from a cup of coffee, to a bunch of tires, to a refrigerator, because it all has to be transported in. Nothing's being done to tell our Islanders about that.

But let's talk about the HST on top of the carbon tax.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, here's the truth.

Mr. Fox: They haven't said that.

Mr. Myers: No.

Mr. Fox: The average Islander, if he just has one vehicle and he travels to work, the

HST alone on the carbon tax of 1.3 cents being added after they take the three cents or the four cents off the federal excise tax –

An Hon. Member: Don't confuse the (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Will actually cost – and she's getting confused because she can't handle this – the actual cost to the family will be on average of an extra \$150 a year.

Mr. LaVie: Ooh.

An Hon. Member: There's the truth.

Mr. Fox: – just on the HST being applied to the carbon tax.

Mr. LaVie: That's the truth.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: No, you don't.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) right now.

Mr. Fox: We talk about – what about efficiencies in how we deal with our actually infrastructure under the roads and around the roads to deal with climate change. The government has taken no action on that.

All we have to look back at is the 19th of August when we saw a major amount of water hitting the Island, come off the Cornwall bypass – they didn't even show the proper pictures when they took the media out there, they took them to somewhere else – but we're not even dealing with our infrastructure and how that is being affected by climate change.

This government has all kinds of work to do, and I think they better go back to the drawing board.

Mr. Myers: Call the house doctor.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see the website updated with information about the program and the integration between efficiencyPEI and Finance PEI. The steps that are on the

website are really clear. So I really appreciate the update from the minister and from the department to make this new program as clear as possible to those who can apply for it, because it will mean that more Islanders can access energy efficiency equipment to be installed in their home or the installation programs that we know are also accessible through this.

So we know that bringing things up in the House does sometimes result in great feedback. Really happy to see that also that that backlog is being cleared, particularly at this time of year when Islanders are really worrying about getting ready for Christmas, when they're owed money – we don't want the province to be owing it.

So it's really great to see that happening and I'm happy to see that sort of good questions from opposition result in good results from the province.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you for listening.

Ms. Bell: Thank you very much for that, from both sides.

I look forward to future programs that follow the same pattern.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

National Young Citizens Program Winners

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

With your indulgence I would like to welcome Basil Alrashdan and his father, and other family members to the gallery – Tom Hilton, Charlotte Stewart, and Elder Morris.

Today, I would like to recognize the outstanding performance of Island students in the recent national Young Citizens program. This program celebrates innovative presentations of heritage fair finalists from across the country.

This year, of the six winners from across Canada, two were from Prince Edward Island. Three more Island students received honourable mention, including: Anna Paquet

of Grace Christian School, Etienne Foulkes of École François-Buote, and Lucy Francis of École Évangéline.

One of the winners, Oscar Cormier, who was a former constituent of mine, has since moved off-Island. We congratulate Oscar from a distance for his excellent project, *The Spy from P.E.I.*, which told the story of his great-grandfather, Clifton Stewart. You may remember him from the news last year; he was the very animated young man that was interviewed on *Compass*.

Fortunately the other winner, Basel Alrashdan is with us today in the gallery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: So as I indicated previously, we welcome Basel as well as his dad, Amjad; Tom Hilton; Charlotte Morris, a friend and the Mi'kmaq elder featured in Basel's video, and Charlotte Stewart, the PEI Heritage Fair coordinator.

Basel's family was the first government sponsored Syrian refugee family to land in Prince Edward Island in December of 2015. Since then, Basel has learned the language and culture so well that he has represented Canada at the United Nations, been interviewed by the national media and received several awards.

Ms. Casey: Met the Prime Minister.

Mr. J. Brown: Met the Prime Minister – we could go on.

Basel's video, *As Long As the Sun and the Moon Shall Endure I am A Treaty Person*, tells a profound story, and I encourage each of you to watch it at youngcitizens.ca.

In his video, he compares how well he was treated when his family came to the Island from war torn Syria to the treatment of his friend, Charlotte Morris, who was taken from her family in Lennox Island when she was six and sent to a residential school where her culture was taken away from her.

Basel says both he and Charlotte were forced from their homes and came to a brand new place. But while Basel says that he was welcomed with warmth and happiness, the

Indigenous peoples who signed treaties with Canadians were bullied and broken.

Basel urges us to respect agreements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as we are all treaty people.

Basel, congratulations on a great project.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not done yet, but you are a remarkable young Islander and you make us very proud. We wish you the very best in January at Canada's History Youth Forum in Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister for a great statement. Congratulations to everybody, the finalists, the award winners, and anybody that was part of the provincial heritage fair day.

It certainly gives a chance for students in grade five to nine to learn some of their history and culture. It's like the annual science fair; these exhibitions give a chance to showcase the students' talents and what they've learned, and to present to fellow students and family as well.

It gives students a chance to learn who they are, where they come from, and the issues that are shaping their future. I was driving home with my daughter the other day, she's now in grade five, I asked her, like I always do every day, how her day was. She said we were learning history and our heritage in school, and I said that was always my favourite subject. She said to me dad, she said: how was your marks in it? I said, actually they were quite good. She said: are you sure dad, because I seen an old report card and you weren't that good in math.

Anyway, congratulations to all the students who participated, to all the staff and volunteers who continue to make this possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I want to start off by congratulating Basel for the amazing work. It's lovely to have you here in the House with us today.

We have such a rich history on Prince Edward Island in all kinds of ways. I'm quite fascinated by the fact that Basel chose to base his project on the history of immigration to this place. We have one Indigenous people here; the Mi'kmaq people of Prince Edward Island, but the rest of us are all settler people. Whether we came - our lineage was European, or whether it's Asian, or more recently, from countries like Syria, where Basel comes from. I love the fact that he tied that long and very proud history that we have here on Prince Edward Island of all of the settler peoples, the Acadians, the British - from all of these different cultures around the world and how we have managed to varying degrees to live well, or not so well, with the Indigenous people here. I'm absolutely fascinated. I must admit, I have not watched the video of your project, but I absolutely look forward to doing that. I think it's very exciting that a new Canadian, after just a few years can not only show that such a depth of interest in the history of this place, but to have mastered the language and to hear Basel speak is just so articulate, so knowledgeable and just a charming young man. As the minister said, he's a real asset to our Island.

So, congratulations Basel and I look forward to watching your video.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I want to recognize Basel too. I was at the airport when they first arrived here on Prince Edward Island in December and I knew the moment I saw the family that great things were going to come from this family.

Heritage Trailer Park in Summerside

This past year residents of the Heritage Trailer Park in Summerside were forced to move as the trailer park was being closed down. Most residents had lived there for many years and faced dire consequences of being forced out of their homes and neighbourhood. This was a tragic and devastating loss for many. And many are still attempting to get their lives back together.

Although the trailer park is privately owned and subject to municipal bylaws, the provincial government provided support and assistance to the tenants in helping them find new locations. Mobile homes provide an affordable option for many people. Not only do they provide a home of their own, they offer the opportunity to have a lawn and a garden and living in a community and building equity.

In the face of the housing shortage, they are an attractive alternative to meet the affordable housing needs of many Islanders. We need to do more to better safeguard the rights of tenants against situations like the Heritage Trailer Park. We need to do better to protect the rights of tenants and ensure they are treated fairly and with compassion. These safeguards will help protect, both present and prospective tenants of trailer parks so that people can live more securely in their own home.

Government is currently conducting a review of the *Planning Act* and the *Land Protection Act P.E.I.* These reviews will help ensure that trailer parks are located and planned appropriately and that they offer the needed amenities to tenants.

In addition, the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission have been asked to review the *Rental of Residential Property Act*. Regulations under these acts apply to mobile homes and we will ask IRAC to consider what amendments may be needed to strengthen the protection of those living, or planning to live, in mobile homes.

We're also going to be working with the department of economic development and see if we can find financing arrangements so people can buy the land in trailer parks or get together like a condominium. We will work with cities and towns in order to make the bylaws in the cities and towns more

favourable to affordable living and trailer parks.

We owe it to those who live in mobile homes to have their rights protected and safeguarded, to enjoy their surroundings and to have a great degree of security.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a good announcement. In fact, really it's fantastic that we're looking into this especially, we're see a housing crisis right now and there's lots of talk of tiny homes as well. We've got companies on the Island like Matt Derrick up in Tyne Valley. We're building mini-homes that are super energy efficient.

I mean we talk about mobile homes and sometimes they get a bad rep and they are – really in many ways – the way of the future. To see what happened in Summerside with the Heritage Trailer Park was very discouraging. I know there are members over on this side that got lots of calls. It's good to see the government stepping up to the plate now. The calls we were getting, we would have liked to have seen the MLAs in that area step up to the plate a little sooner. I'm not even sure if they were able to meet with the residents. Perhaps they can correct me –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: They did, okay.

Hopefully the MLAs themselves were able to meet as well. It's very important.

But we're seeing the trend from this government and really, it's a reactionary trend. It's something – I remember when I rose to speak to the Speech From the Throne back in 2015 when we first sat, I talked about having a short-term plan, medium-term plan and a long-term plan. What we're seeing now are these reactionary announcements because this government, and the Liberal government, since 2007, hasn't had a long-term plan. That's why we're in a housing crisis.

Mr. LaVie: No plan.

Mr. Trivers: That's why we have incidents like the Heritage Trailer Park taking place, because it's reviewing the acts after a crisis happen. What we need to do is we need to be reviewing the acts and thinking about these long-term plans.

This is something that constituents are brining to me and they're saying they want. Just the other day I mentioned in my greetings of a constituent who wrote me and said: Look let's think about this. It's not just about communities, land and environment, it's also about health. I mean I look at the minister of health and he's nodding his head. His portfolio is health and wellness. So it's about illness prevention and it's something we've heard in this House before.

Let's applaud this announcement about doing some planning so that we could have mobile homes, tiny homes, mini-homes and implemented in such a way that Islanders can live less expensively, conserve energy, conserve footprint, lower carbon emissions, all those good things. But let's broaden this line of thinking right now and let's do an ongoing review of all our legislation – I'll direct this at the Cabinet as a whole and the Executive Council, let's be thinking about the legislation and looking at those long-term goals and the vision we have for our Island to make sure that we're making changes today that are going to avoid a crisis down the road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We welcome this initiative from the minister to recognize the impact of legislation not keeping up with the current pressures that are existing in the marketplace. We know that the closure of the trailer park was significant – partly because that trailer park had been there for so long and the residents had invested their equity in their homes but those homes were not able to be moved partly because there was nowhere to move them, or they were not able to be moved

physically, because of the age of the buildings.

What I would like to recognize is that the community stepped up to these residents and there were a significant number of fundraisers, which resulted in every household from that trailer park getting a cheque of just under \$3,000 which has gone a long way to assist them – with housing costs and with the increase in their bills now they are in housing which is not in the same budget space that they were in previously.

The sooner this can be effective, minister, the sooner we'll be able to sort of address, not only this current issue, but future issues that may arise with the continued pressure in affordable housing.

Thank you.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the issue today, CMHC Rental Market Report, including the highlights of Prince Edward Island and the overall Canadian Market, including the overall vacancy rate of point 3% for PEI and point 2% for Charlottetown, and the quotation from Chris James, Senior Analyst, that high levels of international migration continue to result in very tight rental market conditions, for both the Charlottetown and Summerside areas.

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be not received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a petition to reduce the speed limit to 70 kilometres an hour for residents on the Strathcona Road; the minister's department is aware of it and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, that said

document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: I have another one.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House I beg leave to table the emails I spoke about earlier in Question Period and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. LaVie: It was a good read.

Mr. Trivers: Except for the redacted parts.

Reports by Committees

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

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, as indicated yesterday, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management on the appointment of a referendum commissioner be adopted.

Hon. members of the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Legislative Management, pursuant to subsection 5(3) of the *Electoral System Referendum Act*, is charged with the responsibility of recommending to the Legislative Assembly, a person for appointment as referendum commissioner.

In considering the matter, the committee agreed to conduct a public competition for the position of referendum commissioner.

Advertisements were placed in local newspapers and posted on job sites. Eight applications were received with two interviews being conducted. As a result of this application and interview process, the top candidates were identified to the committee.

In considering the results of the public competition for the position, the committee unanimously recommends that Mr. Gerard Mitchell of Charlottetown be appointed as referendum commissioner.

Pursuant to subsection 5(3)(b) of the *Electoral System Referendum Act*, your committee further recommends that, on adoption of this report, that a motion be put to this House calling for the appointment of Mr. Mitchell as referendum commissioner. To effect this appointment, that motion must receive the support of at least two-thirds of members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, as seconder, would you care to speak to the –

Leader of the Opposition: No, I'm fine, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, that the motion of appointment of referendum commissioner proceed without notice.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the following motion:

Be it resolved, pursuant to subsection (5)(3) of the *Electoral System Referendum Act*, that Mr. Gerard Mitchell of Charlottetown be appointed referendum commissioner effective immediately.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters would like to speak to the motion.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know this is an important decision given, particularly; the direction that the government has decided it wants to move in

by having a plebiscite here at the next election. I know that I have had concerns about Mr. Mitchell, not from his judicial background – I think he has a tremendous record there – it was his close association with the Liberal Party that most bothered me.

That said, I do respect that the committee has done their work and will support the motion but I do; however, want on record that there was concerns and I did have concerns personally.

Thank you.

Speaker: Is there any other member who would like to address the motion, speak to the motion?

Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour of the motion for the appointment of Mr. Mitchell as referendum commissioner, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: All those against the motion, signify by saying 'nay'.

The motion is carried and it is unanimous.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, as indicated yesterday, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, that the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Management on the appointment of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be adopted.

The Standing Committee on Legislative Management, pursuant to subsection 38(2) of the *Legislative Assembly Act, R.S.P.E.I. 1988 Cap. L-7*, is charged with the responsibility of recommending to the Legislative Assembly a person for appointment to the position of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Charles MacKay, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, advised the committee of his

intention to retire from the position of Clerk effective March 30th, 2019.

In considering Mr. MacKay's retirement, the committee agreed to conduct a public competition for the position of Clerk. This represents the first time in the history of Prince Edward Island that there has been such a competition for this position.

Advertisements were placed in local newspapers, posted on job sites and distributed to all Canadian legislatures. Forty applications were received with nine interviews being conducted. As a result of this application and interview process, the top three applicants were identified with Mr. Joey Jeffrey of Charlottetown being identified as the top candidate.

Given the results of the public competition for the position, the committee unanimously recommends that, on the adoption of this committee report by the Legislative Assembly, that:

1) Mr. Joey Jeffrey of Charlottetown be appointed as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island effective March 30th, 2019, and,

2) The appointment of Charles MacKay as Clerk of Legislative Assembly, May 18th, 2000, be rescinded effective March 30th, 2019.

I would like to wish Mr. Charles MacKay all the best in his retirement. I know Mr. MacKay, when the interview process was going on, he recommended to the committee Mr. Joey Jeffrey and there's no better person to know who is best suited for the job of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly as our current Clerk, who has given us all great advice over his years.

I wish you the very best, Mr. MacKay, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That concludes my report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today and I will be as brief as I can.

I'd also like to acknowledge Mr. Charles MacKay and the tremendous job that he has done over the years. I've gotten to know Charlie quite well and I wish him all the best, along with his family, in his retirement; and to Joey coming in, certainly have very big shoes to fill. I look forward to working with you.

But more importantly, always remember that you have a dynamic team in the Clerk's office; a lot of experience, a lot of tradition and a lot of knowledge to draw on. I look forward to seeing you develop a new team and working with us all here collaboratively in the Legislative Assembly.

Congratulations to you and to your family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome Joey and his family to the Legislature today. It's lovely. I have not met your family before. It's lovely to see you.

So many people helped me to acclimatize to my life here in the Legislature when I first arrived three years ago. Charlie was certainly one of them and Joey was another, and they both did it in a consistently professional, organized, knowledgeable and very helpful manner.

Every time I went to either of them with an issue, it was dealt with and there were a variety of matters, I should tell you, in which I had to speak with them because of my lack of familiarity with this place.

When it came to Joey, his calm personality; his very methodical approach to all issues that I brought forward was very much appreciated by me.

And absolutely, as the Leader of the Opposition just said, Joey, you have enormously huge shoes to fill.

I would like to pass on my personally thanks too, to Charlie, for all of your counsel and help and advice over the years that I've been here. And to Joey, I look forward to continuing our really great working relationship into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader.

Are there any other members who would like to speak?

The hon. Premier?

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I join other members in congratulating Joey, and welcoming your family to be here on this auspicious occasion; an occasion of great importance for our Assembly, for this particular Legislative Assembly, and others that will follow. This is a big step in the decorum and the knowledge and the – I'll use the words jurisprudence – of this Assembly.

In using that word, I turn to Charlie; we've had the opportunity in the time that I've been here and others who've been here longer to see how you – with respect for what we do in this Chamber with a sense of our traditions and with great consideration for the precedence that we work within and that we establish, as we go forward.

You have assisted us, have assisted speakers – plural – and all members of the staff of the Assembly, and in turn, the people of our province to enjoy a healthy democracy; a practice of good government through the work of this Assembly, and always, under the watchful and, if necessary, firm guidance of you in the Clerk's role. We thank you for that, Charlie and we welcome Joey in your new capacity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale to speak to this motion.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is, indeed, a pleasure to stand here and thank these two individuals. We used to refer to Mr. MacKinley as the dean of the Legislature, well today – we are losing another dean of the Legislature. I want to thank Charlie for his wise counsel and put the tremendous contribution he has made to this Legislature over the years. It's much better because you were here, sir, and it's always a wise man to pick a great replacement and I know we're going to be well served by Joey Jeffery.

So, to both of you, I think this Legislature has been absolutely blessed to have you in the past and – until next year – and is going to be truly blessed to move forward with Joey Jeffery.

I wish you and your family well, as you move forward. And I wish you, Charlie, all the best and please don't be a stranger. Drop in and see us often.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to the motion?

Speaker: Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: All those voting against the motion, signify by saying 'nay'.

Motion is carried, it is unanimous.

[Applause]

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy, and following the receipt of a report on the committee activities of the said committee yesterday, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the report of the Committee on committee activities be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Your committee is reporting on its activities since the last reporting to the Legislative Assembly in December of 2017. Last fall, the following motion was moved and passed unanimously by the House; that Bill No. 101, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act* be referred to the Standing Committee of Infrastructure and Energy for examination and report.

This bill relates to vehicles illegally passing school buses when red lights are flashing. While the scope of the bill relates to increasing minimum fines for illegally passing school buses when red lights are flashing, your committee agreed to invite groups and government departments in that could speak to the issue and provide recommendations to improve this matter.

Your committee met four times on this topic during the fall and received presentations from the following: RCMP L division; Superintendent Mac Richards; Criminal Operations Officer; Mr. Jason MacKinnon, a bus driver in Prince Edward Island and Chair of the Health and Safety Committee for School Bus Drivers across the province; Public Schools Branch; Corporate Services; Mr. Dave Gillis, Leader of the Cooperate Services; and Mrs. Katherine MacKinnon, Transportation Services Manager and Supervisor; MacWorth Industries, Mr. Wayne Ellsworth and Mr. Dan MacDonald; Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. minister; and Mr. Graham Miner, Director of Highway Safety; Neuron Communications Inc., Mr. Jeff Paquet and Mr. Carlos Vosco.

As a result of its deliberations, your committee is pleasure to recommend the following to the members of the Legislative Assembly:

That *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*, Bill No. 101, which proposes to increase the minimum fine for meeting or overtaking school buses when flashing red lights are displayed, is not recommended to continue.

The report is filed, so anyone wishing to see all of the details of the committee's discussion are welcome to go to the report, but I will stay with the recommendations today.

1. The recommendation that government research and consider all additional physical safety features for school buses. That would include noise, lights – that sort of thing. Any physical barriers or prevention bars, reliable cameras that can record incidents.

2. That government research and consider other additional measures that can be implemented to assist controlling the number of vehicles that illegally pass school buses.

3. That government met with Island businesses to discuss options regarding additional safety features for school buses, including: physical prevention bars and high quality cameras. Where possible, a pilot project should be implemented without delay.

4. That the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy research options for implementing license plates on the front in addition to the license plates currently placed at the rear of the vehicle – for all vehicles in the province.

5. That officials in the departments of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy; Education, Early Learning and Culture and Justice and Public Safety, partner to create a social media campaign to provide awareness and attention to the issues of vehicles illegally passing school buses when red lights are flashing.

6. That the Public Schools Branch partner with law enforcement agencies in the province to create a red light infraction communications response policy, in which law enforcement agents would be required to follow up with the Public Schools Branch and the school bus driver following a report of an incident.

7. That government consider amending section 202(1.1) of the *Highway Traffic Act*, regarding amber flashing lights on school buses, by removing the reference that vehicles may pass school buses when amber lights are flashing.

8. That the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy consider increasing the amount of demerit points a driver receives when failing to stop for, or illegally passing, a school bus when the flashing red lights are displayed on the school bus.

Your committee suggests that failing to stop for a school bus with flashing red lights, which is currently set at eight demerit points, be increased to 12 demerit points.

The brief justification from the committee on that was it was felt that with the demerit points that could be done under regulations and that would automatically fall into the current regulations centre there with respect to the loss of a driver license for three months and a requirement to take additional driver training before getting the license back.

(9) That the department of Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy consider increasing the amount of demerit points a driver receives when using an electronic handheld device.

Your committee suggests that driving a motor vehicle on a highway while holding or using an electronic handheld device, which is currently set at five demerit points be increased to 12 demerit points. With the same reference as I spoke of earlier, when we had the experts in talking to us about reasons why this had happened so much, we were advised that the use of cell phones in vehicles was probably the number one reason why people were going through flashing lights on a school bus.

In addition, I want to thank all of those who came out and provided testimony to the committee; I certainly want to thank the committee members in particular. This was a tremendous collaborative effort, it was very non-partisan and everyone that was in that room working on this committee was working towards the number one goal of

making it safer for all Island children when getting on and off school buses.

I must admit, it was a real pleasure to not only chair that committee but to work with all the members on that committee from all three parties that were there. Tremendous collaboration, thank you.

Speaker: Is there any other members who would like to speak to the committee report?

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the committee for the great work that they did on this particular topic and to ensure them as Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy that I will certainly take their recommendations under very serious advisement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the committee as well for this report, when people pass school buses when the lights are flashing and put children at danger, it's a really, very serious issue.

It's something that happens all too often, I know I get reports in my district especially along Route 2 and they're looking for solutions. You just have to look at social media to see the solutions Islanders are putting out there.

Thanks again to the committee for taking all that information in and putting those recommendations down in the report so that I hope that executive council and government can take action to make our school buses and our children safer.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will be brief. I just wanted to say thank you to all my committee members. In the three and a half years I was elected I did find this committee the most enjoyable, I felt accomplished when we were done of it.

There were some great ideas from both sides of the floor, all committee members had some tremendous ideas, it was a great discussion and I just want to thank everybody all the collaboration. I really think we did well and I look forward to see what's next.

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

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

I would certainly thank the committee for this work as many of the members here may be aware, we have had what we'll call a committee that has been looking into this issue as well which was originated through a policing committee actually.

We've had great cooperation from the policing community, come together with members from the Public Schools Branch, the department, Highway Safety, and justice and education, and the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

I will be taking the recommendations from this report, adding them to some of the items we had already resolved to look further into and we will collectively be looking to see what work we can do to ensure that we are responding appropriately. We are already taking some of the recommendations – or putting some of the recommendations I guess into action or as a result of the work we have been doing with the other committee.

We have, as members may note, ramped up an information campaign. We've likely seen a video that would be circulating on Facebook and Twitter and number of other spots that has been pushed through the government sources and we will be looking to disseminate that further.

I should note on that point, the police and really everybody involved would say the primary thing that we need to do to stop this is educate and inform and really catching people after the fact can work in a way as a

deterrent. But, the most effective method has time and time again been shown to be education and information as to what can happen.

Unfortunately, we and in Nova Scotia and in the southern US have seen recently some very, very unfortunate examples of what can happen when folks pass a school bus. Whether it's due to inadvertence or whatever it might be.

As a father of a five year old and a three year old, and if I can say that I would be awfully dismayed to think of somebody who would rather look at their phone or not pay attention for a few moments as my little fellow is crossing the road to get on the bus, just so that they can get to work a couple minutes earlier or so they can look at their phone – or whatever the case may be. Lives are a lot more important than that few seconds.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour of supporting the committee report, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: All those against the committee report, say 'nay'.

Report is carried.

[Applause]

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day Government

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 16th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 16, *An Act to Amend the Gasoline Tax Act*, Bill No. 58, ordered for second reading.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to initiate debate on the principle of the bill which is allowed at this time.

Speaker: Yes you may carry on, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

This is the second time that I've felt the need to initiate debate during this stage of a bill's passage through the house. In both instances it has been in the response to what I believed deeply flawed legislation.

Last spring I spoke to the principles of Bill No. 38, the *Electoral System Referendum Act*, which I believed, would not survive a constitutional challenge as it was originally written.

In fact, I believe that Bill No. 38 was so biased against the individuals who had previously successfully promoted proportional representation that it represents a threat to the democratic norms that form the foundation of everything that we do.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I felt the bill represented a threat to the democratic norms that form the foundation of everything we do in this Legislature.

Now we must consider Bill 58, *An Act to Amend the Gasoline Tax Act*. This act is intricately linked to Bill 62, *The Climate Leadership Act*, which contrary to its title,

renounces any leadership in the global fight against climate change.

In combination, these two bills spell out this government's strategy to address climate change. This pair of bills is not ready for second reading. They are the result of hasty, short-term negotiations with the federal government. They have not been subject to public scrutiny or debate. Government has done its best to shroud them in a campaign of selectively presenting facts so as to bias public opinion against much better approaches.

Second reading is, according to the rules of the legislature of Prince Edward Island, on the general purpose of the legislation. I quote: debate on the principle of the bill is permitted at this stage.

I stand here today to say that the principle of this pair of bills is contradictory. It claims that we could be climate leaders, while still subsidizing the price of carbon fuels. Climate leaders do not subsidize carbon.

So over the next few hours or days, hopefully not weeks, we must debate and then decide on this question: Do we want to be carbon leaders, or do we want to offer tax incentives to subsidize the purchase of petroleum products so we can continue to poison our planet without paying the true costs of pollution? Do we want to be part of the solution, or do we want to be part of the problem?

I'm extremely grateful that our parliamentary traditions provide us with the opportunity to fully debate this issue, as our Premier has repeatedly promised us and invited us to do at this House.

Climate change is the defining challenge of our generation. This bill represents how we, as Islanders, will respond to this challenge. We often hear the men and women who were born in the depression and who fought and won the Second World War as the 'greatest generation'. That term was coined by Tom Brokaw in his book of the same name, and although it sounds somewhat grandiose, it certainly encapsulates his respect for a generation that grew up when, and I quote: "economic despair hovered over the land like a plague". Then as adults they stepped up to fight the Second World War.

In Brokaw's words, and again I quote: "they stayed true to their values of personal responsibility, duty, honour, and faith". These men and women were our parents and our grandparents – ordinary people who did extraordinary things to address the defining challenge of their generation – the defeat of fascism.

I often wonder what our children and grandchildren will call us in 50 years. In 50 years time when they look back and assess how we have responded to the threat of climate change. I am almost certain that they will not call us the 'greatest generation'.

As many people know, my main motivation to seek public office, to reluctantly take on this role of being a politician is to build a better future for my children. I became directly engaged in politics after my first child, Kate, was born. I believed that to be a successful father, I not only needed to keep my children safe and loved in their home, but I also needed to advocate for a healthy society and a sustainable environment for them to live in once they left home.

Sadly, I have not been able to contribute as much thus far as I had hoped when I first started seeking office 25 years ago. If anything, the situation has grown worse.

We are starting to feel the effects of climate change, and I must now look in the face of my grandson and wonder about the world in which he will live. In 50 years, he will still be younger than I am today. Will he live in a world where we have significantly reduced carbon emissions and slowed the pace of climate change; a world where innovative political and technical solutions have enhanced our ability to adapt; a world where he can thrive in a vibrant green tech economy?

That is still my hope, and my vision. But every day when I check the news, there seems to be another story highlighting the impacts of climate change.

For example, there is already climate change triggered anoxia occurring right here in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Predictions that Prince Edward Island will experience hotter and dryer summers punctuated with more torrential rain falls are coming true,

increasing the risk for fish kills – or more accurately called river kills – and creating terrible conditions for our farmers, particularly our potato farmers. Wildfires in the west of North America get worse every year, and it seems that we now experience a once in a century storm every few years.

Most telling is the recent report by the intergovernmental panel on climate change. The report reviewed over 6,000 scientific studies and came to the conclusion that we have a mere 12 years, at most, to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, if we want to avoid cataclysmic climate change.

Just think about that – 12 years. Many of my fellow MLAs have been sitting in this Legislature for 12 years or even longer. Our current senior statesman, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment has served collectively for over 17 years.

In 12 years, my grandson will be approaching his 14th birthday. He will be in junior high and his fate and that of all of his classmates will have already been determined by decisions made by people like us. Elected officials who've been given a sacred trust to make decisions on behalf, not only of our constituents, but on behalf of future generations.

So here we are racing towards the edge of a cliff, and I must ask ourselves, do we have the courage to change direction before it's too late?

I firmly believe that we can change direction. I still see a bright future for my grandson, but I cannot see the promise of that future in Bills 58 and 62. I think it would be useful to quickly describe how we ended up with this pair of bills.

Back in December 2015, Premier MacLauchlan attended the UN Climate Conference in Paris, where he participated in discussions with leaders around the world on how we can reduce emissions and maintain a target of 1.5 degrees Celsius. He returned from Paris determined to reduce emissions on PEI.

He was quoted in *The Guardian*: "We won't have any choice... This is now more urgent than people have understood it to be and if we are looking at getting down to the kind

of emission levels that are being contemplated by the people who are negotiating in Paris we're going to have to make some big changes."

Our Premier – we're going to have to make some big changes.

He was also quoted on CBC: It's going to be real in terms of what we need to do to both adapt and continue working on our energy mix, both in electricity and what we're doing in transportation and agriculture. Transportation and agriculture will be the two areas where we have to do some further work.

In 2016, Prince Edward Island became a signatory to the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.

The province issued a press release that said this, I quote: "Prince Edward Island is acknowledged as a committed contributor to international mitigation and adaptation actions around climate change and as a leader in the green economy. This expertise will inform Government's approach to determining a carbon pricing plan that meets the objectives of mitigating the impact of climate change while fully participating in the economic and employment benefits of a green economy" and there are many.

In this Legislature the Premier announced, and again I quote: "The framework includes a national commitment on pricing carbon pollution. Prince Edward Island will do its part in this" as well.

But from that point forward, government's enthusiasm to meet our commitments has been steadily wavering, until this summer our Minister of Communities, Land and Environment announced on CBC television that the PEI plan would not include a carbon tax and that if the federal government wanted to impose a carbon tax, and again I quote: That's their choice. They can impose their tax.

At that time, I must admit, I found the minister's position puzzling, since I could not see any advantage for us to abandon the gift of sovereignty that we have here as a province by forcing the federal government to impose a plan on Prince Edward Island. Surely a made-in-PEI-and-for-PEI plan

would be far better than the federal backstop.

So my staff and I in the Office of the Third Party spent much of the summer researching and developing our own carbon pricing plan. It is in many ways similar to the federal backstop, but it included a number of made-in-PEI initiatives, such as protecting the agricultural and fishing industries on which our economy depends, and providing small businesses with a tax break.

The most important aspect of our plan and the federal backstop is that they both protect low and middle income Islanders from the impacts of carbon pricing.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: They are both revenue neutral and all revenue collected would be returned directly to Islanders who could then choose how to spend that money.

We thought – and economists agree with us – that this would be the best way to implement a carbon price that would help reduce emissions, that would protect low and middle income Islanders; it would insulate our primary industries and it would help small business. We presented our plan and we urged government to adopt it.

So you might imagine our disappointment when in October, the Premier announced that he had negotiated a deal with the federal government that would not be as effective at reducing carbon emissions and also not protect Islanders from increased costs that might result from carbon pricing in other provinces. As a deal, it provides Islanders with the worst of all possible worlds.

The minor adjustment in price will not be enough to send a market signal that would actually encourage people to change behaviour, and low and middle-income Islanders will not be protected from extra costs with a rebate check that they would have gotten with the Green plan and they would have got with the federal backstop plan; and government will have to spend even more on incentive programs than they would otherwise to achieve the same results.

And as much as the Premier likes to talk about carrots and sticks, he forgets that that

bag of carrots that he keeps dangling in front of us are paid for by taxpayers' dollars. Whether the revenue comes from Income tax or whether it comes from HST or whether it comes from a carbon tax, we should never be fooled into thinking that it doesn't come directly out of the pockets of Islanders.

So essentially, this government looked at the need to reduce carbon emissions. They were presented with a simple, market-driven approach that has been proven to work all over the world and puts money back in the pockets of low and middle income Islanders and they said: Thanks but no thanks, we'd rather do this the hard way.

An Act to Amend the Gasoline Tax Act continues a dismal record that this government has of spending public money to subsidize carbon-based fuels. In 2007 premier Robert Ghiz was elected on a platform of reducing gasoline taxes by 4.4 cents per litre, an amazing mirrored similarity between the increasing costs as a result of \$20 a ton on carbon fuels today.

Then in 2012, Premier Ghiz and then-finance minister Mr. Sheridan introduced the HST, the Harmonized Sales Tax, and exempted home heating oil from the provincial portion of that tax, creating incentives for Islanders to heat their homes with carbon fuels. Yet at the same time, the government has been supporting the switch away from fossil fuels, by supporting wind energy projects and offering rebates for heat pumps.

It's as if this government is standing in a doorway, pushing on one side and pulling on the other at the same time, and it doesn't understand why the progress towards targets is so slow. I have seen few examples of public policies working at such dramatic cross purposes as we have with this government. Just imagine how much more effective our climate change policy would be if government had committed from day one to work with Islanders to move away from fossil fuels and have all their policies aligned with that goal.

One of the most effective tools for government to encourage or discourage certain behaviours is taxation. Governments should use this tool wisely by taxing the

activities that you want people to do less of like smoking and drinking, and not taxing things that are beneficial, like gym memberships or bicycles, for example. Unfortunately, this Liberal government has consistently reduced taxes on carbon-based fuels, sending exactly the wrong signal; a strong market signal that people should continue to heat their homes and access transportation that burns fossil fuels.

I recently wrote a blog post talking about climate action deniers. These are people who acknowledge the scientific consensus that yes, the climate is being disrupted by human activities, they don't deny that; but they still come up with rationalizations that justify continued inaction. Usually those reasons can be summed up in a simple phrase: It's somebody else's problem.

I'd like to list some of these justifications now, so we can be alert to them in the debate that follows in the days ahead and question their validity during our discussions today – and perhaps later on – on the *Act to Amend the Gasoline Tax Act* and later the *Climate Leadership Act*.

The first thing to know about climate action deniers is the tendency to preface their arguments with the phrase: I believe in climate change, but; as in: I believe in climate change, but we still have lots of time to find a solution. Well, that's clearly not true.

As I mentioned earlier, according to the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we actually only have about a decade to make significant changes that will prevent catastrophic climate change. So that means that we need to reduce emissions far more rapidly than the targets that we had in place previously, and most of the targets that we have in place now.

'I believe in climate change, but we can't act on it because it will disrupt the economy.' Now that statement is partially true, but it fails to consider the big picture. While some economic disruption is inevitable, shifting to a green economy can also be a huge opportunity, especially in terms of creating new jobs; and my goodness, we heard today and yesterday how much we need quality new jobs here on Prince Edward Island.

We are also in one of the most wealthy and advanced countries on this planet, and as the Bank of Canada points out, the Canadian economy is resilient and adaptable enough that we can make that shift without too much disruption. In fact, it's the possibilities of the future that should drive us towards this. Besides, catastrophic climate change will disrupt the economy far, far more.

Or how about this one, I hear this one a lot: 'I believe in climate change, but Canada doesn't produce much carbon pollution compared to China or India or the US.' Well, that may be true if you are comparing every nation as a distinct entity, but it's certainly not true if you look at the issue from a per capita basis. Canada is still one of the top 10 global emitters, one of the top 10 countries in the world in terms of our gross emissions; and despite being number 38 when it comes to population; we are still in the top 10. On a per capita basis, Canadians emit three times as much carbon pollution as the average global citizen. We have a responsibility to do our part.

Or how about this one: 'I believe in climate change, but you just can't charge people more for necessities like gas and heating oil.' Although it is true that we are currently dependent on burning carbon fuels, that does not mean that they themselves are necessities. Heat is a necessity, mobility is a necessity, and energy is a necessity. Burning gas and oil is just one way to obtain the energy to give us that necessary service. Given the right incentives and government leadership, people can and they will heat their homes and drive vehicles using clean energy. And once more, I go back to the fact that this is not a new inaction from this government – this has been going on for more than a decade now. Actively subsidizing the continued use of fossil fuels here on Prince Edward Island, when they could have had a decade of getting ahead of the curve and encouraging Islanders to move to the clean, green future that we all know they we need.

I believe in climate change. But, Prince Edward Island is too small to have any impact on the world. Well you know what? That's not only irrelevant, it's not true. First of all everybody is called to do their fair

share if we're going to secure a future for our children and grandchildren.

Secondly, if we show leadership here on Prince Edward Island and come up with innovative solutions that others will see; they will see our successes and they will emulate us. By banding together, small islands around the world have been leading the fight on climate change and have had huge impacts on the international stage – far outweighing their size on the global political map. So, never underestimate the impact of many voices doing the right thing, no matter how small they may be.

How about this one: I believe in climate change, but, we're already doing enough? Well, actually we're not. The IPCC report tells us we are woefully behind in our targets. And from the first time that we've set global targets, 30 or 40 years ago, the world has consistently and predictably fallen behind the targets we have set – and that's put us in this position, where with a decade left, we have to act. We have to act – we have to act decisively and we have to act now.

How about this one: I believe in climate change, but, carbon pricing doesn't work. Well, as Bill 58 and Bill 62 says; it actually does work, or they absolutely concede that. It has been shown to work, everywhere across the world and there is a broad consensus among economists that the most cost-effective and the most efficient way to encourage people to reduce their carbon emissions is through a carbon tax, through carbon pricing, through pricing pollution.

Quite similar to the previous one is: I believe in climate change, but, carbon pricing is just a tax grab. I hear that to my left a lot, again, that's simply not true. A carbon pricing plan can, and in my opinion, should be revenue-neutral with absolutely all of the money collected going directly back to taxpayers. How is that a tax grab? Such as the plans proposed by the PEI Green Party and the federal backstop plan. Both of these plans return every cent back to the people.

Mr. Trivers: Expect for the administration costs.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I believe in climate change, but –

Mr. Trivers: Bigger government.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – low and middle-income Islanders can't afford to pay more tax. Well you know what – I don't disagree with that statement, but I find the argument to be entirely a red herring. Both the PEI Green Party's plan and the federal backstop would put more money back in the pockets of low and middle-income Islanders than they would spend on carbon tax. So those people who are most vulnerable to the effects of this would be most protected – they would end up with more money in their pocket than they did before. That can hardly be described as being a problem for people who are in low and middle incomes.

And the final – no not the final one, a couple more.

I believe in climate change, but, rebates will be enough to convince people to change their behaviours. Well, that's sort of a half-true half-false statement, depending on whether or not you're an optimist. Although any serious plan has to include rebates, and I absolutely concede that and I support that. It's part of our climate action plan and our energy action plan, although any serious plan has to include rebates. Rebates on their own are actually a way more, significantly more expensive and less efficient way to encourage change.

For example, the Quebec electric vehicle rebate is estimated to cost the equivalent of \$395 per tonne of carbon dioxide that's reduced – that's an expensive way of reducing pollution. I'm not suggesting that we should not, by the way, have rebates there for electric vehicles –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – let me be clear about that.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But let me say if that's all you're doing, it is the least cost-effective, least efficient way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: This morning we did a quick calculation based on the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy's claim that each heat pump rebate has resulted in a 2.75 tonne reduction – I believe she mentioned it in the House today, in greenhouse gases – which works out to approximately 436 to \$872 per tonne of emissions reduced – even less efficient and effective than the electric vehicle rebates that Quebec is offering to its electric vehicle owners.

Yes, we need these incentives; we need these rebates, but let's not rely on them entirely. They are so cost inefficient. Of course, this is just a rough estimate, but it demonstrates the high cost of those rebates. Besides – and this is a really critical point – those rebates, whether they be on electric vehicles or heat pumps – they need to be paid for with taxpayers dollars, so they're not free at all. They're being subsidized through higher taxes elsewhere or cuts to programs or services or whatever. But, let's not pretend that rebates are free; rebates cost Islanders tax dollars.

An Hon. Member: Sounds about right.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I believe in climate change, but, we should focus our efforts on carbon sequestration or nuclear power or natural gas or reducing our meat consumption or developing new technology or whatever. Yes, those are all great ideas and they will all contribute to the solution. Climate change, of course, is an incredibly complex issue and no single approach is going to achieve those goals. We have to implement a wide range of efforts on many fronts to prevent catastrophic climate change.

And perhaps, my all time favourite; I believe in climate change, but, Canada is too cold, anyway. Come on, bring on Global warming. Although climate change could, indeed, produce some new opportunities, such as year-round shipping through the Northwest Passage and a longer growing season, and that would absolutely have some potential benefits here on Prince Edward Island, the costs of climate change on the country and on Prince Edward Island, specifically, far outweigh any advantages.

We have to remember that when we talk about climate change, we're actually talking about climate disruption. No nation, especially a large agricultural nation like Canada, can have a stable economy – and we've learned that this year, in the amount that we're having to pay out to our farmers in insurance payments. No economy that depends as heavily on agriculture as we do can have a stable economy if weather becomes as unpredictable and as extreme as it has been in the last few years.

Just look at the devastation on PEI this year because of late spring frosts, a dry summer, followed by record-breaking rains throughout the harvest season. According to the minister of agriculture, this has resulted in almost \$30 million of crop insurance payouts already – already, and no doubt there are many more to come. We absolutely cannot afford – never mind the environmental aspects and the sense of responsibility to future generations, but from a strictly economic point of view – we cannot afford to accept that as the new normal.

I would like to take us back to the IPCC report, briefly, which was released last October. It provided us with dire warnings, but it also offered hope that we can change direction and that we can keep warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Jim Skea, a co-chair of the working group on mitigation stated in an article in the Guardian (mind you not that's not the real Guardian, that's the one in UK) – but anyway he said in the Guardian, he stated this in an interview, and I quote: We show it can be done within the laws of physics and chemistry. Then the final tick box is political will. We cannot answer that. Only our audience can answer that – and that audience is the governments that receive this report.

Now I know many will say that it's up to individuals and corporations to play their part as well. That's true, that's absolutely true. But ultimately, it is government's responsibility to provide the leadership, the policy and the incentives to initiate and also to guide us through this change.

The greatest generation may indeed have fought the Second World War, but the war

effort was coordinated, it was mobilized and it was financed by governments. Today, we have a generation longing to do the right thing, and a generation falling us, pleading with us to do the right thing – and looking to their governments to provide leadership and direction, and they're hearing silence.

Once in a while when we come across an issue that crosses political lines: an issue that is bigger than any of us individually, who we are, or our parties – an issue that isn't about 'me versus you' – it is about something that is larger than us; a problem that demands that we put aside what may be best for our party and find ways of working together.

We are all equally vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and we are all equally responsible to find the shared solutions.

In his book *What is Government Good At?* Donald Savoie, the well-known Canadian expert on public administration, states that government, and possibly only government can solve society's – what he calls 'wicked problems'.

He explains them this way: Wicked problems are highly complex. They require a range of perspectives to address them, and they defy definitive solutions. The private sector has little interest or patience in dealing with such problems. They view them as akin to lost causes, best left to government or just even unattended.

Among the wicked problems that Donald Savoie mentions in his book are development in Indigenous communities, building appropriate infrastructure, and climate change.

Unfortunately, many governments have turned away from trying to solve these wicked problems. We have been seduced by the shortness of the election cycle and cowed by the risks inherent in disrupting the status quo, or perhaps telling the voters something that they may not want to hear.

It is now much more common for politicians to simply kick these wicked problems down the road. But that just makes the problems worse and far more difficult to solve in the long term.

I suspect that much of the public cynicism around politics these days is a direct result of so many politicians abdicating their responsibility to address society's wicked problems in the interests of short-term partisan gain.

Islanders, the people, are ready for action on climate change.

Earlier this month, Abacus released a national poll on Canadians' views on climate change and the federal carbon pricing plan. Among Atlantic Canadians, 73% thought climate change was a very big or a big problem, while only 27% thought that climate change was a small problem or not a problem at all.

When asked whether they think the carbon pricing approach of the federal government was a step in the right direction, or in the wrong direction, 66% of Atlantic Canadians said it was a step in the right direction; 33% said otherwise.

Most notably when asked if they support the federal carbon pricing plan when the refund was mentioned in the question, 48% support the plan, 36% say they can accept the plan and only 16% said that they would oppose the plan. That certainly explains to me why the governing party and the official opposition will not mention rebates when they're trying to attack the federal plan or the green plan that we presented earlier this year.

Yet, I find myself standing in the Prince Edward Island Legislature commencing debate on this bill, and by all appearances, 25 of the 27 elected members are vehemently defending a position held by only 16% of Atlantic Canadians.

That's 93% of the MLAs in this House – 93% are defending a position held by 16% of Atlantic Canadians.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Meanwhile my colleague from Charlottetown-Parkdale and I, a mere 7 or 8% of PEI's elected officials, are the only ones willing to back the position held by 84% of Atlantic Canadians.

The MacLauchlan government is trying to claim to be climate leaders. And yet, they provide incomplete information about their carbon policy in what appears to be an effort to trick the 84% of Atlantic Canadians who approve the federal backstop plan into accepting the MacLauchlan plan. We are truly living in strange times.

I do not expect all of us to agree on a single course of action. Indeed, there is nothing healthier than having a vigorous and a well-informed debate right here on policies in this Legislature. But, it has to be done with honesty and integrity.

If we are going to discuss carbon pricing, we must discuss all aspects, and acknowledge that the plans presented by the federal backstop and the Green party will provide rebates that will actually put more money in the pockets of 70-80% of Islanders.

When we are debating PEI's carbon emissions we have to calculate all the emissions, including those from all the electricity that is imported from New Brunswick.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I agree with that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I hope that's not the first thing you've agreed on, hon. member.

If we are arguing the facts, we can't conveniently quote one expert whilst ignoring the consensus of the vast majority of experts. And we must acknowledge, too, what government is doing well.

PEI has made significant investments over the years in wind energy – bravo. We have had incentive programs for everything from light bulbs to fuel-efficient cars and heat pumps, and they have, in their own way, been successful.

At UPEI we have a world-class climate lab that is studying every inch of this beautiful Island and providing evidence-based policy advice to governments and the public. And we have to commend government for working with the lab at UPEI to develop their climate action plan.

But most of all we have to bring civility and the spirit of public service to this debate. Before we present a position we should not

ask ourselves: How will this affect me and my chances of getting re-elected? But rather: How will this affect my children and my grandchildren?

It is clear that my preference for a revenue-neutral carbon price that is offset by direct rebate cheques for middle and low-income Islanders is not shared by the majority of this Legislature. But, I will continue to bring forth my arguments and present new evidence when it becomes available. I will do so with the latest research and with footnotes.

But, I will also listen and engage honestly when other members of this House present their arguments and their proposals. It is only if we pledge to work together and support honest and factual debate that we will find solutions to this most important challenge of our lifetimes.

The laws of physics and chemistry still allow us a short window to avert catastrophe; we just need to find the political will. Therefore, we have to conduct this debate with honesty, with integrity, with good faith and with fact. We must conduct this debate as if the lives of our children depend on it, because, quite frankly, they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This is going to be a fundamental principle debate.

The Green Party has presented its plan. The government has presented its plan. But I'm disappointed with the Leader of the Third Party when he says: Islanders haven't contributed to the lowering of greenhouse gases.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I didn't say that.

Mr. R. Brown: I'm pretty disappointed. That has been his assertion –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I did not say that.

Mr. R. Brown: – all along.

Islanders have done nothing. That's what he's saying.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I did not say that either.

Mr. R. Brown: That's what he's saying. Islanders are not leaders.

Because the programs that are introduced by the government are introduced on behalf of Islanders; I will defend Islanders for their efforts.

In the 2010 energy accord we lowered the price of electricity for Islanders. We told Islanders – heat pumps, electricity, renewable energy. Wind farms were developed. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on developing renewable energy. We put the cables across the Strait to get renewable energies.

Islanders have been investing. He talks that it's the government investing, it's Islanders that are doing investing; it's their money that we're investing and Islanders have shown in spades that they're willing. Since the energy accord, we have saved 30 million litres of diesel fuel burned in our houses.

I want to thank each and every Islander who contributed to that reduction and we should be thanking Islanders, not punishing them for doing the right thing for the environment. Islanders have come forward and have worked, when the energy from waste plant was built out in Riverside Drive, is that a bad thing?

We've taken our waste, have put it through the energy from waste plant which is heating buildings in Downtown Charlottetown, is that wrong?

The Island waste management system, you look at ours; we are the best in the country.

An Hon. Member: The leaders.

Ms. Biggar: The world.

Mr. R. Brown: The leaders when it comes to (Indistinct)

Are Islanders paying? They are paying for Island waste management.

What are we doing? Recycling our waste into compost and energy that heat our buildings; that are used to grow crops.

That's what we're doing but yet the Green Party wants to punish the people of Prince Edward Island for doing the right thing –

An Hon. Member: They're knocking them down, you're picking them up.

Mr. R. Brown: And that offends me on behalf of Islanders and Islanders should be offended when they hear the Green Party going on about: Islanders have done nothing.

We have come along now, the political saviors, the political saviors – they're the saviors of Prince Edward Island. They're going to save Islanders –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: It gets me so enraged when people talk about Islanders not participating in the green economies, not participating in the lower of carbon here on Prince Edward Island.

I say to the Green Party: Stand up for Islanders. Stand up for the good work that they've done –

Ms. Biggar: Leader of the Green Party.

Mr. R. Brown: stand up for the ones –

Ms. Biggar: Show leadership

Mr. R. Brown: – invested in heat pumps, stand up for the ones that put their bins out each and every day and recycle in their house.

Stand up for those individuals.

No. What the political priests are saying, the political saviors of Prince Edward Island. They come from on high and say to Islanders: You're all wrong, we are right; everything you've done to date is no good. You invested in heat pumps in your house, you've done wrong –

Ms. Biggar: No good.

Mr. R. Brown: You know what; 30 million litres of fuel have been saved. 90,000 tonnes of carbon have been taken out of the air; 90,000 tonnes have been taken out, 90,000 tonnes, 30,000 tandem loads of pollution have been taken out of the air from little old PEI.

But no, do we hear thanks from the Green Party? No, Islanders are wrong.

They then go on about the economy and you know, over the last couple of months there's been a discussion going on about populism and populist leaders, polarizing things, we have it in Donald Trump, polarizing things.

They're going to give you great things and they're going to do great things for you. We have the Green Party is saying: You have to put a carbon tax in, you have to tax – they're sinners, you have to tax them –

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. R. Brown: They're driving, you're a sinner – you have to pay and that offends me.

Then they come along and say: Oh, but don't worry. We're going to give you all your money back.

That's like going down the road, knowing full well that you can speed down the road, Mounties will pull you over, give you a ticket but you know by the time that you get to the end of the block, they're rip the ticket up for you.

Is that going to stop you speeding? I say not.

I took my old economics book out from a long time ago and the fundamental principle on the demand curve – and that's what the Leader of the Third Party's talking. The law of the downward slope demands that when the price of a good is raised at the same time that all other things are, it's held constant, less of that will be demanded.

His plan, he's saying: I'm going to raise the price and if you kept it at that, then the demand curve would work – but he's giving all the money back, that's where he breaks his theory down, okay?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I think you need to read a few more chapters in your book (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Or what is the same thing?

Here's number two to his problem. What is the same thing?

If greater quantities of goods is thrown under the market then other things being equal, it will be sold at a lower price.

So is the Green Party saying that they're going to restrict oil production? Are they going to oil companies to stop producing and stop selling? Because that's what his theory is.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: If we reduce our consumption, the same amount of oil is on the market so the price of that oil is going to drop, as we see now, \$14 a barrel out in Alberta right now.

Prices are dropping, so his theory breaks all apart – now I know he's going to economies out but if all things are equal – but it's not equal, because he's telling Islanders that he's going to give them more money back. Where's he getting that money? I can't wait for him to explain that, where he gets it.

He's coming out with theories that quite obviously is populist theories, it's to be a populist to say: Look, I'm going to tax you but I'm going to give you more money back.

Ms. Biggar: Don't worry, you'll get more back.

Mr. R. Brown: We're going to give you more. You elect us, we're going to give you more and that's what this is all about.

He's talking about his populism and he wants to be popular and he wants to get elected and he gets up here and says: I'm doing tough decisions; I'm making tough decisions here, I'm going to tax Islanders but I'm going to give them more money back.

I can't wait for him to explain his theory there, how that works – especially if he's not going to cap the production of oil. If you're

not going to cap it and keep the supply at the same amount, the price will drop because the price stays the same while you use less oil.

It says here and this is the best quote I like –

Mr. J. Brown: Macroeconomics.

Mr. R. Brown: When the price of wheat is sky high only the rich man will be able to afford it, the poor will have to make do with rye bread.

So the Green Party fully knows that the rich can afford higher oil prices –

Ms. Biggar: Or electric cars.

Mr. R. Brown: The rich person can afford higher oil, doesn't bother them.

So the Green Party is the party of the rich. They know full well the family that's making \$1 million a year, a couple dollars on oil doesn't mean anything.

But you tell the person living in Montague – a single mother that has a job in Charlottetown for her more pay more oil – where does it come out of her pocket? Where does the money come from? From her food bill or from her rent –

Ms. Biggar: Every month.

Mr. R. Brown: – and that's what the Green Party says: The rich will be okay, because they can afford it.

The person that's got to come in from Montague to earn enough money to have their children – talks about bicycling and that – under their plan, they'll not be able to afford bicycling.

Oh but they have a theory: Nana from heaven is going come, you're going to have all kinds of money coming in your mailbox. Where do they get the money? Can't wait to hear it.

I'll tell you where they get it, from the small business owner that has a little business heating his shop, going to charge them for oil; going to charge carbon tax on his oil for businesses all around.

Farmers – and then comes off – the gall of him to say: My plan doesn't include farmers and fishermen.

Well neither does our plan, neither does the federal one.

I can't wait for the debate when he comes up with his ideas and we come up with our ideas because our ideas have been proven. I would probably have to back off a bit if our ideas weren't good.

Again, I go back to our energy accord, I go back to the energy waste plant, I go back to our wind farms and I go back to the individual Islander. I can tell each and every person here and each and every person on Prince Edward Island, they have contributed, they will step up to the plate – Islanders have always stepped up to the plate, Islanders will but you know what? All they need is a little incentive.

We have a program in the energy department that's going to further heat pumps here on PEI.

Now, he talks about – he's juggling his numbers, I can't wait for him to get to the floor with his numbers – Islanders, by going to a heat pump, save 1,000 litres of fuel – \$1,000. He talks – he says that heat pump has got to be paid for in one year. Heat pumps last about 15 years, so you add a 15 year depreciation schedule on that and I bet heat pumps are the best way to go. Otherwise, again, he's basically calling every Islander that is out purchasing a heat pump – they're wrong. They're stupid. I don't think Islanders are stupid –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct) I have one in my own house (Indistinct)

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Mr. R. Brown: Thanks.

Speaker: Hon. member, the hour has been called –

Mr. R. Brown: And I'll lend him the book. Mr. Speaker, I have a reference (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until November 29th at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned