

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: Hon. members, just a couple of notes before we begin proceedings today. I just want to make note: today is the first day for Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Shane Carr, you noticed he carried in the mace – his first day, carried in the mace. Good job, Shane.

Also in the gallery today, I would like to welcome Amy Hickey. Amy, she's our UPEI intern student and I just want to thank Amy for all her hard work during her term here with the Legislative Assembly and her term ends today, so all the best, Amy, in your future endeavors. I hear you may be travelling to Europe and if you happen to be over there, I want you to say hello to the people over there – and in particular John Bercow, the Speaker of the House over there.

Also, we do have a new employee – a new admin assistant for the Legislative Assembly, her name is Bridgett MacCormac. Bridgett has been with us now for a couple of weeks, so we want to welcome Bridgett to our –employ and she is settling in very well.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome colleagues and to those joining us in the gallery or viewing television, Internet, and so from afar. First, Mr. Speaker, I suppose it's obvious that many of us are celebrating National Tartan Day – and opportunity for people who are with family connections or fondness for the tartan to recognize all of the different styles and variations of tartans that are to be enjoyed, including the Island tartan that some members are wearing and, of course, that our Pages wear every day.

We've got a number of people joining us in the gallery: Johan and Janny Arendz; Stephanie Drake, who will be recognized later in a statement – but, of course, let me say that the reason they're here is because of the great success of our Paralympic athletes

– and already been recognized earlier this week in some of the comments leading off our session yesterday.

In the gallery we've got a number of folks who are good friends and loyal followers of politics in the province and I'll mention a handful in the interest of sticking to your suggestions yesterday: Wade Munn, Lee MacDonald, Lorne Yeo, Jason Woodbury, Wayne McMillan – I'll stop there and we'll sort of swing back – others will pick up on that.

In terms of folks who are outside the rail, I know you said this would be exceptional, but let me mention two exceptional people. One, who turned 90 on the 4th of April, Sister Mary Deighan – certainly someone who has made an exceptional contribution to our province – and the following day, yesterday, would be the 90th birthday of Eileen Doyle. Early April of 1928 was a good run when you think of what those two women have contributed to our province and show every sign that they're going to continue contributing.

One other thing, of course, in around the subject of sport, this is an active weekend and time of year for hockey and Hockey PEI will be represented this coming weekend at three Atlantic championships throughout the region: the Prince County Warriors will carry the Prince Edward Island flag at the 2018 major bantam championships in Torbay, Newfoundland. Prince Edward Island will host the bantam AAA female Atlantic championships at the MacLauchlan Arena. Central Storm will play host and the Mid Isle Wildcats will join them as the Prince Edward Island representative. Finally, in Edmundston, New Brunswick: the peeewee AAA Atlantic championships, where the Charlottetown Abbies will represent our province. We wish them all well and, of course, congratulate everyone on a successful amateur hockey season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's also certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to recognize some individuals that have joined us today. Of course we have two very dedicated individuals that work for the Canadian Cancer Society, so they actually work for all of us because the work that the Canadian Cancer Society does for Islanders is unparalleled and I thank you for your work and your dedication.

As you look around the House, obviously you see many of the members wearing the daffodil on their lapel and, of course, this is the month of April which is Daffodil Month and it's cancer awareness month. I just want to, in particular, send out a special thank you to the tremendous staff and healthcare professionals that work at the PEI Cancer Treatment Centre. Just over the last month and a half or so, I've spent a considerable amount of time out there with a family member and I can't say enough good things about the facility. But even more important than the facility, the people that work there; the staff that work there and how compassionate, caring, and professional they are.

I also want to sort of continue on from what the Premier was talking about. I'm not going to duplicate all of his speech with regards to the tremendous sports weekend that we have with a lot of Island athletes taking place this weekend, but there is one other individual that I want to make sure all Islanders are behind and cheering for and that would be Brett Gallant. And of course, Brett's down in Las Vegas right now playing with Team Canada in the World Men's Curling Championship and as of this morning, I believe they're at eight and one, so they're in second place just behind Scotland, who I believe is at nine and one – for now.

I would like to indulge and talk about a benefit that is taking place this evening for a gentleman by the name of Chris Leclair. The reason I bring this up, Mr. Speaker, is PEI is well-known for its generosity and support of Islanders in need and Chris Leclair is one of those individuals that, for as long as I can remember, as a musician, he has been there to help other individuals and Chris and his family are in a time of need right now as he is battling a very serious cancer issue. I'd like to thank all of his friends and the community that are coming around him over

in Stratford at the town hall tonight and I encourage everyone that's able to come out and support Chris and his family. I have to tell you, it's just going to be an incredible evening with fellowship, but tremendous music as well. There's going to be artists from all across PEI participating in this wonderful event.

In closing, I'd just like to thank all those Islanders that have reached out to me. Continue to reach out to me, and especially yesterday afternoon and last night by phone messages, emails, on social media – with regards to the idea that we floated forward with regards to consensus government and I appreciate the support and as I said in my response to all Islanders that have reached out to me, I'll continue to promote this style of government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody back on the first Friday of the session and also everybody in the gallery, the representatives from the Canadian Cancer Society, Jason Woodbury, parents of Mark Arendz, and a good friend of mine and District 17 resident, Lorne Yeo. Indeed, this is budget day and it's Tartan Day and I'm certainly less resplendent than the Premier. I just have my tie on today, but as somebody who was born and brought up in Scotland, it's something that's very dear to my heart, of course, and it's lovely to see all the different colours around the Legislature.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here in the gallery today, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention my good friend Lorne Yeo and Lee MacDonald. It's great to see you gentlemen with us today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to be very short. I'd like to acknowledge Jason Woodbury here, especially Jason for being here yesterday and also here for today.

Last night, I was absent from the House, as you're aware. I took great pleasure in, with an exception here, great pleasure of opening the Maritime north junior C Atlantics, which are being held in Crapaud. Great to see the team here from Nunavut, and I wish them all the best this weekend.

Thank you.

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

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

I'd like to welcome Lee MacDonald, as well, to the gallery. Lee's a neighbour of mine and a great fellow. A great fellow to help out other neighbours.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize my mother-in-law, who's actually a constituent of yours. We've had sick kids at our house over the last little bit. She put in 13 hours yesterday when she was sick herself, so that I could be here. I'd like to thank her.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

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

I want to welcome everyone in the gallery, especially Mark Arendz's parents. Fantastic job, what your son did in, Mark did, in South Korea; really pleased with that.

I also want to recognize Stephanie Drake, who is from my riding. A great golf partner of my sister Karen, but I think she's better know from her time on the floor here with her daughter Hannah, when we passed Hannah's Bill last year. I want to wish Hannah all the best in her studies in Ottawa. There is absolutely no stopping that young lady.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome, everyone to the gallery here today, especially my first cousin, Kathleen Murphy. She's a great advocate at Camp Triumph. She's been a staffer there for many years, as well as the Cancer Society. Kathleen does great things for Prince Edward Island. We're very lucky to have her.

Also, I see Joey Blacquiere at the back in the gallery. I had the honour this winter of having a curling game against Joey and he gave me a good schooling that night. It was a fun night with Joey.

Also, following the Premier's words about exceptional people; I just want to wish my mom a happy 60th birthday, which we'll be celebrating tomorrow. She's a fabulous woman, does so much for her community. Hopefully, she enjoys her birthday tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery, and a special welcome to Jason Woodbury from my riding.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Community Leaders

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my absolute pleasure to rise today, and I want to salute the leaders in our communities. Community leaders are often volunteers; members of service organizations like the Women's Institution, Lion's Club, and Rotary Club, or church

groups like Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus, United Church Women. Or youth organizations like 4-H, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and, of course, all the minor sports.

The Montague Rotary Club presented to the health and wellness standing committee last month and reminded me that these groups often fill the gaps in critical services that this government should be providing, literally millions of dollars worth of supports.

I also want to give special thanks to the many people, who put their names forward and serve on community councils, our elected municipal leaders who step up to make such a profound difference in our communities. In most cases, the compensation they receive is miniscule for the amount of work they do.

Under the new *Municipal Government Act*, passed by both this government and the third party, the scope of their responsibility has been significantly increased. They're being boxed into a corner where there is no other option, but to amalgamate through a flawed process. They're being asked to lead that, too.

I call on this provincial government to join me in recognizing the great work of our community leaders, and I call on this government to fulfill their clearly legislated provincial responsibilities like land-use planning in support of our communities instead of continuing with their attempt to pass off these responsibilities.

I want to let community leaders from my district and right across the Island know that our Progressive Conservative Caucus supports them and the work they do; their dedication, hard work and time do not go unnoticed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tartan Day

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, it's a pleasure to rise and recognize Tartan Day, a day where we

recognize and celebrate our Scottish heritage.

April 6th, was chosen as the date as it is the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, which is the Scottish declaration of independence.

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

In 1837, almost 70 after the first migrants had landed on our shores, the Highland Society of Prince Edward Island was formed. In 1864, the Highland Society adopted a new name, a new policy, and a more formal constitution; it's called the Caledonian Club – a club that continues to recognize and encourage the Scottish highland ancestry and the heritage that we share.

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

The name Tartan Day was chosen to promote Scottish heritage by the most visible means, the wearing of Scottish attire, most notably the kilt and some of us are wearing ours today.

We have a strong presence of Scottish heritage in Belfast and the Big Belfast vision, and in fact the term 'Big Belfast', comes from Thomas Douglas, the 5th Earl of Selkirk, a visionary and a scholar and it was his belief that he could move settlers to the new land – to new Scotland – and to the Maritimes and create an independent life for them where they could own their own land and become successful. They paid their own way and that's part of the heritage and the vision that we have in Belfast – that we can create our own destiny.

I'm happy to be wearing my kilt today, Mr. Speaker, and celebrating Tartan Day, promoting our Scottish heritage.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Yes. Sorry, I'm neglecting you, hon. –

Mr. Dumville: Well, the fourth dimension is new around here.

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

Made on PEI Form of Consensus Government

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I'd like to go on record of supporting a made on PEI form of consensus government. Unfortunately, political party leaders' primary interest is the survival of their own parties, possibly with the exception of one. How can they seriously engage in a full discussion in this Legislature on the appropriateness of a Nunavut-style government? The most practical, efficient, and immediate method would be to elect independent candidates in the next election.

Also, I want to dispel a myth that you need to be a member of a political party to get elected. Party members get elected because their candidates are well-respected in the community and their party advances policies that are popular and/or supported by the entire electorate.

Granted, independent candidates will not have established party positions; however, they will have the trust and the best interest of their communities in mind; more importantly, the individual freedom to advance and protect their communities. The electorate is well-informed, tired of partisan politics, no matter what the stripe or colour. They need and will support independent candidates. Let's give them that opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

I rise today to respond to questions about athletes' regulations, which was asked by the Leader of the Third Party and Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale yesterday. There were approximately five questions.

PEI has passed regulation clarifying that should athletes satisfy the test of an employment relationship, they are exempt from such aspects of *Employment Standards Act*, such as: minimum wage, hours of work, and notice of termination. This change was published in *The Royal Gazette* and on the Orders in Council website in October of 2017. The *Employment Standards Act* already exempts other groups.

Part of the rationale for exempting athletes is that the CHL athletes, including those playing for the Islanders, do not fit the traditional arrangement for employment relationships that are covered by the *Employment Standards Act*.

They receive training, physiotherapy, as well as academic support in the form of free tutors and university courses. For each year played with the team, players earn a \$6,000 scholarship, which after four years; they would have accumulated \$24,000 to apply to post-secondary. In addition to the above schooling benefits, the team pays for all housing, food, travel, equipment, and athletic development courses.

Athletic employees still have protection under the *Employment Standards Act* for compassionate care, bereavement, reservist corps, protection from sexual harassment, and continuity of employment. Government spoke with the Charlottetown Islanders and heard from some of their affected athletes in developing these regulations and government is open to continuing these discussions with the athletes. I would also like to wish them all the best in their second round of the play-offs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) sorry.

Speaker: Are you okay?

Mr. MacEwen: I'm just curious if I (Indistinct) stand up. I didn't want to miss it.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

A year ago today *The Guardian* published an in-depth examination of poverty and its impacts here on PEI. There was a great deal of talk that day about poverty in this exact Chamber. Today, I want to check-in and see what progress, if any, has been made since.

Reduction of poverty and food insecurity

Question to the Premier: Premier, what specific actions has your government taken to reduce poverty and food insecurity here on PEI over the last year?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, in the time since we came to government we can point to upwards of \$40 million in new investments that are in place to support people who are in vulnerable situations in our province.

In particular, in the past year, we implemented the fourth of five increments to the food allowance for our recipients of social assistance. When those five implements or those five increments are in place, the increase will be upwards of \$3 million on an annual basis. That comes together with two increments, roughly a 70% increase, to the personal comfort allowance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Great words, little action. All you have to do is get out and actually travel across this Island and speak to those Islanders that are actually facing poverty and food insecurity.

The complex economic and social issues created by poverty continue, unfortunately, to plague our Island.

Question to the Premier: How many Islanders have been able to escape poverty since you took office as Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate these questions, and indeed, I expect that by the time we hear the budget address today, we'll have some further news in terms of our commitment; our commitment reflecting what we believe are the priorities of Islanders to assist our families and neighbours and friends who are in need.

Our government has, indeed, acted on that. Let me mention two categories – to stick with the 40-second rule – we implemented immediately upon becoming government the Generic Drug Program and Prince Edward Islanders registered for that in the number 20,000, now who have registered for that program, an expenditure of on the order of \$3 million – \$2 million a year.

In another category we have made income tax changes which mean that now 3,000 Prince Edward Island tax-filers no longer pay any provincial income tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier talks about the Generic Drug Program and when that was announced, I stood and I said that that was a great initiative; long overdue. But, I'm talking to Islanders on a daily basis that are still trying to figure out if they can afford their medicine, prescriptions, or actually buy some groceries to put on their table that particular week. And that's totally wrong. There's no reason why any Islander should go hungry here on PEI, but alas, there are too many Islanders who are.

Question to the Premier: What changes have you made over the last year in how you address poverty and food insecurity issues?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the points that I made earlier, I guess I'll repeat, since the question is about the last year.

Indeed, the food allowance for people on social assistance was increased for the fourth out of a five-stage commitment. That is very significant in terms of the number of people and families who benefit from that.

In the past year, I'm pleased to say, we went through a third iteration of home renovation programs. Those were programs that had, indeed, been cancelled by a previous Tory government, and that was something that we implemented shortly after coming to government and continue to make that commitment and broader commitment to housing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's great to stand in the House and talk about a home renovation program when essentially the day it opens is almost the exact same day it closes because it's not funded properly.

You can talk about funding food insecurity, but when the rates of the cost of food increased dramatically over what small pittance of increases that this government has provided, it doesn't equate; we're still having Islanders that are unable to afford food here on PEI.

The Premier's fond of travelling far and wide to talk up his mighty Island brand, but that sunny talk rings hollow when we see the reality of poverty and food insecurity for so many Islanders.

Again, question to the Premier: How mighty an Island can we be when so many Islanders go without struggling just to survive from pay cheque to pay cheque?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, since we've been in government, we have had three primary areas where we've made

investments, over and above, or beyond the rates of either, inflation or the growth in government expenditures. Those are family and human services, health and education. Those are our commitments and we have stuck to them and we intend to continue advancing those priorities and to investing in Prince Edward Islanders so that we all do well and that Prince Edward Islanders benefit from the fact that we do have a mighty Island.

I said, in response, to the first question, and I'll say it again; upwards of \$40 million, including federal investments, very significant dollars, in the families and budgets and homes of Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you're living in poverty and struggling to get by it's tough. You can feel trapped and it takes a toll on a person's mental health as the bills pile up. It's soul crushing.

Mileage rates for medical appointments

Question to the Premier: What's the current mileage rate for people on social assistance who have to travel to medical appointments?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that's something that the minister would answer. I'll be happy to bring back the response to that. I don't have it at hand.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we raised this issue last year the mileage rate for social assistance clients going to medical appointments was 20 cents a kilometre. It hasn't gotten any cheaper to travel over the last year.

Question to the Premier: Why hasn't the mileage rate been increased over the last year?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of fronts on which the province and our collective population respond to need. We've spoken this morning about a number of them. Indeed, in the area of health, we make significant investments and continue to do so. As we work our way through we address new areas and when we have our Budget this morning, I'm sure that Islanders and all members of this House will have an opportunity to see that we continue with those commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All social assistance clients get is \$25 a month for transportation.

Cost of bus pass

Question to the Premier: How much does it cost for a bus pass?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I don't have a bus pass, but I'll be happy to get that information and bring it back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The monthly cost of a bus pass in Summerside is \$30. If you live in the greater Charlottetown area, a monthly bus pass will run you \$65.

Transportation cost versus bus pass cost

Question to the Premier: Does it seem strange that a monthly transportation

allowance for social assistance clients is less than half the cost of a bus pass?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are many components to the areas where social assistance clients are supported. When we came to government we said we would first address food, which is an issue that has been brought up here, and as I said we are now going to soon surpass \$3 million a year in additional support.

We said when we came to government, that we would increase the personal comfort or the allowance for personal items which is discretionary in the hands of social assistance clients. That's now been increased twice, and people have spoken to me that they appreciate that they get those funds that are discretionary. It's now \$91 a month. It's not a lot, but it's a nice increase compared to what it was four years ago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Cost allowance for clients with medical needs

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Social assistance clients can also get up to \$31 a month for medical appointments. That's a total of \$56 a month.

Question to the Premier: Do you think someone on social assistance with medical needs can get to and from their appointments on less than \$2 a day?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I guess, really, the way the question got posed is that someone would be going every day to an appointment.

But, in any event, let me say we are aware that people have needs, that people are putting food on the table, that they've got kids to look after, they've got personal expenses that they're dealing with. Let me mention one item that has been added to the mix in this province over the last two years,

and that is the Canada Child Benefit; \$25 million extra in the hands and in the budgets and on the tables and in the vehicles of Prince Edward Island families. That makes a very big difference to people throughout this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The social assistance mileage rate was last adjusted 12 years ago when Pat Binns was premier. Social assistance mileage rates haven't changed in 12 years, but government mileage rates are adjusted monthly.

Social assistance mileage rates

Question to the Premier: Do you think that using 2006 social assistance mileage rates is helping reduce poverty in 2018?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we have increased food, comfort, home renovations. We'll be hearing more before the day is out about other areas where we know there are needs, where we are responding.

Let me add in conjunction with the comment that I made about the child benefit, which in total is \$100 million in this province when the Liberal government, federally, changed that program to bring it forward in the format that it now is. We committed that it would not affect any social assistance benefits that those people would be receiving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, poverty can touch everything a person does. It becomes their reality. It can turn daily routines most Islanders take for granted, in a moment, (Indistinct) stress and anxiety.

Current price of fuel

A question for the Premier: With last weekend's fuel price increase, what's the current price of a litre of gas?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I haven't filled up since last weekend, Mr. Speaker, but last time I did it was around \$1.14, was it?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: What does he care? He doesn't pay it.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I can bring that information back, but I could tell you I fill –

Mr. Myers: How much did it cost you?

Premier MacLauchlan: – I fill up at self serve in my neighbourhood and the last time I filled up, it was \$1.14.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Probably the cheapest price is \$1.21 a litre for regular unleaded right now.

The price of gas matters a lot to Islanders who rely on their vehicles. It has a real impact on low-income households and families. Most families need to travel for work and to access healthcare, especially in rural communities.

Island communities serviced with public transit

Another question to the Premier: How many Island communities are currently serviced with public transit?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are various arrangements in parts of the province. There's Transportation West, there

is in the Greater Charlottetown Area, there's between Charlottetown and Summerside, and that's obviously in areas where, because of population and the way that our Island has developed, we are not served to the extent that more built up areas are, and this is something of course that the members opposite have been drawing attention to when they're looking at the whole question of local government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, not all parts of the province have access to public transit services. Other than moving into an area where public transit is available, they don't have an alternative but to use their vehicle.

Expansion of public transit

A question to the minister: Does your government plan to expand access to public transit this year to support more low-income Islanders and seniors?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Trivers: I'll direct that to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We were very happy as a department last year to provide extra funding to Pat and the Elephant, to Transportation West. We do, and have made a commitment, again, for this year to provide funding to the County Line Express between Charlottetown and Summerside. We have a transportation committee which we formed to look at different areas that we can approve upon transportation across PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like, once again, doing a lot of great talking about it. Transportation accounts for 46% of all greenhouse gas emissions on the Island.

Carbon tax and fuel prices

A question to the minister responsible for energy: When a carbon tax is adopted on Prince Edward Island, will the price of a litre of gas go up or go down?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In regard to our province's energy, our energy strategy is helping to develop a strong and more sustainable and resilient province. We certainly can't control what the price of gas is here anymore than we can around the world.

Mr. Fox: Carbon tax, up or down?

Ms. Biggar: But, Mr. Speaker, we can or can't control how much energy we consume and the more that we can do around efficiency programs and conservation, that's our primary goal. Through our energy strategy, through our efficiency PEI programs, we're going to be working with Islanders to help them save energy in all areas.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So there's a lot of speculation out in the public of whether you actually have a plan for carbon tax at all.

So I'll ask the question again: When the carbon tax is adopted on PEI, will the price go up or will it go down? Simple question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Well, I thank you for the question. However, carbon pricing or

climate change does not fall under my portfolio so you might want to ask the minister responsible –

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

An Hon. Member: Come on, come on.

Mr. Myers: Weak, weak.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I always thought that this minister was the minister of everything so she'd be able to answer any question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: At any rate –

Ms. Biggar: I want to share it (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: If you don't want to answer the question, why don't you just say so?

Many Islanders, Mr. Speaker, are struggling with the cost of gas and home heating fuel now. I'll direct this question to any minister that cares to answer, because I assume they do know their portfolios.

This is the question: How will more taxes on the price of gas and furnace oil prevent more Islanders from slipping into poverty?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As minister of energy, I can certainly respond to the fact that through our low-income home programs, through efficiencyPEI, through other programs that we've been able to offer Islanders to help them save energy, we've been able to help save Islanders over \$9 million in their energy bills since we implemented our efficiencyPEI department in 2008.

We are going to be launching a new suite of programs in the upcoming months and there will be more opportunities for Islanders to take advantage of those to help them save energy and improve on their homes.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Premier, every time you drive to the Legislature, your mileage is paid for. Do you know by who?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: So is yours.

Mr. Trivers: The very taxpayers that get only 20 cents for mileage, and you're right, the government rate is around 40 cents per kilometre.

The question is, really, with the government rate of 40 cents, the fact that the Premier and Cabinet gets their gas paid for and the mileage rate at only 20 cents for those on social assistance.

Mr. Premier: How is that fair?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: And, first, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. members opposite who didn't know the price of a litre of fuel it's a dollar-twenty-one-point-three for regular fuel, so that's good for everyone to know that in the House.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The people – thank you.

People in this House all are supported by the taxpayer through our salaries, through our support staff, through various ways including either gas or mileage, depending on what arrangements we make. That is done according to terms that are meant to reflect the market. That is something that I didn't think was put in question by the hon. members opposite, but if they want to question it they can do it through, I suppose, legislative management committee if they think we're overdoing it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As was clear yesterday during Question Period and the awarding of the Medavie home care contract, public purchasing by government is an important area where transparency and accountability need to be improved.

The Legislature passed a bill in the fall of 2016 to reform the public purchasing process, but we're still waiting, two years later, for the regulations to be developed and for that act to be proclaimed.

Procurement of Goods Act

A question to the Premier: When do you expect to proclaim the Procurement of Goods Act?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that would be something that would fall within the domain of the Minister of Finance. It's not a day for me to be speaking for him. Let me say, we'll take that under consideration and come back with an answer to the House.

Thank you.

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

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

PEI currently does not publish much information on contract winners. However, many other provinces do and they have already moved in that direction. Nova Scotia, for example, publishes a list of all the companies that submit bids, the amounts of those bids and the winning bidder. PEI does not publish any information whatsoever on winning bids.

Published tender information under Procurement of Goods Act

A question to the Premier, or anybody who does feel like speaking for finance minister: Will the regulations under the Procurement of Goods Act require government to publish

information on the outcomes of tendering processes?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can report any bids that go out for tender through the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy are listed on our website. Anyone can see who was successful in those tenders. They can go online and get that information.

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

Before you ask that question, I just want to remind all hon. members, the supplementary questions, I had said yesterday, should be without preamble, so that should be fairly easy to understand.

Go ahead, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

That department would be the exception in many other cases; procurement is not made public. The Nova Scotia *Procurement Act* that was passed in 2011 includes another innovative practice called Sustainable Procurement Practices.

Sustainable procurement principles

A question to any minister who prefers to answer: Will you commit to a sustainable procurement principles policy in the procurement regulations?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know, in terms of Atlantic procurement within the department of transportation, that's something we work collaboratively on. We have agreements in terms of Atlantic Canada Procurement Agreement. I know the Minister of Finance would have more detail on our inter-provincial trade agreements.

We're always cognizant of the fact that it is public money being spent. When we have a tender open it's a public tender. All people

that have bid on those tenders can come in and see exactly what it is and they are certainly posted on our website. We will continue to work with our Atlantic Provinces on our procurement agreements.

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

Mrs. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Minister, as a former speaker and the current Deputy Speaker, I'm very interested in ensuring the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island has the facilities it needs in order to provide services expected of a modern functioning Legislature now and into the future.

As our most important democratic institution, members, the public, staff and all Islanders expect no less. Since the province vacated Province House in January 2015, it has been under extensive conservation work that is expected to continue to 2022. At which time your department has stated publicly that it sees no reason why the Legislative Assembly will not return to Province House.

Province House as the future home of Legislative Assembly

Minister: Has your department fully assessed the suitability of Province House as the future long-term home of the Legislative Assembly, and if so, what factors have been taken into consideration in arriving at this conclusion?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As former deputy speaker, I know having sat on legislative management committees it is very important to all the hon. members and it is the people's House, as far as I'm concerned.

My department is working closely with the Legislative Assembly staff, staff through the Clerk's office to catalogue the current and future requirements of the Legislature.

Legislative staff has provided a significant amount of information, which does identify what those operational needs are going to be. We are also working with Parks Canada and their design team on a functional review process, but the intent, on all sides, to be clear, is to have Province House meet the requirements of the Legislative Assembly.

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

Mrs. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I understand the federal government through Parks Canada is covering costs associated with the conservation of Province House. However, it has been made very clear that the re-establishment of the Legislative Assembly must be paid for by the province.

Cost to re-establish Legislative Assembly in Province House

Have design plans been finalized for Province House, and if so, how much is it estimated to cost the province to re-establish the Legislative Assembly in the building?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Those particular plans are certainly not finalized at the moment. We are working with Parks Canada consultants to discuss those requirements. The consultant will develop the options to meet the needs of the Assembly's operations. It's too early, at this point, to say what the exact estimates of those costs will come to at the end.

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

Mrs. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, as you know, and most hon. members of this House who have served at Province House, know that Province House presented challenges as the home for a modern legislature even before we vacated the building.

Options for future of the Legislative Assembly location

In the event the final design plans and resulting costs suggest Province House does not represent a sound provincial investment as a long-term home for the Legislative Assembly, has your department been working with the Legislative Assembly on possible options?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Province House has been the historic location of our Legislative Assembly. We are working closely with the Clerk's office on this project. We'll continue to do so and ensure that the functional needs of the Assembly will be met. We have no reason to believe that it can still – that we'll not be able to function in the future as a Legislative Assembly, and we're working towards that goal.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness: The Kings County Memorial Hospital is very important to all residents of Kings County and it has been some years since there have been any renovations or expansion to the hospital. This hospital needs to be replaced.

Future of Kings County Memorial Hospital

Can the minister tell us here today what his plans are for a future Kings County Memorial Hospital and does he have the dollars budgeted in his management plan?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Let me also begin by saying just how important the role Kings County Memorial Hospital plays to residents, not only of the Montague area, but of the Kings County area in total.

It was great for me to, in recent weeks, to go down and do a tour of the facility and I thank the member for joining me on that. I was quite impressed by the facility and the upkeep it's had over recent years. We've had total renovations to the emergency department, replaced the back-up generator, as well, we've also replaced the medical gas system, and did some recent upgrades to the roof. As well, this year, we are going to be making a \$525,000 investment in the area of renovating the area of blood collection and lab services, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Additional services to KCMH

Can the minister advise what other additional services he is considering for Kings County Memorial Hospital? Additional services have recently been added, in both Queens County and Prince County.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are continuously reviewing and researching ambulatory care needs of all Islanders from all across the province. I don't have an announcement to make today for the Kings County Memorial Hospital, but we'll continuously be reviewing their process and what needs they have and certainly any suggestions that the hon. member would have to give me, I'd certainly accept them and any residents from that area as well. We currently want to provide the best health services to all Islanders in all regions of our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Structural assessment of KCMH

Mr. Roach: My question with the minister: Will the minister work with the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to

complete a structural assessment of Kings County Memorial Hospital by this fall and also have his staff complete a service assessment of the hospital, including what additional services could, or will be, added by this fall?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly taking the chair, I do apologize; I did not have a lot of time to spend with the minister of infrastructure, but as we move forward, I would be more than happy to sit with her to have discussions of all infrastructure regarding health facilities all across PEI. Kings County Memorial Hospital is definitely an aging facility and we'll look at opportunity to invest in that region and I'd be more than happy to sit with the minister to discuss those.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the fall sitting of the House, the House passed Bill No. 102, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act*. This bill extends workers' compensations benefits for workers diagnosed with PTSD across the whole province. The bill passed in the House unanimously and received Royal Assent, but yet has been proclaimed by Cabinet.

Voting of Bill No. 102

Question to the Premier: If your government had no plan to proclaim Bill No. 102 into the law, then why did you vote for the bill in the first place?

Mr. Trivers: Who amended that clause (Indistinct) –

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that bill was adopted subject to proclamation, as the hon. member indicated, and the minister brought forward yesterday a plan to improve on the service, on the coverage, and on the

way in which the coverage will be implemented by the Workers Compensation Board. It was through the advice of the Workers Compensation Board that we are bringing forward a bill that will incorporate and build on and improve what was done in the bill from last fall.

An Hon. Member: Good job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier a minute ago talked about 'personal comfort' – were your exact words. Recognizing workplace PTSD injuries is a positive step toward and to forward to Island workers. This bill will pass unanimously again with support from all parties – the Green Party and the Liberal Party.

Question to the Premier: When did you decide to reverse your support for a legislation that you voted for only four months ago?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, in preparation for a legislative session, there are various proposals that come forward from departments, and indeed, this was one that came forward from the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning in consultation with the Workers Compensation Board. I would say it was within the last two weeks or in the lead-up to this session, that that bill came forward in draft form to be considered, as is done in other legislation as we prepare for our session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, if that was the case then and the Premier's always talking about being open and transparent in collaboration, then maybe you should have reached out to opposition and talked with us or the unions on your proposed change.

When this bill was being debated, there was great support from Island first responders and nurses and firefighters – the gallery was full. They all saw the potential to help Island workers who suffer from PTSD.

Mr. Premier, why string along Island workers for the last four months by letting them think you meant what you said when you voted for Bill No. 102?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me object to the language of ‘string-along’, we take our responsibilities seriously in this House and that was very much the case when that matter was on the floor here as a private members bill; there was some concerns at the time.

But what is done here, is to put Prince Edward Island workers in a position that the workers in only one other province currently are. In a further part, there’s a clear improvement in terms of the coverage for Island workers in that it’s not PTSD by itself, but it’s traumatic conditions generally.

I believe workers in this province, so far from being dealt with the way you’ve described it, are being offered coverage and a proper service that they would not have been if we did not bring forward this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since the House closed on December 20th, Cabinet has met 13 times and approved over 200 Orders-in-Council; not one of them proclaimed Bill No. 102 in law.

Question to the Premier: What was so objectionable about Bill No. 102 that you refused to proclaim the bill after you voted for it and the leader of the Green Party?

Mr. Trivers: Playing politics.

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

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

In all due respect to the hon. member, when this bill was on the floor, we recognized the spirit of your bill and we had to do this as government; we have to take legislation very seriously. When we reached out to workman’s comp, their medical advisor reached out to the physician community and 20% of them felt they could diagnose this and 80% felt they couldn’t.

Also, your Bill No. 102 was just for PTSD; we felt we had to expand that and look after all Islanders and that’s –

Mr. Trivers: Why didn’t you amend Bill 102 then?

Mr. Gallant: – and that is what we did in these amendments to the *Workers Compensation Act*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roach: Good job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I’m glad to see the minister stand up because he wasn’t long running out to get his photo taken when Bill No. 102 was passed by all members of the House.

Our first responders put life and limb at risk to help protect others. Doing that comes with personal cost that isn’t always visible. Complications from PTSD can have major, and sometimes, deadly consequences for those who suffer from it.

Mental health of Island workers with PTSD

Question to the Premier: Shouldn’t the mental health of Island workers with PTSD have been more significant and important than who gets credit?

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

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

I'd like to just kind of comment on the member opposite. You invited me out for the picture, hon. member.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: I'd also like to say there was quite a bit of discussion back and forth on Twitter that I didn't bother responding to because as the Premier said, we wanted to wait until we were coming into the Legislature. We wanted to get this right.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Member of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have to look out for all Islanders, as I indicated earlier, and these amendments to the act is what we are intending to do and we will continue to do that as a government, as long as we are the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, if the minister and the Premier would have been paying attention to Twitter then they would have realized that the firefighters, the unions, the nurses, everybody was asking for this bill to be proclaimed. Clearly this delay was about the Premier's ego. Otherwise, Bill No. 102 would have been proclaimed into law already. Instead, yesterday government decided to reinvent the wheel by tabling its own watered-down legislation.

PTSD coverage

Question to the Premier: Why do you think it's okay to make workers have to wait even longer now because we have limited psychological resources available to get PTSD coverage?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I only hear one person here speaking about ego.

This is about workers. This is about coverage. We brought in, since coming to government, through policy, coverage of traumatic conditions and expanded it. It was in response to meetings that we had, I had personally, with Jason Woodbury, who is here and who has been active in promoting this.

What has been done in bringing forward this bill – and I heard the minister by the way say in his statement yesterday giving credit to the minister from Borden-Kinkora for bringing this forward. There's lots of credit here to share and ultimately, it's about protection and service and coverage for Island workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, this will be your final question.

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

To make matters worse, the government's replacement bill makes it harder for workers to get help by restricting diagnosis only to psychologists. We know PEI has a shortage of psychologists right now. This will make it harder for workers to access PTSD diagnosis.

Limiting access to care for workers

Question to the Premier: How will limiting access to support improve the care for Island workers?

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

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

As we indicated earlier over and over, this is about all Islanders and when this was implemented into policy in 2016, there was no increase on the workload of workers comp and there is no anticipated workload in the future. If there is, we will deal with that as it comes upon us.

I need to reinforce that this is about all Islanders. The hon. member across said the nurses and the first responders, that we didn't respect them; we included them in this, and this is about everyone on PEI that suffers from a traumatic stress disorder.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence. I'd like to do some recognition of guests that have joined us in the gallery.

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

Recognition of Guests (II)

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

From the Caledonia Club here recognizing Tartan Day, I'd like to recognize Pauline and Robert MacArthur, Ewen Stewart, Doug MacNevin, Eleanor Boswell, Bill Acorn, (Indistinct) MacLean; welcome. It's great to see her today celebrating and recognizing the importance of our Scottish heritage by donning your tartan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to welcome a couple of those community leaders I referred to in my member statement today in the gallery; Dianne Young, who has really taken the bull by the horns to fill in that gap in critical services that the government has shown, with the Lennon Recovery House. It's good to see her here. As well, I'd like to recognize Jamie Larkin who I believe has a big announcement coming up. I think he's putting his name forward to become an elected community leader as well, so it's great to see you guys here today.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would also like to welcome Dianne Young and Jamie Larkin to our gallery today. I had some time this week to spend with both of these fine individuals, the board members from Lennon Recovery House; a great vision for the future of Prince Edward Island and it's great to have them in the gallery today as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome those visiting the gallery today from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, in particular Bill Acorn is here visiting with us and Dianne Young, who has become a friend since our last election. Welcome to the gallery.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll piggy-back briefly of the Member from Belfast-Murray River to recognize the Scots and the Caledonia Club people who've joined us; many friends, in some cases, family, and Chief Eleanor Boswell.

May I also recognize two other Scots who have joined us? Jack MacDonald and Elizabeth MacDonald; wife and father of the Minister of Finance –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) pretty proud (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – I'm sure they're going to be pretty proud today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: I also want to call on the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford and –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) cup of tea.

Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) like an auction. Keep your hands down.

Speaker: That's right, hon. member.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Mark Arendz

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, very few people get to see their dream of competing on a world stage come true. Even fewer can say they are among the best in the world in their sport.

Mark Arendz, is in a very exclusive class of athletes. Mark was raised on a farm in Hartsville, Prince Edward Island. He started skiing in his backyard at the age of five. He lost his arm in an accident when he was seven, so he started skiing with a ski prosthetic.

Mark's list of medals and accomplishments is vast and includes numerous world championship medals and titles including entering the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Games as the reigning world cup biathlon champion, and the world champion in the 7.5 biathlon sprint. He brought home two medals from the 2014 Paralympic Games. Then, to top it all off last month in South Korea, Mark won six medals at the Paralympic Games including gold in the biathlon. Further, Mark, and we're very proud of this, was Canada's flag-bearer for the closing ceremonies; a moment that made all Islanders proud.

Prince Edward Island is a mighty Island because of people like Mark who dream big, work hard and never give up.

I might say in the comments that he had made from Korea since coming home, he's shared that capacity, that dream, that reaching to all be our best with all Islanders of all ages and all abilities.

While Mark was chasing his dreams he spent thousands of hours at our provincial ski park just 10 minutes from where he grew up.

Earlier this week, it was announced that the park where Mark learned to ski, will be renamed the Mark Arendz Provincial Ski Park at Brookvale.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: It's our hope and firm conviction that every Islander will recognize Mark's name and hear his story and be inspired by it. He personifies dedication, humility and generosity; qualities that he, no doubt, inherited from his supportive parents, Janny and Johan Arendz, who are with us in the gallery today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Indeed, it was very clear in all of Mark's competitive excellence that it didn't start yesterday. We certainly want to recognize what his family and what he was so generous to recognize what his community has done for him to be performing at the level he is.

I also want to recognize Stephanie Drake, board member with ParaSport & Recreation PEI, who also joins us. Stephanie participated in the paralympic celebrations held earlier this week honouring Mark and Billy Bridges for their accomplishments. Stephanie, as has been indicated earlier, is the mother of Hannah MacLellan, who was instrumental in legislation being adopted in this House that increased penalties for designated accessible parking spaces, and modernized the language to be more inclusive. We welcome you, Stephanie.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Prince Edward Island is such a unique and wonderful province with strong support from families and organizations like ParaSport & Recreation PEI, alongside the feverish pride that we exhibit for our own and that's what produces the results and the excellence that we've seen in Mark Arendz. We're very proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's not too often that anyone gets a chance to rise in this PEI Legislative Assembly and

stand to recognize such an awe-inspiring individual as Mark Arendz. As I mentioned yesterday in my statement, I unfortunately wasn't available to attend the ceremony on Tuesday evening; but I did, last week, make it out to New Haven for a wonderful event that was jam-packed of friends, family, Islanders, supporters of Mark.

In particular, there was one young gentleman that I kind of watched from afar, Daemon Atkinson. He was there to meet what I would have to say would be his new idol, his new hero and his new inspiration. I watched Daemon and Mark interact together, and I was awestruck on how dutifully that Mark interacted with this young man. I know that he sparked something in Daemon. You could see it in his eyes. You could see it in his smile. It takes a special individual to be able to cause such a reaction in a young child such as Mark did that night.

The accomplishments that Mark achieved over the last number of years, as the Premier stated, two medals in 2014, awe inspiring six medals in 2018 in South Korea, and not only making all Islanders proud, but all of Canada proud as he was chosen as the flag-bearer for the closing ceremonies.

I know that Mark doesn't spend a tremendous amount of time on PEI currently. He does the majority of his training in Canmore, Alberta and I know that facility first hand because I used to like in Kananaskis, which is adjacent to the training facility in Canmore and it is just an amazing training facility. But, I truly think that we have a gem here and most importantly, we have a gem here in Brookvale that has now the proper name on it. Again, I applaud the Premier for making that designation the other night and it's, I think, a legacy of Mark and inspiring that more young people will start their training here on PEI to go on to great things.

I'd also like to recognize Mark's parents who have joined us here today. Congratulations. I know you are very, very proud and rightfully so. And Stephanie Drake, of course, Hannah's mom and a past school mate of mine. Hannah has continued to do wonderful things and she's still doing wonderful things. I talk to her dad quite regularly and quite often Hannah sends

messages to me through her dad with regards to what we're doing here in the Legislature or what we should be doing here in the Legislature. So, I appreciate Hannah's support and her words of wisdom.

Again, just in closing, I'd like to congratulate not only Mark, but Billy Bridges as well and all parasport athletes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I share everybody's joy and the triumphs of Mark. I've known Mark for a long time. He's a resident of district 17 – went to school with my sons at Bluefield High School. I remember him refereeing soccer matches from many, many years ago and he always stood out as somebody who was exceptional. He's certainly gone on to prove that as a sports person, now of international acclaim as a multiple Olympic gold, silver, and bronze medal winner and it's a wonderful thing.

I think it's a lovely gesture and I applaud government for deciding to rename Brookvale park, which I spent many, many hours – probably Mark whizzed by me hundreds of times as I was plodding around there with my children, both in the downhill and the cross-country ski. It's just entirely appropriate that we should name that after this great Islander.

There are many ways that we can encourage Islanders to lead more active lifestyles and the affordability, the accessibility of places like Brookvale ski park – now the Mark Arendz ski park – is one way of doing that. But, another way is for Islanders to be inspired by individuals. I think, along with the celebration that we've all shared in Mark's successes, many young people, as the Leader of the Opposition just said, have been inspired by Mark, himself, as an individual. He's just somebody that we should all share a tremendous pride in and I'm so grateful for what he has done for the sport of biathlon and cross-country skiing here on Prince Edward Island and for sports

in general and the promotion of healthy lifestyles for all Islanders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, a cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming for an individual and their loved ones.

As a government, we are working to support Islanders living with, through, and beyond cancer. Guiding our efforts is the PEI Cancer Strategy that was released two years ago. The strategy focuses on reducing the burden of the four most common cancers in our province: lung, breast, colorectal, and prostate. Tremendous progress has been made in recent years to advance cancer care in our province, with our more recent efforts focused on lung and prostate cancers.

On PEI, 75% of lung cancer is diagnosed at an advanced, non-curable stage, claiming the lives of more than 100 Islanders each year. To address the incidence rate in the province, a full-time lung cancer prevention and screening coordinator was hired in February to support lung cancer prevention and tobacco cessation and to monitor evidence that will support the development of the province's first lung cancer screening program.

Planning is also underway to establish a prostate cancer action group to determine how to move forward with developing a screening program and care coordination. In August, reports on lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers for PEI will be completed, helping to further guide our efforts.

We know that screening helps catch some cancers early, when they are most treatable, and almost half of all cancers can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle. Screening programs and services are available on Prince Edward Island for cervical, breast, and colorectal cancer. Since April 2017, more than 15,400 Islanders have participated in cancer screening programs.

During Daffodil Month, I encourage all Islanders to take opportunities to do what they can to better their own health and wellbeing, such as knowing risk factors, participating in cancer screening programs, or calling the Smokers' Helpline to make a change for the better. I also want to recognize the efforts of the PEI Division of the Canadian Cancer Society in creating greater awareness about cancer through initiatives such as this daffodil campaign.

Representing the Canadian Cancer Society in the gallery today are: Jayna Stokes; Kathleen Murphy; and cancer survivor, Peter Dunfield. I'd like to welcome all of those to the gallery today. It's good to have them with us and I want to thank you for all each and every day for the work you do to support Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I applaud the minister of health for his statement here today with regards to daffodil month, which of course is cancer awareness month, and any initiative that the government can put forward to help educate and to help identify Islanders through testing. It is a great initiative.

As I spoke earlier today, I've had the – I don't want to say 'the pleasure', but I've had the opportunity to spend a fair amount of time in the PEI Cancer Treatment Centre over the last month and a half or two months and again, I just have to sing the accolades to the people that are out there, and the tremendous work that they do, and the way they deal with their clients.

There's other things that we've discussed here in the Legislative Assembly that I'm very proud of over the last couple of years with regards to initiatives around flavoured tobacco, tobacco cessation programs, and things like that. A lot of that work originated with the Canadian Cancer Society, the PEI division.

There's a lot of advocacy work that this wonderful organization does. I know that

they meet with opposition. I know they meet with government. I know that they meet with the third party, as well.

When we have an NGO, such as the Cancer Society that are advocating for something that is fundamentally so important to the well-being of Islanders we really need to stand up and listen. They have the research. They know what they're talking about. If the Canadian Cancer Society is knocking on our door, telling us that we need to put a certain initiative in place whether it be smoking cessation or any other initiative, we really need to listen and make sure that we're doing what we need to do because, at the end of the day, lives matter.

There's another initiative that I just want to touch on real quickly. That's the Atlantic PATH. The Atlantic PATH is an initiative that was created, or started just, I think it was about, probably, two short years ago. It's actually a 30-year research program to follow Atlantic Canadians and their life within a 30-year window and identify lifestyle, eating habits, exercise, but more importantly, to identify incidences of cancer. I'm very proud to state here today that I'm actually one of the members that are being followed in this path. I remember standing in the House two years ago and promoting that and speaking about that publicly to try to get even more Islanders engaged.

Again, I just want to remind, this is very important, I want to remind everyone, all Islanders, have a daffodil on your lapel. When the month is over, don't keep them. It's very important. This is a very significant fundraising initiative of the Canadian Cancer Society. What we like to see is Islanders, every year, purchasing a new daffodil to put back on your lapel. Similar, to the Remembrance Day poppy; it's a great fundraising initiative. I just ask Islanders to remember that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Also responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's cancer awareness month, and few of us need to be made more aware of cancer. As I was driving here to work this morning, I

listened to an interview with Island musician Chris LeClair, who was mentioned earlier in his journey through cancer. It touches us all, personally within our families, and with our friends and neighbours across this Island every day.

Like the Leader of the Opposition, I want to just say a word about the cancer centre here and what an extraordinary place that is. Not only in terms of the world-class treatment it offers Islanders and their families, who are going through the cancer journey, but also the – just the care and the love of the people who work there. It's a really – it's a special place. Those, who either go in there for treatment, or whose families need, whether it be medical support or emotional support, it's there for them. It's a wonderful place.

There are many risk factors in cancer that cannot be controlled, but there are some that can. There has been some talk this morning of smoking cessation programs. In that respect, yes, we are doing something, but we're behind the other Atlantic Provinces in terms of our funding of smoking cessation. I think that's something government could do, knowing that smoking is the number one cause of the most common cancers around us.

Diet is another thing. Exercise, physical exercise, and I would love to see a government that would remove the taxes from things such as gym memberships, of equipment, of anything that would encourage Islanders to get out there and lead an active lifestyle.

We're knowing more and more that stress is also a significant factor, not in our general health, but in some cancers, as well. The work of people who around this province being proactive on reducing mental health stresses, particularly in our school system, and I want to applaud also, Dianne Young, who is behind me and the work that she's doing. Not just in dealing with people with mental health crises, but providing systems that will support people towards real mental health and wellness. And, in so doing relieve stress and, perhaps, ultimately our cancer burden.

There are so many ways that we, in our society, can help to reduce the risk of cancer. Thank you for the Cancer Society

for all the work you do. I hope, as the years go by, that cancer rates will reduce here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: Hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Premier's expenses, filed since September, which shows taxpayers paid \$1,344.21 over six months for the Premier's fuel. Now, of course, using the social assistance mileage rates, this would have been paid for over 6,700 kilometres for social assistance clients, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a written question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I present here with a message from Her Honour Lieutenant Governor, which said message is signed by Her Honour.

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

and I'll ask all hon. members to please stand while the message is being read.

Clerk: Honourable Mr. Speaker,
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
197 Richmond Street
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Her Honour, the Honourable Antoinette Perry, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Prince Edward Island, hereby transmits the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure required to carry on the public services of the Province for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2019, and also until the passage of the estimates for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2020.

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

By Command,

Paul T. Ledwell
Clerk of Executive Council
Secretary to Cabinet

Also signed by

Honourable Antoinette Perry
Lieutenant Governor

Speaker: Thank you.

You may be seated.

The Hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I have to open the envelope, Mr. Speaker.

By Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I present herewith the Estimates of Revenue for the Province of Prince Edward Island for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019 and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that said estimates be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that Motion No. 33, be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 33.

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

BE IT RESOLVED that this House approves, in general, the Budgetary Policy of the Government.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, you can move into the Budget speech.

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) podium there.

Mr. R. Brown: Buckle up.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our budget address today is entitled, Investing in Islanders.

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure and pride to rise today to present an economic and fiscal plan for Prince Edward Island in the coming year.

I say pride, Mr. Speaker, since we only have to look around us and across our province to see the great leadership and success being seen in all parts of our economy and in all regions. Whether on the wharf, in the field, in the plant or at the office, we are witnessing economic and people activity that is driving Prince Edward Island to record levels:

In July, 2017, Prince Edward Island's population surpassed 152,000, an increase of

1.7 per cent over 2016, the fastest growth amongst provinces.

Additionally, for the first time since 1967 our median age became younger.

The number of employed persons on the Island increased 3.1 per cent in 2017, while the unemployment rate decreased 0.9 percentage points to 9.8 per cent, the lowest annual average since 1978.

Total labour income on the Island grew by 4.4 per cent in 2017, the strongest growth in the region, and faster than the national average.

Retail sales grew 7.4 per cent in 2017, the fastest growth in the region, and third amongst the provinces.

The value of new motor vehicles sold increased by 3.0 per cent to reach a new all-time high.

Housing starts in 2017 were the fastest growth amongst provinces.

Total overnight stays on the Island increased by 6.5 per cent in 2017 to exceed 1 million stays for the first time.

Preliminary figures indicate that the landed value of lobster in 2017 was up 17% over 2016 values.

Against ongoing international economic uncertainty, and with economic and fiscal challenges being faced by many provinces in this country, little Prince Edward Island continues to surprise everyone.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the independent Atlantic Provinces Economic Council stated it simply a few months ago: "Prince Edward Island is on a tear." Our economic growth overall; our successful, growing and diverse economic sectors; our population strength; our record-setting exports to all parts of the world; our never before seen revenues in agriculture, fisheries and tourism; and our increase in full-time jobs and wages all are indications of just how well our province is doing.

We know that this success comes directly through the hard efforts of Island business and community leaders and the many

workers and families who contribute day-by-day and week-by-week in their workplaces, organizations and communities. It is these efforts that make us a Mighty Island, surprising and surpassing expectations – sometimes even our own.

Our own effort in Government has been to support growth, and to honour the hard work of Islanders by making sure that tax dollars are spent wisely on the issues that matter most to our residents. Budget 2018-2019 makes priority investments in frontline services and addresses the most difficult and important challenges facing the people of this province. Our fiscal plan continues our record of managing public funds well.

Le gouvernement met tout en oeuvre pour soutenir la croissance et pour souligner le travail acharné des Insulaires, assurant que les fonds publics soient judicieusement dépensés sur les questions des plus importantes pour nos résidents. Le budget 2018-2019 prévoit des investissements prioritaires dans les services de première ligne et aborde les défis les plus difficiles et importants auxquels les gens de cette province font face. De plus, notre plan financier nous permet de continuer à bien gérer les fonds publics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: French education.

Mr. MacDonald: More than anything –

Mr. LaVie: Can you repeat that?

Mr. MacDonald: More than anything, our plan invests in Islanders. With economic success and strong fiscal management, our plan pays dividends directly and immediately to all people in the province, while investing in needed supports that provide for a sustainable future for our residents.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that we will achieve these significant new investments in Islanders while presenting our second straight balanced budget.

Building on Economic and Fiscal Success

Mr. Speaker, since forming Government in May 2015 and introducing our first budget

in June of that year, our Government has worked hard to ensure that Islanders can succeed. Under the Premier's leadership, we have managed public funds with the care that Islanders expect, have supported smart growth in all parts of the province and have made consistent investments in important public services.

Our economy is stronger than it ever has been, and growing faster than the region and the country. Islanders are better off and our businesses and communities are growing and diversifying into new areas of activity and are more productive than ever.

More Islanders are working, with more full-time jobs available, including more than 2,500 new full-time jobs in the last year. Total labour income in the province is experiencing the second fastest growth in the country. Our population continues to grow, and we are well on track to meet the goal of a population of 160,000 Islanders by 2022.

Our Government has balanced its books, with the first balanced budget in a decade, allowing for more investments in health, education, children and families in communities throughout PEI. We have provided direct tax relief to 85,000 Islanders and, at this moment, 3,000 fewer Islanders are paying any provincial income tax than in 2015.

Together with our Federal partner, we have made historic investments in infrastructure, including the PEI-New Brunswick Submarine Cable Project, the single largest infrastructure project since the Confederation Bridge, and many important community projects.

Our plan, centered on people, prosperity and engagement, is succeeding for Islanders. We all have reason to be optimistic, given the resourcefulness and ingenuity of our people. However, we should never be complacent. The continuing commitment of our government is to support and invest in the people of Prince Edward Island and to work together to grow an economic and social prosperity that we all share in – now and in the future.

Investing in Islanders

Mr. Speaker, the core of our 2018-19 budget plan is focused on making investments in and for Islanders in areas that are a priority to them. Specifically, our plan includes:

Significant new supports for children and youth, with \$17 million additional budget investment in education and early learning, including \$5.7 million in classroom teaching and in class educational assistance, and \$5.6 million for more supports and spaces for early learning and childcare;

Historic support investments for post-secondary students that will result in \$3.3 million in new funding and achieve free tuition for over 1,000 Island students in our university and colleges;

A second straight year of record increased investments in healthcare, with \$32.5 million new budgetary allocation, including \$4 million for new investments in mental health supports;

Significant supports for Island seniors, including the creation of 50 new long-term care beds in this fiscal year with a plan for up to 50 more in the next fiscal year;

\$17 million investment over two years in affordable housing solutions across the Island;

Direct tax savings for all Islanders and for Island businesses; and

Cheaper electricity for all Island households.

Advantaging our Children and Youth

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important investment we can make as a society than in our young people. Supporting our youngest to get a strong start in life, our children to succeed at home and in school, and our youth to thrive is a priority shared by everyone in this province.

Over the last decade, Prince Edward Island has made significant strides in supporting early education. As a result, the Atkinson Centre recently ranked our province as being Canada's leader in early childhood education, recognizing the sustained effort that has been taken to advance better learning and development opportunities for our youngest children.

In this past year, a total of \$1.75 million was invested to create 196 more spaces for children in centres across the province. Our budget commitment this year adds an additional \$5.3 million to support up to 400 childcare spaces and increased support funding for families. This will provide more accessible and affordable childcare and early years spaces for more Island families. Our budget also commits to increasing the wage grid for early childhood educators.

A total of \$6 million additional investments will be made in frontline services in our schools. 19 additional classroom teachers will be added this year, bringing to a total of 46 new teachers within the last 12 months. 25 new EAL positions will be created to enhance in-class supports for students and teachers, bringing the total to 66 new EAL positions within the last 12 months. In addition, 32 new Education Assistant positions will be created to support children with special needs.

Funding is being committed to enhance the literacy of Island students in their early grades to ensure they have the base they need to succeed during their middle and later grades. 8 new coaches will be added to provide focused support for early literacy in response to provincial assessments.

Investments will be made to follow through on the commitment on the school psychology strategy. This includes the addition this year of two school psychologists, two assistive technology facilitators, two intervention support teachers, and funding for 50 private psych-ed services. These efforts will ensure more timely access to psychological assessment and appropriate treatment for our students.

Student Well-being teams began working in the Montague and Westisle Families of Schools in September 2017. These teams include mental health therapists, school health nurses, occupational therapists, counselling consultants and school outreach workers, who provide support to students and families struggling with mental illness, emotional and physical health challenges. The teams are becoming part of the fabric of the schools, working closely with school staff to support children and families to thrive in their communities. As of March

2018, the teams have had over 1,500 direct connections with students and family members.

Our budget follows through on the commitment to have teams in place in Colonel Gray, Morell, Souris, and Bluefield Families of Schools and École François-Buote, École Saint-Augustin, and École La-Belle-Cloche in September 2018; Three Oaks, Charlottetown Rural, Kinkora, and Kensington Families of Schools and École Évangéline, École Pierre-Chiasson and École-sur-Mer in September 2019.

Introducing the Island Advantage

For Island students completing their secondary studies, Prince Edward Island provides tremendous post-secondary study opportunities. Whether for a degree or a diploma, UPEI and our three colleges – Holland College, Collège de l'Île and Maritime Christian College – provide Island students with a quality education experience and an opportunity to stay close to family, friends and community.

As our economy thrives, we need more of our young people to stay on PEI and be equipped to be our next leaders in all fields. Budget 2018-19 puts in place the most significant supports to encourage our young people to pursue their post-secondary studies here through the Island Advantage.

Every Island student earning their first degree in PEI at UPEI and Maritime Christian College will get an additional \$3,600 under the new Island Advantage bursary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Casey: Great minister.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: This –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) getting –

Mr. MacDonald: – is in addition to the \$5,200 a student already receives during a four-year degree through the George Coles Bursary, the Island Student Award and the George Coles Graduate Bursary. With the new Island Advantage bursary, Island

students at UPEI and Maritime Christian College will now receive \$2,200 for each year of a four-year degree.

Every Island student attending Holland College and Collège de l'Île for their first diploma will get an additional \$1,200 from the new Island Advantage bursary. This is in addition to the \$3,200 to \$4,200 a student already receives through the George Coles Bursary and Island Skills Award during a two-year diploma.

For those students that meet the income requirements for the Canada Student Grant, an additional Island Advantage bursary will be available for students attending PEI publicly-funded post secondary institutions. This bursary will provide additional supports for those students whose financial needs are greater.

When combined with the other supports, over 1,000 qualifying Island students will receive sufficient bursaries to provide them with free tuition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) back to college.

Mr. Henderson: The Scottish think we're spending too much money.

Mr. MacDonald: Additionally, we will actively attract PEI graduates residing elsewhere to move home. Beginning in the 2018-19 academic year, Island students will be eligible for \$3,500 in debt reduction grants per year of study if they reside in PEI within three years post-graduation. This grant is available for students that study in PEI or attend post-secondary institutions outside the province. For years prior to 2018-19, these same graduating students will still be able to receive \$2,000 per year of study for years prior.

These investments total \$3.3million per year, the largest single investment in non-repayable assistance for post-secondary students in history on PEI.

To support our university and colleges, the province will be doubling the annual increase in funding to publicly-funded institutions to a 2% increase in operating

income. The Province will sign a multi-year funding agreement with the University of Prince Edward Island and seek to confirm a similar arrangement with Holland College and Collège de l'Île. This predictable, multi-year funding will allow the institutions to better plan for their future operations.

Funding is also being committed for mental health supports for post-secondary students. A new mental health supports fund will provide \$25 per student at UPEI, Holland College and Collège de l'Île, a \$200,000 investment each year.

Advancing the Health and Wellness of Islanders

Mr. Speaker, our Government knows that access to quality healthcare is a top priority for Islanders. Last year, we made the largest increase in health spending in a decade. This year, we are making a sizeable additional investment of \$32 million to support frontline services by our dedicated health professionals, including in primary care and mental health.

We are seeing positive results from the investments we have made through the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and are committed to doing more to improve access to these services. Building on recently-added resources, including in psychiatry, our budget commits to an additional \$4 million in new supports for mental health and addictions. These funds will allow for the support of acute mental health care needs through enhancements to staffing at the Prince County Hospital and Hillsborough Hospital, including funding a provincial forensic mental health unit. A new Mobile Mental Health Crisis Program will be established this year to support Islanders in need of acute care on a 24/7 basis.

In partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, we will provide Islanders with mental health issues with housing supports as they transition back into community life. The provincial Disability Support Program will be expanded to include mental health supports. The Province also will provide support for the creation of a new Psychology Doctorate program to be established at UPEI,

providing a much-needed supply of psychologists to PEI.

We will continue to invest in the primary care services for Islanders. This year, we will improve access to community-based care through the addition of nurse practitioners in collaborative family practices across the Island. We also will support seniors through the addition of nurse practitioners in Health PEI manors and expanding the Seniors' COACH (Caring for Older Adults in Community and at Home) program. We will enhance the drug formulary to support Islanders having greater access to medications at a reasonable cost, including adding new drugs to the formulary and enhancing the Hepatitis C program, providing an additional \$1 million in support.

Our Generic Drug Program recently reached 20,000 registered Islanders, and annually is saving Islanders in excess of \$2 million on their drug costs.

Two family physicians will be added in the central part of the province to support Islanders who are having challenges accessing primary care and community mental health care. Additional budget resources will be allocated where demands for physician services have increased, including in orthopedics, ophthalmology, internal medicine and radiology.

The Provincial Seniors Strategy will be completed this year. During this fiscal year, both the Tyne Valley and Riverview Manors are scheduled to open. Budget 2018-19 makes a further commitment to add 50 new private nursing home beds in the Fall of 2018, with up to 50 additional beds in 2019-20. Together, these new spaces will address wait times for Islanders, Island seniors and their families.

Continued supports will be provided to seniors in their homes. Home Care Services will be enhanced by a partnership with Island EMS to introduce three mobile health care initiatives to improve seniors' access to care at home.

Recognizing the prevalence of concussions in the active lifestyles of Island youth, the Department of Health and Wellness is committing \$210,000 over three years to UPEI to support a Concussion Awareness

Program, which will feature classroom education for school aged children, concussion recognition training for Island coaches and officials, and important research on return to play protocols. This investment will be matched by funding available from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

Government continues to prepare to serve as the host province for the 2023 Canada Winter Games. In this budget, funding of \$1.25 million is being directed towards completing the formal Bid Submission to the Canada Games Council, and establishing the 2023 Host Society following the expected formal awarding of the Games to Prince Edward Island later this year.

Prince Edward Island will proceed with the legalization of cannabis, and later in this Legislative sitting will introduce a suite of legislation to comply with the federal initiative. The Province intends to enter into an agreement with the federal government on a coordinated cannabis taxation framework. While we are conservatively projecting estimated sales in this first year of operations to be \$7.5 million, we do not expect any net revenue against the associated costs. We also will invest in public education, public health and public safety related to cannabis legalization. This includes a commitment of \$200,000 to provide public information and education that will support informed choice amongst Islanders.

Supporting Families

Mr. Speaker, Government recognizes that all Islanders should share in the benefits of a strong economy. That's why this budget includes significant supports to help Islanders and families with the cost of living.

Over the past three years, we have made significant investments to help those Islanders who need it the most through initiatives such as the generic drug program, reestablishing home renovation programs, and providing tax relief to all Islanders. In fact, combined federal and provincial investments in poverty-related initiatives now total approximately \$40 million each year.

The 2018-2019 budget builds on this progress to further help Islanders requiring assistance with their cost of living.

Food rates will increase by \$420,000 – the fifth consecutive year rates have raised as part of a five-year commitment.

Further, we will add to shelter allowances, increasing the budget by \$500,000 effective June 1.

Ensuring Island children are given every opportunity for a healthy and rewarding future is a fundamental responsibility of all Islanders. This budget will see the creation of 10 new frontline social worker positions to strengthen child protection in response to the *Child Protection Act* review.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Mr. MacDonald: These new investments will assist Islanders who are the most vulnerable.

We will build on our successful Community Food Security and Food Education program to help young people and their families learn more about where local food comes from and how it is produced. The goal is to promote good nutrition and healthy food choices on Canada's Food Island.

Mr. Speaker, I also am announcing an increase to the Basic Personal Amount of \$500 for the current taxation year. In addition, to the increase for the current year this budget announces a further increase of \$500 effective 1 January 2019. Mr. Speaker, the amounts for the Spouse and Equivalent-to-Spouse will also increase proportionately. This is the largest announced increase in the Basic Personal Amount in our history and results in approximately 2,200 additional Islanders no longer paying provincial income tax.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: They're almost dumfounded over there.

Mr. MacDonald: Building Strong Communities

Mr. Speaker, one of the great hallmarks of Prince Edward Island is the strength of our

communities. In this province, we all know where we are from, and take great pride in our connection to place. Together, we have a great sense of community support and a spirit of collaboration that is helping to drive us forward as a province. Whether welcoming new families into our communities, drawing together on community initiatives or working together in community organizations, we are at our best when we are seeking to grow and improve collectively.

Recognizing the tremendous role of community organization, our Government recently announced significant investments to community groups across the province. This has added capacity to groups such as Community Inclusions, the Adventure Group, the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, Pat and the Elephant and the Women's Network in their work in the community.

This past year, our Government put in place new funding supports for our municipalities so that public services could be delivered locally without tax increases. Over two years, the province will have transferred an additional \$2.8 million to local municipalities. Working with our federal partner, we continue to make significant infrastructure investments to improve our local infrastructure in highways and bridges, and water and wastewater, among other areas.

Our Regional Economic Advisory Councils have been hard at work identifying the areas of greatest consequence for economic development in their areas. To advance the ability for local and regional initiatives, our Budget plan includes \$2.6 million for the creation of the Rural Growth Initiative, with the aim to help revitalize community infrastructure, increase rural population growth, build resilient economies, and increase the strategic capacity of rural communities.

To assist in population development, we will increase investment by \$200,000 in rural settlement supports to help newcomers better integrate into smaller communities across the province.

Our Cultural Action Plan continues to support creative industries, cultural

initiatives and community-based festivals and events. This includes new project funding to organizations and groups that are contributing to the economic and social development of culture in PEI and funding for small and medium-sized community-based festivals that celebrate our unique, diverse and rich PEI culture.

En 2019, pour la première fois, l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard organisera conjointement le Congrès mondial acadien. S'appuyant sur la fierté et le dynamisme de notre patrimoine acadien, le Congrès mondial accueillera des visiteurs de partout dans le monde. Au cours des deux prochaines années, notre budget appuiera cette importante rencontre internationale de laquelle découleront des activités dans plusieurs communautés de la province.

In 2019, Prince Edward Island for the first time will co-host the World Acadian Congress. Drawing on the proud strength of our Acadian heritage, the World Congress will be an opportunity to welcome visitors from around the world. Our budget provides support over the next two years for this major international gathering which will be hosted in communities across the province.

Answering the Housing Challenge

Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear the concerns being raised in communities across Prince Edward Island about available and affordable housing. Last year, our Government convened a Housing Supply Task Force and initiated a Housing Action Plan to establish both immediate and long-term solutions that answer the housing challenge.

With this Budget plan, and working with both federal and community partners, our Government is committing to a total investment of \$17 million over two years to build and sustain affordable housing supply, provide rent supports and reduce chronic homelessness.

Affordable appropriate housing is one of the most important social infrastructures in our communities. It supports our economic development, population growth and provides the basis for Islanders to be successful. Government is committed to

ensure that affordable appropriate housing is available for Islanders most in need.

To that end, during 2017-18 Government invested \$7.1 million in housing initiatives including:

\$1.8 million to complete capital renovations at Government's 1,500 family and senior housing properties.

\$650,000 for five non-government organizations to fund existing supportive housing and to create 18 new units of specialized residential housing.

Government has implemented the Seniors Independence Initiative to provide Island seniors with over \$1.65 million in funding for practical services to support them in maintaining their independence.

Working with our community partners, Government has created a \$3 million Community Housing Fund, to be administered by the Canadian Mental Health Association. This fund will bring community partners together to work on long-term housing solutions. To be well prepared to address long term housing needs, Government has commenced a provincial housing action plan to help determine the current and future housing needs and optimize the delivery of affordable housing and related supports. This plan will be completed in June 2018.

Based on community input from our Housing Action Plan Co-development Team and the Housing Supply Task Force, Government has committed to invest over \$2 million in 2018-19 on initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing and maintain current affordable housing. Government will be working with our community partners to ensure those most in need benefit.

Government, through Health PEI, is partnering with CMHA to create 10 units of transitional housing, an investment of \$2.9 million over three years, and \$1.3 million in 2018-19.

Government has issued requests for proposals to create new housing units: \$5.2 million has been provided for 50 new seniors units in the Charlottetown and

Summerside areas and \$1 million for 10 units of transitional housing for victims of family violence and children leaving the child protection system. These units are expected to be completed by March 2019.

Through our capital budget, Government has invested \$750,000 to ensure over 1,100 seniors housing units continue to be well-maintained and upgraded.

We will continue to work with our partners to provide effective responses to housing challenges and opportunities in the province.

Growing Jobs and Business

With our economy on a tear, now is the time to take advantage and set growth for the future. With opportunities around us, we will work hard with business and employers to ensure sustained growth and job development for our province. All indicators point to Prince Edward Island being a great place to work and succeed in any sector, and our objective is to support that growth in the interest of all Islanders.

Our main effort will be to connect Islanders to job opportunities. We will increase our investment in the successful Graduate Mentorship Program and other student mentorship and employment opportunities to provide younger people an opportunity to quickly get into the workforce. We will invest and expand programs like the Harvest and Prosper program which help employment attachment for Islanders who need to overcome barriers to work.

We will continue to focus on opportunity areas, broadening sector-focused initiatives such as Team Seafood to include the Agriculture sector and renewed funding for Team Construction and Team Youth Trucking to provide the valuable supply of labour, while promoting these sectors to a new generation of workers. We will provide and promote alternative delivery of apprenticeship training to enhance skills, while providing less workforce interruption.

Our plan commits to supporting the ability of small business to grow and thrive, and to re-invest in their enterprise. We will reduce the small business tax rate by 0.5% in this fiscal year, with a commitment to reducing that further in future years. The dividend tax

credit will also be adjusted to preserve the integration between the corporate and personal income tax systems. Our Government also will introduce this year a Small Business Investment Grant that will provide companies with a 15% rebate on direct investments they make to improve their business. These investments, along with our ongoing support to small business, will strengthen the backbone of our economy.

We will, in partnership with the agriculture and food industry, continue to invest in the expansion and diversification of crop and livestock production in Prince Edward Island. Under a new, five-year federal-provincial agreement, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a total of \$164 million will be committed to programs focused on markets and trade; science; research and innovation; risk management; and value-added agriculture and agri-food processing. A new focus will be on environmental sustainability, climate change and public trust.

The fishery and aquaculture sector continues to grow and develop. Earlier this year, the Province entered into a multi-lateral agreement with the federal and regional governments to establish the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. The fund has allocated \$38 million over the next seven years to advance and strengthen the seafood industry in Prince Edward Island through increased innovation, productivity, automation and new product development. The aquaculture industry continues to expand through the development of leading-edge techniques and technologies for farmed mussels, oysters and finfish. The industry now employs more than 2,000 people and contributes \$90 million annually to the provincial economy.

The tourism industry is vital to the economic health of our province. The industry employs over 7,700 full-time-equivalent workers and is responsible for over 6% of our Provincial GDP. Prince Edward Island is well known as a tourism destination and instills a distinct pride of place in all Islanders. We have an abundance of cultural, culinary, coastal attractions, arts and activities to enjoy from tip-to-tip on our Island.

2017 was the fourth consecutive record year for tourism on the Island with all entry points and regions seeing growth year over year. Overall visitation has been growing in excess of 5% annually for the past 3 years to an estimated 1.56 million visitors in 2017. 2017 was also the first time that PEI has eclipsed the one million overnight stays posting a 6.5% growth over 2016. There is excitement and real growth in this economic sector with nearly 300 new licensed accommodation providers entering the market in 2017.

We will continue to invest in tourism development to build on these consecutive years of growth. These investments include a focus on high yield markets, including international, working with private sector to target tourism activity in the spring shoulder season, and a vacation at home initiative to encourage Islanders to get out and see all this great Island has to offer.

PEI is also showing strength in new business development, and our efforts will continue to support start-up and early growth companies. The Start Up Zone has been a successful platform for new initiatives, with 40 companies having been resident and 22 companies having graduated. LaunchPad spaces are busy and 20 new companies have been provided Ignition Funding since 2016. We will work with new, growing and established companies to support export sales initiatives to markets around the globe.

The PEI Energy and Environment Advantage

Mr. Speaker, we have much on Prince Edward Island to take pride in when it comes to clean energy. We are a world leader in wind energy and, along with our innovative approach to waste management and biomass heating, our investments and efforts have resulted in Prince Edward Island being the lowest carbon emitter and the second lowest emitter per capita among Canadian provinces.

We value the environment around us, and regularly have witnessed the direct impacts of major weather and climate-related events. Our Government is taking a coordinated approach on energy and environment, to build a future for our province that is based on the smart investment and choices we

have made in these areas. Our Energy Strategy, released last year, provides a map for cleaner and renewable energy and more efficient use among all consumers.

Later this month, we will release a Climate Change Action Plan that will similarly outline the province's path to reducing greenhouse gases (GHG) and reducing the risks and impacts from a changing climate. In partnership with the federal government, the Low Carbon Economy Fund programs will be centered on specific areas of GHG reduction.

PEI will enhance its capacity for carbon sequestration through conversion and afforestation of idle and/or less productive agricultural land. The province will support tree planting and sensitive land retirement, allocating \$160,000 to afforest 285 hectares of private and public land. Not only will these efforts sequester carbon in the soil, but they will improve local wildlife habitat.

Approximately \$402,000 will be allocated to develop and implement a research program to investigate measures to reduce emissions on farms. Areas where mitigation measures need to be explored include nutrient stewardship, conservation cropping, feeding strategies for cattle, performance tracking and cattle sorting improvements; feeding technologies, innovative techniques to improve true feed efficiency, dairy production systems, and food loss in agricultural production and post-harvest handling and storage.

A large part of our efforts will be to engage Islanders directly in reducing carbon emissions and working to make electricity cheaper. Significantly, we are in this plan committing to providing Islanders with a Clean Energy Price Incentive and will rebate the provincial portion of HST on the first block of residential electricity, as well as on lower emitting heat sources, including firewood, pellets and propane. This is a direct and provides a clear pricing signal for clean energy.

Through efficiencyPEI, we will provide Islanders with the means to make smarter use of their energy and to invest in switching to cleaner energy sources. We also will work with businesses to develop customized energy solutions that work for them. With a

shared provincial and federal investment of \$12 million in initiatives this year, we will provide the means for savings of up to \$6 million annually on energy consumption for households and businesses

We will continue to negotiate with the Federal Government on a carbon plan that makes sense for Prince Edward Island and ensures as much regional coherence as possible. This plan will be confirmed later in 2018.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I started off speaking about pride and want to end on the same note. We should take pride for everything that is happening in this province – how, on any stage, we are surpassing expectations and showing that we are the Mighty Island.

We should take pride in the way we are both growing our economy and investing back into Islanders. How we are growing opportunities in rural areas as well as in our municipalities. How we are responding to immediate needs and also creating sustainable futures for younger generations. How we are making smart energy choices that protect our environment. How we are investing while not experiencing deficits.

I am both proud and pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we are, with this Budget, providing real support and investments for Islanders:

Over \$4 million in personal income taxes savings

\$3 million each year for our post-secondary students and free tuition for over 1,000 of these students

\$18 million in supports for clean energy, smart consumption and electricity savings

\$32 million in overall health care services

\$4 million for mental health services

\$17 million for affordable housing supports

\$17 million in additional supports for early learning and education

These are great investments in the people of Prince Edward Island, that will provide benefit immediately and far into the future.

It is this kind of vision and leadership that is needed to serve the people of this province, and we look forward to working with everyone across the Island to build even greater success on our Mighty Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) no deficit.

Mr. Henderson: They're gobsmacked.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) what date?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) election (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: They didn't even get their new leader, yet.

Mr. LaVie: Election (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, hon. members, let's have some order. Order! Hon. members.

Now, responding to the budget motion will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, there we have it. It's happened. There is some good news in this budget –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: The good news is –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: – that this Liberal government has been listening to the opposition –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) years. When I was listening to those announcements I thought that it was our election platform from the 2015 election that was being read right there.

It's pretty clear that this government has been saving up these announcements for this Budget for a reason. They're very proud of

it, but these are things that they should have done three budgets away.

Mr. Myers: Oh, yeah. That's so true.

Mr. Trivers: So, they've saved up all these good news announcements. They're announcing them now. They have the audacity to present this Budget as a surplus budget –

An Hon. Member: It is.

Mr. Trivers: Incredible. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you why I think this really is a question of whether we can believe this government. This is a question of trust. This is a question of confidence in this government.

This is the fourth budget –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) balanced.

Mr. Trivers: – that this administration has presented. They presented a deficit budget in 2015-2016. They presented another deficit budget in 2016-2017 –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – we received the blue books, the actuals, and, indeed, they were deficit budgets. Now, there's a Budget from 2017-2018 that they presented that as a small surplus Budget, \$600,000. But, we won't know until October, 2018 whether or not it truly is balanced –

Mr. Myers: It's not –

Mr. Trivers: – or not.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: We have another Budget with an even larger surplus, you know, \$1.2 million. Not really huge per se, when –

Some Hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Trivers: – you look in the thing, but it's a surplus.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Once again – we won't even – we won't know whether this is actually a

surplus Budget or even close to being balanced until October, 2019.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: What we see, of course, is we see millions and millions and tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars of special warrants that this government issues. How can we believe them? How can we believe that this is actually a balanced Budget?

Just in the last six weeks alone –

Mr. Myers: No planning.

Mr. Trivers: – there were \$20 million in special warrants, in the six weeks alone.

I'm an optimistic person –

Mr. R. Brown: Working for the people.

Mr. Trivers: – but I have to be a little cynical when I hear these two budgets that they are so proud of over there. The Premier couldn't even wait for the budget day. He had to tell the media two days ago he was going to present a balanced Budget –

An Hon. Member: Yeah!

Mr. Trivers: I mean I even see people in the gallery with copies of this Budget before it has even tabled in the House. Obviously, they're patting themselves on the back –

Ms. Biggar: I don't even have one.

Mr. Trivers: I'm cynical.

I think it's very clear, if there was any doubt, at all, that there is going to be an election called prior to the legislated election date, this Budget proves it –

Mr. Myers: Need a leader first.

Mr. Trivers: I mean –

Mr. R. Brown: You need a party.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: We won't know until October, 2018 whether last year's budget was

balanced. We won't know until October, 2019 whether this Budget was balanced and I'm going to say we don't even know if we can trust this government to implement what they have in the Budget and what they promise.

This is the same government that made all kind of election promises that they reneged on last election.

Some Hon. Members: Oh! No.

Mr. Trivers: They're absolutely right. This province and our economy is on a tear, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Yes. This is great.

Guess what? I hate to burst your bubble over there. It has very little to do with anything that you've done over there on the government side. It's a private industry and the hardworking Islanders in this province are the ones that deserve all the credit for our hot economy. All that this government's done since they've come in is they've raised taxes.

Mr. MacEwen: Raised them.

Mr. Myers: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: They promised that they wouldn't bring in the HST, and then they did bring in the HST. They promised that they wouldn't raise the HST –

Mr. MacEwen: Raised it.

Mr. Trivers: – and they raised the HST.

Mr. Myers: Oh no. Not these guys.

Mr. MacEwen: Islanders balanced it.

Mr. Trivers: This government –

An Hon. Member: Taking it away.

Mr. Trivers: – is going to take in over a billion dollars in taxes and fees.

Mr. Myers: Are you serious?

Mr. Trivers: The small business tax is up. They've increased fees across the board. They've actually indexed fees to inflation, but are they indexing the basic personal tax amount exemption to inflation? No, they're not.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Trivers: They're not.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. LaVie: That's why you got fired.

Mr. Trivers: So, Mr. Speaker, our economy's on a tear. They say they're going to spend – I don't even know if they're going to come through with the promises they're making.

Mr. MacEwen: Spending (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: I'm not going to speak to a lot of the details of this Budget right now. I'm going to leave that to our budget estimates – if we even get through the Budget estimates before the writ is dropped.

Mr. Myers: They need a leader first.

Mr. Trivers: I certainly hope that –

Mr. Myers: Wait until the leadership's over.

Mr. Trivers: – this government really takes some steps to stop the obfuscation of data.

Mr. R. Brown: Obfuscation?

Mr. Trivers: For example –

Mr. Myers: I'll send you a dictionary, Brownie.

Mr. Trivers: – when we go through the budget every time we say: Can you please give us the detailed breakdown of that line item, and the Minister of Finance sits there smugly with his big, thick book in front of him and says: If you want to, you can ask and I'll tell you here on the floor.

It would be so simple to publish all of the details of the budget in an online version where you could drill down electronically.

Mr. MacEwen: Transparency.

Mr. Trivers: This is the same government that still hasn't removed the CAPTCHA from the corporate registry. Even the Orders-in-Council where we see all the special warrants, it is really difficult to navigate. If you look at the summary of the Orders-in-Council, they don't have the dollar amounts and then you can go in – you have to search for the date that the Orders-in-Council were issued, you get the individual Order-in-Council, it gives the name of a company, you have to go to the corporate registry, you have to search, enter in a CAPTCHA. Mr. Speaker,

I just hope that this government will be more open and transparent and maybe give us the actual budget details that they're so proud of. Really, the bottom line is –

Mr. R. Brown: It's great news.

Mr. Trivers: – why haven't some of these things been done earlier? Can we trust that they will even be implemented?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: And I think I'll predict that the –

Ms. Biggar: Buckle up.

Mr. Trivers: – legislated election date will probably not be adhered to.

Mr. Myers: Oh, no. He follows every rule, this guy.

Mr. Trivers: There's only one group that can answer about whether we can trust this government and whether we can have confidence in this government. That's the people of Prince Edward Island and I think we're going to find out sooner than later whether –

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Mr. Trivers: – that is the case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: So, you're adjourning debate on the –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) he doesn't know what's going on.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, April 10th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, April 10th, at 2:00 p.m.