

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to, everyone, here in the Chamber and in the gallery and those viewing by television or Internet.

First, I want to welcome Gerard Greenan –

Ms. Casey: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – served two terms in this Legislature and set a good example for the rest of us, and I'll say he's setting a new example in keeping trim. Great to see you here, Gerard.

We've got various people, who are with us today for the discussion on a motion on our hours. Welcome Jane Ledwell from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Dawn Wilson, women in government; Representatives of the UPEI Student Union; William McGuigan, president Emma Drake, and Taya Nabuurs.

William ran into his aunt Maude Morrison and brought her in, too. We're all recruiting. Great work. Certainly, people, who are with us, today, who've been here before and are regulars in the Chamber.

I see Irish Mythen is with us.

Ms. Casey: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: It's great to see you, Irish, and welcome.

We've spoken yesterday, and it's an opportunity to mention, again, with you being with us, Irish, that this is the week of the East Coast Music Awards and what that signals, in terms of the strength of our artists and all of the people who support them as Prince Edward Island's presence on the world musical stage. It's a great thing to improve all of us and to make us proud and to make sure people know about our great province.

Tomorrow will be the Provincial Heritage Fair for students from 26 Prince Edward Island schools, who will presenting their projects on Prince Edward Island and Canadian heritage, history and culture. That will be just next door at the Confederation Centre of the Arts. And an opportunity for all Islanders to drop in and it's always a great opportunity to learn from the substance of what the students are presenting, as well as their enthusiasm, and the pride that they get out of it.

Two other matters to say as we've said on earlier occasions in this Chamber, how proud we are of the season of the Charlottetown Islanders, who went seven games and came out on the three-side of a four-three split. It's been a great season for them, for their head coach, Jim Hulton and the entire organization and the players and we salute that.

Finally, this is the day when our first cruise ship is in the harbour here in Charlottetown. I met a women from San Antonio, Texas, with a very fine fur coat. She's making the best of her visit to Prince Edward Island and she's gone home with a selfie with the Premier.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Whoever that is.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House today, as well, and greet those that may be watching on Eastlink or tuning in over the Internet.

Just in interest of time, I won't repeat all the recognitions of the great individuals that have joined us here in the gallery today, as the Premier has already done so.

I would like to say hello and welcome to Mr. Darren Creamer, who is here with us today representing the Kiwanis Clubs of PEI.

2018 is a very important year for conferences here on PEI. I would like to send out huge greetings to the delegates for

the 2018 National Conference for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada.

This conference has staff, managers, volunteers, program directors, board members from Boys and Girls Clubs from one end of this great nation to the other, and I welcome them and I wish them best in all their deliberations.

Today is also World Maternal Mental Health Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness around peri and postpartum supports for mothers. One in four women will experience a change in their mental health during the peri-natal and post-natal period as a result of their pregnancy.

We need to ensure as a province we are offering adequate and accessible supports for women during these times. I'd certainly like to acknowledge the great work of Lisa Carmody-Doiron and her leadership in creating the only peer support group for mothers on PEI called Moms in Mind who provides weekly meetings for mothers right here in Charlottetown.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't just send out my positive best wishes and thoughts to our neighbors in New Brunswick, especially around the Fredericton area, that are experiencing severe flooding conditions. I certainly hope that the river subsides in the very near future and that the damage is as limited as it can be.

I'd also like to extend my most sincere condolences to the Brown family in Ontario. There's a Member of Parliament that just unexpectedly passed away this morning on Parliament Hill; a Member of Parliament, Gord Brown. Apparently he suffered a severe, fatal heart attack this morning and I send out my condolences to his wife and his children.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Again, in the interest of time, I won't repeat all of the welcomes that the Premier and the hon. Leader of the Opposition have done

except to mention two constituents from District 17: That would be Lorne Yeo, a regular attender here and my wife Ann, who is sitting with us this afternoon.

It was seven years ago today that the first Green Party member ever in Canada got elected and that was, of course, Elizabeth May. I sent her a note this morning, got a lovely little note back and it was a huge day for politics in Canada and of course the party I represent, so I'd like to send out my congratulations to Elizabeth for her seven years of dedicated work.

Also, speaking of federal politics, Gord Brown was the member for Leeds-Grenville, a riding in Eastern Ontario in which I used to live. Actually, I ran against Gord at least once at a federal level in that district. I remember him as a thoroughly decent man and I was very shocked and saddened to read today of his sudden death and I'd like to pass on my personal condolences to his wife Claudine and his two sons, Chance and Tristan.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, will be quick. I'd like to welcome everybody here today and a special welcome to our regulars, Lorne and Eddie and I'd like to welcome Gerard Greenan – a good friend and a former colleague. Welcome, Gerard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if I'll be quick, but with your indulgence, I'd like to recognize a lot of the women's advocacy groups that are with us today in support of an upcoming motion and that's Dawn Wilson, Taya Nabuurs, and Judy Herlihy of the Coalition for Women in Government; Jane Ledwell with the advisory council; Amy Clerk, women's network; Will McGuigan, President UPEI Student Union; and Emma Drake, the UPEI

Vice President of the Student Union; and everyone else – I know there's other individuals that have come here today in support of this motion and I want to thank them for all their consultation in helping me prepare for the motion today.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise and welcome everyone into our public gallery today. It's great to see such a great crowd. I'd like to begin with my former office-mate, Gerard Greenan, who's in the gallery today – it's wonderful to have him back. He often sends me words of wisdom from Summerside to help me do my work, so thank you, Gerard. It's good to see you in here today.

I'd also like to make quick reference to three other visitors that are in the gallery today, sitting in the front row I have: Tessa Roche, Robyn Connors and Kyle Robertson and I'll recognize them a little further a little bit later this morning.

To those here from the UPEI Student Union, UPEI's in my riding. It's always a great place to go and visit, so it's good to see you all in the room today.

As well, the Premier alluded to this earlier, but as minister of sport, I want to send out my very best regards to the members of the team, the coaching staff, all staff of the Charlottetown Islanders – who, as Islanders, we are so proud of how far they went this year. We were all hoping and wishing they could go all the way, but to those young gentlemen, we want to say 'congratulations'.

As Islanders, we're proud of you and you should be all very proud of yourselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see such a crowd in the gallery today; a number of people from the district.

I'd like to also welcome Irish – the only thing that would make this day better is if she would break in song for us.

I would not be able to stand up without saying the name Maude Morrison because it's wonderful to see her here today. It's important that we get that in Hansard. She's a great person of the community, a great worker at the Dr. John Gillis Memorial Lodge. She brightens the day of every resident there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

I would also like to welcome everybody visiting us in the gallery today. I'm really impressed with the number of young women who are in the gallery, especially the young, young women who are here to listen to the proceedings. Maybe someday we'll see them on this side of the rail.

I, too, would like to welcome Irish Mythen, one of the most wonderful ambassadors for our province, and I know the former minister of economic development and tourism has given her a new flag which she proudly displays all over the world. We'd like to thank him for that.

The reason I'm on my feet today is to offer congratulations, and I know all members of this House will join me in congratulating our Page Matteo LeClair who is with us today. He has just been accepted at the University of Ottawa, but more importantly he is going to be a Page in the House of Commons in the upcoming fall sitting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Casey: Congratulations, Mateo.

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome Gerard Greenan. We had a nice announcement there yesterday and Gerard sat in this seat at a time about a decade ago when things weren't quite as rosy, and started the work to help to point us in the right direction.

I'd also like to welcome Irish. The hon. member kind of stole the words out of my mouth, but we're very lucky to have performers of the caliber of Irish here on Prince Edward Island so that we can collaborate and everybody can raise the collective boats.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You were going to say MLA for District 22, weren't you? Because Gerard Greenan used to have this seat and I just want to acknowledge him today because if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here today. He has been a great mentor to me; on his retirement offered this seat up and he was very instrumental in helping me get elected, so I want to thank him and welcome him here today.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone in the gallery. You can almost feel the music in the air with Irish and people – and I'm a big fan of music.

I wanted to mention William MacGuigan, who I knew first, before he was president of the student union, as a fiddler. We've had some jams before, so you never know what might happen later on around here.

I also wanted to wish everyone a Happy World Maternal Mental Health Day and recognize all those moms out there that are experiencing mental health illness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Primrose Guitars

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

Today I would like to recognize a business that is doing something very unique on Prince Edward Island. Primrose Guitars is located in St. Georges, PEI, and offers a number of different services, including custom instrument design and construction, quality repairs and music courses.

The company was founded by Mitch MacDonald, who was originally from Montague but moved off-Island to follow his passion for music. He had a smaller business doing similar things in Dartmouth before deciding to return home to rural Prince Edward Island.

We often speak in this House about the impact of rural businesses to our economy, and let me tell you firsthand that Primrose Guitars is certainly making a special impact to both our economy and our culture.

They build some of the most beautiful handcrafted guitars and have been getting global recognition for their work. I am so proud of what they have accomplished since coming to PEI and am certain that they will continue to grow and expand in the years to come.

It has become a bit of a trend for businesses from the mainland to return to PEI because they see the infinite potential in our markets here on the Island. We must celebrate Islanders who come home and grow our economy.

I was very pleased to have had a tour of the small Island enterprise and I want to wish the best of luck to Primrose Guitars as they prove that you can be, in fact, successful while doing business here on rural Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

First Responders

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many members of this Legislature have spoken about the Humboldt Broncos and now, we, in the entire country, have witnessed yet another tragedy that happened in the area of Yonge Street and Sheppard Avenue in Toronto, an area that I used to live in.

We have expressed our condolences for the sadness felt by the families, extended families and the communities involved. Today, I want to shine a light on the work of the first responders who went to those tragic scenes and worked their way through all and both of these horrific scenes, including dealing with the victims, the injured, the transportation to medical facilities, the family members involved and other people attending the scene, such as accident investigators and including, accident reconstruction specialists.

As a former peace officer, first responder, I have attended accidents where there have been multiple fatalities. My admiration and sympathy goes out to the peace officers, the paramedics, the fire services and certainly all those medical service providers at each of those hospitals, facilities, that came into action. I know firsthand how hard and difficult it is as a peace officer to go to a family and advise them of the passing of a loved one.

My heart goes out to all of those first responders. Again, I want to recognize and thank them for the compassion they bring to their work, the expertise and professionalism that they bring to this type of sensitive situations.

I also want to recognize those citizens who suddenly found themselves in the situation of being a first responder. They, like the professional responders, now go home at the end of the day and relive the scene, their experience with the victims and the injured. We need to thank them for their courage to jump into civic duty and act.

I hope all Members of this Legislature can join me in thanking each and every first responder for all that they do, and continue to do, on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to allow me to extend my gratitude to these compassionate workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Kids Help Phone

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

It's certainly an honour for me to rise today and talk about an event that's going to be taking place this weekend. As we all know here on PEI, weekends are very active, very busy from one end of the Island to the other with many events. This particular event I want to draw particular attention to and ask Islanders to come out and support, wherever and however they may.

The Kids Help Phone is always open providing non-judgmental support and information about any problem or need. Kids Help Phone empowers young people from towns and cities all across this country to talk about a wide variety of issues without fear or judgment.

Kids Help Phone has the expertise in delivering 24/7 essential services to be able to offer innovative solutions, ensuring young people have access to the information and support they need. They want parents, educators, care givers and adults to be able to guide our young people in their lives to information and services that they can trust.

Kids Help Phone is a nationally recognized leader in youth mental health and wellbeing. Supporting young people has always been their focus and mandate.

The Kids Help Phone is a charitable organization. Thanks to the generosity of their donors they are always open when young people need them. Their services are open 24/7.

This will be the second year that the Kiwanis Club of Charlottetown will be the primary local sponsor for the Walk So Kids Can Talk, presented by BMO. They would like to invite all Islanders to come and support this vital service by attending this

year's walk on Sunday, May 6th, at Victoria Park at 12:00 p.m. There will also be a walk in Mill River at 1:00 p.m.

I hope everyone can make it and support this very very worthy cause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

Mr. Palmer: Yesterday, the Third Party House Leader had questions about the innovation – about Innovation PEI's Web Presence Program.

The success of our Island businesses have enabled our government to make investments like \$1.2 million in child care subsidies. We are proud to support PEI businesses. In the 2017-2018, 104 applications came into the Web Presence Program; 95 of those projects were approved at a value of \$45,000 and of the declines that we received six of those were from out of province. It's clear to see that other businesses would love to be here in PEI and we welcome them to come here if they want.

An internal program review was last completed in March, 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We've all heard, countless times over and over again how long some of our seniors are waiting for a long-term care bed. Meanwhile, they're occupying a bed in a primary care facility.

Timeline vacancy for nursing home beds

My first question today is to the minister health. I wonder if the minister can advise us: When a nursing home bed becomes vacant in a public facility, how long does it

take before that bed is made available to another patient coming in?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would assume that there would be typical protocols for transitions like that. I don't have the exact days that that would be part of, but I can check into that and bring that back.

My assumption would be that the turnaround time would be quite reasonable, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In fact, it takes an average of 11 days to fill a vacant bed in a public long-term care facility.

Bed vacancy timeline in private facilities

Question to the minister of health: How long does it take, on average, to fill a nursing home bed vacancy in a private facility?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These private homes provide a very valuable service to seniors needing long-term care. These homes are well staffed. They are well adapted to meet the needs of our senior population. I would say, as well as for the private ones, the turnaround time would be very speedy, as well, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

In fact, it takes an average of four days for a private nursing home vacancy to have that bed filled by a senior that has been waiting, sometimes months, up to a year for that bed.

Question to the minister of health: Why does it take nearly three times as long to fill a vacant nursing home bed in government facilities as compared to a private facility?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, as a result of the budget that we're bringing on par to the floor, this government, on this side of the House, is very proud that we are opening up 50 new long-term care beds on Prince Edward Island in the very near future.

As soon as we can get through our budget pieces, we will be putting out RFPs. I expect that those RFPs will be answered very quickly and we will see more seniors transferring from institutions or hospitals into these long-term care beds all across Prince Edward Island very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Process for patients from hospital to long-term care

We're talking about, on average, of 11 days for a government facility, and we're talking four days, on average, for a private facility. I wonder if the minister feels that this is managing the inventory of our long-term care beds in an efficient manner and if he agrees with me that I don't think it is, what kind of measures will he put in place to ensure that we can transfer seniors in a more expedite-able process from primary referral hospitals to long-term care beds.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, when seniors are in hospitals or other areas looking to go to long-term care beds, in the past we've offered them choices of where they would like to go; whether it's a public facility, whether it's a private facility.

As we move forward with 50 new beds this year, an additional 50 next year, those opportunities will be greater for seniors of Prince Edward Island to choose and select where they'd like to go.

We'll continue to work on that. We will continue to speed processes up where they need to be speeded up and we will work so that seniors' health care needs on Prince Edward Island are being met to our best ability, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I applaud the government's decision to add 50 new beds, this year and another 50 next year. As a matter of fact, that's what I've been calling for now for the last seven years. This government had a perfect opportunity with the construction of the two new manors. One of which was announced eight long years ago in Montague, and the other one in Tyne Valley.

But, sadly, these facilities are being built with the same amount of beds they had before, whereas government could have been much more efficient and increase the number of beds available in those long-term care facilities.

Inefficiency in long-term care beds

My question again to the minister: We have, what appears to be a major inefficiency, what will you do to correct that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the addition of these new long-term care beds will be seen very favourably for seniors across Prince Edward Island.

We also offer a very valuable home care service for seniors. We recently enhanced that with our mobile integrated health service where advanced paramedics will be going into homes to assist with seniors' needs; to help transition from hospital to home. Home is often the environment where

our seniors will progress and get healthier faster. A lot of them want to be home. A lot of the families want them home.

We want to support that. We continue to work on home care advancements; long-term care bed advancements and community care advancements so that all Islanders are being met to the best ability of our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our nurses and our licenced practical nurses, they're the backbone of our health care system and they provide countless services to all patients on this Island.

Advertising of nurse and LPN vacancies

Question to the minister of health: Currently, how many nursing and LPN vacancies are you advertising in the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had an opportunity today to attend the AGM for the Nurses Union of Prince Edward Island.

Obviously, they're a dedicated group of individuals, very passionate about the work they do. Obviously, we are always out recruiting new nurses, whether it be RNs, BNs, LPNs, nurse practitioners. They are all part of the same group.

They do very wonderful work on PEI and we want to support that. When we come to graduating new nurses, I had the opportunity to go out to UPEI last week and talk to them. We're trying to recruit every available nurse to fill positions on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll provide the answer. As of today, government is advertising 68 nursing and LPN positions. Vacancies are found across the Island, Alberton to Souris.

As you well know they're found in emergency departments, long-term care facilities, obstetrics, dialysis.

Quality of health care and nurse vacancies

Question to the minister of health: What impact is 68 RN vacancies having on providing quality health care for the people of this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, vacancies are being looked at and addressed all the time.

Certainly, when we talk to young, graduating nurses, they're looking for the same work-life balance as physicians do today so we have got to address those needs. But, obviously some are also looking for fulltime positions.

We are looking at those vacancies to see if any of them are part-time or casual pieces that we can combine together to make some fulltime spots for these RNs that are looking to get out and carve out their professional careers right here on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can speak, as a former administrator, and you could ask any administrator across this province. It means more double shifts. It means denying vacation to those nurses and LPNs, and denying educational opportunities and more burnout.

Nurse vacancy and positions

Minister: How many of your 68 nursing and LPN vacancies are for fulltime positions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have the exact number of the vacancies but I know it is being looked at. It is being addressed, if any of those should be combined. Obviously, a graduating class of approximately 80 nurses will be walking across the stage at UPEI this year and we are out looking to try to keep all of those nurses right here on Prince Edward Island to fill these very vacancies that we have in front of us today, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It'd be great to retain all of those nurses here in the province, we all know that, but most of the vacancies that we're offering here are not full-time positions and your government's nursing strategy flags excessive part-time and casual employment as deflating staff morale. Your own government strategy urged that you improve the current part-time/full-time ratio to 50/50.

Careers for nurses on PEI

Question to the minister: How is part-time and casual work going to encourage young nurses and LPNs to pursue health care careers here on the Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I said, we're trying to identify what is the best go-forward. As speaking with some of these young graduate nurses – nursing students – they're looking to establish these work-life balances. They're getting out – they're early on in the career, they feel they have a lot of years left, and they'd like to reach that balance, but there are others that want to work full-time. They want to carve out their professional life on PEI, they want to raise families here on PEI, and we want to give them all the opportunities to do that as well.

So we're looking at where best can we provide these full-time positions and where best can you provide part-time positions for the other that would like those, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Well those graduates, I'm sure, want a work-life balance, but more importantly they want a full-time job and they want to be able to be assured of that.

The UPEI School of Nursing produces about 60 graduates in a year and, of course, not all of them stay here on the Island, yet we have fewer nursing graduates than available nursing positions – now, that's just in government. What about private sector vacancies that would be on top of that?

Discussions with UPEI School of Nursing

Question to the minister: What discussions have you had with UPEI School of Nursing about this shortage?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I was very pleased to actually go out the other day and talk to the third year students and some of the others as well and one of the things that I found out was they're not all from Prince Edward Island, obviously, nurses that attend UPEI. It is a top-notch learning facility – the University of Prince Edward Island – people come from all around the Maritimes and all over Canada to get their degrees there.

Some of these young nurses are planning on heading back to their home provinces, but we do our best to encourage even those students that live in other areas of our wonderful country to stay here in PEI. Once they're here for four years, they kind of get a taste for PEI and some of them indicated that they would be staying on Prince Edward Island – at least in the short-term because they've developed relationships and friendships here and they plan on staying here and trying to begin their careers here at the very least. Once they do that, Mr.

Speaker, we'll try our best to retain them here for the future time.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great that we're trying to retain all of those nurses and even if we retained every one of them, we still wouldn't have enough to meet the shortage that we need here right. We have to look at the age of the workforce and we talk about workplace balance. What's the big picture going forward to keep our heads above water when it comes to health care?

Even if we increased the enrollment by 20 students at the UPEI School of Nursing today, it would be four years before we start to reap the benefits.

Question to the minister: Will you commit today to working with the UPEI School of Nursing to increase the number of registered nurses being trained so that we start to reverse this RN shortage now instead of waiting until it's too late?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My time this morning with the nurses union educated me a lot. I believe the number indicated today was there are about 1,600 registered nurses working on various places across Prince Edward Island. The average age of those nurses is 43 years of age, so it's still relatively young. We're in pretty good shape here on PEI as far as the age of our RNs here on the Island, but that does not mean that we stop working.

We will be talking with UPEI; we'll be talking to every student at UPEI this year and in subsequent years to ensure that we do our absolute best to indicate to these RN students: There's work here; there's a good life here; and we hope they remain here in order to fill these positions.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've had a number of debates here in the Legislature so far this spring over the Pan-Canadian framework for pharmacare and its effect on our local pharmacies here. We've heard the minister talk about big pharmacies and affecting their bottom line. They should be able to cover it, but we're hearing from a lot of small, small pharmacies out there; it's affecting these pharmacies' very, very small profit margins.

Effects on small pharmacies on PEI

Can the minister tell us today what he is doing to balance out the hit to our local pharmacies here on PEI?

Mr. Trivers: Great question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're all aware of these small pharmacies in small communities all across Prince Edward Island that provide that valuable service to that community, where if a child is sick or somebody has an injury where they go in, they talk to the pharmacist, probably did not have to go to an ER or a walk in clinic to get dealt with – this is a very valuable service and we like to strengthen those relationships with the pharmacists by looking at their scope of practice, looking at other areas where they may be able to develop that a little bit further.

A very short number of years ago, we've indicated to pharmacies that we'd like them to take over, or be a big part of the immunization program and we have over doubled the amount of immunizations on Prince Edward Island because of this program so that people are not getting sick, not going to hospital, and it's all because of the pharmacists that are giving the dosage.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister would agree that this is the most successful front line health care provider in the province. They're in every little community. There are 48 pharmacies across PEI.

I'll give you an example: We had a big debate here the other day about the Montague ER and it was talked that 58% of people that present at the ER in Montague are non-emergency. We all talked about walk-in clinics and nurse practitioners, but we were missing the most obvious example. There are four pharmacies in Montague. If the scope of practice was expanded for those pharmacists on PEI, those four pharmacies could help alleviate that 50% of people that are presenting non-emergency.

Scope of practice for pharmacists

Is the minister committing to look at the scope of practice immediately?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

When Islanders present themselves to ERs, they're there because they feel that is the place where they need to be, whether it's for a sick child that they're really not certain about, the proper care, or their elderly parent that needs this service.

So that doesn't mean when people walk through our emergency room doors that they're pushed aside as maybe the hon. member was thinking of, but what we are trying to do with the pharmacists is to develop and talk about what their scope of practice could be, what it should be, how do we get there, so that their work that they do in the communities provides that absolute best health care service for Islanders wherever they are.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've been hearing about this expansion of scope of practice forever. It took about five years just to get pharmacists to give flu shots and we've seen the uptake in that. We've seen the convenience of it. I'll give you another example: Public Health on PEI, they do amazing, amazing things, but for example, when Public Health comes to Morell, it comes – they might say: Okay, on October 12th, we're coming to the Morell

fire hall from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Guess what? That doesn't work quite well with my family – it doesn't work with many families in PEI. Pharmacists, you can walk right up and do it. Think of how many other procedures or services that the pharmacist could provide that would be much more efficient than this.

Minister: What is the holdup? What is the elephant in the room? Is it the doctors, is it the nurse practitioners? What's going on? Why can't we get this scope of practice nailed on? Why do we just keep saying: We're going to look at it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. LaVie: That's the last minister (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously things of this nature, they are a negotiation. You sit down at a table, you talk about what you're doing today, you talk about what you see in the future and what services should be routed to whom where.

We want Islanders seen by the appropriate people, at the appropriate place, at the appropriate time. We have a lot of methods for that. The hon. Leader of the Opposition stood just yesterday, I believe, and talked about calling 811, getting great service there. 811 plus the services of pharmacists provide great services all across Prince Edward Island. We are looking to improve the services where we can. It's about taking the opportunity to sit down, to look at the short-term, medium-term, long-term care needs and to find solutions, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm hearing is that when the pharmacists and these people involved in negotiations come to the table with representatives from government, it always comes back to: We have to get that pharmacare line down in our budget. Why don't we start using them as a solution? Why don't we be innovative? We've got 150,000 people here, 48 pharmacies across

PEI. Imagine if the pharmacists' scope of practice could include almost what you'd get at walk-in clinics. They can do it. They're taught to prescribe. Their whole education is surrounded around that. The next time they come to the table, are we going to just talk about it? Or, what is the hold up?

Can you tell me why we can't just say: Let's do it? What's the push back?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't believe there's been push back. There have always been negotiations done with pharmacies, with the society of pharmacists, that it's a regular occurrence. This is nothing new. This year, with the change in the Pan-Canadian framework, that has put a little bit of pressures on the pharmacists to look at doing business differently.

We're willing to sit down and talk about that. I've had some conversations with pharmacists individually I've had some conversations with their governing body. I've indicated that we will continue this, and I actually sent a letter to that recently. As soon as time permits, we will sit down and have those discussions, and hopefully good outcomes will be the answer, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A pharmacist can prescribe medication for a cold sore, but yet the government won't reimburse them for that. They have to charge privately, where you go to your doctor and they are reimbursed. If pharmacists can do that at a much more efficient and smaller cost, this is another example.

I'm quite concerned about our rural pharmacies. This is a difference in PEI. This isn't a big box-store pharmacy; they are in all the small communities. The walk-in clinic – we had this conversation – the walk-in clinic in Morell is open half a day a week, but yet the pharmacist is there every day. That's a huge place in our health care

system. It's the front line service in our community, and many other communities across PEI.

I worry about their bottom line, and I worry that the first place that is going to be cut is in these rural communities.

Expanding scope of practice for pharmacists

Can you commit today to expanding the scope of service so that these pharmacies can stay open in our small communities?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've stated in here that I'm willing to sit down and talk to pharmacists. I understand their scope of practice – maybe we'll be able to do something there. But, what keeps me up at night is the –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – want that Islanders are being provided with the lowest cost drugs, with the best drug programs, so that they are able to go out and purchase drugs that they can afford, at affordable rates, so that their health –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – is improved. It keeps them out of hospitals, and that's also for our seniors.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) ER closed half the time.

Mr. Mitchell: It's so important that the drug programs that we provide are affordable –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Kevin Murphy (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – for our Islanders that need to access drug use in Prince Edward Island, and pharmacists are a part of that and we continue to work together on all means for Islanders' health, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've asked several questions about economic development business support programs, but instead of getting answers I get told about the Micro-Loan Program. So, today I'm going to ask about that program.

The Finance PEI program provides loans of up to \$15,000 on a five-year term at prime plus 4.5%. The funds from this program are for working capital and financing for new and expanding businesses on presentation of a completed application including a business plan, just like a bank.

Priorities and objectives of Micro-Loan Program

A question for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: What are the priorities and objectives of this program, and is it achieving those objectives to date?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Micro-Loan Program is doing exactly what we want it to do. We're providing loans to small businesses –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) our idea.

Mr. Palmer: – that continue to grow and we're happy that they continue to employ Islanders. They're bringing new money into the province, and they're giving us an opportunity to reinvest back into the community.

We've been able to add, I think, 10 new –

Mr. Trivers: Too bad you can't get interest rates at IIDI.

Mr. Palmer: – front line social worker positions because of the success of small business and business right across PEI.

We know they're the engine of our economy, and we're very proud to continue to support businesses, both large and small.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This fund was launched in the spring of 2016 with a cap of \$1 million per year and plans to review it each year to determine if that cap was sufficient, and that small business needs are being met.

Distributed funds and review of Micro-Loan Program

A question for the minister: How much of the \$1 million per year was given out in each of the first two years of the program, and what did the reviews of that cap tell you?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to monitor all of our programs and make sure that they are addressing the needs of small business. We want to make sure that those programs are being utilized; that's what they're for, is to create jobs, to give Islanders an opportunity to help them move along, that they can compete in the national stage and so that they can compete here locally.

We want them to bring new money into the province so that we can continue to support all the things that we know are so important here in PEI from a social aspect, from an economic aspect, and we're very proud to continue to support businesses, both large and small, here in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Consultation with business community

Without clear objectives, it may be quite difficult to do those reviews so I do hope that when the minister gets them done, if they are done, then he can table them. Perhaps, if they haven't been done yet, you could consult with the business community to find out whether they feel this program actually meets their needs.

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

Mr. Palmer: That is a wonderful idea and that's what we do. We have people that are development officers that go out and speak to businesses to make sure that we're meeting the needs of business because we want to make sure that businesses have the opportunity to succeed.

Our programs are for business so they can compete, so they can continue to grow, and we want to make sure that they take every opportunity to be involved in all of those programs that we do have available to them. If they're not working, we're very eager to get them changed and we will review those on a constant basis as we've done, as I talked about in the Web Presence Program that we had just reviewed in March 2017.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Minister, the federal government, through Transport Canada, has notified the provinces and the transport industry that they plan to make electronic logging devices a mandatory provision by 2020 for drivers of commercial vehicles that are currently required to complete and maintain a daily log.

Impacts of electronic logging devices on transport industry

Minister: What impact will this have on our Prince Edward Island transport industry?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, member, for the question.

The proposed amendments do not change current regulations. Electronic recording devices have been in use for several years. In fact, most of the PEI industry have invested in this technology before it's even become mandatory because it makes record

keeping easier and there's high satisfaction among the industry with it.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my district I have a transport company, Morley Annear Transport, and I'm wondering, with that company as well as other larger transport carriers, we understand that they are already using e-logging devices and shouldn't be affected too greatly by this change.

Effects on smaller transport companies

My question, minister, is: What about the smaller transport companies that are currently exempted from keeping daily log books and how that will impact them?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Commercial vehicles are exempt, as I noted earlier. The current exemption does require the motor carrier to keep a record at the main office for all employed commercial activities.

I have written a letter, though, to the federal minister of transportation seeking clarification from Transport Canada regarding this definition, with respect to any requirement for electronic logging devices for when a vehicle leaves the province, but is still within 160 kilometres of their home base.

Thank you.

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

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

My question is for the Minister of Finance, and this is something that we're going to be discussing in this House later on. It's being discussed right across the province at the present time. That is the legalization of marijuana. The federal government is going

towards that direction. They noted earlier that it may be out by July. But, we're going to have to face that discussion here. I'm sure it'll be a very open discussion.

Legalization of marijuana in Canada

I was wondering if the minister could tell me at what time we feel this may be in place and legalized in Canada this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The federal initiative to legalize recreational cannabis is very public and a major lens on it.

What we're seeing happening right now in the senate, we know it's going to be delayed from the original plan, but there should be — there's supposedly will be a vote on this in June. We should know more at that time.

My responsibility to the people of PEI, is to be prepared for when this does happen. I think we're moving in the right direction to ensure that we have all of our i's dotted and t's crossed, so we're ready for the legalization of cannabis.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, first supplementary.

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

Legalization versus decriminalization

Again, I know there's going to be a lot of questions on it. The one that keeps coming up to me is: Does legalization means decriminalization and why are we going to legalization or is decriminalization involved in that? Just before we get into the big debate, I wonder if you can clarify for me, and for the other that talked to me about it, are we decriminalizing, are we just legalizing or what the difference may be there?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is correct. We are legalizing it. We are not decriminalizing. We are trying to take the cannabis out of the hands of organized crime. We are trying to set-up an infrastructure across the nation in relevance to having a safe product.

I just read recently the Ontario police chiefs have a program, Know your Source. They're getting behind it. That's exactly why we're setting it up. I think it's important to know that we want to prevent Canadians from have a criminal record with a small possession of cannabis, and tying up the courts and so on and so forth.

There are several different issues relevant to why it's not decriminalized and why we're legalizing it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's no secret that our province has, really, a massive debt. In fact, we're paying \$348,000 a day just in interest.

Last July, at Public Accounts I asked the Auditor General, who, exactly are we paying all this interest to?

To my great surprise and maybe I shouldn't have been surprised. The response was: The province does not have the information on who holds the debentures. There are six or seven syndicates that issue the debentures, but the actual holders are confidential and are constantly changing.

Investments to syndicates and investors

A question to the Minister of Finance: Minister, who are these secret syndicates and investors that Island taxpayers pay hundreds of millions of dollars to each year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our province's investments are paying dividends, right now, for what we're seeing in the economy.

We just released our most recent Budget 2018. I can tell you we're hearing all kinds of good reports based on the knowledge of that budget.

I will mention today, it's very interesting and I know sometimes – what it's allowing us to do is reinvest in health care, education, social services.

I will say, today, through Stats Can that just came out today, we are actually a province of 152,000. Our GDP has increased by 3.2%. We're behind Alberta and we're behind BC –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: One good day of fishing

Mr. MacDonald: – so a small province –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) mighty. On a tear.

Mr. MacDonald: – it's unbelievable.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not as concerned about the economy as these people are. I am concerned about the reinvestments we are making in Prince Edward Island because the economy is so good.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this province owes billions of dollars that are financed through debentures.

Interest on the debt is the third largest line item in the budget. It think it's completely unacceptable that the Minister of Finance does not know who we are paying interest to.

Who knows what kind of entities PEI taxpayers are contributing to around the world?

Taxpayers' dollars paying off province's debt and interest

A question to the Minister of Finance:

Minister, will you commit to finding out and sharing publicly who Island taxpayers are sending money to?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our net debt to GDP is actually declining. We are in good shape. We're continuing to reinvest in all the important issues that we hear from Islanders on a daily basis. Whether that be mental illness, whether that be infrastructure, whether that be education. We're going to reinvest.

If that is available to me and that's legally allowed, I will bring that back and table it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a key part of the finance minister's portfolio, is servicing our debt and understanding where this interest is going to, who holds it. These debentures are \$2 billion worth of debentures.

In other provinces like British Columbia and Nova Scotia, they make this information publicly available on their websites. It's really about time that this government does the same.

Publicly sharing information on debt payments

Minister: You should be able to find out this information, and will you commit to publicly sharing this information with Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I just indicated that in his last question and my response that I would if I'm legally able to.

But, what I will say, the last time the Premier went to Toronto and visited with the big banks, who we, at times, borrow money from, the last thing before he walked out the

door, they said to him was: When are you coming back to borrow money?

Because, they know, that our province –

Mr. Myers: He's in his back pocket that's why. He's in their –

Mr. MacDonald: – is in good –

Mr. Myers: – back pocket. The big bank Premier –

Mr. MacDonald: – fiscal responsibility. We're prudent –

Mr. Myers: The big bank Premier.

Mr. MacDonald: – gatekeepers of our finances. We're growing the –

Mr. Myers: That's where he's got his own.

Mr. MacDonald: – economy as fast as we can. We are growing the population as fast as we can. We're seeing the benefits of that.

Our 2018 Budget is historic. We'll continue to charge forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, in the last 10 years, this Liberal government has more than doubled the debt of PEI by adding \$1.2 billion to the debt of our province.

At the same time, this government has increased taxes and fees so that government revenue has gone from \$771 million to \$1.1 billion; a 43% increase.

Mr. Myers: We're on a tear.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) though.

Mr. Trivers: Despite their erroneous claims, this government has never balanced the books of this province –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh yes.

Mr. Trivers: – their budget estimates aren't worth the paper they're printed on. The proof is in the actual over-budget spending of this tax-and-spend Liberal government.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Yearly spending has shot up \$775 million since this Liberal government took office –

Ms. Biggar: We're on a tear. We're on a tear.

Plans to pay off PEI debt

Mr. Trivers: Minister, question for the Minister of Finance: What are your plans to pay off the debt?

Mr. LaVie: No plan.

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Mr. Fox: The budget will balance itself.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, our net debt to GDP is declining –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) chasing (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – net debt per capita –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – is declining –

Mr. Myers: You're going –

Mr. MacDonald: – I'm not sure where –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Premier of Bay Street.

Mr. MacDonald: – the hon. member is coming from.

If you look at the value of our net debt to per person in Atlantic Canada, we're the lowest in Atlantic Canada.

In fact, we're the fifth lowest in Canada. As a province, we're continuing to drive the province and drive the economy.

Mr. Myers: Right into the ground.

Mr. MacDonald: It looks like we're driving it into the ground with you have people like APEC saying we're on a tear. When you have the Royal Bank of Canada saying –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – all kinds of positive things –

Mr. Myers: Royal Bank can't say –

Mr. MacDonald: – it's –

Mr. Myers: – can't say, borrow more money.

Mr. MacDonald: – unbelievable –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – we haven't borrowed money since before 2015 when this party took over.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example of short-term thinking and lack of a plan.

Island taxpayers and their children are on the hook for this government's huge debt. They are doing nothing about it. They have no plan.

Of the 19 debentures owing, only nine of them has sinking funds with any money in them. In layman's terms it's like this provincial government has 19 maxed out credit cards worth \$2 billion owing, and this government has chosen intentionally to make only the minimum payment.

When it comes time to pay the piper, the Minister of Finance plans to simply get another credit card and roll over the debt onto it, passing it on to our children and grandchildren.

Passing debt on to future Islanders

Question for the minister: Minister, why are

you contributing to sinking funds for the majority of debentures, choosing instead to pass even more debt onto Islanders of the future just so you can look good today?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure, but a balanced budget to me is very prudent to what the hon. member is – contravening what the hon. member was actually talking about. If you want to talk about sustainability, if you look at the 1,000 student that are going to go to UPEI or Holland College for free next year, that's sustainability. If you look at the reduction in electricity, that's sustainability –

An Hon. Member: Forward thinking.

Mr. MacDonald: – to help those most vulnerable. There are all kinds of things that we're doing and not borrowing money since before 2015 – obviously, I'm not sure what economists the hon. member's talking to, but I hope he changes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, this will be your final question.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, my questions are all about servicing our existing debt, something that this government refuses to do. Really it's unacceptable for this government to sit back and take no action to pay off our debt and continue to send hundreds of millions of dollars in interest out of the Island economy every year.

Here in the official opposition, we have a suggestion – we have a plan. Islanders hold hundreds of millions of dollars in investments in their RRSPs, TFSAs and elsewhere. Retired Islanders, especially, are looking for low-risk, reliable investments. Just imagine if Islanders held government debt and the massive amounts of interest government pays out goes to Islanders – most of it's staying in the Island economy.

Transfer of government debt to Island investors

Question to the minister: Will you consider issuing financial instruments, such as

provincial deposit receipt specifically designed to transfer your government debt to Island investors?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm getting confused, but I will tell you this: that –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: You're the finance minister.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. MacDonald: I think if they look at the resources and the individuals, and the different financial institutions, and what they're saying, and the economists across the country and ministers from the federal parties –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – talking about what PEI is doing and how they're doing it, it's pretty simple.

Mr. Trivers: The former minister of finance doesn't even know.

Mr. MacDonald: Our government is working diligently hard, we're respectful of taxpayers on Prince Edward Island and balanced budgets with an influx of investments in everything from the most vulnerable, to our students, to our health care and education. We're continuing on a right path, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue on a right path and I can ensure Islanders that, that we have a good handle on the books.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Roach: Great job, minister.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Well maybe we'll begin with the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Front Line Staff Investments

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

Our \$17.4 million budget increase for education will allow us to make strategic investments for children, youth, and families all across Prince Edward Island. It will protect and expand front line education staff, who are the all the important interface between our programs and the people that we serve.

People are the most important element in a high-quality education system. Our budget will protect the 27 teachers we added last year to support class composition and diverse learning needs. This year, we will add 11 more class composition teachers, as well as eight classroom teachers to support increasing enrolments in English and French schools. We will also invest in eight new early literacy coaches who will help children get a strong start in reading and writing.

Through our successful population growth strategy, we are seeing more newcomer students in our schools. This year, we will add 15 EAL teachers and 10 education assistants to support our growing and more diverse student population – great investments.

These resources will help immigrant students acquire language skills and integrate into our schools while creating more equitable learning environments for all students.

These 25 new positions will mean that we have invested four million new dollars in 66 new EAL positions over just the past 12 months.

Our Educational Assistants have a very important role in student learning in our province. With the support of our EAs, students have more opportunity to learn and participate, and teachers have more time for all students.

This year, we are pleased to add 32 new EAs to assist children with special needs,

bringing the number of EAs added in the past three years to 55, an increase of 20%.

We are making good progress in rolling out our \$750,000 School Psychologist Action Plan. We have hired three school psychologists and are receiving interest from others who are interested in our new PEI positions.

Children are benefitting from the 50 private assessments completed this year and the assistance of two intervention support teachers and two technology facilitators who are working in schools to implement the recommendations of assessments.

Finally, through investments by social policy departments, we will welcome 21 new front line staff to our schools this year as the new student well-being teams get set up in the Colonel Gray, Bluefield and Morell-Souris families of schools and some French first language schools.

These major new investments in front line positions reflect our deep commitment to education and its important role in supporting a strong society and a prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker, and that's the Liberal plan, I should add.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems kind of funny sitting here listening to the education minister talk and the very first thing he talks about is protecting and expanding the education services here in the province.

I recall directly after the 2015 election, this Premier and this government tried to cut 25 teachers. If it wasn't for the fact that we held the session long that year and caught them in the act, they would have done it. We were able to put the type of pressure on them that they buckled only a week after we found it in the budget.

So, this government was well planned to take education in a completely different direction until the Premier got some heat on his heels, and we found out that very first

year that he couldn't handle any pressure at all and he would run in the other direction every single time he got any pressure, which is great because we're going to keep the pressure on him for a number of things.

Then, he turned around and he tried to close the schools; ran across Prince Edward Island and tried to rip the schools right out of small communities. We fought him on that. We pushed back and we said: No, you're not doing that. Again, he ran away like he normally does. The communities all the way across Prince Edward Island learned if you put the pressure on this Premier, he won't do anything. He'll just sit there, frozen; just like he is right now.

It seems kind of funny to be making all these promises now in what appears to be an election year. The Liberal lending machine was hot here yesterday.

We find out that the minister doesn't have a clue who owns our debt or how he plans to pay it back, but here we have government making these grandiose announcements of how they're going to spend money, after completely ignoring education for what? 10 years now? Since you've been in government you've been completely ignoring it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: When I talked to schools, I talked to schools who got a raise of point 4 of a position last year. What's point 4? Like a teacher who leaves at 11? Do you guys have any idea how ridiculous that is? Or is it 11:20 a.m. they go home? How does a point 4 work in a school? You guys acting like –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) front line (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – you're going to take these jobs and you're going to put them right across Prince Edward Island and this is going to be some wonderful announcement; a point 4 is completely ridiculous when you have school-age children trying to learn and get ahead.

Ms. Casey: 161.

Mr. Myers: I know Kathleen, you love to chirp at me when I talk and I guess it's

probably because of you not being able to do this yourself. I'm not really sure why, but –

Mr. LaVie: Because you're probably right.

Mr. Myers: On top of that, this very government – the minister over there of communities, land and environment, as he was signing thousands of PNPs in the last day, not one single person in government, not one single person in the whole government said: How are we going to take all of these people and teach them English?

Then, you have these schools mostly in the urban areas full of students who need English as a second language training; they absolutely need it. So, when you're implementing these positions into the schools, for some of them it's been way too late. There's been this kind of pressure on the system through the PNP immigration process for a long number of years. This is way too late.

The district advisory councils hadn't met for a year; hadn't met for a year and even many of the members who remain on those are completely disenfranchised because they feel like they go to these meetings and government tries to drive decisions backwards down their throat so they'll regurgitate them and give them some sort of a solution that government wanted to begin with. I know you tried to do it with the school closure thing.

No elected school boards. You guys promised it. It was in your platform in the 2015 election that you were going to have elected school boards, and you didn't do it. You didn't do it. This government promised that students were going to be able to take their own devices to school and connect to the WiFi. That hasn't happened either.

Boy oh boy, this government has to do a lot of work, in my opinion, to live up to all of the promises and all the mistakes that they've made in 10 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We should indeed celebrate the front line workers who make our educational system as awesome as it already is and the potential to be so much better.

Those front line workers are teachers who work incredibly long hours, substitute teachers who don't have a contract, coaches, teachers' assistants, janitors, cleaners, cooks, home and school associations, non-profit associations, community groups, parents, caregivers, and family, and parents, and the kids themselves.

I think those children and all of those front line workers would probably not be celebrating about investments and infrastructure and environments and facilitators, and positions and implementation plans, but instead would like to be celebrating that they are happy and healthy, and proud of their schools and the education they're receiving, that they're excited to go to school, they have a lot of learning, that they are well supported and that they feel they're a member of society and not of an economy.

I look forward to that day, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Concussion Awareness Project with UPEI

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We want to make physical fitness, sport participation, athlete development and an overall culture of wellness a part of Islanders' everyday lives.

Concussions are what we call an invisible injury, yet it affects hundreds of Islanders each year. From athletes, to trauma patients, to kids playing in a schoolyard, concussions can be a significant injury for anyone.

Recognizing the prevalence of concussions in the active lifestyles of Island youth, Budget 2018-2019 is committing \$210,000 over three years to UPEI to support a Concussion Awareness Program.

Before I go any further, I'd like to recognize some representatives from UPEI that we have with us today in the gallery. With us today are Tessa Roche, the Patient Centered

Research Clinic Coordinator at UPEI, as well as the Research Coordinators for the project, Kyle Robertson and Robyn Connors.

This research and implementation project will focus on increasing awareness of concussions, injury prevention, reliable and accurate concussion detection, injury management and surveillance.

Our \$210,000 investment will be matched by funding available from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research. The new program will include many new initiatives including an education program for students; modular based education sessions for coaches; an annual concussion report for health care professionals and the general public; rehabilitation management for return-to-active living and return-to-learn protocols; protocols to enhance informed medical clearance; and evidence to evaluate different therapies for concussion recovery.

In addition to this new initiative with UPEI, I also would like to recognize the great work happening with Trauma PEI, as well as our new Trauma Clinic at Harbourside Health Centre in Summerside.

We have many tremendous clinicians, support staff, and researchers working in the area of concussions providing care for our patients today and just as importantly, helping to prevent future injuries.

Our government's budget invests an additional \$32 million in our province's health care system in 2018-2019. We are doing this because this government is continually working to provide Islanders with the right health care in the right place by the right provider.

I look forward to working with UPEI and these three individuals with us in the gallery today over the next three years on their project, which will benefit our young people; our sporting community, our teachers, our clinicians, and, indeed, all Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the minister for the announcement. It's great news. Any time we can put money into such a worthwhile cause like that, I think it's well worth it. I'm glad to hear you've got matching funds as well.

Welcome, Tessa, Kyle and Robyn. Good luck with your work. We much appreciate it. Please, keep in mind an education process to get into the early years of people supporting careers is most important, especially for young coaches, as well. I look forward to your results. Good luck.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

This is, indeed, a great announcement. I have always thought that I'm very appreciative of the fact that my brain is safe inside a strong and hard box because I was quite a clumsy boy. I used to crash on my bike and walk into things and fall off trees and things like that. Although – a permanent egg on my head.

I don't think I ever suffered a concussion. It's important we don't trivialize that because concussions can be very serious. It could be a one-off event, which is bad enough to cause an immediate injury, or it could be cumulative things, which occurs over years.

There has been a lot of really interesting work done, recently with the help of technology to recognize the sorts of impacts, which can cause those sorts of injuries to anybody, particularly sports people, of course. That's where this great work is being done, particularly in the sports community.

Yes, welcome Tessa, and Kyle and Robyn. I look forward to the results of this work. This is a great announcement minister. I really thank government for this far-sighted initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter and paper from UPEI student Alex MacDonald, who wrote a paper on midwifery at UPEI as a final paper to synthesize research in order to communicate something important to the community, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document received from the students at L.M. Montgomery school with respect to Bill No. 114, *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: I thought it was going to be a letter supporting kids from Montague (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table a number of opinion and articles that have been written in support of the upcoming motion and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the 32nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women moves, seconded by the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism the following motion:

WHEREAS efforts are being made to encourage more diversity in the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS the sitting hours of the Legislature have been identified as a barrier to women's participation in provincial politics by the Coalition for Women in Government;

AND WHEREAS all political parties strive to improve transparency and accountability;

AND WHEREAS the Legislature presently has two evening sittings which are not televised;

AND WHEREAS the daytime sittings are televised, so increasing the number of sitting hours during the day would make the Legislative proceedings more accessible to Islanders;

AND WHEREAS public attendance in the gallery is higher during daytime sessions compared with evening sessions;

AND WHEREAS Legislatures in all other Provinces and Territories, with the exception of Quebec and Saskatchewan, end their sessions between 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm;

AND WHEREAS moving the evening hours to daytime sessions will not affect the number of hours that the Legislature sits;

AND WHEREAS the sitting hours of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island were historically set according to train schedules, which no longer exist;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that members of this Legislature support adjusting sitting hours;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Standing Committee on Rules and Regulations be entrusted to adjust the present sitting hours to include the four hours of evening sessions during the day so that the total number of sitting hours is not reduced.

Speaker: I'll now call on the mover of the motion, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and Status of Women to speak to the motion.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the many Islanders who have come forward since I tabled this motion with their support. Some of those people are here today and I thank them for their collaboration. There are many perspective candidates and interested Islanders today watching via live stream.

I have put forth this motion because I believe it's time for our provincial Legislature to modernize and look at becoming more family-friendly. We continue to speak about how we want to see greater diversity and attract younger Islanders and those with young families to our democratic process.

What better way than to do this by reducing barriers to public life. The Coalition for Women in Government has strongly advocated for a change to Legislative sitting hours for many years. They believe, and I agree, that night proceedings of the Legislative Assembly prohibit and discourage many individuals from putting their name forward.

More and more we are seeing familial responsibilities shared by both parents. I believe that by examining our Legislative sitting hours that would encourage more men with young families to also consider putting their name forward as potential representatives of our province.

What I am suggesting is to eliminate the evening sessions and incorporate those hours into our daytime schedule. Currently, we have 16 legislative hours per week. We could still have the same amount of hours even if we were to eliminate the evening sessions.

One suggestion I would make would be to see the sitting go on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Fridays. I would also note that the hours ending at 5:00 p.m. is something that would align well with more childcare centres' hours of operations that many young families have to rush to pick up their children.

We would still get our important work done of the Legislature. In fact, I believe, we would see stronger debate and greater discussion about legislation, motions, and budgets.

That is not to say that by eliminating the night session, there is still not many obligations for members of the Legislative Assembly day and night. This is not a nine-to-five job, Monday to Friday type of job, but being a politician requires a major time commitment year-round.

By eliminating the night session – and I stress incorporating those sitting hours into the daytime proceedings – we are providing prospective candidates and our sitting members a choice. By incorporating the four hours of nighttime proceedings into the current daytime schedule, we would be able to offer members and prospective members a better work-life balance and a better solution to balance parliamentary and constituency responsibilities as well.

As I have mentioned, I feel that incorporating more of the legislative workload to daytime proceedings would mean and make for a stronger legislative process. It would increase the accountability and transparency of our Island officials and politicians.

Our Legislature needs to modernize and it has taken some steps over the years already to do that. We have introduced televised proceedings and live web streaming. We have made Hansard available to the public

on our web. This is just another step forward that can benefit all parties and all Islanders. I would like to quote a press release issued by the Coalition for Women in Government last fall when I tabled this motion.

And I quote: Parliaments across Canada, including that of P.E.I., were designed at a time when democratic process excluded the voices and experiences of women, when women didn't have the right to vote or even be considered a person under the law. It is not surprising that still certain aspects of parliamentary institutions fail to meet the needs of women members. Modernizing the system with family-friendly updates can make parliaments more inclusive spaces, not only for women, but also for people of all genders and people who live outside the main area of Charlottetown.

Having a great diversity of voices and experience in government is vital to strengthening democracy and I worry we are missing the mark. All parties have an opportunity today to help make a change that will show our constituents and our continued commitment to recognizing that this is a step we can make toward being more inclusive.

I encourage members of this Legislative Assembly to support this motion and its intent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to second this motion.

I'm humbled to be a member of the Legislative Assembly and the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism but my greatest accomplishment and the job I am most proud of is as a husband and father of two amazing children. It is because of my children and the value I place on family that I am in support of this motion.

When I decided to enter politics, I was not blind to the commitments of public life and I really enjoy the day-to-day work of being an MLA and member of Cabinet. Getting out and meeting people in my riding and seeing

the difference our government has been able to make in the lives of Islanders is meaningful work, but I can understand why many individuals wait until later in life to get into politics.

In their 2009 report, *Whose Job is it Anyway?*, the Coalition for Women in Government found that PEI MLAs spend less time with family and friends than other MLAs around the country. Half of respondents from other jurisdictions say they spend at least six hours a week with family and friends compared to only one-third of PEI MLAs.

Things have changed. Our society is changing. It is no longer just women who are responsible for child care. Duties are shared equally and this is great for the family unit. As well, more and more people are seeking work-life balance. Our provincial Legislature needs to change with the times. Having a system that was put in place to accommodate the passenger train schedule is no longer necessary in our modern era. We have made other modifications to the procedures of the Legislature over the years to coincide with the changing times and I think this is another change that could be implemented for the greater good of the legislative process.

I think eliminating the night sittings and as the minister suggested, moving those times into the day, would also increase transparency and accountability for our provincial legislators. What I mean by this is that the daytime proceedings of the Legislative Assembly make the legislative process more accessible to Islanders. Daytime sittings are televised while nighttime sittings are not and public attendance in the gallery is higher during daytime sessions, as we've seen here today. With more Islanders able to view and participate in the daily proceedings, it will hold all politicians to a higher standard of accountability and transparency.

I also question why we wouldn't reduce any barriers we could to have a more diverse Legislature and provide Islanders a more diverse choice on the next election ballot. We need to do our part to reduce barriers. Our policies, procedures and traditions should not be prohibitive to the democratic process and to finding quality, civic-minded

individuals who could be strong voices on behalf of Islanders helping to create a stronger, mightier Island.

As the minister said, we could make exceptions when necessary to incorporate a night session if there was a particular group or issue that required debate. I think we need to be flexible but I think we can come up with a solution that will benefit our current members, future candidates, and the province as a whole.

With that, I will allow others to speak on the motion.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise and speak to this motion around modernization of this House. I want to start by acknowledging the minister of transportation for putting this motion forward in the fall.

I'm in agreement that, as a province, we need to take concrete steps to update and strengthen this great institution. This view is also shared by my colleagues on this side of the House. Earlier this year, the Leader of the Opposition released a public discussion paper entitled *Modernizing the House*. This paper contained many ideas for potential reforms to make the Legislature more responsive and inclusive. I do not intend to list them all this afternoon, as Islanders can go online and read the discussion paper and see all the great ideas themselves; however, one very important idea contained in the Leader of the Opposition's discussion paper involved taking a detailed look at our sitting calendar. Reviewing our sitting calendar includes not just the hours of sitting, but a holistic look at a 12 month calendar that looks at which days we sit, which days are reserved for committee business, and potentially increasing the number of sitting days.

The Leader of the Opposition and our entire PC team believe we can have a more modern, inclusive, effective, and efficient Legislature, that truly engages Islanders. Aside from routine housekeeping matters,

the rules and operations of the Legislature have been largely unchanged for many years, prior to the mid 1990s when the government of Catherine Callbeck first established a Hansard office to create and publish permanent records of legislative proceedings.

The government of Pat Binns first introduced cameras into the Legislative Chamber back in the late 1990s, televising and live-streaming House proceedings.

The Binns government was also the first Island government to change the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island to ensure a mandatory two sittings each calendar year, in the spring and in the fall.

More recently, since 2015, our PC caucus has championed and secured some reforms to how the House operates including adding audio transcripts and live-streaming of legislative committee proceedings to improve transparency and accessibility, particularly for Islanders with visual impairments or barriers of literacy or geography.

Other legislative reforms sought, such as improved accountability for responses to written questions and expanded use of open data principles to share public information with the public remain a work in progress.

Along with the reforms that the PC team is continuing to press for, there are many small changes that can be made by members themselves, and changes that will make a difference. In fact, one true reform that I hear from Islanders across the province during sittings is for Cabinet ministers to give answers to the important questions raised during Question Period, rather than avoiding questions and giving stale talking points that have nothing to do with questions being asked.

However, when it comes to reforming the Legislature, perhaps the most important component of the modernizing the House paper brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition was a call to have true public consultation with all Islanders. This is the Islanders' House, and these seats that are currently occupied by us actually belong to

the people. All MLAs within this Chamber must not forget this fact.

With respect to the motion as tabled by the minister, I'm not sure this motion actually advances the great work that has already been done to modernize the House. Firstly, I'm afraid there was an error in the motion itself. You referred to the standing committee on rules and regulations. It's actually the title is the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges. Secondly, this motion calls for the House to entrust the committee to change the sitting hours. I would point out to the minister and to all members that standing committees are masters of their own domain and not of everyone in this Legislature.

I do have some concerns with the wording that the minister has chosen. Most importantly, the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges is already in the process of doing this important work. The committee just recently reported back to this House.

Their report to this House from last week concludes:

Your committee wishes to advise that this is an interim report on its review of the rules of the Legislative Assembly. As a part of this upcoming work, the committee intends to publish a white paper on the review of the rules of the Legislative Assembly. This white paper will suggest ideas for the change of the rules of the Legislative Assembly in areas to modernize the Legislative Assembly and it will include the following topics: Ways to update the legislative process, committees and how they function in the Legislative Assembly, petitions and potential for electronic petitions, and the sittings hours and parliamentary calendar of the Legislative Assembly.

I want to commend the members of the committee, especially the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the Chair of this committee, for working with the Leader of the Opposition and agreeing to this review.

For these reasons, I have an amendment to this motion, that I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, and I

will read the amendment now and I have copies for all members.

Mr. LaVie: You did your homework first (Indistinct) homework now.

Speaker: All members have a copy of the amendment?

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The amendment to Motion No. 32 on modernization of Legislative Assembly sitting hours:

Omit clauses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Retain the first three clauses and then insert:

And whereas the Honourable Leader of the Opposition authored a discussion paper entitled Modernizing the House, filled with new ideas around modernization including changing to the sitting calendar;

And whereas the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges reported back to the House this sitting, and are undertaking a white paper on the topic;

Therefore be it further resolved members support the work of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges in their ongoing review of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, that includes the sitting calendar.

Speaker: Do you have a seconder for that?

Ms. Compton: I do, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

On that, I'll open debate on the amendment.

Speaker: The second of the amendment to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to rise and second this amendment. I do want to thank the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women for bringing this motion to the floor.

I think it is very telling that the hours of this Legislative Assembly were originally set based mostly on the train schedule at the time and so they are well overdue and the Leader of the Opposition, as was pointed out and is in this amendment, has thought long and hard about this and authored a discussion paper entitled Modernizing the House to talk exactly about those sorts of changes, not just Legislative Assembly sitting hours, so it's important to look at the whole scope.

But, it's important not only because of many of the reasons that the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy said, it allows members to get out in the evenings and actually be with their constituents and represent them at events, which you have to miss many times if the House is actually sitting in the evening.

It does allow them to really, I guess, contribute in a standard and in a fixed way to their family. I think that's an important point. As the clause says, the sitting hours of the Legislature have been identified as a barrier to women's participation in provincial politics by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government, and I would agree with that. I think it's actually a symptom of the way families operate and actually points at a broader problem we have and, indeed, the reason why we need to advocate for women's rights and the equality of the sexes is women really, just through our culture, take on a lot of mental overhead in the home and are expected to do this because they are women.

It's one of the things I think that contributes to the inequality of the sexes. For example, when it comes to managing the household, and many times it's considered the de facto responsibility of the woman in the house to manage the house, and the man of the household, maybe her partner, often could be heard saying: Well, if you need any help just let me know and I'll help. As opposed to being proactive and help proactively manage the schedule.

That's where the Legislative Assembly sitting hours come into play, because it really, it will allow – if it's a woman who is the MLA, it'll make sure that the man, regardless of what cultural bias is built into our society, really has to step up and take

some of that mental overhead away from the woman and allow them to go out. That's why I say it speaks to that bigger problem. Changing the sitting hours really does allow anyone who's an MLA more flexible time in the evening to decide how they want to manage their family, it's important to note that.

Therefore, it contributes to equality of the sexes, really which is what feminism is all about; advocating for women's rights for equality of the sexes.

I do support this motion. I do support the amendment. I think it's important because, as I mentioned, it expands the scope to the discussion paper of modernizing the House in general. I think it's important because it does talk about the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations Private Bills and Privileges, and their review, in particular, referencing their undertaking of a white paper on the topic.

I think that, in my personal life as an MLA, I think it would really help me. My wife is a professional engineer and relatively recently she was running our business – well, recently, for the last number of years, she has been running our business while I'm an MLA. She has taken it from top to bottom. It's a small business. We do web development. I was keenly interested in the questions that were being asked by the member from District 11 about the Web Presence Program, because within our company our clients access that a lot.

She recently decided that she wanted to branch out and instead of only running our company, she also, she found a job with a third party as a professional engineer. It's great for her to get back, more to the core engineering work that she was used to doing. That means that she has a little less flexibility in her work life and it means I need to step up and I need to look after things around the household more that she was looking after as she was working from home. I think that these changes in hours would really help me do that and help me support her in the household. Not so much just because I'm a man, but as a partner. It's changing our division of responsibilities and I'm fully willing to do that.

When she heard about the motion to change

the legislative sitting hours, she cheered and she said: this will be great. In the evenings, when our children have events, whether it be sporting events or 4-H and these sorts of things. When I was sitting here in the House, that responsibility fell onto her. Now, I can pick up some more of that slack and it can free her up to really do more focus on her work life, as well, as make it so that it frees up her personal life.

At any rate, I wanted to make the point; I guess the point I'm making is: this is not just good for women who want to get involved in government, provincial government, this is good for all members who are of a household where you have children and you're trying to manage that household. I fully support this.

I think that, really, we need to strive to be progressive. I mean that's one of the core values of the Progressive Conservative Party and that's really what we're talking about here. We're looking at things and we're saying: let's not have change for the sake of change; let's have change for real concrete reasons. That's what this motion, and that's what this amendment is all about.

With that, I will say, I do fully support the amendment and I do support the motion. I look forward to the time when we actually do see adjusted sitting hours within the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we have to look back in 2016 and the strides we've made forward to improve access to the Legislative Assembly, the standing committees. Back, 2016, we brought in live-streaming on social media of the standing committees, was a huge step forward and it really allowed more people to have access.

One point, the minister talked about, no t.v. sessions in the evenings. Yes, that is true, but we have a broader approach on social media. I don't support – I support the modernization of the Legislative Assembly, and I believe we have to look at the work that the standing committee is doing on that.

With that, I support the amendment to the motion. But, I cannot support limiting or lessening the amount of hours or the periods of day we sit in the House –

Ms. Biggar: That's not –

Mr. Fox: The thing is if we limit the hours and reduce the night sessions, we're actually going backwards in time. We are not allowing all of society of any gender of any nationality; we're limiting the ability for them to attend the House when they're able depending on the job or the role they fill within society.

I made some notes on that; groups, Islanders and students. Students, right now, they go to school Monday to Friday and some days they're limited because of snow days and so on. If students want to become more involved in politics and they want to come into this House we have to take them out of school. We have to put them on a bus and we have to get them here.

In the evenings, students can come with their parents. They can come with their families. They can come with their MLAs to the House. When the member, when the hon. transportation minister talks about reducing these hours then she's actually going to affect students.

Work schedules. Islanders are struggling to provide for their homes and their families and they can't afford to take a day off – or pardon me – a day off or an afternoon off to come into the House to see what's happening.

Night sessions allow people, to work during the day, whether it be women or men of any gender to come into this House, either on an opposition time evening or a government time evening.

Seniors, that are in residential care homes or the hospitals or whatever, that might want to attend the House, this will also hamper them because they rely on modes of transportation such as their family members to get them here. If the family members are working during the day, they will not be available to get their loved ones or their seniors or their moms and dads here into the House. With the evening sessions this can be possible because the person – I work all day and I

could take my mother tonight to an evening session. We're limiting these seniors being able to get into the House.

I want to talk about Debbie for a minute. Debbie has just completed her RN. She spent the last 15 months taking her RN refresher to go back to work days in the oncology department of the Prince County Hospital.

I love to take that woman wherever I go to different functions and different meetings and I enjoy it when she's here in the House. If she's working days part-time or casual, how is she going to get here to a session if she doesn't have access to night sessions? I find that quite disturbing.

I also want to mention that MLAs work hard. When we're in the House sitting for the six or eight weeks or whatever, I depend on the mornings to meet with constituents, to talk to constituents on issues that they want and make sure their concerns are brought into the House. If MLAs are limited, and the hours in the daytime are increased to where we have to be in here at caucus, in our meetings and then sitting in the House, I'm going to have less time to meet with groups or individuals in the morning.

Where am I going to transfer that time to? I'm going to have to transfer that time probably to an evening, which is going to limit the amount of time I have with my grandchildren, or with my wife or with the family, in general. We have to be very cognizant – I think, actually, our forefathers and the people that designed this House and developed this country on PEI were very advanced-thinking. Yeah, it was based on a train schedule, but they put into a system that allowed equal access during the day and the evening for all, not depending on who you are or where you are within the province.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will conclude. I support this amendment to this motion.

Thank you.

Speaker: Next speaking to the amendment will be the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: You're up.

Ms. Biggar: I'm sorry. I thought you (Indistinct). She's next (Indistinct) if you don't mind, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: That's nice of you. Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Telling the Speaker what to do.

Ms. Biggar: I said: If you don't mind, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, to speak to the amendment.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be brief.

I'm speaking to make it clear that I do not support the amendment. What I do support is the original motion and, in fact, I support that original motion to be implemented immediately and taking effect in the next sitting.

Modernization is probably the most important piece in this – both the amendment and the original motion. Modernization does not just mean that we change the rules, it means we need to change the way that we think. Some of the language that's being used in the House today to speak to and about women and women's experiences is not (Indistinct).

I would like to make it absolutely clear that as a member of this House and a member of the Legislature, and as a single parent, I do not have to ask permission of anybody to do my job and to do my role. In fact, I am proud of the fact that the only person I ever asked permission of was my 10-year-old daughter.

We do need to be very mindful of the impact that our words and our actions make when we speak about the experiences and the privileges that we have and that other people have. When we are talking about the needs of this space, we are talking about the needs of the space not just now in our own experience, but in the experiences of those

who are to come – those who are not here yet. Whether they're not here yet because we haven't made space for them, or they're not here yet because we just can't imagine that they're here, does not mean that we should tell them they don't have permission.

There's much more I could say, but in trying to remain as professional and calm as I can as you would expect me to be as a member of the Legislature and as a woman speaking on behalf, in this case, of other women who have my experience, I am grateful to have the privilege of being able to speak to this. I am clear that I do not feel this motion does help us move this forward as quickly and as clearly as it should and therefore I am not supporting the amendment. I look forward to speaking, however, to the original motion when it comes back to the floor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to speak to the initiative that's been taken here this afternoon and to recognize those in the gallery who've joined us and who have worked diligently and with real advocacy to bring us to the point where this matter is being debated in this House and I will speak to the amendment.

I believe the original motion and its operative clause put the matter squarely when it addressed the question of sitting hours in the evening and I believe that should be retained in the matter that is addressed by this House. I would strongly favour retaining that element of evening sitting hours in the ultimate decision of the House and for that reason, I would encourage an amendment – an envisaged amendment to the amendment that would see that operative clause retained.

Further, I believe that the matter was brought forward in a modern way, or in a way that was inclusive of all sides of this House and that it should, when it's ultimately adopted or dealt with by this House, it should reflect our common view or our work together and for that reason it did not, until the amendment, include any reference to a particular political party. I

think for that reason it would be better if the amendment did not include the reference to the discussion paper and the work of the hon. Leader of the Opposition; without taking anything away from that work or from the contribution that it makes to the collective position that we are moving toward.

For that reason, I believe it would be better if we were to have an amendment that brings forward something that is clear and that we can all support and that we can all share moving forward and that future members of this House can look back on as a collaborative effort, an effort that came at a time and place.

I do, in speaking to the amendment, believe that there is merit in the operative clause that speaks to the work of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges as proposed by the Member from Belfast-Murray River.

In saying that, of course, to acknowledge that when this motion was originally put – that report – if not at that point, the interim report had that point not been before the House. So, I may indeed speak further to the main motion that was put, but I believe there is merit in addressing the amendment by making a further amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: So do we have copies of the amendment of the amendment.

Mr. Myers: Did he make an amendment to the amendment?

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Premier, you were moving an amendment to the amendment. Is that what you were doing?

Premier MacLauchlan: If I may, Mr. Speaker, what I was really doing is speaking to the amendment, but indicating that I feel that there is merit in amending the amendment to reflect the points that I made, but the opportunity to move that amendment will be for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. I was under the impression that we had the printed copies of an amendment that would be moved because

of the complexity of the clauses that are involved. That's still being prepared, Mr. Speaker.

Let me, if you wish me to continue speaking to why we feel – or why I feel the way I do about the amendment, I'd be prepared to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Premier and hon. members, we had the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, who was on the list, really, before –

Premier MacLauchlan: Great.

Speaker: I think we should give you a chance to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Myers: To the amendment. So, I'm okay to go?

Speaker: You're speaking to the amendment.

Mr. Myers: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the amendment – I just want to kind of go back to the basis of what this was kind of all about. I do sit on the rules committee and I know that we've done a substantial amount of work and the report that came in last week indicated some of the rule changes we would have going forward. They would be somewhat minor, but from a procedural point of view, they would be pretty major to a lot of us. Things like: a report of the committee has to lay on the table for a full day so everyone has a chance to read it before they vote on it – which has never happened here before. So before, the report of our committee would come and we'd have to vote on it blindly because the reports of committee are not allowed to be shared with other members who aren't on the committee until after they hit the floor, so it made it really awkward for us to stand and say we agreed to something when we didn't know whether or not we actually agreed it. So that's one of the changes that we brought forward.

Things like extra time for bills to sit on the floor before they could be debated to give, particularly opposition parties, an opportunity to review those documents so that we could get a bit of a leg-up when we were asking questions on them – that we had

actual research done – which we didn't have before.

So, there are lots of different things that that committee has brought forward and over the years I've been on that committee and off that committee, and I happen to be back on it now but that's also the committee that brought forward the changes that I had requested to have audio recordings of all committee meetings and up until 2016, we would meet and if no one showed up – nobody from the public showed up to committee, which they never do, the only transcription of the committee meeting was what the media said, or what one of the members could recall and transcribe maybe on Facebook or Twitter.

That was a big change for where the committee meetings and their entirety now reside on the Internet and people can go back and listen to them. If two years down the road there's an issue where government had made a commitment via committee to do some extra work on a particular piece of policy, then it's right there and it's kind of undeniable. Though, they always did have the written record I guess, too.

Anyway, some of these things have been, in my time here, have been put together in a piecemeal manner. So, they come as one-offs or they come as the result of something that happens and all of a sudden somebody's got their back up and wants a change to make that, and I was the one in 2016 on the audio recording. I wanted it, and it kind of caused some friction, but at the end of the day it was all good.

Now, our committee meetings are held in this Chamber and they're live on video and they're also stored so you can go back and watch the video transcription of what happens in our committee meetings, which I think is a great step forward, particularly when you have groups presenting to committee. It's great to be able to go back and watch what they said because sometimes what they said makes more sense as you learn more about the topic that they're speaking of. We wouldn't necessarily have the full context when they were presenting, but over time we would have.

That's kind of the context of how changes have happened in my time. The Leader of the Opposition here this winter had put forward a white paper. Included in it was change of sitting hours or having a complete schedule. So, anybody who follows politics in Ottawa knows they have a whole-year calendar. You know when you sit. You know when you're off, and it could be weeks where they're off. It's all broken out. When the year starts, they know – and I know it's different for them because they have to travel to Ottawa, but still – they know when the year starts, when they're going to be back on PEI and when they're going to be in Ottawa, and when they're going to be in committee and that's all – so what the Leader of the Opposition was suggesting was that.

As a bigger conversation, none of the ideas were – it wasn't written in a way that it had to be accepted wholly, and the concept at the time when he presented to committee was: Let's take this idea forward to the people, and let people present to us on some of the ideas that were outlined. I do have a copy of it here, and I know that members of the committee had a copy of it and we spoke about it quite a bit over time. But, some of the ideas are really forward-thinking when you want a change.

I personally believe that the Legislature needs to be modernized. Is it by getting rid of night sessions? I don't know. Like I've said numerous times, this seat isn't mine; it belongs to the people who I represent and I feel like if we're going to make changes, let's make changes. Let's make a bunch of changes and let's make it make sense for all Islanders.

That's why I support the committee going out on the road and doing the work and hearing from people, maybe right across Prince Edward Island. I know I've sat on a couple of committees who have met in Alberton and Tignish, and Georgetown and all over Prince Edward Island, and people were able to present their ideas to that committee and the committee was able to come back to this House with a report that was a concise vision of what the people were telling us.

I know there are numerous women's groups in the gallery today and I thank you for

coming to hear this debate. I do understand your position quite well, and I don't discount it even for a moment. I do think that there are lots of other voices on Prince Edward Island, though, as well and that they too deserve to be heard. This is only one topic. If you read the white paper, the white paper is kind of a living document.

At the rules committee, as was presented back to the House here last week, the rules committee had recommended doing their own white paper. It was like the Leader of the Opposition's idea, but now it's going to be more a committee-driven and a committee-owned living document. We don't really a draft of it yet, but we will, and when we do I know personally, I'm still committed to taking that out to hear what Islanders have to say. And let's not forget, this is the peoples' House.

We need to do this in a way that it's going to be the right rule changes or the right modernization for the most people, and I can't proclaim to know what that looks like. I know, for me, I know what the stresses of the job are for me. Time is certainly one of them. The amount of time it takes to do the job certainly would be one of the stressors in the job, but that doesn't go away for me after we sit for six weeks in the spring or three weeks in the fall. That's a constant stressor that I carry, and each and every one of you are probably the same.

I know tonight we're done here at 5:00 p.m., but I know several members on this side aren't done at 5:00 p.m. because they all have different meetings that they have to attend tonight, and I, myself, have one that I have to attend tonight. I'll probably be walking in the door at 9:30 or 10:00 p.m. again tonight, and tomorrow night, and last night, and Monday night. It's kind of the nature of the job.

So yeah, while not having evening sittings would allow me to have more meetings at night; it wouldn't get me in the door any sooner. For me, I think a lot of people, particularly in my district, understand when the House is sitting, my time in the district is somewhat limited because they expect me to be here and be their voice every day.

Having kids growing up in this process – my youngest fellow really was probably too

young to understand what I got into when I got into it. He does now, but when I first started he was really too young to understand the additional stress that it brought to the family life. My older son did. I remember he came to the rallies and stuff and he was quite a bit older when I started, and he seemed to have a better understanding of it. But, I know for my younger fellow, it always kind of bothered him; the extra stress that it took even to go to the grocery store together. Now that he's older, he's almost 15, he doesn't feel that way if we get somewhere and somebody stops me, he's quite glad to ditch me. But back when he was seven or eight he really didn't. To him, it was something and it was always a constant pull for me, is that I know that this is my time that I've set aside to spend with him and what I started doing is stop going places. I couldn't do running around with him. I couldn't go to the grocery store because I knew it would immediately take me away.

I think that I wouldn't want to oversimplify the job to anybody, and like if no nights is what people want, then that's fine. But, everybody needs to understand if you want to do this job it's going to bring various amounts of stress into your life that you may not know until you get.

I've had the unenviable position of being leader of the opposition through a really rocky period of time for our party and I can tell you, I certainly didn't know that was going to happen when I put my name on a ballot in 2011. I certainly didn't know the amount of stress it was going to put in my life.

There's no measure – we can make all the measures in the world, but this is a tough job. No matter what the decision of the committee is or this House is, for me, I want people to understand that; that there's going to be bad days in this and I'm sure that every member who sits here has had more than one.

A friend of mine told me at one point in my career, when things were particularly rocky, he always used to call me in the morning, he said: You know? They'll print another paper tomorrow, bud. And I'm like: I sure hope so. I sure hope there's another paper tomorrow with another front page.

But those are the things that I would never want anybody to oversimplify by not having any night sessions. Have a night one or not have a night one, I personally enjoy the night sessions. I've made great friends with my colleagues by the time we spend together. Most of us are stuck in Charlottetown because we don't live here, so we don't really have a place to disappear to, so we spend time together and it's a great way to get to know my colleagues. For me it's been an opportunity to bring people into the gallery.

I remember one of my best memories was we were fighting to have the expansion for the Montague Intermediate School so we decided we'd have a motion and it was a Tuesday night. We called a few people and the gallery over in the old Legislature, the gallery was up around the top and it was full. When I walked in that night – I was the one who was moving the motion – when I walked in that night and I looked up, my son was there – who wasn't in junior high, he was still in Cardigan school. He was in grade five, but he thought it was important because that's the school he was going to go to, so he called my dad and asked my dad: would he take him in because he really wanted to see that motion that night.

So for me, it was one of the few times that I had either of my children in the gallery. My youngest fellow never has been, though he sat on the floor here for a Speech From the Throne with me, but those types of things probably wouldn't have happened. I couldn't count them all. You've been around for a long time when you can't remember all the times you had the gallery full, but we had the gallery full a lot. In my first term, we had the gallery full a lot. We had a lot of big issues where we were able to draw in people at night to talk about the issues.

The member from Belfast was making a list for me, but – the Member from Borden-Kinkora has made great use of evening sessions and I want to give him credit for that. Different nights I've walked in here and he's had a bill on the floor and he's had the gallery packed and he's had his PTSD motion.

I remember one time we had the gallery filled for dialysis. I remember one time we had it filled for insulin pumps – that was one

time we had it full. It's been full here for teachers' cuts. I've had a good representation here from my own area for amalgamation. I know that one night here we ran a motion on school closures and we were able to have people here.

For anybody who's following what we've been doing here as a party this spring, is we've been using a lot more of our own time to bring forward legislative ideas. We seldom have a motion – though we had a motion on the floor last night – but a lot of the time that we spend here, we spend bringing real legislative changes to the floor. Most of them don't pass, but some of them have and the PTSD one was one that had passed here and I think there was one about uncovering your face on a police stop and I think that one had passed here too.

So we're trying to bring forward changes of the things that we do and if you notice, it's a much better debate. The style of debate that we are having here right now is I'm talking and everyone's listening, but when we're debating bills, everyone is talking and everyone is debating and everyone is having a chance and they could have multiple chances at asking questions and it's been a really fun spring for me and I know from talking to members on this side, they've really enjoyed that – bringing forward a legislative agenda and we have more coming.

I have a bill that'll be coming on the floor here, not this week, but in the coming weeks and we intend on having the gallery full for that one as well. Though that may be one of our afternoon times we use, but either way, we do our best to try to bring the people in.

The other thing I just wanted to touch on, because I do think it's important that the rules committee be given an opportunity to bring forward changes because they're going to. I sit on that committee – I don't think there's anybody that sits around that committee that isn't saying: Yes, let's do something. Let's make some changes. The exchanges have all been pleasant, the type of debate in the meetings has been really good and upbeat, so I really want to see that through.

This session will close regardless, so this particular rule change won't come in before

the spring session leaves and the fall session won't be until November, so this committee has a lot of time to bring forward changes and I reluctantly use: We should take our time and do it right – because I think that's a fault that people often have with government is government all too often takes their time to do it right, but time is way too long. But I think that this committee could come back with a really, really good set of changes for this Legislature that will completely modernize it and attract all different kinds of people who want to be able to represent their constituents in this Legislature.

So I guess that's all I really want to say on this amendment is I think that – I just want to reiterate the points, is that we should use as much caution as possible by saying that the 10 nights in the spring we'll sit here and the four or five nights in the fall we sit here are the only nights that you'll work because that is not true. You will work many, many nights and – but you know what? Other people might tell you that they don't leave the house at 5:00 a.m. in the morning too – Cabinet ministers probably do, but there is a balancing act in this job, but it's not always flexible at night.

The second thing is that: I sit on the rules committee, it's a really engaged group and they're really looking at doing very positive things. Let's let them because I'm pretty sure you're going to get the change anyways, but you're going to get it in a whole encompassed set of rule changes that will make this Legislature look modern and ready to govern the people for the next hundred years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your patients, first of all, and you're indulgence.

In speaking to this amendment, I would like to bring up a couple of points, actually. I, too, in the past have sat on the rules committee and remember when the Coalition for Women in Government came in and presented to that committee with this exact topic and that this was one of the

barriers that they have done a lot of research on this topic, probably going back at least, I'm going to say, 15 years – close to it. So this is not something that has just come up out of nowhere. I would also like to point out this has come to committee – at that time, around that committee table, it was not brought forward to the Legislature as a recommendation of that committee at the time.

Prior to that, there was another recommendation in regard to this same topic that was brought forward when Pat Binns was the premier of the day – that his own member of the Legislature brought forward – Eva Rodgerson brought it forward and it was voted down at that time by the Conservative government of the day.

I recognize that the work that is happening at the rules committee and I'll read it out if I must.

To be exact: the Standing Committee of Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, to be exact, is the name of the committee.

I would also point out that this motion was tabled last fall. Respecting the recent report that came forward from the rules committee, which is our acronym, I guess, our short way of referring to them – that was just tabled last week. I recognize that, over the course, of since last fall there has been a lot of discussion at that committee and maybe this is something that spurred that discussion. I hope that it has been. I think there are lots of ways that we can certainly make changes within our Legislative Assembly.

I would like to make an amendment to the amendment; I do have copies for everyone.

In explaining in what I wish to do, I would wish to:

Reinsert clauses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9; and omit – because we're talking about the committee – not one individual on that committee, I would omit:

And whereas the Honourable Leader of the Opposition authorized a discussion paper entitled Modernizing the House, filled with new ideas around modernization including changes to the sitting calendar.

Because these changes are not just one person's ideas.

I would also retain that the whereas clause:

And whereas the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges reported back to the House this sitting and are undertaking a white paper on the topic.

I also would retain:

Therefore be it resolved members support the work of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges in their ongoing review of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of PEI that includes the sitting calendar.

I would then, also, reinsert the clause:

Therefore be it further resolved that the Standing Committee on Rules and Regulations be entrusted to adjust the present sitting hours to include the four hours of evening sessions – include the four hours, I would repeat – the four hours of evening sessions during the day so that the total hour of sitting hours is not reduced.

I have copies for all hon. members in the House.

Speaker: We'll have those distributed to all members.

Hon. minister, who is the seconder?

Ms. Biggar: I'll second that by the hon. Premier.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you like to speak further to the amendment to the amendment?

Ms. Biggar: Just a couple of points, if I may, Mr. Speaker –

Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. Biggar: – thank you.

I would like to come back to the point that was raised about having access to the Legislature during debate, during special issues that we bring forward here on the floor of the Legislature.

The concern that was raised by the opposition in regard to this, and I recognize, we have had lots of debates in this House in the afternoon.

In fact, this afternoon, earlier, it was totally filled. I recall when we had the debate about the PTSD and the Island EMS that, in the afternoon, this Legislature was filled with EMS workers, with nurses, with other individuals that did come into hear that debate that was from the opposition.

Again, I would encourage members to realize that we can work together on this, and recognizing the work that the committee has undertaken since last fall since this was tabled. I would ask them to support this motion.

Thank you.

Speaker: Speaking to the amendment to the amendment, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister has put back in the clause that says that: the standing committee on rules and regulations be entrusted to.

If I was on that committee, I'm not, but if I was on it, is that not instructing me to do something? If you were a committee member of that committee you would have your own mind on something. I'm not sure how we can demand that that committee do this –

Ms. Biggar: It's not a demand.

Mr. MacEwen: We're entrusting you to do it?

An Hon. Member: Entrust.

Ms. Biggar: Entrust.

Speaker: I think it just means like you, as a member of that committee, because you were elected to represent your constituents that they are putting their trust in you to do the right thing.

Mr. MacEwen: To do what the minister says.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Entrusted to adjust, is what it says.

Ms. Biggar: I don't (Indistinct) speak (Indistinct) don't have the floor.

Speaker: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: You did earlier. You're telling everybody how to speak.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah, so. Exactly. It's assigning the responsibility to do something.

Speaker: Hon. member, there is a report –

Mr. MacEwen: So there's no –

Speaker: – from the committee has to come back to the Legislature. It could be debated –

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: As long as they adjust to the sitting hours.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To be fair, if I was for changing the hours, but I felt that that committee should continue its work and hear from Islanders, I certainly wouldn't support this motion because what this motion says is: it's telling, entrusting, that the rules and regulations committee change the hours to exclude the evening.

I would prefer to hear and let that committee go out because I believe they will go out and do public consultations. Even if I was in favour of changing the hours around, I wouldn't support this motion the way it's worded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Do we have other –

Mr. Roach: That's a privilege of being (Indistinct)

Speaker: Did you want to speak to the –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River would like to speak on the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I brought the amendment forward, it was to make the point that this has already gone to committee. We can bring a motion to the floor today. It's going right back to committee. It's already at committee. That's what I'm trying to say.

We've already made –

Ms. Biggar: Wasn't (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: But you know it is now. Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that this has already gone to committee. I'm just making the point that the work is already being done. There does not need to be a motion come forward.

And, on that, I will also talk – and I know there has been a lot of studies done and whether you agree or disagree with evening sittings, it is very important for the opposition to do their work. We do have a much better turnout and a much better result when we have people here in the gallery in the evening, arguing and stating the case for PTSD, and stating the case for amalgamation and stating the case for school closures.

When we have the gallery full in the evening, it does make a difference. If we're going to say: it's going to be a barrier to women or anybody to sit in this House in the evening, then it's also a barrier to be a nurse. It's also a barrier to be an EMS worker. It's also a barrier to be a musician because I'm sure, maybe, musicians would like to perform in the afternoon.

We have a job to do, and whether you agree or not, it's up to each member or for each member to talk to their constituents about how they feel. There are a number of jobs that are done; you do not get to choose when you work or when you don't work –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) 365 days.

Ms. Compton: – it's no different in this House.

When we are not sitting in the House, we are usually having a meeting. You can talk to the males or the females in this House. There are pros and cons to having evening sittings, we'll all agree. It's up to each member to decide that.

The point I was trying to make today is, to bring a motion forward is redundant because it's already gone to committee. If we support a motion today, it's going back to committee. That's all I was trying to say. Amending, amending, amending is not going to make any difference.

I wanted to make the amendment to say, the work is already being done. It's already at committee. It's not up to us to instruct the committee on their decision. It's up to us, as a Legislature, to move it to committee if that's what we want.

When I made the amendment it was to say, this is already at committee. The work is being done. They will look at it, review it, decide what needs to happen next.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party. I did have your name on the list, but then because there was an amendment to the amendment then – okay, go ahead.

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

This has been an interesting debate to sit and listen to. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to sit in this room as a legislator. I think we all feel that; and the sacred trust that is imparted on each and every one of us. And I think it's very rare that the Legislature has opportunities to inspire and to soar, and I think this is one of those moments.

I've always believed that good ideas are good ideas, no matter where they come from. I think it's a shame when we feel that we must insist for taking credit for something.

The rules committee – and I'll use the abbreviated version – is a group of MLAs from all parties. I remember well the meeting that we had when we talked about

changing the rules of this House, including changing the hours. There were ideas indeed brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition and there were ideas brought forward by members of government. The Office of the Third Party presented a nine-page presentation with dozens of recommendations. The Clerk of this House gave an impassioned, articulate, incredibly-well researched presentation to the committee.

From all of that, we will come forward with some ideas. Some of those will be quick and easy, and we've already heard about some of them. I think this one probably falls somewhere in the middle. It's not something that will be impossible to do quickly, and as the minister for the Status of Women has already said, this is not a new idea.

I have here the report of 2009 from the PEI Coalition of Women in Government where recommendation four out of 17 was that we eliminate evening hours. So, this is not a new idea. It's something that has been researched, and this paper was a research paper. This was not just a single opinion of a particular individual or group.

We come to this House today to debate changing hours, and I think we have a real opportunity to soar. I think in order to remove all barriers; we have much extra work to do. I think evening hours is one of the barriers to having women run and become elected, but it's not the only one. I think there are many others: Access to childcare, access to finances during campaign periods – I think fixed election dates are really important so there is predictability as to when the election is coming, and we're not always worrying about being ready for an election. That's terribly difficult for anybody, never mind a man or a woman, single parent, double-parent family with children.

I think it's clearly proven that proportional systems elect more women, and recommendation number 17 from the report is that we adopt proportional representation.

There are many barriers to women and we say women and minorities, but actually women are 51% of the population, let's not forget that. They are not a minority at all,

but they certainly are a minority in this House.

I support the amendment to the amendment to the motion. I think this is something that we can and should implement now. I thank the minister for bringing this forward. This is not a revolutionary idea. We will be coming into line with most of the other jurisdictions in this great country, and I hope we can get on with this and vote on with this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker: Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Roach: Standing vote.

Ms. Biggar: Standing vote.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) standing vote (Indistinct) amend amendments (Indistinct) been here for 10 years.

Speaker: Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, you can ring the bell. There has been a recorded division requested.

[The bells were rung]

Mr. Perry: Government members are all present and ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, Third Party members are present and ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, opposition is ready.

Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Whip.

All those voting against the amendment to the amendment, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Member from Borden-

Kinkora, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: All those voting in favour of and supporting the amendment to the amendment, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. members the amendment to the amendment is carried.

Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Speaker: On the amendment as amended.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Mr. Myers: Standing vote.

Speaker: Question.

You can ring the –

[The bells were rung]

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, the third party is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, the government members are ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you.

All those voting against the amendment as amended, please stand.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: No, the amendment as amended.

Clerk: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: All those voting in favour of and supporting the amendment as amended, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, and the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Speaker: Hon. members, the amendment as amended has passed.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: So now we're calling for people to speak to the motion as amended.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) I put my hand up first.

Speaker: No, you didn't. No, you didn't. The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale indicated she wanted to speak to the motion. Now don't tell me who I know who's on the list.

Ms. Casey: Speaker, may I have the podium?

Speaker: Yes, you may.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of all women, I would like to thank everybody for the discussion that we've been having here this afternoon. It's been informative and I welcome the support of the members of the House in modernizing the Legislative Assembly and making it more inclusive and open for more people to come into this House.

While I was writing my notes on this motion – and I'd like to thank the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women for bringing it forward – I wanted to tell people that this past summer I had the pleasure, with 21 friends, to bike across the Confederation Trail – tip-to-tip, Tignish to Elmira – 273 kilometers. The Confederation Trail is one of the most beautiful pieces of tourism infrastructure that we have, but it's a result of the rail line being taken up in our province. In fact, 1968 was the last passenger train on the Island and all the trains were removed in 1989.

So the reason I mention my bike trip, and the trains, and the removal of the trains is that we all heard earlier in the debate that the train schedule and the House sitting hours were around the train schedule to bring all the men to the House at the time.

Did you know that since 1905, there have been five changes in the sitting hours of this House? 1905: the House sat from Monday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. In 1922: Monday

through Friday, 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. until adjourned. In 1964, Tuesday through Friday, the House sat 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., but by sessional or special order, if the House sat in the morning, it recessed from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. – Maybe the called that a siesta, but the House did not sit past midnight in 1964. Then again in 1966, the House sat from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and then 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Wednesdays it sat from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Thursdays 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Friday, 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

But then the last change was in 1995 – it wasn't that long ago, but what I want to make a point is that these are not the traditional or the historical – we haven't been sitting for the same hours since this House opened. 1995 we changed to our present hours – Tuesday, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; Wednesday, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Thursday, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; and Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. So I just wanted the House to know that there have been many changes since 1905 to the rules of the House.

There has been talk for too many years about changing the evening hours of the House and I'm all for public participating in the legislative process, but I'm all for a motion that allows more Islanders to do just that.

There were a lot of people voiced their opinions as to whether or not they're for or against the evening sitting of the House and we all know evening sittings are not broadcast on Eastlink and some Islanders do not have access to a computer to watch it online, so daytime sittings allow for more access for Islanders to participate. There are a number of members of this House who have young families with school-aged children and it's not just current members of this House, I think of those who are going to follow us in the future.

I know the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale spoke that we're making rules today. I'm not concerned about us in this House; what I'm concerned about is attracting people into the future. You know what? I kind of thought – and I know some of the members on the other side were

chatting about this, but when I look around the House and – when I was first elected – I’ve been involved in six election campaigns and when I was first elected, my boys were four and seven. They’re now 25 and 28. So, Mr. Speaker, whenever we can open the doors and drop the barriers for anybody who wants to sit in this House, I am all for that.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, May 3rd, at 2:00 p.m.

I also thought – when I looked around this House, I thought what I may do is – I look at the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, and the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque who just had twins within the last eight months. The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale is a young, single mom. The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development has a young child and the minister of education. Everybody – I look around this House – the majority of the people in this House have young children, so they get what it means to be sitting here in the House in the evening when there are things going on.

When I first knocked on doors, I did not step one foot inside Province House. Being an Islander by choice, I wasn’t part of a school class that went to visit Province House or knew what the hours of the House were and actually, as a matter of fact, I had no idea that there were night sittings in the House when I knocked on the doors.

Mr. Speaker, at this point, I’ll call the hour.

Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, just for clarification: It was brought to my attention that I said that it was the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale who asked to put their name on the list, but it really was the member who just spoke: the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, May 3rd, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.