

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to colleagues here and visitors in the gallery; those watching online or by television. This is the first day of June. It would be hard to imagine a more glorious June one than we have today. Our province is in its fullness. We don't have to look too far to see the many blessings we have on this great Prince Edward Island.

I want to welcome to the gallery, Marlene Hunt, a former councillor in the great Town of Cornwall; Eddie Lund, who has been very regular this latter part of the sitting, and Wayne McMillan, who has been here quite a bit.

May I say, of course, a welcome and greetings to my constituents in District 9 York-Oyster Bed.

Tomorrow, will be Reading Town street, reading street on Queen Street here in Charlottetown. A lot of activities planned for Saturday afternoon from 1:00 to 5:00 and an opportunity to celebrate in its fullest sense what it is to read, and to have people, who create the works that we have a chance to read and be stirred by and to learn from. That will be rain or shine. That will probably be true for just about everything that's to happen on Prince Edward Island this weekend. And there would probably be a majority that would welcome the rain.

On the point of people, who create things to read, I was late getting in, but I certainly want to add my voice to those, who spoke about Harry Baglole early on Wednesday; was a colleague at UPEI, and a friend and someone known in many capacities, and a great contributor, as others have said, to our province and it will be an enduring contribution. Certainly, consistent with the idea of reading week, that when you record your thoughts or put them on the record they can outlive you.

On that note, I also want to say a word about Satadal Dasgupta, who was hired at UPEI the year the university opened and taught there for several decades; was a great teacher; prolific writer, nine books, and contributor to the community; a charter member of the Prince Edward Island chapter, the Prince Edward Island Indo-Canadian Association, and a great contributor to the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation. Including, a significant period of time as chair of the foundation.

I may close and expect we'll hear more about this as we get on into next week, with a word about the Vegas Golden Knights and game three coming up tomorrow night. I understand that in the legislative parking lot there – some of us have the logo of the Golden Knights with: Go Turk go. I think the further west in the province you go the more you'll see them, pretty well every vehicle. It's a great weekend that I note Prince Edward Islanders from tip-to-tip will be cheering on a native son, a team of native sons and looking forward to a great series.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd just like to draw attention to the House some very significant events that are happening over the weekend.

First and foremost, as the Premier said, it's June 1st today, and this evening at 5:00 p.m. at Glen Stewart school they'll be hosting their annual spring fling, which is, of course, one of the major fundraising activities for the schools in Stratford.

I know there's a big push being put forward right now to build a new playground over in Stratford between the two schools. I'd encourage everyone that's available to stop by and participate in this very fun activity.

Also, I'd like to acknowledge today that it's World Milk Day. Certainly, there's a very active and thriving industry, dairy industry here on Prince Edward Island. Not only are our tremendous farming community, but, of course, it's supported tremendously by

ADL, which we talked about that wonderful company here in the Legislative Assembly earlier this session. I'd just like to thank our farmers and dairy producers for the tremendous work that they do.

I'd also like to acknowledge an event that I'll be attending this evening. It's the certified professional accounts graduation ceremony and that's taking place at the Florence Simmons Performance Hall this evening at Holland College. I congratulate all of the individuals on achieving this tremendous level in their professional career.

Last but not least, I'd like to extend my sincere condolences to Rose Krempig on the passing of her husband Gunter, yesterday or, I'm sorry, just the last day-and-a-half. I got to know Gunter over the last couple of years very well. I had many wonderful conversations with him at his kitchen table. As I said, I'd just like to extend my deepest and most sincere condolences to Rose and the family.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and everyone to the gallery.

I just wanted to rise and today was the 50th season that Chez Yvonne's Restaurant opened in Cavendish for the year. I wanted to wish them a great opening day and congratulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to welcome Wayne, Eddie and Marlene Hunt, who is a neighbour of mine, actually, and a great advocate for the environment.

I'd also like to just mention that West River United Church will be holding their annual ham and scallop potato dinner on Saturday.

Also, reiterate the hon. Leader of the Opposition's – the 18 graduates from the CPA convocation today. PEI has always been known as one of the top placements in the country for this. We cherish that acknowledgement and congratulations to all those graduating.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. members, I'm very pleased to announce that beginning today, closed captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing community will be available on video broadcast of House proceedings, including Eastlink television.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. members, this new initiative further advances the Assembly's commitment to ensuring that the work of the Legislature is made available as broadly as possible.

Thank you, hon. members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

On a Tear

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I was first elected, my constituents told me they had three priorities; quality education system; accessible health care, and that the economy was going in the right direction.

I'm pleased to report to all Islanders and to everyone who is listening what regional and national publications have said on numerous occasions that Prince Edward Island is on a tear.

Our government has been committed to and focused on Islanders, and the statistics speak for themselves. Canadian Federation of Independent Business ranked Prince Edward Island number one in confidence rates for small businesses at 70.5%. We're ranked number one in the country for early childhood education according to Atkinson's

Centre research. Retail sales are up 7.4% in 2017. Our exports grew 4.6% over the last year at a whopping \$1.38 billion of our economy.

Our tourism industry has its fourth consecutive record year. That's \$447 million towards the economy. Seventy-seven hundred full-time jobs and over one million overnight stays in 2017.

We are in the top three strongest economies in Canada for the second year in a row, and manufacturing has grown seven straight years. This week, the Conference Board of Canada forecasted that Prince Edward Island and British Columbia will lead all provinces in 2018.

Because of our powerful economy and responsible spending, we're able to reinvest in what Islanders need most. The economy hasn't seen this strength in a very long time, which is why I am proud to say with pride, Prince Edward Island is on a tear.

We have invested an additional \$32.5 million in health care to increase care for those who need it most; new investments in mental health to help those dealing with complex issues. We've also made historic investments in post-secondary education. Over a thousand students will go to school for free. We raised the student loan forgiveness to \$3,500 per year, and a new Island Advantage bursary will be giving an additional \$3,600 to students for a four-year program. Simply put, we are making it easier for Islanders to get the education they need to succeed.

More people are working on Prince Edward Island than ever before: 4,000 jobs have been created over the past two years, and 3,500 of those are full-time. Wages have grown over 3.6% making us a leader across the nation. Convention centres and tourism operators are booked week after week, and people love to come to Prince Edward Island.

Our government has kept one goal in mind during our mandate: to better our communities so that everyone can succeed. Prince Edward Islanders are getting ahead together. I've said it twice and I'll say it to anyone who will listen: Prince Edward Island is on a tear.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

ALS Awareness Month

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize ALS Awareness Month. Thirty remarkable days: 30 inspirational stories; 30 chances to seize the days. That's what ALS awareness month is all about.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, ALS, is a progressive neuromuscular disease in which nerve cells die and leave voluntary muscles paralyzed. The senses are unimpaired and the intellect may remain unaffected. ALS can strike anyone, male or female, of any ethnic origin and of any age. Usual onset is in middle age, but some have been diagnosed in their teens.

Approximately, 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians live with ALS. Every day two or three Canadians die of the disease. ALS is the most common cause of neurological death in Canada.

I would like to a moment and talk about the ALS PEI society and the great work they do. In their beginning years they focused on fundraising and awareness. Since then they have evolved and developed a support services program. The society then became involved in the provincial palliative care planning committee.

They have also started a wonderful relationship, which has grown substantially with home care support teams and they have reached out to hospice volunteers.

Although, there is no cure for ALS, they work together as a family with service clubs, private industry and health care providers to help Islanders and their families affected by ALS.

As June is ALS awareness month, let's seize the opportunity and spread the word about ALS. Donate to the cause. Volunteer or participate.

The 15th Annual Walk for ALS is June 9th at Victoria Park here in Charlottetown and the registration is at 9:00 a.m.

Never take any moment for granted.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Referral of referendum bill to committee

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, the referendum bill has been on the floor now for days with little to no progress. Will you refer this bill to the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal to work through this gridlock?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I would strongly defer with the premise of the question, which is that we're not making progress. We are here. We are working in committee of the whole. We are listening to each other. We are taking account of what we're hearing.

I don't think we're anywhere close to a gridlock on this and we appreciate the opportunity to be here as 27 legislators doing our job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again to the Premier: Premier, the referendum bill is flawed, but it can be improved. Will you allow the all-party democratic renewal committee to consult Islanders on how to strengthen this bill?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I believe that what we've seen from the time this bill has been presented and, indeed, I read very carefully the report from the

Attorney General of British Columbia that was released on Wednesday to see that there were strong similarities between the analysis there and the direction that is recommended there.

Our bill and its architecture and its commitment to have an even playing field; to have a strong, publicly supported dialogue and to enable Prince Edward Islanders to make a clear choice on this question.

I believe that's what we are doing here in this Chamber and I look forward to that continued work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Following question again to the Premier: Premier, government has had two years to prepare for this bill, and clearly it's not ready.

Amendments on referendum bill

Will you send this bill to committee so that the bill's many amendments can be considered?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we are here as an all-party committee, committee of the whole. There are legislatures around the world that would envy the opportunity that we have to be here; to work together; to do it in a collegial fashion. In fact, I would say, anybody watching what we have been doing in this Chamber over the last week or several weeks would have to say that we're getting our work done. That we're taking it to heart. That we have, indeed, the referendum bill being an example of something that comes to the floor; that engages the public. There is time given. There is an exchange. There are amendments. That, indeed, is the ultimate work that we have as a Legislative Assembly and I look forward to continuing with that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, to the Premier. The stalemate and Green-Red partisan finger pointing is why I favour a more consensus approach.

Partisan gridlock and consensus style of government

Isn't this partisan gridlock a great reason that we should have a more consensus style of government here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we've been trying to cut back on finger pointing, and I think we've done a good job of that in this sitting since we've brought this bill forward.

I just want to pick up on the characterization of the Leader of the Opposition. We are here as three parties with an important job to do for the people of our province and for the history of our province and for the choices that will be made in terms of our electoral system.

If the Leader of the Opposition feels that they're under engaged, then I welcome that further engagement –

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: – because we are here. That bill is – it's not actually all that extensive.

I believe that what has been done so far indicates that we are perfecting this bill and that is exactly our work in committee of the whole and I look forward to continuing with that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again to the Premier: The bruised egos and the heated rhetoric in this debate will make consensus unfortunately very unlikely.

You have three choices. One, continue down this path of gridlock. Two, stifle debate by forcing closure. Three, find consensus by sending the bill to committee. Then, deal with it in the fall. Which will it be, Mr. Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I would not use the word 'gridlock' whatsoever to describe, in fact, that seems to be what the Leader of the Opposition is concerned about is that there are, in fact, changes that are being made through the process of engagement here in this Legislature.

The public has had its say. Or, is having its say on this. I believe that is the legislative process. It is, indeed, unfolding in a very active –

Mr. Trivers: Free-for-all.

Premier MacLauchlan: – sense. It is being – this legislation will be, when it is finally adopted, a bill that has been perfected through the legislative process here in this Chamber and together with the people of Prince Edward Island.

I believe that the result will be as the purpose clause says: it will be an opportunity and a vehicle for Prince Edward Islanders to express a clear view and to achieve an unambiguous result and let's continue working on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Investor in Anne in China

Question to the Premier: How long were you an investor in Anne in China with Frank Zhou?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's Frank Zhou. I was an investor in that until I became a member, at least until I went into public life. That would be until the winter, probably, February of 2015.

That likely started in 2011 or 2012, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anne in China is a business venture that holds the exclusive publishing rights to *Anne of Green Gables* books in China.

The Premier, Frank Zhou and their spouses have been partners in this venture for many years.

Anne in China and PNP program

Question to the Premier: Did Anne in China ever access the PNP program while you were business partners with Frank Zhou?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, if it did it was not to my knowledge.

Let me say a word about Anne in China. It was similar to other things I was involved in. It's to find opportunities for Prince Edward Island to do well through business ventures that will be an opportunity to prosper here on Prince Edward Island and for Prince Edward Island to do well on the world stage.

That's exactly what that translation; that new edition; that much acclaimed quality edition of Anne in China or (Indistinct) as it's known in Chinese did, and continues to do for Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The very seam of my questions are, in fact, what the Premier's talking about, that there was a significant amount of business growth during the time that he was partners with Frank Zhou in China. Unfortunately, it was just Frank Zhou's businesses that have grown, and while they were business partners in Anne in China, Frank Zhou's PNP files continued to grow and grow.

PNP growth in Sunrise re: selling Anne in China

Question to the Premier: Did the PNP growth in Sunrise help your business venture with Frank Zhou sell more *Anne of Green Gables* books in China?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the growth of *Anne of Green Gables* in China goes back to L.M. Montgomery; a great piece of work in our province, one that has achieved many successes on various fronts, including the recognition this morning of the opening of Chez Yvonne's Restaurant.

L.M. Montgomery's work has continued to achieve for Prince Edward Island, not just in an economic sense, but in a cultural sense, in building our identity. I celebrate all of that and I'm happy to have been part of the group that took that initiative to the world's most populous country of now on the order of 1.4 billion people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier doesn't want to talk about his relationship with Frank Zhou and the fact that while Frank continued to get more and more PNP files, their business in China that he had with Frank grew.

Presentation, which I have here, presentation that was made to your Cabinet eight months ago, and I'll table it in the House later today, says that between 2011 and 2017, Frank Zhou processed the second-largest number of immigrants through PNP in this province.

But, he has a success rate of only one in three.

Frank Zhou success rate

Question to the Premier: Why did government increase Frank Zhou's PNP market share when his success rate was so poor?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the matter that's now being raised was judged according to known criteria, to a scoring system that reflected the RFP process that the minister spoke about yesterday, that was assessed by officials in the agencies that are responsible for immigration; that reflected the improved program that has been spoken about over a period of time in this House, and by the time that comes to Cabinet, it is a proposition that is put forward by those officials.

I believe, and I believe the minister has spoken to this; this has been done in a rigorous way and in a way that will achieve the objectives of our province in terms of immigration and enhanced retention and success of immigrants coming to our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, this is all about the success rate and that's what these questions are now about, if you'd listen to my questions a little more carefully you would hear that what I'm saying is that according to a Cabinet briefing that your Cabinet received eight months ago, that only one third of Frank Zhou's clients are fulfilling their requirements through the PNP program. Which means, two thirds are forfeiting all of their money to the finance minister, which is probably what you guys wanted to happen anyways.

Sunrise's PNP success rate

Question to the Premier: Is that why you have taken the leave-it-be approach to

Sunrise's poor PNP success rate, because you're cashing in big time on it?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understood from the line of questions from the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters yesterday that he was concerned that we weren't admitting or drawing enough of the business investor applicants, so I guess it comes back to which way do you want it?

Let me be very clear and it's been said here many times, this program is one that started back in the 1990s. It has been something that has evolved and developed and made better, and we are now, on an expression-of-interest basis, achieving a much higher rate of retention. We have a much higher rate indeed in the upwards of 75% who are people who are coming to our province as workers who are tied to, or coming because they have a job.

We are achieving – last year at 1.9% the highest rate of immigration on a per-capita basis of any province in this country and I believe everybody in this House should celebrate that and work to continue to improve it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's scary, the Premier's lack of depth on this issue and the fact that he's trying to trail back to what I said yesterday and turn it into something it's not. I wish he would follow along like a good student, way closer than he is, because he's not at all getting what I have said about PNP for this entire session.

This Premier is allowing a crooked program to remain crooked because he's cashing in on it. That's the problem. It's not about how many people – if the minister of economic development ratchets up the program and let's more in, we want them to stay and not default. That's what immigration is. It's supposed to help Prince Edward Island by growing its population. That's the things

that you have talked about. It's not about stealing immigrants' money and putting it in your coffers so you can spend it wildly and pretend that you balanced the budget.

Premier, you and your spouse, and Frank Zhou and his spouse, have been business partners for a long, long time and you know this. You took *Anne of Green Gables* to China with Frank Zhou. He is the one who is pushing through the most immigrants who aren't staying. So, 33% of his clients aren't staying and he's putting through the second-highest number of immigrants in the program. Think of that and you let him stay there.

Money to province through PNP

Is your cozy business relationship with Frank Zhou the reason why you allow him to stay there, or is it because you're desperate for the money that he is bringing into this province through crooked dealings?

Ms. Biggar: What was the question?

Speaker: Hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I heard you saying that somebody was stealing money and putting it in their own coffers. That, to me, is a serious accusation and I would think you should withdraw that recall.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't recall exactly saying that, but if that's what I said, I'll paraphrase and say that they're allowing immigrants to default so they can feed their wild spending habits.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's been said before and I'll say it again; indeed, it does seem to be the very track that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters followed yesterday, that indeed there is a more select group of investor immigrants who are coming to Prince Edward Island under this upgraded, advanced, evolved program that was evolved and reformed in 2016 into 2017 with the advice of outside reviewers. There was a study by, was it Grant Thornton – and we had acted on those. We have had the Auditor General look at this. We've acted on those.

What Prince Edward Island is achieving today in immigration through workers, through people who are coming here with particular skill sets, for people who are coming as investors and settling throughout our province and staying, is a model that has benefitted from the program that has been in place, and from the fact that people around the world know about Prince Edward Island and it is actually a very big part of what the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point was talking about, and that the opposition doesn't want to hear about, and it's the prosperity and the success, and the increasing global position of our province.

That's exactly what Anne in China was about, and I'm very proud of that too, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have been told that road workers across the districts are in limbo because the allocations have not yet been finalized.

Roadwork allocations across province

Question to the minister: In your district, apparently the allocations have been taken care of. Why have you been allocating road work to your own district but not other districts across Prince Edward Island?

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

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) soapbox derby (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have started with some road work, which is under the 50/50 funding that we made application through, which went out to tender for different segments of that 50/50 new Build Canada funding. That work has started. There's a notice out today that yes, Grand River is started; Urbainville is started. There are some other sections across Prince Edward Island. Those were all tendered out in the middle of the winter for work that

would take place under that 50/50 eligible funding.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well Mr. Speaker, I'm being told the districts cannot get a handle on what roadwork is going to be done in their districts.

Yes, the minister is right. Work did start in Grand River with a 1.5 resurfacing project in the minister's riding.

Question to the minister: What made this project so urgent that it had to be done right away?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I have pointed out, these are projects that went out to tender in the middle of the winter so that work could get started as soon as the spring season was upon us.

We're working in Urbainville. We're working in Grand River. We're working in – I'd have to go back and look at all the other lists that's out there.

We will be moving forward, in addition to that, with other roadwork based on the priorities we get across the province from different districts. The road supervisors are out there working across the districts looking at the other road conditions.

These were projects –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) Twitter so no one could –

Ms. Biggar: – that were identified –

Mr. Myers: – see them.

Ms. Biggar: – last fall that we had to apply for to Build Canada for approval and those tenders after that approval came out went out to tender and these are all across Prince Edward Island and we're glad to have that new funding.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have Twitter tenders and we have Facebook tenders. It has been said urgent – it must have been an urgent priority because the minister was on Facebook saying that the paver was coming through.

Finalized allocation for road paving

Question to the transportation minister: Has your district's riding allocation been finalized yet, or is it just totally minister's discretion when other ridings need paving done?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, actually our paving staff have just come back on –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – our maintenance and workers have just come on for the season starting the end of April. We'll be moving forward with work.

All that tender work for recap also goes out to tender to the construction companies, which hire individuals right across PEI to give them jobs for the summer.

We've got new funding arrangements with the federal government. As I noted, those went out last fall. All those areas were identified last year. We went through a public tender process for those.

We will be doing our priorities across PEI for other paving now that staff are on.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, let's tell you the truth, okay?

They've always tendered out for paving. It's always been done for years and years ago. The different companies and say, what's your best price on paving across the Island. That's all that's been done.

What we're talking about here, minister, is the priorities. Who makes the decision? It looks like the more than 250 that turned out at the District 23 nomination got your attention.

Road work held up across province

Question to the transportation minister: Do you think it's fair to have district roadwork held up across the Island – and that's exactly what we're talking about– while you try and shore up support in your district with a paver?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I noted, it's great to have people all across PEI come to my district and spend money there. I'm glad to have them.

Again, going back to this process in regard to putting tenders out, the actual recap is tendered out, public tenders to those construction companies –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) priorities.

Ms. Biggar: – that then go out. When those allocations are looked at as to what –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – priorities are in need based on the traffic on that road; the winter breakup on that road and, the locations of those roads, we will then go forward. Now, that the Budget is finally passed and we get out of the Legislature, we'll be able to move forward on – we just passed the final appropriation act the other day.

An Hon. Member: Oh, yeah.

Ms. Biggar: We can't start spending money on that particular side of the budget –

Mr. Fox: Weeks ago.

Ms. Biggar: – which is operational –

Mr. MacKay: You have the paver there (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – until we get out there out and get the Budget passed, which we're finally –

Mr. Fox: We're talking operating budget here –

Ms. Biggar: – able to do.

Mr. Fox: – not the capital.

Mr. Myers: The capital (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Hon. leader, you do have my good graces (Indistinct) for a little longer preamble.

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

Yesterday, during debate the justice minister stated that there have been media and social media reports that show and I quote: Concern or inaccuracy over some of the discussion.

I pulled up the exchange from Hansard to see where the misunderstanding came from. I asked the Speaker's indulgence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I feel it's really important that we have – that we read back the entire exchange.

I asked the justice minister, "So does that mean that a newspaper or another media company would not be able to produce, for example, a special issue on the referendum if they wanted to? If it was a particular issue specifically about the referendum? Or an insert, for example, which often happens on these things, would they be allowed to do that?"

The minister answered, "It would depend on the circumstances."

I said, "Okay, so perhaps not."

The minister said, "Perhaps not, yeah."

I said, "Okay."

The minister said, "And perhaps they would."

I said, "And do you think those sorts of limits, if indeed that is a limit, you think that's justifiable under the charter?"

Minister, “Yeah.”

Me, “You do?”

Minister, “Yeah.”

Me, “Okay. Can I ask Gary...” Gary Demeulenaere “...if he feels the same way?”

The minister, “I just answered the question. Gary’s here to assist in our answers and that’s the position that we’ve put forward.”

Attack on right to free press

A question to the minister of justice: How could a rational person not interpret that exchange as anything other than an attack on our right to a free press?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice of Public Safety.

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

Perhaps, the hon. member should have asked for a few more minutes to go right back to when I said: anybody that’s doing business in their ordinary course would have nothing to worry about.

What we are putting forward here is a program that will allow for a fulsome, open and transparent debate on this subject. We value freedom of the press. That is what we are saying. We have made provisions for the press to be able to do their jobs. We value their job in a free and democratic society.

We are putting forward a great program that we feel will allow Islanders to express their wishes, their desires to sharpen their understanding of the options that are available to them, including through the help of the press.

We feel that the program that we are putting forward will allow them to do that without having the ability of outside money or big money to come in and unduly influence the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister there are currently 14 amendments. You might refer to that as a fist full of amendments proposed for this bill and you plan to introduce even more.

Flawed bill re: complete overhaul

When will you admit that this bill is too flawed to proceed on the floor and it needs a complete overhaul?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

We had an interview this morning on CBC and I made this comment then, and I, maybe, will even expand on it now. I marvel at the suggestion that any legislation is, quote-on-quote, too flawed to proceed.

This member went out of here last fall saying that everybody in here had the job to come to the table everyday to work professionally towards an outcome in terms of the legislation that we have before us on behalf of our constituents.

It’s in that spirit that we have brought these amendments forward. We are very happy to work with the third party and the official opposition and the Member from West Royalty-Springvale to be able to put the best bill possible forward for Prince Edward Islanders.

It’s our intent and it is the objective of this process to establish a process that Islanders feel confident that will result in a fair and equal playing field and result in a clear, unambiguous answer to a clear question.

That’s what we’re trying to achieve and we hope everybody else in here will help us out with that process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, at any time, it’s difficult to deliberate and debate legislation. It’s

particularly difficult when an amendment comes forward in the middle of debate. It's particularly difficult when you have 14 active amendments on a single bill and that's what we're faced with here.

With our next election a year-and-a-half away, there is absolutely no rush to pass this bill immediately, at all.

Referral of referendum bill to committee (further)

To the same minister: Will you send this bill to the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal for review and public input and ask them to report back to the House in November of this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I'm happy to see all of the members of this Legislature here working on behalf of their constituents.

The hon. member had two and a half or three hours to open the debate in respect of this bill. We were all very patient. We all listened to what he had to say. We went on debating the bill at length. We've been at it for four or five hours at this point in time. We've been listening to Prince Edward Islanders. We've taken the input. We've begun to craft amendments based on the input that we're getting, and this is all the work of the Legislature.

It's a point that the hon. member himself made last fall. It's one that we certainly abide by, and we are very happy to be here doing the work of Prince Edward Islanders. Who's in a rush? We are in the second-longest – we might even be the first longest, as far as I'm aware of, but we're in the second-longest sitting of the Legislature and we're content to be here until we get this work done, and we're content to get that program in place so that Prince Edward Islanders can move forward and have confidence in a fair and equal process to take them forward to a referendum.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, my question today is to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

At the beginning of the spring session, I asked the minister about the department's work in assessing the suitability of Province House as the future long-term home of the Legislative Assembly. At the time, the minister said the staff was cataloguing current and future requirements, and it was the department's intent to have Province House meet the needs of the Legislative Assembly now and into the future.

Cost to re-establish LA in Province House (further)

I'm assuming the timeline is tight for this important project. Has the department made a decision whether or not Province House will meet the future operational needs of this Assembly, and will substantial provincial investment be needed to meet those requirements?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see the work that's happening next-door to us to proceed going forward.

As we know, but maybe Islanders don't know, the legislative precinct is made up of the Legislature, the Coles Building, the J. Angus MacLean Building, and also, we're using the rectory.

We feel that we have those facilities to work towards making sure that we meet the needs of staff, of Legislative Assembly members, and we are working towards that goal.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Timeline for work on Province House

Minister, what is the timeline for decisions to be made, and has any consideration been given to other options given these tight deadlines?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The work, the schedule of work that is happening is on schedule, working towards completion. We have moved forward with taking steps to move the public archives out of the fourth floor of this Coles Building, so that will free up more space for the third party and for Elections PEI. So, those things are on target to move forward. We've taken immediate steps to start that process and again, the schedule of work for Province House is on target and we will work towards those targets for completion.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I was pleased to hear that you have put \$3 million in your budget to start the process for the demolition of the Prince Edward Home. The site, which is adjacent to the residence of the Lieutenant Governor, and across the street from government buildings and it has great potential for a number of uses. I'm sure there will be great public interest in this property.

Former PE Home property re: location for LA

Should it become clear that provincial costs to reinstate the Assembly at Province House due to operational compromises, would your department consider the Prince Edward Home land as the future home for our legislative operations?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had this conversation when I was at the table and the member from that area asked me this question. We made a commitment,

yes, to put money in the budget to have that there for the demolition process.

Again, I indicated we have to look at the energy from waste/heat system that's connected to that building. We made a commitment also, that we would consult with the community. So that's where we are. We will honour that commitment before anything is used on that particular property.

Again, the project for the Legislative Assembly, Province House, is on target and we will be working to incorporate the needed space for the work of the Legislative Assembly into the existing precinct that we have.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Minister, I have six incorporated municipalities within my district and some are concerned that the changes in the *Municipal Government Act* is pushing the smaller communities in rural PEI to amalgamate. Some of these constituents have expressed concern over whether or not this is the best option for them moving forward.

Forced amalgamation in West Prince

Minister, will these communities be forced to amalgamate together? Can you please tell me whether they'll be forced or not?

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

Mr. Trivers: Good question.

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

Communities are the backbone of Prince Edward Island. They are what makes Prince Edward Island the unique place it is today, and that's why we have over one million tourists coming to Prince Edward Island each and every year, to see our uniqueness in these areas.

I can say right from that first: No, we are not going to force municipalities to amalgamate. No, we're not going to force communities to amalgamate. There is a process in the *Municipal Government Act* where people can get together, study the options of coming together. But, it is in their way – it is in their hands and when a decision comes to go, there is an opportunity to go to IRAC to hear the hearing and to make a recommendation to Executive Council.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm so glad to hear that they won't be forced into it.

But, these communities just feel that they're getting along fine just the way they are now – some of these communities feel like that.

The regulations that are in place are expecting communities to get their affairs in order within five years of the act being proclaimed.

Requirement and timeline of act

Minister, what happens when the five years are up and some communities have still not met the requirements laid out in the act?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for that question.

I know he works extremely hard for his communities, as all members in the Legislature.

There's a five-year transition period. We're working with the communities. We're working with the federation of municipalities to assist communities to meet the requirements of the act. But, if some communities cannot meet the requirements of the act, in no way are we going to force them into it.

We're going to continue to work with them. If it's meaning that the department or the

federation of municipalities set up some sort of a centralized system to assist communities in their accounting or in their telephone inquiries, we're open to those options.

What we want to do; we have great communities right across Prince Edward Island. We want to work with those communities and make Prince Edward Island the great place it is, to live, work, and play, and raise a family.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the requirements includes hiring an administrator for 20 hours a week, in other words, to hold all-day elections.

Administrators and election expenses

Minister, what will happen to these communities if they are unable to afford both the hiring and the election expenses involved under the act? Will government help them?

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

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

That is another question I'm asked quite often when I'm out and about.

There are new technologies, there are the computer systems now, there are telephone systems – there are all kinds of technology out there that it could be a virtual office. We're not going to force municipalities to hire somebody for 20 hours a week. If we can come up with solutions that communities can work together – or if one community wants to share an office in another community's area, we're open to anything.

Our objective here is to work with the rural communities right across Prince Edward Island and continue to make Prince Edward Island one of the best places to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's come to our attention that there was an urgent emergency memo sent out yesterday that details the lack of ER coverage at the Kings County Memorial Hospital in June.

Closures at KCMH emergency room (further)

Can the minister of health confirm if this is true?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Over the past, I'll say, number of months there has been situations where the Kings County emergency room where we haven't been able to provide physician coverage. I met with a room full of people a couple of Friday nights ago, and Dr. Scott Campbell from the Montague area, he's an ER doc; he's a doc from that area who met with the community to inform about a new process moving forward where there will be a triage of patients at a particular time of the day if the room has so many people in it where the frontline staff, the nurses and the doctors, will triage patients to determine the urgency of their illness. If they can come back the next day, they will be asked to do so.

What we're trying to do is provide sustainable ER coverage for the Kings County region. There's a vast amount of population down there that we're trying to provide health care service to in a very effective way. So, this is a process that's been in place for some time and we're going to move forward with a new plan after today, June 1st.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't hear of other places in PEI with this many closures and I hope that the minister knows how important this is to Eastern PEI.

I understand this memo details that we are lacking coverage on June 3rd, 4th, 5th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 16th, 18th, 19th, the 22nd, the 25th, the 26th, and the 29th of June.

Mr. Myers: Holy smokes.

Mr. MacEwen: It's serious. We don't have walk-in clinics down there.

Minister, what are we going to do to cover that amount of time?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the past, there have been indicated days where physicians were unable to fill their requirement in the ER. Physicians from other regions, from the Queens County region, have stepped up and covered those spots for those physicians from that area.

The member has indicated a fair number of spots, but those are out the road, down into the future. We will be dealing with other physicians from all over Prince Edward Island to determine if anybody can step up to fill in the needs that are there.

This is not a unique situation. We have had several in the past where there would have been a run of three or four or five, but physicians stepped up to fill them in and we might have ultimately ended up with one uncovered. This is not uncommon.

I would anticipate that other physicians from other areas, including the QEH, will step up to fill most of those spots, Mr. Speaker, if not all.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly isn't down the road. We're talking about Sunday, Monday and Tuesday to start with. That's not down the road. That's this weekend.

I had mentioned before about scope of practice for pharmacists and looking at other

options, and I hope the minister is taking some of these suggestions to heart.

There is a nursing staff down there at the Kings County Memorial Hospital that is going to be working these shifts. They're going to be there. We all know that nurses aren't using their full scope of practice either. In fact, in Ontario RNs are now prescribing medications as well.

Expanding scope of practice for RNs

Is the health minister looking at expanding the scope of practice for the nurses down in Montague?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The situation that is in Kings County Memorial is unfortunate. But, at that meeting that night Dr. Campbell talked about physician burnout. We don't want that to occur. Doctors are working significantly long shifts per day when they are their ER duty, so we're looking at adjusting those hours for those physicians so that it's not a 14-hour day. It will be a seven-hour coverage split in two.

There was a lot of conversation that night about nurse practitioners being a potential possibility. There was also discussion on walk-in clinics as being something that could be looked at down the road. None of those options have been turned away or shut down. But, currently as of today, we will be providing those split shifts for the ER physicians. We will be providing opportunities for frontline staff to triage those that their illness is not of an urgent nature that can come back tomorrow. They will be prioritized.

But all in all, it's about maintaining our physicians – are not burnt-out. Our frontline staff is not burnt out, that when you go for your ER experience; you're being met by not exhausted doctors, by doctors that are well rested for your patient safety.

It's something that we will continue to work on. This will be the first stage to see how

this works out. All options are still options. We are looking at everything, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no walk-in coverage in Souris for the next two weeks. There is a nurse practitioner in Morell one day a week for the next two weeks. The ER has a lack of coverage. We know the percentage of non-emergency people that are going to the Montague ER because we don't have the physician coverage in the rest of Kings County.

The minister keeps talking about it's hard to get doctors, and they're meeting, and this kind of stuff. We know. Sometimes, that stuff is out of your control. But, guess what's in your control? Guess what you can actually go and do as minister?

You can work on the scope of practice of all these health professionals that we have been talking about. You can actually go and listen to our ideas here. You can listen to the professionals' ideas that they keep meeting with you all the time. You can actually effect change that could change this right now and get these people the help they need, if you take the leadership.

Minister: Will you take the leadership and do this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I take my role as minister of health quite seriously. I have met, in the past, and will continue to meet into the future with frontline RNs; frontline BNs; frontline LPNs. I've met with pharmacists about expanding scope of practice.

Everybody is very passionate about the work they do that are working the health care system now. All frontline staff have a primary focus on patient health. I will continue those conversations to see where we can strengthen scope of practice for all frontline professionals.

There are issues that are out of our control. That is for certain, but we can work with the frontline people how best we can provide safe, quality, efficient health care for all residents of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

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

Fed/Prov Infrastructure Funding

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about Prince Edward Island's strong relationship with all levels of government and with the community organizations all across the province. We know that when we work together and we pool our resources, our province's small size allows us to make big things happen.

We surprise people with how many things we do well, especially compared with larger metropolitan places. We can exceed their expectations and sometimes our own, too. That's why Prince Edward Island is the mighty Island.

Our Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy works diligently to leverage federal funding for infrastructure projects for our province.

Since 2015, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$218 million in our provincial highways; public transit; water and wastewater projects. We also successfully persuaded our federal partner to change the eligibility criteria for road funding for, not just our province, but for communities across Canada.

Our infrastructure projects have meaningful impacts for Islanders. Jobs are created. Islanders in their communities see an improvement in their quality of life and they support our province's continued economic growth in various sectors. We know that we must be strategic and responsible when spending Islanders' tax dollars. That is exactly what we do.

With that in mind, later today, Member of Parliament, Sean Casey, for Charlottetown,

and I will be making another great infrastructure investment announcement for our Island. I invite all of the hon. members of this Legislative Assembly and the public to join us today at the Port of Charlottetown at 1:30 p.m. for that announcement.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks about \$218 million that has been spent since 2015 on infrastructure projects across PEI. I think the question that has to be asked is: These infrastructure projects are great, but are they an equal share across the province and especially in rural PEI?

I know that when you travel out in rural PEI, we're seeing roads that aren't fit to drive on. We're seeing a recap budget that has not been increased in 10 years. We have bridges that are closed. Bridges that are limited. We're using floating bridges. We have culverts that are overflowing and they can't handle domestic – the water from rains; that are washing out highways. We're seeing a whole variety of problems across rural PEI.

The only place that I see where money is being spent, in actual fact, is actually on the Cornwall bypass. We're spending \$65 million there when we could have took that money – and yes it is federally funded, or it is federally shared, but it should have been evenly distributed across the Island to make sure our rural infrastructure –

Mr. Myers: You're right.

Mr. Fox: – can get backed up and get product to market.

Gerard Mol, up on the Freetown Road, it cost him over \$100,000 just to get three-phase power down a highway so that he could get potatoes to market. He's further being limited with the rotary going in in Newton that's going to limit the transport truck traffic being able to get to his farms. You can sit there and you can shake your head, but it's a fact because he's concerned over it.

We need to be taking a real serious look at our infrastructure across the whole Island to ensure all our products can get to market. And I'll close on one point:

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) bridge.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Back in 19 –

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) cables.

Mr. Fox: We did good on the cables.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Premier brought that up because I remember at a meeting when the Premier stated that cables would reduce electrical rates in PEI and they haven't done it yet.

Ms. Biggar: July.

Mr. Fox: I'm going to close on this one point.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: This government, back in, six years ago, purchased the Straight Crossing project – the property.

Mr. Myers: Yes, the jetty.

Mr. Fox: We can't even get ladders on the jetty for fishing guys.

Mr. Myers: I heard that. I heard that somewhere.

Mr. Fox: We've got a monstrosity sitting there that no development's been done whatsoever, and that is sad, it is sad. Any other structural project that's announced is a good project, but let's just make sure that it's distributed fairly across the Island so we can get our products to market.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Get the jetty open.

Mr. Fox: Get the jetty open.

Mr. J. Brown: I notice Souris-Elmira's not over there.

Mr. Fox: That's why the bridge comment.

Mr. Myers: He's up there opening a new bridge or something.

An Hon. Member: Probably

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) holding it up (Indistinct)

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

Openness and Transparency for Government Loans

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As part of our government's commitment to openness and transparency, we need to provide Islanders with a clear picture of how government works and how it uses their hard-earned tax dollars. And I believe Islanders should have access to a wide range of information, while still ensuring private information is protected.

Mr. Trivers: Like corporate registry without a CAPTCHA.

Mr. Palmer: In that spirit, government recently made two changes; one at the policy level and one at the legislative level. These changes speak to our efforts to be more open and transparent.

Mr. Trivers: Like publishing the air quality tests at TOSH.

Mr. Palmer: The first is a new policy that requires all loans worth \$1 million or more to be posted online. Government loans to businesses are important to the economy of our province and provide great value to Islanders. The available information will describe who is receiving the loan, the amount, the interest rate, and a description of the intended use. We think this is an excellent step that will increase the transparency of our loan portfolio and will provide better information to Islanders.

The second change comes at the legislative level. Currently, the Island Investment Development Inc. board is comprised of

four deputy ministers along with the CEOs from Finance PEI and Innovation PEI. In an effort to be more open, and transparent, and accountable, the composition of the boards will change.

Mr. Myers: That's my bill.

Ms. Biggar: That's what you call cooperation.

Mr. Roach: Working together.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: The new composition will include the CEO of Finance PEI, the Deputy Minister of Finance, and economic and development and tourism, and four private citizens who will be selected through Engage PEI.

Ms. Biggar: What an idea.

Mr. Palmer: These major changes will help to keep government accountable to the people of this province and further demonstrate Island taxpayers' dollars being used responsibly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Ms. Biggar: Great idea.

Mr. J. Brown: Come on over and just pat him right on the back.

An Hon. Member: Why didn't you think of that?

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly feel compelled to be a part of this joint announcement that we're making. It's certainly the IIDI bill that we had on the floor that was mine that passed, brought forward these changes to bring in some private Islanders into the IIDI business and I think it's a fantastic opportunity for IIDI to maybe run a little bit cleaner than they have in the past few years where they were tripping over themselves to hand out money to Kevin Murphy and failed Liberal

candidates and such and sort, which obviously I've expressed quite a bit of concern about, not only in here, but on my social media.

I think a long time ago government said this is starting the next day, but we haven't seen any yet. I know that they ran a bunch of loans through the day before they said it and some of the things aren't probably going to see the light of day ever, but one of the things that has been a concern of mine, and of many Islanders, isn't so much the fact that government is in the business of lending money. In the case where government needs to be – that's fine.

I know we talked about, at one point, the defence – because you guys were against governments being involved in the crab loans, and I know the Minister of Community Lands and Environment was quite vocal on that, but the government of the day said it was because it was an investment and it was too high of a risk that the bank wouldn't give them the money, but they thought if they could get some of the crab land and onshore here that it was an industry that could grow from it. And the members of the day that were on the Liberal side didn't believe that that was a good way to spend government money.

I'm not opposed to lending money when government is the lender of last resort, and noticeably absent from any of the things that you are going to publish about the people is, I would certainly like to see the number of lenders that turned them down for their loans so that we know that you are the lender of last resort. I would certainly like to see businesses use the bank. That's what a bank is. That's what banks are for. They lend money. And if you can't fund your project because it's too high-risk, that's okay.

Like, I don't think there are any members over here that would say that we just can cut it off to zero. Maybe some would, I don't know. But I'll speak for myself, and I'll say that if it's the lender of first resort, that's where all the issue arises. So if Kevin Murphy gets up in the morning and says I need \$7 million, I'm going to see the Premier, I have a problem with that. If he goes and sees four bankers in Charlottetown and gets says no and then goes to the

Premier, that's a policy decision that government should be making as to whether or not they want to grow business that are too high of a risk for banks to invest in. That is the time when I think that the government should be expanding their loan portfolio, not as the lender of first resort.

And just in closing, I guess like the minister opposite, I'll congratulate myself for the great work I did on the bill to bring transparency to government. It's good to see that you're finally starting to listen to some of the good common sense that comes from this side of the floor and implementing some of our great ideas. A good idea is – I'm okay if you steal my good ideas.

Mr. Trivers: Can't wait to see the amendments (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: There's an absolute great opportunity for us to grow Prince Edward Island together if you would just start listening to all the wisdom over on this side of the floor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) *Water Act* (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see such a great example of collaborative government at work. We heard yesterday about openness and transparency on government loans and there's a big gap between data sets that can be downloaded as CSV files where we can actually do analysis on the data and, as yet, what potentially this looks like – what we've seen in the past means that these come out as PDFs.

So there's a couple of things that could additionally expand the impact of this in terms of openness and transparency – would be a lowering of the loan threshold for release of information – \$1 million is high. And the bulk of the loans that go out are in a lower bracket, so down to \$100,000 or lower would be more useful.

Information on loan write-offs, as well as loans that are issued, but what happened to

those loans, when are they repaid and what are the write-off ratios? Ensuring that that data can be analyzed beyond them being printable documents, as that out of PDF the data goes to die and into what we've already seen with the great work on openness and transparency. And, obviously, continue to take greater advice from this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Presenting and Receiving Petitions.

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a presentation presented to the Cabinet on immigration that I spoke about earlier and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, 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 Economic Development and Tourism, that the 9th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 9, *An Act to Amend the Tourism PEI Act*, Bill No. 27, in committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that this House do now resolve itself into a

Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road if he would mind coming up and continue on chairing this bill.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Tourism PEI Act*.

Hon. members, last evening we left with the minister giving just a brief description of the bill and so we had some questions, and it was requested that night that we move forward section by section. Is that still the wish of the committee?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, we were having a good discussion last night and when we left off, I was questioning 7.1 and the minister having full – basically the comment, “...and the Board shall comply with the Minister’s policy direction.”

Last night I was talking with a few people from the tourism industry, and this morning as well, and people that are involved with TIAPEI and they assured me they were okay with this bill like you’d mentioned. I don’t know if they had the enthusiasm as you had for the minister having the final say, but they said it was certainly not a non-negotiate – or it was fine in the end for them, kind of thing.

So they alleviated my concerns and I’m okay to pass the bill if everybody else in the Legislature is okay.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

I guess the overall question from us is looking at sort of why all the members from the private sector, minister, given that there are a number of different organizations and bodies involved in the industry, and though I heard your arguments yesterday around perhaps – and I agree, but we also know we have many other organizations, including non-profits and industry associations and so on.

Why are they now being excluded from being able to be represented on this board because it is specifically only private sector?

Mr. Palmer: So I assume that you’re talking about members of RTAs and DMOs, which would be –

Ms. Bell: Potentially, yes.

Mr. Palmer: – ultimately private-sector members anyway that are working inside of those organizations.

So, we really do expect and hope that there will be representation from the, I guess I’ll call it, dual representation. It would be private sector folks that may be on an RTA that would also be on this board as well, so that we have that message coming from the ground, which is from the operators, and also able to feed that information back and take information to the board from the Regional Tourist Associations.

Ms. Bell: Yes, because of the small nature of our community, that’s often the case that people will wear many different hats and roles.

One of the challenges with governance boards, though, is that when you are a board member, your role is to act in the best interest of the organization, and also to be representing your constituency in the same way – in some ways that we do. And so when you have multiple hats, it can be quite challenging to know sort of: Which lens am I looking at this from? One of that of a private sector representative for the industry, or on behalf of an interest group, or someone that has maybe, perhaps, a different purpose. So that would potentially create some challenges if there’s the expectation is that those board members are meant to be doing more than one thing, or be

more than one thing, when they're on the board.

So if you're specifically looking for private sector, I would expect that to mean that you want them to be there as private sector and not as RTAs or anything else. You can't have them be both.

Mr. Palmer: Well, I think they could, in their roles, they could be both. But really what it comes down to, I think what's good for private sector is good for the RTA which is good for the province.

I don't think there'd be very many times that something would be – positions would be counter to what an operator would think as opposed to what an RTA would think, which would then kind of flow forward to the board. So I think that gives us the very best information from the operators flowed through their community, and again, they don't need to be on the RTA, but as you said, they probably are. There are people that are very active in our community that will sit on various boards and it's a really good way to move that information around the province, to make sure we get the very best to have our industry even stronger.

Ms. Bell: Absolutely, and I have spoken to the representatives from the tourism industries as well, and I understand how important this legislation is from a governance perspective for them and on an overall basis, very much in support of the bill.

There are two things that I think as of concern to bring forward and one of those is that a board has to be able to be able to make decisions that are in the best interests of the work that it is assigned to do, and that is not one that should be directed by an external policy or by a political motivation, or by other influences.

If somebody takes a board role, then they have a very specific job to do: fiduciary responsibility, risk management for the organization, speaking as a representative for their constituency. And so, I would hope that that best practice of governance is reflected in how this board comes forward.

When you begin to put restrictions in terms of what you hope will happen and the

expectations that will happen that may not actually result in the best governance.

You said that the board – sorry, the tourism industry is in support of this move, and as my hon. colleague mentioned, I've also gotten that vibe. I think we do need to be very careful, however, what we expect that may look like, and that comes to that second point which is around the opportunity for the minister, whomever that may be, to have the ability to influence policy and direction, is that the board should be independent and working in the best interests of the organization it serves.

This is not an organization that reports to the minister. It's an organization that reports through a governance structure, and so I would like to just have on record that concern for that not being in the best practice of good governance.

Mr. Palmer: Okay.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair.

Further to the comments that were made by the Member from Morell-Mermaid and Charlottetown-Parkdale about the industry view of these changes specifically and of how tourism is evolving in the province.

I had a note on Wednesday from Robert Jourdain, not long after they had been in the gallery, and I'll read two paragraphs from it and then I'll table that note.

The first, useful for all of us to hear someone to say:

“This is just a quick note to say that it was a pleasure to sit in the gallery of the Legislature yesterday!” That was – that's good feedback on how we're getting along.

Then, the ultimate paragraph or a, oh, six or seven paragraph note is:

“This is why it is vitally important that we move forward as soon as possible with the second reading of the legislative changes for improving governance of Tourism PEI during this spring sitting of the Legislature.”

That was sent unsolicited and without Mr. Jourdain's knowledge that this matter would be on the order paper and in committee of the whole yesterday and today.

He goes on to say, and I think this is very useful to have on the record:

"There has been a lot of hard work, time, and effort put into these recommended changes.

In conversations with both government and industry ... this is a good news improvement and one that is needed to continue..." In quotes, in his words, "... "Growing Tourism Together"."

It's a further feedback along the lines of what has been described here. We certainly appreciate the part that the industry played in developing these changes. I'll table that note.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, the question has been called.

Carry the bill. Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Palmer: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Tourism PEI Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Palmer: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Palmer: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Tourism PEI Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through

the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the 8th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 8, *An Act to Amend the Tourism Industry Act*, Bill No. 23, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Tourism Industry Act*, Bill No. 23, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to come and chair this bill, also.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Tourism Industry Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Fox: Overview please, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, would you like to give an overview on this bill?

Mr. Palmer: I sure would, Chair. Thanks.

This is a housekeeping item related to the last one that we're going to – there's a section in the act that requires the minister to appoint a tourism industry council, which is no long in operation – operational useful. We're just repealing a section.

Mr. Fox: Carry the bill.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Palmer: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Tourism Industry Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Palmer: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Palmer: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Tourism Industry Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, government would like to call Motion No. 32 to the floor, please.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, debate on this motion was adjourned by the deputy speaker. I will now call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to continue speaking to the motion.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I was last on my feet to speak to this important motion, I mentioned that since 1905 there have been five changes to the sitting hours of the Legislative Assembly. Changes occurred in 1905, 1922, 1964, 1966 and 1995. We're all aware that the schedule for the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island originated around the train schedule, which brought members from all over the Island to the capital City of Charlottetown and the home of the Legislative Assembly.

There has been debate for too many years of changing the hours, the evening hours, of this Legislature, and at least 11 years since I've been a member I've heard the talk about changing the evening hours.

I would like to see access to this House to as many people as possible. During the evening sitting, there isn't any broadcast on Eastlink, so some Islanders do not have any access to watch the proceedings online. Like they have accessibility to that during the day. Daytime sittings would allow more access.

Mr. Speaker, when I was in your chair, I asked a member of the Legislative Assembly to keep a record for one sitting just how many Islanders would come in and watch from the gallery.

It was rare that we would have any members come to the gallery in the evening, unless they were invited – unless they were support staff, supporting a minister, or if someone, a member of the Legislative Assembly invited their executive to come. But it was really rare during that sitting that you would see anybody in the evening, more than one, maybe two people, but there were a lot of nights where the gallery was empty.

There are a number of hon. members of this House, who have young families with school-aged children. It is not just current hon. members. I'm always thinking of those who will follow us in the future. As I look around this Legislature, I recognize many

hon. members who are now parents of young children.

And you've all heard that I'm a believer of leaving a place better than you found it. If changing the sitting hours will attract a more diverse and inclusive – more and inclusive members to the Legislative Assembly, I want to be part of creating that change.

One of my favourite roles as the speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island was outreach to schools. We have developed a program to educate students on the inner workings of the Legislative Assembly. The problem is access. We all know that Province House is closed, but even though province house is closed and we moved here to the Coles Building, the issue for schools is that there's only one sitting a week that accommodates schools, and that's on Fridays, and we have to turn schools away because there's just too many who want to come on Friday mornings. We're missing out on educational opportunities. Daytime sittings would allow more access to more Island schoolchildren.

Changing the sitting hours in the evening in no way takes away from the hours we sit. In fact, we may be able to add hours to the daytime sitting hours. We are currently the only legislature that sits past 6:00 p.m. with the exception of Quebec, who has a one-night sitting from 7:30 to 9:00. We can always put in a provision in the legislation to sit beyond the regular hours. I've had the opportunity to speak to many young women and many young men, who would like to take their seat in this House, but tell me that: I'm going to sit this one out because my family is too young.

The evening sittings, as I said, are not conducive to attracting young men or women to the Legislature. As hon. members of this House, we can be that change. The evening sittings do not affect the current members of this Legislature, but they also affect legislative staff, security, media and civil servants who come to this House. And I'm sure there has been more than one member of this House on a snowy night at 9:00 p.m. worried about a young Page who had to drive to each end of the Island on a winter night.

My suggestion could be we could try this for a session to see if it works, and we could provide provisions in the rules to have an evening sitting, if need be.

The sitting hours of this House will change, and I'm going to repeat that. The speaking hours of this House will change, if not with us, some wise members of the House in the future will change the hours to be more inclusive.

As I said earlier, I have always believed that you should leave a place better than you found it. We have a chance collectively to be on the right side of change, and I am pleased to support this forward-thinking motion by the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. I look forward as the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, to receiving this motion and convening the committee at the earliest possible moment to discuss the effects to modernize the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion as amended, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise and speak to this motion about modernizing the Legislative Assembly sitting hours.

We've heard a lot of conversation on this, a lot of debate on this already, and it has been noted that the hours are the way they are primarily because of the old train schedule. I think that speaks volumes as to why this motion is a good motion and why I support this motion.

I think that we do need to modernize the Legislative Assembly as a whole, and sitting hours is a great place to start. I think that it would be excellent from the perspective of families, excellent from the perspective of people who work at the Legislative Assembly, that includes MLAs and clerks and people who are typing up the Hansard and listening.

Given the fact that a live stream is available on the Internet, through Facebook, and although it is on Eastlink, and that's much limited access to most of the rural parts of this province, it is there, but as well, that video clips of key pieces of our debate are available, and in fact we utilize that a lot to get the key pieces of information out through social media of various kinds.

I think that I would wholeheartedly support a changing of the Legislative Assembly sitting hours. Now, will it have an impact on allowing more women to become MLA members or encouraging more women to become MLAs? I hope so. I'm not entirely sure it will, but I hope it does, but I think just on the merit of common sense, I think changing the legislative sitting hours is a great idea.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I totally disagree with changing the hours in the Legislative Assembly.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Free vote.

Mr. Fox: The reason being is because I've seen the benefits for people that work during the daytime, that under no circumstances can they get out of their work schedule or afford to take a day off so that they can come during the day. With the night sessions, one for opposition and one for government, there's a clear opportunity for everybody across the province to get into the House.

A senior citizen is a prime example, one example; a senior that lives by herself, him or her, and has to depend on their children to take them to different places. If one of their children is working and can't get a day off to take his mother or father to the House, then that senior would not be able to get into this place, which is the people's place. I totally believe that we must make sure that we allow everybody the opportunity, whether they are a child, whether they're a mom and dad working day jobs, or whether

they're a senior that has limited access to ability to get somewhere.

We must also remember that many times we've had groups in this House that could only clearly get here if they had access to night sessions. It's a fact. I know countless groups that I've talked to, that they don't come all the time, but they like that opportunity to get here, to see how actually it's going on, or it could be an issue that's being discussed that's very important to them, and we must make sure that they have access to it.

If we totally go to a day session, what limit and restrictions are we putting on the general public? I think we must look at that very closely and very seriously. I'm all for – I want everybody to have access to everything that I have access to, and I think everybody has the right, or it's an honour to be able to come in here, and whose honour are we taking away or infringing on if we limit the hours in this House?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion as amended, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to rise and speak to this motion. I do feel like I do support it. I had to look at it awful hard and the pros and cons behind it, but I guess as a father of small children right now, I find myself, it's very tough. There's a lot of days go by you don't see your kids awake, so that's probably the hardest part of the job for me is what I'm missing out at home. My little girl started to walk the other day, and I missed it because I wasn't home that evening.

But I certainly do understand that this has been a part of history too, and it's a very major decision, I guess, in a sense. So I do see the both pros and cons behind it.

I do really like the idea from the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park about a trial

Ms. Casey: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Lewis Point, sorry.

About a trial to see if it would work. I know anybody that asks me, they say: So, what do you find the hardest part? And it is the family life.

I really struggle not being home with my family, and I know in fairness it is only a few months of the year we're down here, but for people entering politics with small children, I do feel it's tough to make it work, and it's a sacrifice that the spouse has to give as well, and you need the support at home to make everything work.

So after some thought, I certainly think I do support this motion and will be voting in favour of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Also, speaking to the motion as amended, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion.

Firstly, I'd like to see there are a number of barriers for all MLAs, and we all know that. It's a job that we've committed to. We're all doing the very best we can. We've committed to our constituents to do better for our communities.

I would like to point out that back in the recommendations that were given in *Whose Job is it Anyway? The Life and Work of an MLA* by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government in 2009, there were 17 recommendations. So here we are in 2018, and the only recommendation we're looking at –

Speaker: (Indistinct) I've just been informed and I guess I didn't have it down on my own paper that this is the second time you've spoken to the motion and you can't do that. Sorry about that.

Ms. Compton: Okay, that's all right.

Mr. MacEwen: It's on the amendment.

Ms. Compton: It's the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Yeah, no –

Well, with the consent of the House, is it okay to let the hon. member –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: All right, carry on.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So in the recommendations that were proposed through the PEI Coalition for Women in Government in 2009, there were 17, and here we are in 2018. I'm going to read those recommendations, because I think it's important that they're reviewed.

Recommendation (1): We recommend that government constitute the special committee on the role and responsibilities of an MLA, as proposed in the Speech From the Throne, invite and appoint participation for all four political parties in PEI and task force that special committee with the following: Explore ways to restore public trust and respect in the office of MLAs; explore ways to create reasonable, public expectations regarding the role of the MLA; explore ways to ensure MLAs are fully removed from the business of finding jobs for individual Islanders; develop a clearly defined MLA job description for modern times; and explore ways to eliminate identified barriers connected to the role, work and expectations of PEI MLAs to women entering provincial politics.

Constituency support: Our research indicates that constituency work is the main culprit in creating an imbalance between work and personal life for PEI MLAs. Islanders appear to have extremely high expectations of their elected representatives and anticipate very hands-on assistance in problem solving. Research participants have imparted stories of constituents who feel entitled to demand immediate and complete focus on their agenda simply because they voted for the MLA and feel that they are owed. MLAs do not currently receive financial support for the constituency expenses and must pay for these out of pocket with their homes often becoming their constituency offices and their spouses and family members becoming unpaid staff people answering phones, listening to complaints, and attending functions. Finding

ways to support MLAs to assist their constituents with problem solving should have the impact of bringing more balance to the work and, in turn, attracting a more diverse candidate.

(2): We recommend that government create an ombudsman office to provide information, as well as direct assistance to Islanders in navigating government and community options for problem solving. We recommend that the ombudsperson perform a role separate from the role of an MLA or government, at times advocating on behalf of a citizen. We recommend that this office be accessible beyond regular government hours. We recommend that government provides support and funding for five staff constituency offices, with one in each Southern Kings, Eastern Kings, West Prince, East Prince, and Rural Queens, to be shared by MLAs and where they may conduct constituency communications, hold office hours, and receive constituency problem-solving support from trained staff.

Performance of legislative duties: While our research indicates that PEI MLAs spend about the same amount of time on legislative duties as MLAs in other jurisdictions, research participants highlighted the added component of travel for those MLAs representing and residing in districts outside of Charlottetown as an element which can add a significant amount of time to an MLA's workweek. Participants in the research indicated that the uncertainty of legislative timelines contributed to difficulty in planning for good balance. They shared ideas for streamlining other legislative tasks which could assist in bringing about a greater degree of balance between work and personal life, not only for MLAs, but for the staff which supports them.

(4): In order to support current and future MLAs travelling from outside Charlottetown and those with young families, we recommend that government eliminate the evening hours of the Legislature.

So that is the one and only recommendation we are looking at today.

(5): We recommend that government create legislative and standing committee calendar which designates, in addition to the start date, dates when the House may sit and

when it may not sit, when committees may meet and when they may not, and designate or agreed upon family or personal days, such as March break or holiday breaks.

(6): To reduce travel times for MLAs representing rural ridings, we recommend that more standing committee meetings be planned outside of Charlottetown.

(7): We recommend that government provide regularly accessible training for MLAs in chairing and facilitating meetings and time management.

Health and well being; our research highlighted that some MLAs perpetuate the imbalance between their work and personal lives by acquiescing to unrealistic demands of constituents and by taking care of the needs of others and ignoring their own needs for health and well being. In recognition of the fact that PEI MLAs currently work long hours and have many demands and pressures on them that most people do not face and that changes to the political culture, including, expectations of constituents, political parties and MLAs themselves, will take time. It is helpful to think about how MLAs can be better supported to meet the demands of work and personal responsibilities in the current climate.

(8): We recommend that government provide a caregiver benefit to MLAs with child or elder care-giving responsibilities.

(9): We recommend that an orientation for new MLAs and ongoing and regular accessible training for MLAs include: information about the employee assistance program and other counselling and supports available to MLAs, and discussion and support regarding time management, including balancing work and personal time.

(10): We recommend that, during times when the House is in session and food is provided, healthy choices are available to MLAs and staff.

Immediate Recommendations for Political Parties.

To achieve the goal of a Prince Edward Island Legislature which is representative of our Island's diversity, the PEI Coalition for

Women in Government recommends the following steps be taken by Political Parties.

Supporting Elected Members

As noted above, MLAs do not currently receive financial support for their constituency expenses and may pay for these out of pocket, with their homes often becoming their constituency offices and their spouses and family members becoming unpaid receptionists.

(11): We recommend that political parties support their elected members to conduct constituency and party business by providing funding for a separate phone line in their homes.

(12): We recommend that political parties plan party events to include families of MLAs when possible and appropriate.

Supporting and Attracting More Diverse Candidates

We know from our current and past research that the job and work of an MLA in PEI is such that certain of our population is deterred from taking on the role. Women, in particular, who hold only 26% of the seats – at that time – are not well represented in our Legislature. Implementing measures to support balance of diverse candidates, including women, before, during and after election campaigns could have an impact on the demographics of the eventual Legislature.

(13): We recommend that political parties recruit more women to play an active role in the grassroots of the party organization and set specific goals for recruitment.

(14): We recommend that political parties commit to working towards a goal of nominating a minimum of 9 women in the 2011 Provincial election.

(15): We recommend that political parties support candidates during campaigns by; providing child/elder care; providing a clothing allowance; and providing training on what to expect regarding work as an MLA, time management and balancing work and personal life, along with other pertinent information connected to campaigning.

Defining the Role of an MLA

The participation and support of political parties in redefining the role of the MLA is crucial if we hope to make any real change.

(16): We recommend that political parties support and encourage elected members and party organizers to participate in non-partisan, multi-partisan, and other collaborative work on public policy and the function of government and the role of the MLA. In particular, we recommend that political parties collaborate in their participation in a Special Committee on the role and responsibilities of the MLA, as proposed in the Speech From the Throne.

Working Towards Long-Term Change of PEI's Political System

A lot of tradition and history underpin the expectations that citizens and parties place on MLAs. We have found that many of these traditions privilege men and historical male roles at the expense of women and historical women's roles, especially their role as caregivers. Our first-past-the-post electoral system additionally disadvantages small parties, which often in the past have offered more women candidates.

Our other recommendations address incremental change, but it remains clear that the whole system requires a major overhaul to ensure a truly representative democracy, in which elected representatives reflect the diversity of the population.

When we look at democracies around the world, we find that the more women there are in government, the more likely a jurisdiction appears to enact policy which supports women's everyday lives and reflects their life experiences. When we look at the democracies with the most balanced proportion of women, we find that most of these have some form of proportional representation.

Additionally, the form of proportional representation most frequently recommended for Prince Edward Island...the Mixed Member Proportional system, and other similar models, have different kinds of MLAs, elected in different ways, representing geography-based constituencies and interest-

or issues-based constituencies. Such a system would offer MLAs more diversity in the way they build relationships with constituents and constituencies, leading to new ways to create work life balance.

(17): We recommend that Government work together with all parties and the electorate to explore and implement Proportional Representation for Prince Edward Island.

So, I guess we'll say recommendation 17; we are working on that right now.

As far as changing the hours of the House, as an elected official, I can tell you the hours we sit in here are very, very short and very, very few compared to the hours that we deal with constituents' issues and attend events in our district. It's part of the role of an MLA. If you do the work properly and are there for your constituents you will have to work evenings –

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Ms. Compton: – and that's just the way it is.

We had a lot of conversation back when we had a women's event here. I remember Kim Campbell talking about the fact that she thought legislation should be passed so that 50% of the people running in election would be women. I'm not sure how you make that happen. I know myself and my caucus members and our party continually encourage women to run, continually support them in any way we can, and try to pave the path so they understand what the job is about.

There are many, many recommendations in here, many of which we have not even explored at all. I would say that the job of an MLA on Prince Edward Island is probably a little more onerous because we're a small province. We know our constituents very well. They feel that they have a personal relationship with us, which I think is great.

I've heard it from constituents who have moved here from other provinces, who are operating businesses, that it is wonderful how close their MLA is, how easily accessible they are, and also, all the government departments and how red tape sometimes is much easier to navigate

because they have their MLA's ear when they need it.

As far as changing the hours of the Legislature, I think it's low-hanging fruit for government. If you look at the work that we have done in opposition as far as trying to pass bills and getting engaged people, people who are interested in those bills, and the way it will change their lives into the gallery of the Legislature, it's much easier to get them here in the evening. It's much easier for us to make our point and to make government feel that we really need to listen here because we have a gallery full of impassioned people who really believe in what we're saying.

There are a number of recommendations in here that I agree with, but I think changing the rules of the Legislature to get more women to run is not the answer. We have some strong females in the Legislature right now who all got elected with the present system of government, with the expectations that the public have on us.

I understand for young families it's difficult, but I know there are a number of careers that we look at now where one or the other of the spouses is working in the evening. There are a number of careers that you're expected to work in the evening or work in the night. So I'm not sure that – in some ways this looks very self-serving for the MLAs in the House here.

I think we, as MLAs, need to do the work for the province. We need to ensure that the public has the opportunity to come to the Legislature, that opposition is given the opportunity to ensure that we can bring concerned individuals into the Legislature in the evening when we are moving any kind of a bill that affects all Islanders, and I think it's very important as government that you look at, not just the low-hanging fruit of changing the hours, but looking at all 17 recommendations put forth by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government back in 2009.

And I'll remind you, this is the same government, and now we're at 2018, and the only option we are bringing to the floor right now is changing the hours of the House. I think it's wrong. I will not be supporting the

motion, and I thank you very much for your time, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

I just want to make sure that you had – did you want to speak to the motion as amended? Your name was on the list.

Mr. MacEwen: Sure.

Speaker: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It might have been on from actually talking about the amendment, but I'll still speak to this motion, too.

Like the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, I had to think long and hard about this. I know when we were on the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal, we had a lot of discussion around the table about this, too, about the options and whether or not to do it or not.

Many, not many, but a few members of the Legislature have approached me over the past three years on what do you think about it, are you in favour of it, we should push it, how do we push it, that kind of thing. Notwithstanding that, I talked – I can't remember if I talked about it before or not, but the last clause I do have issues with anyway about entrusting the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges to do it. That's entrusting, directing, all that stuff. I'll ignore that and I'll just talk about the hours.

Yeah, the evenings are crazy for people, for everybody, but especially for MLAs with young children or young families.

I haven't got to talk to the coalition for women and government yet, but I want to because to me, and I want to be careful, but I want to hear what they say, but to me I really don't see how adjusting the hours puts more women in the Legislature.

I can understand how it would put more people with less resources or single-parent families, that type of thing. But if we didn't have evening sessions, my evenings, my wife's evenings, we're still going to be

juggling back and forth, doing different things, for the little time we're in here in the evenings I don't understand it. I understand that the coalition says it will and they've got research, so I need to talk to them to find out why.

To me it's more about more of family situations that – for all the reason that I'm hearing, it's more of a family situation that makes it hard and difficult for the evenings. If I was a single parent and I had my three children right now and in care, it would be incredibly hard to find people to help out to do all that stuff in the evenings. As it is now, even with having a two-parent-type situation. That's a conversation I want to have with the coalition.

If we were sitting year around, I understand why we could look at it. I know the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters talked about this. At the end of the day the hour is the hours, we'll make it work regardless. I do see an advantage on having – sitting during the evening sometime. We've seen oppositions effect change because of that. Before my time as MLA, when I was working in the opposition office, we would take advantage of that evening session a lot. The former leader and the former MLAs, we would organize people when we're in the former legislature when they used to have the side gallery with a, I don't know what it was, a lecture theatre or what it was, but I'll call it a side gallery for now.

It was wonderful. We'd have food and drink then would bring the people in, we'd talk about it. Then, we'd go up for debate to the Legislature. It was quite an experience for them. Most of them people would never get to sit in the Legislature. As we see right here in the Legislature, it's – it is different when you're debating a bill and it's just us in here like it is now versus a full gallery of people that you're actual affected by. We've seen it with the hunting bill. We've seen it with the PTSD bill. It's effective and it works. What it does, speaking to the hunting bill that time, there was a number of people from District 7 happened to be in the gallery that evening.

I really, to be honest, I hadn't done appear lot of research on the bill, and I spoke to a lot of people about it, I know the Member from Borden-Kinkora put a lot of work into

it. But there was two people in particular were in the Legislature that night, and sometimes you wonder how foolish it'll get in here and you wonder what they think. I was talking to them after, and they said: Wow, that was a really good debate. Everybody had really good points. That just happened to be the hunting bill that night. But they said, all sides had great points and they were very much for the Sunday hunting, the group that was here. They said but we understood where the other people were coming from, back and forth. It was their first time in the Legislature. They work during the day, all that kind of stuff.

I appreciate it because they came to me. They were kind of joking, they said, we thought you just fool around there and do nothing, but when they actually come here they see really good debate, it made me feel good. That's one example.

It's already before committee anyway. I know they'll go out and understand – do the consultations to find out what's going to go on. I am looking forward to that conversation though with the coalition. Of course we're for increasing diversity increasing women's participation in the Legislature. Changing the hours two days a week for 16 weeks a year doesn't seem like a logical way to do it for me. I can see the proportional representation argument a lot more than just a couple hours.

People are busy. Moms are busy, dads are busy. Every evening is busy, doesn't matter what you're doing. If you're running your own company, many people in here have their own companies, you know there's not an evening to yourself and you got to have that network to pass off. I don't know. I get what they're doing. It seems like an odd ploy just to pick this one and come in.

If this rules committee decides that this is the way to go and we speak to some of the groups, I would support it. But right now, in my mind, it's – we're not here enough to dissuade anybody from – I can't understand how this would dissuade someone from running unless they didn't have the resources to help cover in the evenings. That is the big point, and it is a big thing. We're very lucky to have a structure at home of grandparents and neighbours, and all that to help out.

As I said before that example, I do believe – at least having the option at some part of the year to come in in the evenings and talk with issues so people can see. It effects change. Yeah, there's lots of evenings where there's nobody here or yes, you can watch it online, that kind of thing. When you're trying to – no different than organizing a rally or you host a public meeting to get your point across that type of thing that's happening. I think there is many other better ways to increase the percentage of women in politics, and to create diversity than this motion or what are this will change.

Will it affect things in the long scheme of things? No. We'll make it work. Those are basically my points. I completely understand when people say it would be nice to be done and home in the evenings, of course. Last night – you miss things, this you miss concerts, you miss different things. Sometimes that's life, too. It's tough, and the Member from Kensington-Malpeque talked about it having to miss some important things, and we've all done that.

Personally, I do value that. I value that tradition of the evenings and what you can accomplish. I would push for many other options to increase diversity; increase women's participation, before I would consider changing the hours, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: Next, speaking to the motion as amended, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I thought long and hard about this motion, and I'm very proud to be a member of the standing committee on rules, regulations, private members' bills and privileges to the point where I actually put a discussion paper out back in January with regards to modernizing the Legislature.

One of the components that I had in that was the development of the three separate distinct sessions so that individuals – sorry, let me back up for a little bit. Three distinct schedules sessions: spring, fall, and the winter session. In that I also talked about having a set schedule a number of weeks, predetermined some that an individual, if

they were considering entering or potentially putting their name forward to enter life in politics, they would have a better idea of the schedule, and they could plan their life accordingly around that.

What we're looking at right now is we have a spring session which to me, it doesn't matter when it ends. It can keep going until August or October as long as it closes before November when we reopen.

One of the problems that I find with this motion is it's almost like double jeopardy because we're already doing the work at the standing committee level. And so for a motion to come forward asking the standing committee to do the work that they're already doing, I find that disrespectful to the committee itself. When the hon. members of this Legislative Assembly fully know that the work is ongoing.

One of the pieces of that work that we did not that long ago is we had the Clerk, and he did a fabulous presentation, jurisdictional scan, and a very detailed presentation of how we could move forward and different things that could be done. To say that evening sessions are going to just completely change the make-up of the face of the Legislative Assembly I find it very erroneous.

When we talk about having access to the Legislative Assembly and looking at it and just the lens of being here during the day and not in the evening, there's activities that government goes through in the daytime. They have budget – public budget consultation processes in the afternoons. You just have to go back and look at the participation of those. It's dismal at best.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: One of the things that I find again troubling with this is the public perception of politicians particularly on PEI and the work we do or the hours that we keep, quite often, when a House closes or a session closes, people say: Oh, so you guys are on vacation now. You're done. You're done until you go back. When do you go back? November? Look, you got the entire summer off.

People don't understand quite often – I'm not saying everybody, but a number of people don't understand the work that goes on behind the scenes; the constituency work and the committee work and other means such as that.

The reason I bring the public perception to the floor is that unfortunately is the perception that a lot of public have about the work that we do. To me I find the evening sessions, in particular, the non-government time on Tuesday evenings, to be very beneficial. Yes, we don't always see a huge crowd here in the gallery. Maybe the viewership on the Internet is quite low, as well. But when there's important motions or private member's bill that the opposition are bringing to the floor for discussion and fulsome debate, such as we did with the PTSD bill; and if hon. members will recall, we had the gallery filled on several occasions in the evening sessions.

If it was during the afternoon or during the day, those individuals, those hard-working, first-responding professionals wouldn't have been able to make it here to the Legislative Assembly to actually see their legislators working on their behalf. Whether it was that side of the floor or this side of the floor.

I look at other professions such as teachers. Quite often teachers have to work evenings; whether it's teacher-parent interviews, whether it's some of the volunteer work that our great teachers do here on the Island around intramural sports or other activities; social clubs at our schools. Again, I talked about the first responders, the paramedics. Couldn't the paramedics at some point I say, we're going to work 8:00 to 4:00, 9:00 to 5:00 every day, so if you get sick or you're injured in your car accident, well, call us the next day when we're actually working. Don't call us now. Nurses: same. Doctors. Servers.

We talked in length here today about the tourism industry. The tourism industry thrives on PEI, and it's because of the hard-working, dedicated professionals that we have here that are known worldwide for their friendliness; their outgoingness; their professionalism, and the overall hospitality that we provide here on PEI. That doesn't

end at four o'clock in the afternoon. It doesn't end at five o'clock in the afternoon.

I know from 27 years' experience in the hospitality industry that you're working evenings. You're working shift work. You're working weekends. You're there when you need to be there. I think that we as legislators need to be here when the work needs to get done. Again, I feel very impassioned that, in particular, the opposition time on the Tuesday evenings is a very important aspect of this Legislative Assembly.

Now, I can certainly sympathize with members that have younger families at home. I was in that case myself many years ago. You know what? I am fortunate because I'm in a family dynamic where I have a partner, a spouse that is extremely supportive of the work that I did then and the work that I do now. I know every member here in the Legislative Assembly more than likely is in that same boat as well.

To just arbitrarily say that, you know what, we're going to forego the evening sessions and roll those four hours into the day is going to change the makeup or the dynamic of this Legislative Assembly. I think it's fictitious.

I'm going to go back again to just stating that I think this motion goes against the work that the current standing committee is doing. I think the standing committee should be allowed to continue and report back after due diligence to the legislative committee. Because there's much more work to be done.

At this time I would like to table a friendly amendment. If I can be permitted, Mr. Speaker, just to read it at this time; I have copies for everyone.

Speaker: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: My amendment would be to omit the last clause and replace with the following: therefore, further – therefore, be it further resolved that the House support the ongoing work of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, and direct them to examine the option of a trial period

whereby Thursday evening sittings are limited.

So essentially what I'm saying, if the government is intent on reducing the evening hours, I'm not completely 100% against it, but what I am against is opposition losing their time on Tuesday evenings where they can get special interest groups in here when we're debating very important motions that the opposition or the backbench may be bringing to the floor, whether it's a motion, or whether it's private members bills. So as I said, I'd like to move that amendment and I have copies for everyone.

Speaker: Need a seconder?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, I do.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Speaker: Hon. members, if you have a copy of the amendment now, I will ask the seconder of the amendment to speak to the amendment.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had talked about my points earlier. One evening a week we could try it. Some members of the opposition are obviously concerned about having that ability to speak in the evenings. I know the intent is here from the Leader of the Opposition. There's just one thing that's left out, and I know one of the other members of the official opposition will amend the amendment, but one thing I want to make clear is we keep the same number of hours in a week – and I'm not sure if this amendment actually does that. It would most likely take away one evening, but also keep those same two hours in the legislative calendar for the week. I think that's important that we maintain that minimum amount.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very happy to talk a little bit more about this, and certainly first of all, to acknowledge all the contribution of the

members of this Legislature. We all work hard on behalf of our constituents. Whether you're male, female, whether you have children, whether you don't have children that are at home at the moment, we all acknowledge, and I acknowledge, all of the work that the legislative members do here.

Thank you very much, as well, Mr. Speaker, for the change that you made and that the Legislative Assembly have taken to have more access to those with hearing impaired. That's a great change that has been implemented.

[Applause]

This is an amendment to an amendment and I just want to talk a little bit about the fact that the original motion was changed, and we did make an amendment and I will get to this amendment as well.

But, originally, I know there was discussion about the work of the standing committee and, in fact, that – but I'll go back to the original origins of when these requests – yes – from the women in government and as well as the advisory of the status of women, but the recommendation that are there from the recommendations that the Member from Belfast-Murray River talked about, the sitting hours are one facet, and I think, yes, we have to continually, continually move forward with making change. We were able to work together with the opposition to make a change on behalf of women and the bill that they did to have extra days off. We continue to work.

If women – or those who experience violence in their relationships – anybody, but I will say – and I think we all know that the data – and we always talk a lot about data in this House – the data shows that predominantly women are the victims of violence in a relationship. We must address violence right across the spectrum, yes, but what I'm trying to do is commend the opposition and the fact that we were able to work together with the opposition to bring that forward. And that's a great step that this Legislature has been able to accomplish and it is something – I know that the unions have worked on, that has been out there, that the Coalition for Women in Government have also been advocating for, and government themselves recognize that that is an issue

through the work that we do. So I want to say that as well.

The recommendations that have been out there, this is what small change. At some point, we have to take a step forward. It's great to say everything should be all encompassing. Obviously, we need to make one small step forward. This is a small step. And the recommendation – the original motion that was put forward – was to have the committee on rules, regulation, private bills and privileges to work together to see what might work best if we were to change those hours from evening to daytime.

We're not talking about restricting hours of the work of the Legislative Assembly; we're talking about trying to encourage those – which is a recommendation from the PEI Coalition for Women in Government – encourage more diversity in this Legislature including women, including different abilities, and different opportunities for people and it has been identified that trying to balance a life balance between daytime and nighttime and constituency work – we still do constituency work and that was one of my original points when I brought that forward. We still work evenings. It is still a requirement. As I noted, this is not a nine to five job and this is something that is certainly – when I talk to anybody that's interested in politics – I do tell them: you do have evening time.

But, we are trying to change the diverse make-up of this Legislature. I commend everyone else who also works evenings in their schedules, but it's been identified time, after time, after time. For the first time in the history of the Legislature, it's only been 27 elected over the whole history of the Legislature. We are putting together an event that will bring 27 young women to this Legislature to celebrate the history of the famous five. That is something. We bring Rotary students in here. It's a wonderful program that the Rotary club puts on, and for the first time over the years, I've noticed, from 2007 up to today, we now have about a 50/50 make-up of young women who come as part of that Rotary parliamentary program that comes here every year to the Legislature. Originally there was not that 50/50 make-up. So I want to commend the Rotary clubs for the work that they do in the schools – that they do to engage their

students to take part in the Rotary parliamentary program that's here on Prince Edward Island.

As was noted, this does go back to the standing committee to try and work out what those hours should be. And yes, to have a trial period. I don't have a problem with trying a trial period. I think we have to make one small step and if it means that we try a Thursday evening instead of Tuesday and Thursday, I will support that. But I want to have a commitment that that will be implemented as part of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges. By having this motion come forward, and we worked together on it – it's asking for a trial period and I hope that trial period will start this fall. And I see that the Leader of the Opposition is working towards that. All parties are working towards encouraging more people to come to political life. It can be a challenge; we know that.

We all have experienced different challenges being in political life, whether it's the harassment we take; whether it's the violence that we experience; and no one, and I will say this publicly, in regard to the threats against Charlottetown-Parkdale or any kind of harassment by any other member of this Legislature, I do not support that. It is something that we, as legislators, can set a role model for here too, in how we treat each other. We may not agree on our policies. We may not agree on some of the things that do come forward here, but we're all people here who show respect for each other, and that respect – and if it's not shown through comments that we make to each other, it is going to go out into the larger public to say: Hey, these folks can do that; why can't I do that? We set an example whether we like to do it or not. It's something that we take on as a responsibility to have a higher calling or a higher tenor of how we conduct ourselves. When have we gone below that and we start to engage in behaviours within this Legislature that does not show respect to each other, we in turn say it's okay for the rest of the public to do that. It's not okay to threaten anyone, whether they're male, female, in this Legislature, or anywhere else in this province.

But we can set the tone in this Legislature among men, among women, man to man, woman to woman, how we treat each other in this Legislature, and I totally condemn anybody that threatens any member of this Legislature. We've all experienced it. But to go to the next step that the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale has been exposed to and submitted to, is totally unacceptable in a society of Prince Edward Island and we need to stand up in this Legislature and say that is not acceptable.

So, I will support this amendment because I want to make one step forward to show that we can start to be making change and to bring this Legislature from the 1800s up into the 2000s and 19 or 18. I want to see this come into effect and I implore the committee to look at this – and we still have lots of time to work out the logistics of how that would work for – Thursday nights is the government night in the Legislature – we can still incorporate those hours for government work into the day sittings of the Legislature. It does give more opportunity to engage people, to see what government has to put forward, but also, if the opposition and the third party are concerned about time on Tuesday night, let's start somewhere. At least do something. By doing this on a Thursday night, starting effective this fall, and I leave that and entrust that to the work of the committee, I will fully support it.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Ms. Biggar: I call for the vote on it.

Speaker: We have somebody else to speak.

Speaking to the amendment, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wouldn't want to see my rights taken away from me twice in one week. I will speak to the motion. There is an amendment on the floor.

I just want to address a couple of things just outside of the amendment because the minister went fairly wildly away from it. When we had Theo Fleury on the floor of the Legislature, it was to deal with sexual assault against all people. And as a survivor himself, that was his story, and it appears

that maybe the minister didn't listen well that day. It shouldn't happen to anyone. It's not just a women's issue. It is a societal issue and she should know better than to speak so wildly and out of turn about something like that.

I, too, don't condone any violent threats made towards any member. The Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale or anyone in the Legislature. And you said by any other member of the Legislature. I'm not sure if there was an insinuation that somebody –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – has made a threat inside this Legislature, but certainly, if you know of it a threat that was made from inside this Legislature there is a mechanism to deal with that, and I implore you to deal with it if you know something that the rest of us don't know.

I'll support this amendment. I have said in the past that I wasn't in favour of changing the hours. I'm willing to go halfway on it and see how it works. It's not because I don't want the hours changed, it's not because I wouldn't accept the hours changed, it has a lot to do with what the member from Belfast talked about earlier today.

There was a report done by the Coalition for Women in Government had 17 recommendations, of which this is one. The Leader of the Opposition had brought forward a full package of discussion topics around modernizing the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island. For those of you who read it you would know that it was a pretty concise document and it dealt with a lot of the different topics. It is in front of the rules committee currently. It's on the agenda of the rules committee.

The Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale had also put forward some changes that she would like to see. Maybe the Leader of the Third Party did too. I can't remember exactly who all had one on the floor. The consensus of the room was that we would explore ideas. The committee was going to have their own white paper designed on the things that we could modernize on.

We didn't do it prior to the sitting because we, quite frankly, ran out of time, but my understanding from the last meeting I was at was that this will continue once the session closes. We have an agenda already. Of course, the hours are on it as well as sitting schedule. Sitting schedule is becoming more and more important. It's June 1st, and really as MLAs we don't really know when the House will rise. We don't know even sitting here today when will be the last day that we are here.

I know that there's ministers who probably have their annual meetings coming up. Some could be as soon as in June, I don't know, with their counterparts from across the country. They're not able to book those to leave. There's lots of other things that are going on throughout communities that people are – that MLAs would plan for. Even things like – it even limits the ability to plan, to go somewhere because you don't know when you're going to be able to leave. That's one that's in front of committee, too, is having a sitting schedule, so whether the business was complete or not on a day that we rise, and we would sit again at (Indistinct) – we wouldn't have any less sitting days a year, but it would be organized in a way that people could actually plan their lives around it. That's one that I would think would attract diversity into this Assembly: if you knew when you were going to sit. If you knew that I won't need somebody to pick up my child at 5:00 p.m. starting next week because we're done this week, then, you could plan your whole life around that.

That and many other things that would help ease your life. There are things, I know there are members that are involved with coaching in this Assembly and they have commitments to their own children through programs that they coach in. Those are our time commitments that have to be arranged for now while the House is sitting.

I coach hockey in the winter. I know the member from Morell coaches hockey in the winter. Sometimes I'm left juggling in the fall session, and I always have – I've been very fortunate to coach with good people who understand my job. They are always good to cover for me until we get the House closed. I can't even say Thursday night I can go to the away game because I don't know when the House is going to rise in the fall

either. As we found last fall, we went really long. This spring we're going really long with no real end in sight. Though, I think based on the fact that this motion is on the floor today, it appears we're out of legislation that is ready to be debated on the floor, at least, that had its homework done.

That's just a couple of the things that could make the Assembly more diverse. Will the (Indistinct) even sittings? I don't know. I don't think they will alone. I think that different people have talked about the busy life that comes with the job, and you're away a lot. I must say that, generally speaking, when the House is closed my nighttime work is close to home. Even if I have to go out for a meeting at 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. or go to any other event that I may be required to go to as part of my duty as the MLA for the area, they are close to home because the districts are not gigantic, though mine would be the biggest probably currently. It's still not an unreasonable size so they can't travel at night, but it does require night work.

I'm not convinced that just one change will do it. That's why I've really been pushing that the committee be allowed to do its work. This is a topic that's on the agenda. It's been brought to the agenda. The Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale had it on the agenda and she has spoke of it probably at least two meetings that I was in. The committee is fully aware that this is an issue that needs to be dealt with.

The couple of other things on it is; so the Coalition of Women and Government has a report, and I read it a couple of times and there are some recommendations in there that, I agree, need to be implemented. There are some that are probably a little bit harder than others because it requires political parties to do their part. Nonetheless, it was a report that was made up of interviewing MLAs, some from this jurisdiction and some from other jurisdictions. There's some from Ontario and there's some from Alberta. I think there was 12 or so that were interviewed in total. It was something in that vicinity. I can't remember now. When I went to look for the report, it's no longer on their website so I couldn't read it before I stood up, but it was MLAs who were interviewed.

One of the stats on work-life balance was, it was really a negligible amount of difference between men MLAs and women MLAs as far as how they found their ability to have work-life balance. I think that there was fewer women, but they were both in the vicinity of 50%. I think women were 47.5 and men were in the 54–55% range. All in the relative area of each other that about half of MLAs are able to find work-life balance.

Being involved in many organizations over the years, I can say that many people I know and probably 50% of them have trouble balancing. There's probably not a terminology for it, but life-life balance; a lot of people, like myself, over the years that like to be involved with things that were going on in the community and sitting on boards and coaching and that stuff. It was the full package of work, volunteer, and home-life balance. Granted, I probably didn't do a very good job of it, and I probably struggled to make that balance. I probably have, since I've been an MLA, too. I like what I do, I spend a lot of time doing it. I like talking to people, and I like trying to solve issues. Not everybody has that issue.

Some people that know when to cut it off and know how to cut it off and know when to go home and know when to take a night off and that's fantastic. I would say that there's probably 50% of the population that does and 50% that probably doesn't. They just don't know when – my problem over the years, was probably I didn't know when to say no when somebody came along and said: Would you sit on my committee, too? Then, you know, I would always have to say, well what night do you need, because I only have Thursdays left. But that's kind of the nature of life for some people, and that's kind of the nature of this job. If you know when to take a night off and you know when to shut it down, you can make the work-life balance.

What I think and I know I'm now talking about the committee work as part of the results of the white paper, once we have it, I'd love to be able to survey Islanders from parts of Prince Edward Island in a similar manner that the Coalition for Women in Government did. And say to regular Islanders who aren't in politics today, so who have never participated in election

cycles; who haven't done the door-to-door and tried not to do just the job of an MLA, but a councillor already or any political position on Prince Edward Island: What are the limiting factors? What is it that keeps you from wanting to do it?

We've all been part of the conversation of talking to people who we want to run for our party when it comes election time that will go to them and say: I'd love to see you run; you'd make a great candidate. I'd sometimes find them, but about 75% of the time people would be like: why would I want to do that? Why would I possibly want to do that?

I have a friend of mine who a dentist, actually, and he said to me one time why would you want to be a politician? I said, why would you want to be a dentist? I said: I can't imagine having to be a dentist. He said: I guess that's right –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – then, we have one over here that happens to be both.

The same is true for a lot of things. The member from Morell talked about doctors and the doctor shortage in Kings County here earlier today. While I know there are doctors across North America, it's not really something that I'd want to do either. I'm glad there's people that do, same as I'm glad there's people who want to be police officers, because I don't want to be one. That want to be firefighters, because I don't want to be one.

Sometimes people don't want to do what you do, but sometimes it's only because they see the 30-second *Compass* clip and they think that's what I have to be or that's what I'm going to have to face when I'm there. I guess from time to time, it may fall into that category but it's not the norm and it's not the majority of the time.

The majority of the time it's quite rewarding dealing with people. I've met some wonderful people through politics. I've made some great friends through politics right across Prince Edward Island. I had the opportunity, of course, to serve as interim leader for awhile for the party. It gave me an even broader group of people who I was able to get introduced to along the way. I

made great friends throughout Atlantic Canada through politics that have a great passion for what they do or for what we do and maybe follow this closely.

One of the things that was in the recommendations, the 17 recommendations, I believe, there was one about having a job description. I probably am for it more than I'm against it. Before I was against it more than I was for it. And the reason is, is that I think that if you had clearly defined this is what the job is, that people could look at it and say: yeah, okay, this is a job that I can do and I can see.

There's a great benefit to people, who get to see the work up close and I think of all the Pages that have come through here over the years. Some of them I still see in the streets today and have great conversations with. We've had some go on to work for political parties of all stripes afterwards. There's been – I know one of the Pages who was the Page the first time I was elected in the very first session, she worked in our office for probably three summers as a student, and now she works for the PC Party of Nova Scotia in their caucus office.

You know what? It's always great when I get to have a conversation with her because she has such a passion for politics. I remember her sitting on those stairs right there when she was in grade 12.

The Pages get to see a side of politics that no one else gets to see because they get to see the kitchen politics, which isn't at all like the politics that are on the floor of the Legislative Assembly here. People probably find it hard to believe that the majority of the people – the majority of the people in here, the majority of the time, get along.

Even though we may not agree on things, we can actually have friendships and not agree. I always say, well, think of it. I have friends of mine who I don't – who would have different views than me. We might even argue about it sometimes because we find it entertaining to argue about those things. But it doesn't make us not friends, and it doesn't make us not care about our community, and it doesn't make us not care about the issues as a whole that concern us.

Maybe that's what we need to do to attract more people into politics is start letting people – give people a more insight into what politics actually is. It's not about fancy dinners, and it's not about wearing fancy clothes, and it's not about getting your picture taken at an announcement, it's not about giving money away. And that would go for anybody in here. The majority of your time is spent on the one-on-one thing – helping Islanders navigate government or find the money that they need to pay their bills, or get food on the table, or help people get into business, or do some of the start-up type of thing that people are trying to do.

There are all kinds of things that, as members of this Assembly, we would have put on our plates that we would deal with that looks nothing like what the public side of it looks like. And we're all kind of guilty of making it look like I wear a suit every day – and I don't. I know one of the members in our caucus carries his suit to the Assembly and puts it on just before he comes down here and takes it off as soon as he leaves here. He wears it when he's in here and that's it. I've done that different times in the past. I know that I wouldn't wear a suit down to get gas in Cardigan – only for the razzing I'd take. It wouldn't be that I wouldn't want to be seen in it, I just know the ripping I'd take if I showed up down in Cardigan wearing a suit.

Mr. MacEwen: Bad enough when you show up in jeans.

Mr. Myers: Bad enough when you show up in jeans, yes. There's no in-between. Sometimes you just don't win; you're getting a ripping.

But to give people an insight, I think, into what actually goes on in politics that isn't the side that we tend to want to show because we share pictures of ourselves in our business attire, dressed up, ready to go to work or at functions that are formal functions.

Everybody here spends, probably, the majority of their time not at formal functions and the time that you spend away from work is in your community and people here still care about where they come from and care about the residents of Prince Edward Island, and they don't dress in suits. I see the health

minister at the race track all the time. Never once, I don't think, have I seen him in a suit there. It's not racetrack attire, but he fits in well there and I feel like I do too. It's a place where you can talk to people and they can find out who you really are – that you're not just a suit-wearing guy in a building in Charlottetown arguing about things. The job is more than that and I think we could all, probably, do our part to show that.

Anyways, on the Thursday evenings –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: What's that?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Somebody has to amend it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Oh, we don't. Okay. We don't have to amend it. Okay, thank you.

I had a few other points, but it looks like scribbles here now.

I wanted to talk about a couple of the other things that were in the report – and I know I asked questions about it in Question Period here one day, but one of the things around moving committees outside of Charlottetown. I'd be willing to go to Summerside, Alberton, and Tignish. Obviously I'd be willing to go to Cardigan for one. That would be great.

An Hon. Member: We did once.

Mr. Myers: We did – once since the last election we were in Wood Islands. I know one of the committees that I was sitting on we were going to go out to St. Theresa to deal with an issue out there and have a hearing out there, but the applicant withdrew their application prior to it –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) take care of it.

Mr. Myers: – so the meeting was cancelled.

Yes –

Mr. MacEwen: You did that.

Mr. Myers: – that was taken care of.

But in the election cycle before that, I was on a committee that dealt with EI and we went right across Prince Edward Island. We were in all parts of Prince Edward Island. We met in the evenings, we invited the public to present to us, the member from Tignish – I was on that one with him.

Probably the other one we had was the one on drugs, the addictions. We had a great committee on addictions, and took that committee across Prince Edward Island, and we were able to get presenters in every community that we went to, some talking about the impact on their household that addictions have had.

Some of the people who presented actually were recovering from their own addictions at that time, and they were able to give us great insight into their struggle with addictions and how they got there and stuff. Those committees were great.

Living in Cardigan and going to a committee meeting in Alberton is a big commitment because it is quite a ways from home. But if you are moving those committee meetings around, I know that I'm also going to have an opportunity to have one in Montague or Georgetown or Souris or somewhere that's close to me. I think that as one of the recommendations from the report that we're currently talking about had that in it. I think it's something that really needs to be explored by the rules committee.

I know for a long time there has been calls by various people to have an ombudsperson here on Prince Edward Island. If we had an ombudsperson here I think the belief from the report of asking for an ombudsperson is that the ombudsperson would deal with some of the complaints that come to an MLA. We all know because we all get them. They would be of varying degrees about this or that or unfair treatment or stuff that happens to a loved one or a parent or how somebody didn't feel that they had the treatment they required when they were in the hospital setting. Whenever the issue is, we would all kind of get them on an equal level here as MLAs.

The object of an ombudsperson is they would actually get that complaint. They would have the ability to investigate it right through a government and bring a resolution

back to the complainant. I still think that there's an opportunity for government to bring that forward, and that have it the recommendation, too that I believe, that was in the 2009 report.

Child care is a big one, and it's not just for single-parent families. People are busy these days. Both spouses generally work outside the home in this day and age, and sometimes both are working long days and have trouble kind of making the whole child care thing work for them. One of the recommendations dealt with child care and I know it's been different questions in the House here about bringing – what we would have to do to explore the idea of having child care provided as a branch of the Assembly here for people who have small children, who require it. That might help attract younger people in, people who have young families in.

We're nine years from the report. The original report came nine years ago. I feel that government waited a long time to take any action on it, but they did, so there's action, and this is part of it. Also, as I had stated several times here this afternoon, there has been all kinds of action at the rules committee. While I support this amendment, I'm still not convinced that the rules committee needs to be told what to do because they're already doing it. The hon. members that are on it, of which I'm one, they are committed to bringing a suite of changes to the Assembly. I would suspect that we'd be able to have that work done and a report issued to this Assembly by the fall session. I would see no reason why that wasn't the case.

I do want to state again that I will be urging the rules committee to come up with a similar style report that Coalition for Women in Government did in 2009 –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – and run it on a broader base across Prince Edward Island to get respondents right across the Island to tell us, what are the things that you need as an Islander, who could be interested in running in politics, to get to you come to the table and take this job on?

The other thing that the Leader of the Opposition talked about is about who works

nights. This is our ninth week, which to us seems like a long time. But if you go on out this weekend to your community and tell people that I'm really tired, I've worked nine weeks, you're probably going to be pretty embarrassed with what they have to say to you –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – and –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) trying to say, one time you were working all the 24 hours (Indistinct) seven days a week and now you're saying you only work (Indistinct) a week (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: No. I'm saying if you're trying to say to a regular Islander that you're working too hard because you worked nine weeks, they are going to laugh at you. I know you're a lawyer, you wouldn't understand how hard some people actually have to work to pay their bills but –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – for those hardworking Islanders out there that are working on the fields right now, on tractors, that are driving trucks; that are working in fish plants that are putting in 10, 11, 12-hour days right now, who are going to chug through the whole summer working that hard, you can't tell them that the nine weeks that we've put in here is a lot of work –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. Myers: – because they're going to laugh at you.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, June 5th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 2:00 p.m.