

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Appointment of Page

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that Matthew LeClair of Westisle High School be appointed as a Page for the duration of this, the 1st session of the 65th General Assembly.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I, too, would like to welcome Matthew to the team and I'm sure you'll enjoy yourself.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome all colleagues back to a new week and a new month, and our guests in the gallery, and those watching on television or the Internet.

A special welcome to long-time MLA Gerard Greenan, a good friend. It's great to see you have an appetite to come back for more, Mr. Greenan.

I would like to make a special mention of an organization that's well known to members of this House, that being Farmers Helping Farmers. In the last month they had a recognition of people who make a special contribution to the organization. Long-time neighbours Noreen and George Shaw of Stanhope, who've been farming continuously in that area since 1770, were recognized as friends of Farmers Helping Farmers with an award. As well, the youth of Margate pastoral charge were recognized as the recipients of the youth award, and the honorary life membership was awarded to my former colleague at the University of Prince Edward Island, Dr. John van Leeuwen.

I think it's appropriate at this point in the session as well to shout-out recognition to the people who work so hard to put together the legislation or the proposed legislation, the bills that we consider in this House, starting with the Office of Legislative Counsel led by Peter Allison and the team there, people throughout government. As of today we'll have 48 bills that we've had to consider going back to June and the beginning of this session, and as well the people who worked on two private members' bills that have been considered. I really want to say, on behalf of all members, how much we appreciate the good and timely work that those people do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Welcome everybody in the gallery, especially you too also, Mr. Greenan, who was an upstanding principal up there at Amherst Cove Consolidated School with me years ago, and he was also quite a member in the House here also.

I would like to also talk about the Indian River Festival. On Sunday night my wife and I went to the Indian River Festival and we had a great evening listening to Tom Jackson who was on the Island and put on a tremendous show and put things into perspective. He told a story with a little bit comedy with that, and also brought the Christmas theme. I think, with that, when you leave – when I left that show I thought, you know, you think about the people that are less fortunate and this is the time for thinking of the Christmas spirit and trying to help our fellow man. With that, it goes back to the job that we do in here and how important that is.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to welcome Mr. Greenan, and also point out Chris Sallie who is sitting right at the end there. This is his last week. He's been working as an intern here in the Legislature. Happy travels, Chris, when they arrive.

I also want to mention I, along with the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, attended Diwali on – Sunday? Was it Saturday. Sometime this weekend – Sunday, I think it was – and it was a wonderful event. Busy, wonderful, kind, warm people.

I also attended, along with I am sure many of the members of the Legislature here, the youth parliament that was held over the weekend. The quality of debate – and I know at least one of our Pages here today, John, and two others that I could see, were members of that – and it was just a grand event. I was so incredibly impressed.

One last thing. Yesterday was St. Andrew's Day, the patron saint of Scotland, the land of my birth, and I, along with the MacLauchlans and McIsaacs and MacDonalds and MacKays and MacEwens, and no doubt Hendersons and Biggars and Browns – have a great week.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to welcome everyone here today and those that are watching at home on EastLink or online.

We had a number of commercial shopping days, Black Friday and Cyber Monday, but I would like to mention that today is Giving Tuesday. That is an opportunity for those who want to perhaps look at a different side of shopping for Christmas, to reach out to our organizations and charities. I know Islanders are great at giving. If they wish to give they can go to givingtuesday.ca and help someone less fortunate in the approaching season coming up to Christmas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to rise and welcome all the folks in the public gallery, Gerard Greenan, Eddie Lund, and of course I have my in-laws, Eric and Arlene McKenna, in the public gallery.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome Matthew LeClair. Matthew lives in Kildare just outside Alberton there and he's good friends with my son Drew.

I'd like to also mention, when I'm on my feet, the generosity and the kindness of people of my community, West Prince, never ceases to impress me. There was a benefit concert held on Sunday night for a family in the area and they raised the tidy sum of almost \$18,000. A big shout-out to the good people of West Prince supporting the people in their need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does give me great pleasure to rise today and welcome all those in the gallery and those viewing at home and online.

I'd also like to welcome Matthew to the Assembly and wish him good success, although it might be quick, but anyway.

I'd also like to welcome a District 22 Summerside-St. Eleanors resident, long-time MLA, retired educator, a dear friend and mentor, Gerard Greenan, to the gallery as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to rise and welcome all visitors to the gallery today, but especially to a former office mate, Gerard Greenan. He and I have had a lot of great discussions over the past number of years and he does still continue to send me wise advice by email and text. Please continue to do that, Gerard. Always great and a pleasure to have you in the House with us.

Also, something I haven't done this session was to thank the Tim Horton's coffee group that often gave me great advice as well, and especially to Walter Gorrill who gave me some just this morning. Thank you, Walter, for doing that on a regular basis.

As well, I would like to also mention, like the Leader of the Third Party, I had the opportunity to be with the Rotary Youth Parliament on Saturday. Extremely interesting outcomes to some debated bills that they had there. Actually, some former bills and motions that were defeated in this House, they brought them back on to the floor of their Legislature and passed some of them. So maybe we can brush the dust off some of them and bring them back to the floor as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've not got that advice that the minister of land and environment has got, but I'd like to welcome my old colleague, Gerard.

I'd like to welcome everybody here in the gallery, especially Carol Simpson, we had Rotary lunch yesterday. We had a great luncheon. I'd also like to welcome Matthew to join us.

I'd like to make a special announcement. My mother, Bessie Dumville, is turning 100 years old this Friday –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dumville: – December 4th and the family will be celebrating this weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone back to the House today, everyone joining us in the gallery, and a shout-out to all the members from District 4 Belfast-Murray River.

I'd just like to mention on Sunday morning I got the opportunity to join the candidates for the Duke of Edinburgh Award in Belfast. The students of both Belfast Consolidated and Montague Regional High School, they were finishing their second day of the journey, and I got a chance to walk with them on the Confederation Trail for 6 kilometres with my friend Janice MacDonald. We were the supervisors, although I don't think they needed much supervision. They were way ahead of us most of the walk but it was a lovely chilly morning for a walk.

I just want to say hello to all those students, Cameron Stewart, Cami White, Evan Stewart, Abigail Munroe, and Brianna MacDonald, and I congratulate them on their hard work with their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Also, I'd like to say hello to everyone at Belfast Consolidated, Southern Kings Consolidated, and Montague Regional High School. A special shout-out to my friend Paula MacKenzie, it's her birthday today. She works at Cooper's Store in Eldon and I'm sure that they're giving her a great time down there today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's also a pleasure for me to welcome my former colleague from Summerside-St. Eleanors, Gerard Greenan, to the House. By all the comments given by all the members of this House you can tell the respect that he had while he was a member sitting here, so welcome back to Mr. Greenan.

I would also like to say hello to all my friends in the Indo-Canadian community, as the Leader of the Third Party mentioned, I had the pleasure to attend the Diwali celebrations, the celebration of light, with the Indo-Canadian community and to them I would say *Namaste*.

I would like to give a shout-out to Graham Zinc who has just received the Frank Zakem Award for the Youth Parliamentarian of the year. I would note that Graham Zinc is the member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, so maybe I'm just helping warm the seat for our future parliamentarian.

I would also like to say hello to all those who are watching at home from Charlottetown-Lewis Point. I always appreciate their support and the great advice they give to me.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to welcome everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald and of course everyone here in the gallery today.

In the House this sitting we talked a lot about seniors and we talked a lot about innovation and education. So I wanted to commend Lydia MacKay and her Stratford elementary students and the work they've done bringing seniors together with technology and using students to help train them up. I'm thinking maybe we could use a visit from those students here in this House so we learn how to use our tablets and get rid of the paper as much as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back here on a Tuesday. Want to say a special shout-out to all those at home in Georgetown-St. Peters, in particular Melvin Ford. Those of you who know Melvin, he's quite involved in the communities all around Souris and Georgetown and places in between. I know he does some work. I am seeing things in Charlottetown here as well. Melvin has recently announced that he's going to be hosting a Christmas dinner at the Kings Playhouse in Georgetown on Christmas Day between 11-3 for those who don't have a place to have Christmas dinner and for those who don't have someone to have it with or are looking to do something like that. He's looking for help, some volunteers, any donations I'm sure he'd be more than grateful to take. If anybody can help Melvin out that would be fantastic. I know that the community is certainly getting behind him.

I also want to make note for everyone, if you haven't already had a look at your tires it's probably high time to have a look at your tires. I know that the shops were busy yesterday switching people over. I came out from Charlottetown Sunday night, probably the height of the storm, and there was no plows on the roads and the roads weren't sanded or salted, which was disappointing because it wasn't snowing in Charlottetown which would explain why there were no plows in the east.

Mr. LaVie: That wouldn't happen with the old minister.

Mr. Myers: We had to wait for the snow to start in Charlottetown before we got the plows. But for those who live in rural Prince Edward Island and know that you're going to be ignored by this government, I suggest you get your winter tires on and get ready for the winter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome everyone back to start off another week and I'd like to say hello to everyone that's watching at home.

I had the opportunity Friday night to attend the sixth annual Farmer's Appreciation Night in Fortune community centre. What that is is all the farmers get together and they bring in their helpers and family and friends and they all get together and they share and they talk and they have a great laugh. The place is full and it's good cheer and it's probably one of the biggest fundraisers that the farmers put on right now for the community centre out there in Fortune, so I'd like to put a big shout-out to Wayne and Bonnie Townsend and all their family for organizing this. They've done it now for six years and I'm sure it'll continue to grow.

While I'm on my feet I'd just like to put a big shout-out to the volunteer firefighters right here across Prince Edward Island. What these volunteers do right in their own community is just amazing. These firefighters, 70% of their calls are through the night, and when they get a call, when that alarm goes off, these firefighters do not know what they're heading into when they are called till they arrive on the scene. So I'd just like to put a big shout-out for the volunteer firefighters right from Souris to Tignish, right across this Island from north to south. Big shout-out to the volunteer fire departments.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise and welcome everyone to the gallery and a special welcome to Mr. Greenan who used to give me some advice. I miss that and his good nature. Welcome, Mr. Greenan.

I'd also like to mention that Saturday night I had the privilege to attend the Christmas party for the Miscouche Volunteer Fire Department. At that time, they selected

Travis Gaudet as the firefighter of the year. He's a young man who was well-deserving of this award. I'm so happy that he got it. I'd like to thank the volunteer firemen for all their hard work they do in keeping us safe all year long.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I, too, just want to take this opportunity to welcome everybody here in the gallery today, especially some of our regulars.

And, of course, Gerard Greenan. Welcome to you, Gerard. As an office mate of mine, we shared a lot of stories and a lot of knowledge. A lot of well-educated programs came out of our office, for sure.

I had the opportunity over the weekend, of course, to attend and to be with the Rotary Youth Parliament. What an honour and a pleasure it was to have the opportunity to do this. Because the research and the preparation and the intelligence and the knowledge that came out of those people, just in a short time – it's outstanding, unbelievable, the young people that are coming up in the world today. We can feel assured that we're going to be in good hands.

I know that the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche has a statement coming on that. Hon. member, I do not want to steal your thunder so I'll give you a chance to come with your statement.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Rotary Youth Parliament

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had the privilege of attending a portion of the proceedings at this year's annual Rotary Youth Parliament held in Charlottetown over the weekend.

There were 36 students and five exchange students who acted out the roles of provincial politicians and debated bills regarding Island issues. The proposed bills ranged from a healthy living tax credit to a snow removal and clearing act.

I want to send a special shout-out to Jessica Gillis, a resident of District 24, who served as Government House Leader over the weekend.

I was so impressed by the depth and quality of their discussions. These students were extremely well prepared and respectful towards each other.

This weekend gave students the opportunity to see how the Legislative Assembly works and the processes behind passing bills and resolutions.

To add to the experience, the speech from the throne was delivered by His Honour Lieutenant Governor Frank Lewis and the assembly was presided over by the Honourable Speaker Mr. Watts.

I also joined in the fun and chaired two committees of the whole.

The students also received visits from provincial and federal politicians including the Premier and many members of this House.

Opportunities like this for our youth are of the utmost importance. Exposing students to the political process will help develop interest at an early age.

I thank the chair of the Rotary Youth Parliament committee, Albert Zakem, the Prince Edward Island Rotary clubs for their continued support of this program for the last 28 years, and to all my colleagues in the House who had the opportunity to stop by the proceedings.

I think we will have some competition for our seats in the future.

Je tiens à remercier tous les organisateurs de cet événement réussi et à féliciter tous les jeunes qui y ont participé.

I want to thank all the organizers of this event and congratulations to all the youth who participated.

Merci, monsieur le président.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Recognition of Peter Bolo

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge a dedicated community member in Alberton-Roseville, Peter Bolo, who has recently retired as the Westisle Wolverines men's volleyball team coach after 39 years.

Mr. Bolo, a physical education teacher by trade, began his career in O'Leary for two years and then moved to Westisle Composite High School after it was built in 1979, where he remained there for the next 35 years.

Teaching for 34 years at Westisle high school, Mr. Bolo continued to coach for an additional five years after retiring from teaching in 2010.

Over his coaching career, Peter has taken the team to the provincial championships over 27 times.

A highlight for Peter was the year his two sons, Nathan and Matthew, who were in grade 10 and grade 12 at the time, were both on the school team.

On two occasions Peter has had the opportunity to coach for the Canada Games, once in 1989 in Saskatoon and again in 2005 in Regina.

Not only has Peter contributed to sport in western Prince Edward Island but he has also had international impact. Peter and his wife Corina were part of a 16-member Habitat For Humanity build in Zambia. The Bolos have been active since returning home from Africa and have been raising funds to support the construction of two more classrooms there.

I want to thank Peter for his contribution to western Prince Edward Island. For someone to dedicate their lives to helping young people reach their full potential is a true asset to our community.

I wish you well in your retirement, Peter, and look forward to seeing what you do next.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

National Travelers Curling Club Championship

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today and recognize the recent Canadian Travelers Curling Club champions, the rink of Lisa Jackson, Carolyn Coulson, Melissa Morrow and Jodi Murphy.

They beat the Ontario women's team, skipped by Tina Mazzerole, 6-3 in the final, blanking the first end, scoring two with the hammer in the second. Ontario took two singles in the next two ends, but PEI pulled ahead with the deuce and a stolen single in ends five and six. Ontario was only able to take one in the seventh and they ran out of rocks in the eighth. That's the play by play. This was a tournament of firsts with the Jackson rink of the Cornwall Curling Club capturing its first Curling Canada national championship and also scoring an eight-ender in round robin play, the first eight-ender ever scored in a Curling Club national championship. And it may be the only one that's ever scored because anyone who curls knows it's really tough to score an eight-ender, make all eight rocks count.

These four outstanding athletes have represented PEI with pride and integrity on the national stage. They have shown young, aspiring Islanders that PEI can succeed on the national front in any sport. PEI is well known for producing some of Canada's finest athletes and these four exceptional women are no exception.

Curling continues to be a growing sport across the province with many young Islanders taking up the sport. We have also seen many rural rinks retrofitted as curling rinks to adapt to the increasing popularity. The Crapaud curling club in particular comes to mind although they are having some financial difficulties right now.

I want to personally congratulate the Cornwall club on their fine victory. We are all very proud of them. I wish them all the best in their upcoming season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Response to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Winter road safety

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

First question of the day will be to the Premier: How important is road safety to you and your government?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, road safety is very important to our government.

The Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy made a statement on a new initiative, the Road to Zero, last week with the collaboration of other departments and we're actively working on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We're going to switch to the minister of transportation.

How much did your department spend on highway maintenance operations last year?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, I'll have to bring that particular information back, but I'd be happy to have a look at that and bring it back.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We all know that last year was a brutal winter and the same as the winter before. Both of them, they were bad. Do you have any idea how much snow fell last year during the season?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd have to verify my number but I believe it was well over – around 100. But I'll have to double-check that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Last year there were over 551 centimetres that fell on Island roads. Definitely a lot.

Ms. Biggar: Thanks.

Leader of the Opposition: This was an unusual heavy snowfall which resulted in a lot of extra costs.

Do you have any idea how much extra in costs were incurred last year by the government?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had a lot of extra costs associated with the heavy snowfall and the extra equipment

that we needed to have on side. We contracted out to New Brunswick for extra help during that critical time.

Off the top of my head, hon. member, I know there were a number of special warrants that were issued to assist in the overrun of operations during that time, but I'll get you some other information.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Back to the minister: Can you outline to the House what your snow removal plan is for this year?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, we have purchased a number of new pieces of equipment which are in the process of arriving, including a number of snow blowers, plows, attachments for trucks. We are ready, I can assure the travelling public and all Islanders, for any snow event that will occur this year.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Can the minister tell the House how much road salt was used by the department per year, or last year, and per kilometre?

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

Ms. Biggar: I am sure that our department has those particular data. I'll get you that as well, hon. member.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

To the minister: Would it surprise you to learn that there was over 200 kilograms of salt used per kilometre last year?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, if those are the numbers that you have, I will assume that you are correct in that. That would not surprise me. I actually was out to the salt storage shed on I think it was Thursday. I can assure you, by the pile of sand that's out there and the sand that's in the shed that's out there, we, at the present time, have no shortage of salt.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

My numbers are right. On average we use roughly 200 kilograms of salt per kilometre. With that, we know the last year was a bad winter. We know that the year before was a bad winter.

We had the Premier say a minute ago that safety is a priority. So why is your department – or has your department – made any adjustments in the amount of salt that's going to be used on Island roads this winter?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, we use a brine-and-salt mixture to maintain a lot of the highways across Prince Edward Island. The main arteries are where salt is used. We will continue to assess the need for other areas as we go forward, but I can assure you that we have more than ample amount of supply for salt for the roads of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm not questioning whether we have enough salt and whether we have enough sand in the warehouses.

Our information is that the minister, or your department, is cutting down the salt-brine content on PEI roads from 200 kgs per kilometre to 100 kg per kilometre. Can you confirm that?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, we're always assessing the need of areas and we do continue to focus on the main travelled areas of Prince Edward Island for salt-and-brine and as well as sand on the other roads. We will continue to assess the needs of those areas. To my knowledge we will continue on as needed.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Information has come to light to me from across the Island of concerns being raised by the drastic cut in what is actually required on the roads and what we're going to be providing to the roads.

Was this an evidence-based changed or another budget-driven decision which could affect the safety of Islanders, especially school buses which travel on our roads first thing in the morning?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A number of years ago there was a move to use the salt-brine combination as it did prove to be more effective during a particular temperature on the highway. That was moved toward that type of salt and system on the Island. We'll continue to assess that. That was based on data and information that the department received that it was an effective way of treating the roads of Prince Edward Island. We'll continue to gather that information on what other provinces are doing and what our

counterparts are doing and continue to assess that information.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Minister, I've also (Indistinct) other concerns from front-line workers who say you've switched from a two-season box to a one-season box on the back of government trucks. Has the minister heard of any concerns from operators who basically said they don't want to operate these trucks?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have actually just signed our sanding contracts with our contractors for the upcoming season. We've worked closely with the truckers' association on a number of things. We have not had concerns addressed on that particular regard, but if anyone in our department has any concern with that I would advise them to have some discussion and we'll address their concerns.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'll make it perfectly clear. We're not talking about private contractors, we're not talking about the guys that are out doing secondary roads with salt trucks. We're talking about main highways and a switch of government trucks from two-way boxes to one-way boxes.

The double box has a greater storage capacity so would require fewer round trips to resupply, helping eliminate fuel costs. Is reducing the fuel bill for snow removal a good goal to have?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The best goal that we can have is safety on our highways, hon. member, and we will accomplish that by working together with our contractors, with our staff that do that job on a daily basis within our department, and we will always keep safety in mind when we're making decisions.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

We had the Premier a minute ago say safety is what they believe in. We know there's a drastic cut in salt which is going to affect the safety on the roads. This came to us from operators and the actual salt guys.

We also have a concern that's been brought to us that the actual government trucks on the road have gone from a two-way box to a one-way box. This eliminates weight on the plows, takes steering off the steering axle, and also causes a truck to be more dangerous to operate.

Does the minister have any concern that greater use of single truck boxes for snow removal may result in higher fuel use, more round-trips, and even higher safety concerns for the operators?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I would say to the hon. member, any staff that come forward, if they have concerns – however, we will continue to work with our staff on requirements in particular areas and work with our director of maintenance who is very involved in planning for the upcoming winter season and is very effective in the best use of dollars in how we protect Islanders on the roads.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Disclosure of loan extensions

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions today for the finance minister. I was pleased to hear that government planned to address loan write-offs, something the Auditor General flagged and something we campaigned for. The details of the bill are a bit disappointing, though. Section 26(1) of the *Financial Administration Act* lets Cabinet cancel, discharge or release write-off of debt, all mentioned in your new bill. However, this section allows government to extend the time for payment, something that your bill does not address.

Minister, why haven't you included the Cabinet disclosure of loan extensions similar to the disclosure of write-offs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The changes that are being made under that act are a direct result of recommendations that are being made by the Auditor General and we followed those recommendations pretty much right by the numbers in proceeding. All loans will end up coming through Cabinet so there will be full public disclosure when loans are written off.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

February-May loan write-offs

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, how many loans were written off by your government between February and May of this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have those numbers.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you're not sure, I was wondering if maybe you could possibly take that back, minister, as well as what the dollar values of the write-offs might have been.

Loans given special treatment

Minister, how many loans have already received special treatment and have been quietly written off between the May election and your government's announcement on June 17th?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not aware of anything being quietly written off or of any rush of write-offs. What I can assure this House is that there will be no loans written off between now, as an example, and when this legislation comes into effect. We will not be accepting any write-offs until after the legislation is in effect.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

June-December loan write-offs

Mr. MacKay: If I didn't get an answer for the last two, I don't expect I'll get one for this one.

Minister, how many loans were written off since your original announcement on June 17th to now?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have an exact number for that but I'm prepared to go back to staff and look at that and bring back whatever I can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Post-dating of write-off legislation

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister: Minister, why have you post-dated this bill so it does not take force until February 1st of next year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that came to light as we were researching the amendments to this bill is that there may be a number of clients out there that for us to post those write-offs would harm them. By those clients I mean we may have students with disabilities whose loans may have to be written off, we may have social services' clients on overpayments, and we don't want to see those types of things written off. We're going to take the time to make sure that we protect those vulnerable people between now and when the act comes in.

But I'll assure the hon. member and this House that there will be loans written off before that date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Loan write-offs before February 2016

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, how many loans do you intend to write off and bury in the shadows before this bill comes into force February 1st?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Great question. None.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Write-off legislation and e-gaming loan

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must say that's the first answer in 40 questions. I'm quite happy to have one.

Minister, is it your government's plan to quietly write off your controversial million-dollar e-gaming loan before this bill comes into force in February?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've stated, there will be no loans, zero loans, written off until this legislation comes into force.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Write-off legislation 2005 retroactivity

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, why haven't you listened to the advice of the Auditor General and made this bill retroactive to 2005?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting that the member picks that date because when the research came back and I read the Auditor General's report, it was the former Conservative government that instituted the policy that these loans would not be brought through to Cabinet. It was the legal advice they sought that kind of started this ball rolling where we wouldn't see them. With that legal piece of work done loans did not come forward. However, prior to that, loans were brought forward and they were made public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Write-offs and FOIPP

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard the minister say a few times that he's got the utmost faith in the Auditor General, so I don't see why you wouldn't listen to her on this and take this bill back to 2005.

When I asked the economic development minister about the loan write-offs from 2005 to 2015 I was told to use the freedom of information act. Can the minister confirm that Islanders wanting information about loan write-offs of their own tax dollars will have to pay for the privilege of maybe getting transparency?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's been the case for that length of time, and I'm proud that this government is taking initiatives to amend this bill so that will not be the case going forward in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, by ignoring the Auditor General's recommendation in this case, are you not setting an ugly precedent to ignore the Auditor General's findings in the e-gaming scandal?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly not. I'll reiterate the confidence that I have in the Auditor General. Also, when these recommendations are made we would seek and find the support of legislation or acts or laws that would have any effect on these and we'll continue to do so. I look forward to the full results of the Auditor General's report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Write-off legislation language

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, your new bill says Cabinet may disclose rather than shall disclose all written-off loans. Why the language loophole?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's not a loophole. That's simply so that we can protect those vulnerable people who may inadvertently fall within the legislation that is there. You'll see that in a lot of legislation. It's very normal wording.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, doesn't this language loophole give the Cabinet the option to withhold disclosure if it chooses to?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government, when we brought this new legislation forward, there is a trend within that to be open and transparent. Our government's position is that we will be open and transparent. This work on the *Financial Administration Act* allows that to happen and, like many other things, it has to go through Cabinet.

The wording that the hon. member refers to is very common in most pieces of legislation that you'll see and that you'll read. The regulations will be written between now and then to make sure that when it comes to those vulnerable people that the word 'may' allows them to protect those vulnerable people, along with the regulations that will follow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, why does your bill fall short of the transparency promise by the Premier? Is this just another scab not being picked liked government actions on e-gaming?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the fact that this government acted so quickly a number of months ago with respect to openness and transparency and then immediately went to work on the *Financial Administration Act* to ensure that the transparency would be there with loan write-offs, and we have committed that there will be no loan write-offs until such time as

that new legislation is in, as soon as we get that through the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

FOIPP and retroactive disclosure

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

I think I'd like to keep the conversation going on loan write-offs. On the 18th of June of this year the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism told the opposition that if they wanted more information on past write-offs and loan cancellations that, and I quote here: "... we do have a FOIPP act. If there's anything that they require to see there is a streamline there for them to access that."

Question to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: Does he still stand by that statement today?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Right from the get-go transparency and accountability was the backbone of this government and that's what we campaigned on. The FOIPP act is there for a particular reason and we're bringing in new legislation right now and I think we're being very proactive in that legislation to bring files like this before the Cabinet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

In reference to the same loans issue and around the same time our Premier stated, and again I quote: "...legally, that we cannot at this stage go back and disclose the identity under the legislation on a retroactive basis."

So I'm confused. Either the information is freely available through FOIPP, as the

Minister of Economic Development and Tourism has just told us, or it is prevented from being disclosed by law.

Can the Premier point me to the specific legislation which, in his opinion, would prevent this retroactive disclosure?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, in the course of researching a response to the advice of the Auditor General it was the considered view of legal counsel that people or firms who had loans written off during the period 2005 through to when this new legislation will take effect could not have their loans disclosed because of the terms of their loans, and the legal advice under which we operated, starting, as the Minister of Finance has said, under the previous Conservative government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Financial Administration Act and Auditor General

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

Under section 16 of the *Audit Act* the Auditor General has a statutory obligation to report the total amount of write-offs and cancellations. Increasingly, however, Finance PEI and IIDI have not reported write-offs through the *Financial Administration Act*, therefore making the information inaccessible to either the Auditor General or anybody else.

I look forward, by the way, to the investigation of the *Financial Administration Act*, and I'd also like to shine a spotlight on the 'may' and 'shall' issue which you discussed earlier, Minister of Finance.

But a question to you, sir: Will the proposed amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* correct this incompatibility and allow the Auditor General to fully carry out her mandated requirements?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Yes, it will, and those loans that are written off will come through Cabinet in the regular process and be made public.

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

Status of regional cooperation in health care

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is directed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Minister, your mandate letter indicates that regional cooperation is a priority. Specifically, your letter states you will work with your counterparts in Atlantic Canada to develop and implement regional strategies that improve the effectiveness and efficiency in the management and delivery of health care, including the development of a common formulary and increasing the generic fill rate.

Minister: Would you please provide the House with the status of this priority as it relates to the efficient management and delivery of health care across the region?

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

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

Regional collaboration is on the forefront of our agenda. It's been clearly stated in our provincial mandate letters and also been reiterated in Minister Jane Philpott's letter at the federal level. Currently, we've been in discussions with our counterparts in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland on opportunities.

Currently, we capitalize on procurement initiatives that save millions of dollars for the reinvestment back into a range of health care services. We are currently working on a regional formulary. I clearly stated in this Assembly that our commitment is to bring our province up to parity in respect to other formularies in the next 24 months, and we're very committed to doing that.

We're continuing to look at ways – we've got 2.2 million people in Atlantic Canada, we spend over \$10 billion in health care, and we're all very committed to making sure that we're efficient and we get the best value and provide the best access to services here in Atlantic Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Generic fill rates

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, in terms of the generic fill rates, how does Prince Edward Island compare to other Atlantic Canadian Provinces?

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

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

Our fill rates here on Prince Edward Island, from an Atlantic perspective, are really strong. We're at about 72% of all prescriptions. Regionally, the average is about 65%, but as a province and as a region we know that the ability to expand those rates to capture that savings to reinvest back in to whether it be expanding more drugs to our formulary or reinvesting that money back into other health services is still an opportunity that we must capitalize on. If you look at the fill rates in other provinces they're higher than 75%. If you look at in the entire United States their fill rates are at 85%.

We've got some huge opportunities in Atlantic Canada to capture. We've seen the benefits of the changes that we made with the drug interchangeability legislation, whether it be payor of last resort, whether it be the rebates that we've taken back to reinvest. We built our catastrophic program, we're currently rolling out our under-65 program, and so we're making inroads.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Strategy to lower traffic accidents

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This year has been the worst in past decade for traffic fatalities on the Island. Six died in September, more than all of 2014. As we move into the winter months when road conditions become more dangerous and we typically see more car accidents, my question is to the minister of transportation: What is being done to lower the traffic accidents on our Island roadways?

Mr. Trivers: Less salt.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had noted before, safety is our top priority on Island roads and we did have a tragic year. Our Road to Zero policy is to combine the four Rs: engineering, enforcement, education, and enabling legislation.

We have implemented – and we work very closely with the RCMP in terms of enforcement. We have done a lot of education, starting actually at the high school level, in regard to texting and driving. We've done a lot of promotion around that, and I want to congratulate some of the students that have put together a lot of educational videos around that as well, and we do see that it is working.

In regard to legislation we enacted a number of pieces of legislation that would see our fines increased for texting and driving, drunk driving, or driving while drug impaired. We will continue with our engineering designs in dangerous intersections to put in roundabouts. So we will continue on that Road to Zero and that is very important in terms of safety on Island highways.

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

RCMP traffic services unit

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, in the past couple of years the RCMP has disbanded its five-member traffic services unit. In light of these tragedies, would the minister consider discussing this with the commander of the RCMP and see about reinstating this traffic service that concentrates solely on traffic violations?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That unit was disbanded but it wasn't to lower the effort on traffic safety, but it in fact was to make an effective coordinated effort between the RCMP and the municipal police forces throughout the province. It's indeed that collaboration that's behind the Road to Zero policy.

The past year has undoubtedly been a tragic one and one for families and communities, and it's one I think we must deal with very sensitively, but it's also a matter of public education. In seven of those fatalities the person who died, the deceased, was not wearing a seatbelt. I think we all have to be thinking about how we can raise public education to ensure that we've got better safety on our highways, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Hand-held devices and fine amounts

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the minister of transportation. Prince Edward Island now has the highest fine in the country for operating hand-held devices while driving. The minimum fine was increased from \$250 to \$500 while the maximum fine has tripled from \$400 to \$1,200.

My question to the minister is: Is the minister satisfied with the current fine amounts or are more increases possible in the future?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, that particular legislation and law came into effect in August of 2015. We have been enforcing that diligently and we will continue to review the effectiveness of that particular legislation. It's not only the fine. I would mention there are demerit points that come off of a driver's license as well which has another impact. Also, in regard to first-time drivers, it has a big impact on them. If they get caught texting and driving they actually lose their license for different periods of time.

We will continue to monitor that and it is very important that we remember to not text and drive.

Speaker: Ton. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and the Opposition House Leader.

EDT minister briefed on e-gaming

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

The *Guardian* recently broke an exclusive story surrounding the secret loan from the department of innovation for the e-gaming file. I wonder if the minister of economic development can tell this House on what date he was briefed on this file?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I was elected and appointed to Cabinet we started working with our briefing booklets, so I guess that would give us an approximate date of the 1st of June, somewhere around that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

EDT minister and e-gaming money

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister of innovation is ultimately responsible for this financing mess. It's true that the finance minister approved it when

he ran innovation, but the new minister is ultimately responsible at this time.

Will the minister of economic development responsible for IIDI please tell this House what his current understanding of this outstanding public money is?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been briefed several times on the e-gaming and it's been the discussion of the Legislature many times. Part of our issue was surrounding the legality of it, and what we have done as a government is stood up and said we're going to send this to the Auditor General right away and see what comes back from there. Until time (Indistinct) let the Auditor General do her work, which we have the strictest confidence in, that – why we speculate on this file until all the facts are on the table doesn't play into our role as a good government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, the offer of finance obtained by the *Guardian* is dated December 12th, 2011.

This correspondence states, and I quote: Upon acceptance, this offer replaces in its entirety the offer of finance previously issued on November 24th, 2011.

Can the minister of economic development admit to Islanders what was contained in the first offer to finance which is still secret?

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

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Appreciate that the articles get published in the *Guardian* and it's great to see the opposition is paying attention to that, as I'm sure all the public are.

But I think it was very clear that this was turned over to the Auditor General by this government at the very early stage in terms of this government's commitment to transparency. It would be – and I still believe this today – it's inappropriate for anyone to speculate. What we need is the facts. The Auditor General has been given and asked to do that and is, and it's responsible of us to wait back and hear the facts rather than any accusations or supposition that may come from anywhere.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

E-gaming offers

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

I wonder if the minister of economic development could explain why government issued two separate offers to finance this illegal scheme and why the first offer was replaced.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I find myself standing in the House answering a question – an accusation where government has performed an illegal act. That's why we've consistently said in this House that we have the confidence in the Auditor General to review this matter and bring back the facts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Again, the finance minister is way off fact. Not once did I say it was an illegal act. What I referred to was it was an illegal scheme.

Perhaps the member sitting on the other side of the room would be interested to know that the Binns government, in 2002, were looking at a similar scenario, but the Binns government of the day had the fortitude to at

least gain a legal opinion before going forward and wasting \$950,000 of Islanders' taxpayers' money. I have the legal opinion here from 2002 and I'll be more than happy to table it at the end of Question Period.

Again, back to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism. Explain to Islanders the differences between the first still secret financing offer on November 24th and the second made public by the *Guardian* dated December 12th.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, he did stand up and say that he wasn't stating that it was an illegal act. Again, he stated it was an illegal scheme. For anyone who's been involved in the enforcement area or the legal side of things, when you say somebody is doing something illegal, whether it's illegal scheme or illegal act, that's still what the accusation is.

I'll go right back to the transparency this government committed to. I think that it's done the right thing by referring this to the Auditor General. Accusations are not fact. I look forward to the Auditor General's recommendations coming back and to her report and I look forward to reading the facts. Only then, when we get the facts, will we be able to look at this in a clearer light.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Let's talk about facts for a moment. Let's talk about a government that ran on being open and transparent and doing things differently. Well, they're certainly doing things differently as far as transparency goes.

What do they do? They seal all the relevant documents through their securities commission so nobody can access these documents. They're hiding behind the courts. They're hiding behind the Auditor General.

E-gaming and no-pay clause

Again, back to the economic development minister: Could you please confirm for Islanders whether the first still secret offer to finance included the no-pay clause found in the accepted loan?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure this House and those that are listening, including the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, that any documents that the government has with reference to this, a lot of them have been delivered and the Auditor General already has them. In fact, I know that there were a number of additional documents being delivered today.

So there's nothing being withheld. All the appropriate steps are being taken with respect to all documents, including emails and all the rest of it. So this government isn't hiding.

We're going to be accountable on this and we look forward to the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General, with all of that information that is being given to her in full cooperation of this government, the facts will be seen when the Auditor General finishes that piece of work which we're all looking forward to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, final question.

E-gaming loan approved during election campaign

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

One secret offer to finance dated November 24th, 2011, a second offer to finance dated December 12th, 2011. Government's own documentation shows this loan was placed in their system on October 1st, 2011.

This timeline becomes hard to follow because October 1st was a Saturday. Saturday, October 1st, right on the eve of our provincial election which took place on Monday, October 3rd, 2011.

Again to the minister of economic development: Minister, how was this loan established and approved by government in the 11th hour of a provincial election campaign?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've just stated earlier, all the documents with relation to this file are going to the Auditor General and that includes everything that we have. This is going to be looked at by the Auditor General as well as the courts, in other instances.

When we get to that point, we will – when all those documents are assessed, whether it be in the Department of Finance or the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the former innovation department, the Auditor General will have those documents. Once the Auditor General reviews them we'll see the facts.

An Hon. Member: That was the last question so you could (Indistinct) time.

Mr. Roach: We're looking forward to seeing the Auditor General – again, we have the confidence in the Auditor General to do that great work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: That ends Question Period

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bond Ratings 2015

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the major commitments of the Department of Finance is to protect our province's current credit rating.

A stable credit rating – also known as a bond rating – demonstrates to potential investors that Prince Edward Island is a wise choice, which enables us to borrow when needed.

Borrowing is a normal and necessary tool used by government to finance long-term

infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and buildings.

The more we improve our infrastructure, the more efficiently we can provide programs and services to Islanders into the future.

Today I am proud to stand in this House and announce that all three credit rating agencies, Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and DBRS, have confirmed our bond ratings for 2015.

On August 14th Moody's announced our ratings remained unchanged at Aa2 with a stable outlook. They noted our high degree of fiscal flexibility to address ongoing fiscal challenges and that we reflect: strong debt management practices that have ensured debt servicing remains strong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roach: On October 26th Standard & Poor's maintained its 'A' long-term issuer credit ratings and 'A-1' short-term rating, with a stable outlook.

Standard & Poor's noted our strong financial management and: timely, comprehensive, and independently audited disclosures.

On November 20th DBRS confirmed our issuer rating at 'A' (low), along with its long-term debt and short-term debt ratings at 'A' (low) and R-1 (low), respectively.

All trends remain stable. They credited our resilient economy and efforts to restore fiscal balance.

We are pleased that this province's credit ratings have remained unchanged over the last five years. This period has seen some challenging times for the global economy. However, the rating agencies continue to cite our prudent fiscal management practices – as well as our plan to return to a balanced budget – as reasons why our bond ratings have remained stable.

It is always encouraging to have third party validation of our work as we continue with our plan to return to balance in fiscal year 2016-2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unchanged and stable. Not good enough for this province. It's hardly a glowing report.

DBRS also states that fiscal discipline will need to be maintained in order to grow the economy. That's quite a departure for this government and the last eight years of spending.

I guess we should be thankful we have a stable rating. With over \$2 billion in debentures we should all prepare for a pretty bumpy ride when interest rates do start to increase.

DBRS also states that the debt to GDP ratio is down 3.6%, which on the surface sounds great, but it also represents the second-highest debt burden of all the provinces.

I will note we've gone from the highest to the second-highest. I'm not sure that's a rate of excellence, but we definitely want to see a downturn in where we are. We do not want to be second-highest or highest. So we look forward to that.

The fiscal recovery plan of this government is based on an average revenue growth of 3%. Ambitious targets for sure. DBRS also states: When combined with potentially lower-than-planned economic growth, DBRS believes that fiscal risks are tilted to the downside, and indeed, PEI second quarter projections point to a wider-than-planned shortfall.

In the Budget tabled in the spring this government showed a more than optimistic increase in revenues, especially income tax revenues, but in the RBC provincial outlook in September, and I'll read from it:

After shedding jobs in 2014 and then showing signs of renewed job growth in early 2015, we now expect Prince Edward Island to see its worst year of job losses since 2009. The primary drivers of job losses this year include education and health care, and looking ahead there is little scope for a turnaround given Prince Edward

Island's focus on restraining spending in order to eliminate its deficit.

Mr. Speaker, I think you will agree we need to reduce the spin in this House.

Islanders are watching and waiting for this government to make some changes. Minister, please do not disappoint them.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Just to mention, hon. member, I disallowed the word "spin" by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, so just refrain from using that word.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I want to make it clear that anything I say now – there is no distinction between our present administration and past ones of the last 30 years. We have been racking up deficits with almost no exceptions for the last 30 years. There were three or four years where there were small surpluses, but on the whole we've been accumulating deficits for a long time, which has led to the situation on Prince Edward Island where the third biggest expenditure of government is financing our debt.

We spend more money on that than we do on agriculture and fisheries. We spend more money on that than we do on tourism. We spend more money on that than every other department except health and education. That has to change. We need to get back to fiscal health and we have to start producing budgetary surpluses again, and until we do that I'm not going to celebrate what the bond agencies think of our fiscal situation. I will celebrate when Prince Edward Island finally gets back to balance and starts producing good budgets.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dual Credits

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Island students currently have two opportunities to receive a dual credit – that is a credit that they can take in high school which also earns them a credit in post-secondary.

Dual credit programs help high school students complete their high school grad requirements and ease a transition into post-secondary programs. Island students can earn a dual credit in high school and at Holland College by taking economics 621A or Accounting 621A in high school.

All students who have successfully completed economics 621A and have achieved a grade of 60% or greater will be exempt from taking business 2030 at Holland College. Business 2030 is found as either an elective or a core course in the following Holland College programs: Business Administration; Accounting Technology; Marketing and Advertising Management; and Sport and Leisure Management.

Students who enroll in these programs can apply to have their high school credit transferred and will receive a reduction in tuition for the equivalent of one course, and this helps students with their overall tuition costs.

There is a similar agreement in place for our high school course, Accounting Principles. Students that take this course and get a 60% or greater score will be exempt from taking the equivalent course at Holland College.

This course is an elective or a core course in the following Holland College programs: Golf Club Management, International Hospitality Management, Marketing and Advertising Management, Tourism and Travel Management, and Sport and Leisure Management.

As we move forward with this initiative, we hope to expand these dual credit opportunities to include other post-secondary programs.

It is important that all high school students on the Island have an opportunity to reach their full potential. We are committed to working with our partners in offering students excellent opportunities for students so that they can succeed in life.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the course of the fall and the majority of the spring we have asked many questions about education over on this side of the floor, and in particular this fall we have been quite adamant that we want to know from the minister of education what the plan is moving forward besides the small little details that he announced one day at a press conference.

Now, I have to wonder if this is part of the plan that's starting to piece together. Is he waiting for his advisory boards to be in place before he's making decisions? Is he making decisions himself? Was this already done? Did the minister of workforce – I suggest the minister of education sit down, stops making announcements in this House about nothing, get to work, get the answers for Islanders that Islanders want. How is education going to work? When are we going to have answers and when are we going to finally put on the table what the changes to education are without piecemealing out here in the Legislature, pretending that someone is going to pat you on the back for making an announcement about nothing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I think we need to do everything across all of our educational institutions to make it as easy as we possibly can for our young people to reach their full potential. This is obviously a good announcement in regards to collaboration between post-secondary institutions and our secondary schools. I know for my own children people learn at different speeds and in different ways, and you may be finished high school in terms of your age, but you may not have been ready,

for whatever reason, to fulfill the requirements of a particular subject. If we can dovetail the capabilities of a post-secondary institution with those of the schools then that can only be good for the prospects of our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Best of Sea Awards

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

I am pleased to rise today to congratulate the Island chefs who took home awards during the first ever Best of Sea promotion.

Best of Sea was a three-week culinary competition and education campaign celebrating Prince Edward Island's seafood and our top Island chefs.

There were 12 restaurants participating in the promotion offering a total of 48 unique seafood dishes which featured a total of 12 different PEI seafood species and other PEI agriculture and artisan food products.

Islanders were able to vote for their favourite dishes online while executive chefs competed for the Best of Sea title in five different categories.

I had the pleasure of announcing the winning chefs yesterday at a reception at the Culinary Institute. Chef Irwin MacKinnon from Papa Joe's took home the award for Best of Sea in three categories: The Wild Crustacean; Indulge and Be Shellfish; and the Ultimate Seafood Fusion.

Chef Miguel Cervantes from Waters Edge picked up the Hooked Up with Flavours Award.

The Islanders' Choice Award went to Chef Jane Crawford and Red Water Rustic Grill.

Prince Edward Island's seafood is second to none, and while it is important that the global marketplace recognizes our Island seafood products for their high quality, it is

also important that we focus on increasing education and consumption of Island products locally.

High quality Island seafood is available year-round and we encourage all Islanders to support our local food industries.

In closing, I would like to thank the department staff for their work in creating the Best of Sea campaign, as well as our Island restaurants and seafood industry associations for their support. Lastly, I thank all Islanders who took in part in experiencing the Best of Sea this year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to congratulate all the award winners on the Best of Sea campaign. Any time we get to advertise our seafood, not only on Prince Edward Island but globally, it's a good thing for our seafood industry, and I want to thank the minister and his department for initiating this. It's a great program.

As I know, seafood is one of our main industries right here on Prince Edward Island. If we can get that out worldwide it's exactly what the industry needs, Mr. Speaker, as you well know.

You were in the industry so you know the importance of getting that seafood out there right across the world and getting people buying and eating seafood right here on Prince Edward Island. We have the best seafood right here in the world on Prince Edward Island.

I want to, once again, before I sit down, thank the minister and especially thank his department. I know there's a lot of work went into this and goes into this and I want to thank all Islanders for supporting this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Indeed, the seafood industry is an enormously important part of our economy. It contributes over \$200 million to the provincial economy and it's something that we need to protect. I love eating seafood too, of course, that's another reason why I stand in support of your announcement.

But we have to make sure that we protect our fisheries. The United Nations' food and agriculture organization recently made an announcement of a report that over 70% of the fisheries around the world are either fully utilized, over-utilized or in crisis, and that the ones who were most vulnerable were the small fisheries, and Prince Edward Island aquaculture and all of our fisheries here would fall under that.

If we want to protect and preserve this incredibly important part of our economy here, then we need to be vigilant. Invasive species are also a particular issue here on Prince Edward Island.

A wonderful announcement, but the seafood fishery is something that we are really going to have to protect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the document I referred to during Question Period, the 2002 legal opinion that the Binns government obtained with regards to online e-gaming, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the details surrounding the loan as outlined in a December 12th, 2011 document from Innovation and Advanced Learning and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Annual Report for the PEI Liquor Control Commission for the period ending March 31st, 2015 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table answers to question No. 17 from the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table written questions to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Rustico-Émerald, 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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2015* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Supplementary Appropriation Act (No. 2) 2015*, Bill No. 48, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, could you just give us a brief explanation?

Mr. Roach: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 37 of the *Financial Administration Act* and for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2015, it's the fiscal year ending March 31st on additional capital expenditures for environment, labour and justice, and transportation and infrastructure renewal.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, that the 22nd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 22, *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act*, Bill No. 38, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, 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 would ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Casey): 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 Early Learning and Child Care Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Aylward: Chair, I think when we concluded with this the other evening we had already had an explanation and just some of our members were asking questions. If we could just revert to questions for the time being.

Chair: That's perfect. Thank you.

Permission to take a stranger on the floor?

An Hon. Member: Granted.

Chair: Hello. Could you please state your name and your position for the record?

Carolyn Simpson Director: Carolyn Simpson, director, early childhood development, for the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Chair: Welcome, Carolyn.

Carolyn Simpson Director: Thank you.

Chair: All right, hon. members, we are in questions, and we have a question from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I just have one question. I'm wondering do all centres have to be licensed now, all type I and type II centres?

Mr. Perry: Yes.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

A type II would be treated the same as type I?

Mr. Perry: In terms of licensing yes, but the requirements are different.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Could you tell us the number of unlicensed centres that are currently operating on PEI?

Carolyn Simpson Director: That would be unlicensed –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Carolyn Simpson Director: – would be impossible to really put a handle on because the way that the licensing board or the child care facilities board responds would be on a complaint basis. Unlicensed does not necessary mean illegal either and that's important to understand the distinction.

Unless we're made aware by the general public we are not aware where these centres or programs are located.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Does that mean with this regulation, with these new amendments to the legislation, that all of those unlicensed centres would have to become licensed in order to continue operating?

Chair: Carolyn?

Carolyn Simpson Director: No. There's a certain minimum number of children that you can have in your care before being required to be licensed. So if you have six or under, depending on age, you do not require a license. Anything over that, then yes, you would require a license.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: In speaking to people about this legislation, general approval by the way from the daycare operators that I met with, just saying this is a good way of modernizing the legislation in the way that it had to happen.

I did, however, hear that across the Island there appears to be insufficient infant care and that gap between the end of maternity leave and the 22 months where child care would take – do you have any figures on what kind of wait times across the province are for people who are looking for infant care?

Carolyn Simpson Director: That varies depending on the jurisdiction. However, infant care does certainly remain our greatest need. The wait time can range anywhere from six months and, within a regulated program, the child may age out, if you will. In other words, turn two before they actually do find a spot. That is, albeit, the greatest growth area remains the greatest need area.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Madam Chair.

Given that, does the province have a plan to expand that, to fill that window of opportunity?

Carolyn Simpson Director: One of the areas of concern that we have and do continue to have is with infant care. It is our intent to work with the existing programs to try to respond as best we can. We did have an opportunity before where programs – there was an opportunity for private homes to provide what we call infant care homes but there was no uptake on that. A little bit of interest but no uptake. So certainly we'd be looking back at pursuing some options to try and respond to that need. It's not as simple as if you create the space will the families come. There are other variables such as when the need is there, sort of shift work, nights, weekends, those sorts of things as well.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: In section 39 of the act, the amendments to the act, it talks about alternative programs. I have specifically one daycare in my district that is looking to institute an intergenerational program. Take the children to a seniors' home, which I think is just a fantastic thing for both the young, those at the beginning of their lives, and those at the end of their lives.

I noticed here that the board would have to issue a permit to the operator in order to do that. Can you tell me what criteria you would use for issuing that permit?

Carolyn Simpson Director: Without knowing the exact details, if that were a new licensed program within the province that would have to come before a licensing board. It would then need to be determined that there's actually a need for spaces in that geographic region.

The board does not consider whether or not this is a new or innovative type of service delivery. It specifically looks at supply and demand of child care spaces in a geographic region. Currently there is only one area in the province that the board is working with and that is in the western part of the province where there is a gap in full day or for all ages, if you will, in respect of the infant care that we just spoke about. To answer your question, it would depend on whether or not this was an integration of an existing program or the beginning of a new program.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Just to follow up on that infant care again, and I think you were alluding to what I'm going to talk about. I understand there was someone or the option was presented to have an infant care only centre maybe or you guys allowed it or someone asked for it, that kind of thing, and it didn't go. Does this legislation still allow for that option to happen? The infant only care?

Carolyn Simpson Director: Excuse me, are you asking would we be open to new infant homes?

Mr. MacEwen: No, I guess what I'm saying is if the legislation passes, is an infant only care centre still – would it still be allowed? I guess I'll phrase it so that – because in order to have that, you have to have more funding for that centre, right? Because of the ratio of educators to – one educator to three babies basically is what it is. If this legislation passes, can the centre still operate like that or can the government still provide extra funding over and above what they would to a normal centre because they've got a better ratio because they have more older kids?

Carolyn Simpson Director: There's two points to that. The licensing question, which is separate from the department, is: Would there be licensed or program granted operation for infant care because that is our need? At this point in time the answer to that question would be yes.

The question around the funding to centres would be one that we would certainly have to take a look at our existing allotment and budgets. It's not an early years designation so the funding would have to then be explored. You are correct when you say it is more expensive to operate infant care because of the ratio of 1:3, which was the main deterrent for people to opening such programs to begin with.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Yeah, I mean, the centres out there that just take three infants because of that ratio and it's hard to follow up when they're trying to break even in a lot of cases in the centres. I guess that's good. That's good to hear that at least if – I think it's an option worth exploring if you can have an infant only care centre. I'm not sure where the need is, if the need is in an early centre probably or if it's in (Indistinct), I don't know. But to have that and then at least they're allowed to still get the license, but then obviously they have to negotiate and decide with government to look at the funding ratio and that kind of thing. So that's fine.

Thank you.

Chair: Other questions? Other questions?

Mr. Perry: I move the title, *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act* –

Chair: I got it. *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you Minister.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to intituled, *An Act to Amend the Early Learning and Child Care 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 Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, that the 21st order of the day be now called.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 21, *An Act to Amend the School Act*, Bill No. 42, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, 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 once again call upon the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

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

Mr. Aylward: No, Chair, again, we've spent a considerable amount of time on this bill.

I think we might have a few more questions on it, but if we could just come back to the process that we were following currently.

Chair: Thank you.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Good afternoon. Could you please state your name and your title for the record?

Blair Barbour Coordinator: Yes, Blair Barbour, legislation and planning coordinator, Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Chair: Welcome.

Any questions on this bill?

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Chair: Carry the bill, great.

Mr. Perry: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the School Act*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: 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. Perry: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and 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 School 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 Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 24th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 24, *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2016*, Bill No. 24, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Gallant): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2016*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause or would you like some questions?

Mr. Aylward: Chair, yeah (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: Continuation of questions.

Chair, I'd like to bring a staff member to the floor?

Chair: Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Jim Miles Secretary: Jim Miles, assistant secretary to Treasury Board.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Miles.

Our first question is from the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Previously on several occasions the minister of health talked about, in particular, the Hillsborough Hospital, how it's antiquated and has to go. I think it was back on January 10th, 2014, he was quoted in the *Guardian* as indicating the province has been exploring how to replace the 69-bed facility.

I'm just wondering, within capital expenditures that we're looking at, is there any money being spent with regards to the Hillsborough Hospital?

Mr. Roach: Yes, there has been monies set aside starting with the smaller amounts in 2016-2017 and increases over the next number of years.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

When would you see that facility being completely replaced?

Mr. Roach: There will be planning that will take place over the next couple of years but I don't see any substantial work until probably 2019.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

The money that's currently set aside for, I believe the minister said 2016-2017?

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Mr. Aylward: Is that for upgrades to the current facility or is that for design and starting the tendering process for the eventual replacement of that facility?

Mr. Roach: That'd be the initial stages of design and planning.

Mr. Aylward: Right. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Couple of quick questions, Chair.

On the schedule there at the back, capital expenditures, Communities, Land and Environment, \$250,000. What is that?

Mr. Roach: Yes, that's a mass spectrometer.

Leader of the Opposition: A what?

Mr. Roach: A mass spectrometer. It's lab equipment.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Justice and Public Safety, \$355,000?

Mr. Roach: That was for the provincial correctional centre's repairs where they replaced the air-handling units. Also beginning to move to the LED lighting outside to reduce the costs. And replacement of the exercise yard.

Leader of the Opposition: Final question. Back in the spring we saw I think it was somewhere around \$2.5 million move from Economic Development and Tourism over to transportation and infrastructure or innovation. Did we not move money from small –

An Hon. Member: Island Community Fund?

Leader of the Opposition: – Island Community Fund?

An Hon. Member: Island Community Fund (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: So where did it go to?

Mr. Roach: Sorry, would you repeat the question?

Leader of the Opposition: Where did the money go to? Because we did move it from one part somewhere.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy will answer the question.

Ms. Biggar: The Island Community Fund was part of an agreement that was from 2007 which ended in 2015. So there was no money moved.

The New Build Canada agreement came in effect in 2015, as you're aware. That particular program that was under the previous Build Canada Fund was no longer effective and there is no criteria. The criteria was set out under the federal government that put in the New Build Canada Fund. Under the New Build Canada Fund, under infrastructure, Small Communities Fund, there is no provision for that particular type of projects that were there under the previous agreement. It wasn't caught, it wasn't moved, it was just no longer there.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald a question.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

First off, I believe last time we were going through the Capital Estimates here we were on – I believe we were on page 15. I would have to go back and check the Hansard. We were going through, looking at each one of the summary line items, and you were breaking it down into projects that were covered underneath each one.

You had stated originally that we would have to go through and get those read into the Hansard during Committee of the Whole House, but then you said you would consider maybe tabling the list of projects under each summary line so we wouldn't

have to do that. I was wondering if you've considered that again since you have the information at your fingertips, if you would consider tabling that information.

Mr. Roach: No, I haven't. I will consider it going forward for the future though, yes.

Mr. Trivers: For the future? So, Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Just to be crystal clear, although you have the information, details of the projects, and we don't need the dollar amounts under each one of these summary lines, we'll even call them proposed projects, (Indistinct), you are not willing at this time to table that information for the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island to consider?

Mr. Roach: As I said before, this is the first time we've ever even, in this much detail, I think, come forward to talk about the Capital Budget estimates. I'm prepared to take your request under advisement and when I have the opportunity to sit down with staff who compile this and go through it, we'll consider it going into the future, but I'll certainly take that under advisement.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So just to confirm that, you're saying no for these Capital Budget estimates, you will not do that?

Mr. Roach: I am prepared to sit down and go through the budget document and talk about departments in general and questions with respect to dollar values in those. I will break it down as much as I can for you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: All right, Chair.

What I would like to do is just ask some questions about specific projects to see if they might fall on the list of projects. They'll be jumping around. I'm not sure what pages they would fall under necessarily.

Mr. Roach: Sure, we have time, lots of time.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: The first one is there is the pond in Hunter River known as Bagnall's Pond. There is various work that needs to be done there in order to make sure it's environmentally safe as well as aesthetically pleasing. I was wondering if there was any money in the Capital Budget that will be going towards Bagnall's Pond in any way, shape or form.

Mr. Roach: That wouldn't be set aside in this budget. That would be the – probably if it were there it would be in the operational budget.

Ms. Biggar: It's under estimates –

Mr. Roach: The one we did in the spring.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, these would be capital projects, but thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Right now, the way it's been presented to me, is that the current poultry plant on Prince Edward Island may need some work to make sure that it's viable in the long run. I was wondering if there is any money in the capital budget to either, (a), renovate and ensure the existing poultry plant is viable in the long-term, or to (b) potentially build a new poultry plant.

Mr. Roach: This budget here is primarily for government-owned buildings, government property and vehicles and equipment, and that sort of thing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, I guess there's an answer in there somewhere – what are you –

Mr. Roach: Well, the answer is no.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So if we looked under – for example, the reason I was asking questions, when I looked under, like, Tourism PEI there was specific projects in there for specific things. You could, for example, consider Bagnall's Pond to be underneath that for example, and in Health PEI we talked about building new manors and that sort of thing.

Mr. Roach: Yes, and health buildings –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, so –

Mr. Roach: – and when we were talking about the tourism piece of it there we're talking about the tourism government-owned properties and buildings and that sort of thing. Slightly different budget.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So would money for capital projects within volunteer fire departments fall under capital budget estimates?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Roach: No.

Mr. Trivers: No? Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: If you were to put in things like, for example, photo radar on our highways would that fall in capital budget estimates?

Mr. Roach: If photo radars were being considered –

Mr. LaVie: Island Coastal Fund –

Mr. Roach: – that would have to come through the same process, through capital estimates, through the departments and that sort of thing, yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: At this time are you considering photo radar for our roads to help reduce the number of fatalities?

Mr. Roach: That would be if – yeah, no.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. Roach: That's the simple answer.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Right now there are two communities in District 18 Rustico-Emerald that have said they would really like sidewalks, and they would be very useful to make the community safer, in particular for senior citizens. For example, in Hunter River right on Route 13 Oakdale Road in the community, going from the restaurant from the main intersection, that sidewalk is desperately needed for safety reasons. As well as in North Rustico there is talk about putting sidewalks that lead up to the pharmacy and that sort of thing.

Are those sidewalks included in these capital budget estimates or is that the sort of thing that would be there?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you. Hon. member, municipalities that get gas tax do qualify to use their gas tax money to put sidewalks in so that would be under the municipal priorities.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So just to be clear, there's no capital expenditure money in the Capital Budget estimates for sidewalks at this time?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Mr. Roach: It's in their own budget of gas tax.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Arenas are another community-focused building that need to have renovations in order to continue to be safe and to be up to date. Is there any money

in the Capital Budget estimates to help with our Island arenas?

Mr. Roach: No.

An Hon. Member: Chase the Ace (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Chair: Further questions, hon. member?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I have a number of roads that need to be fixed up in my district, District 18 Rustico-Emerald, as I know across the Island. I'm guessing I'm going to find out that the Capital budget is not where the money for repaving or long patches, they sometimes call it, of roads is included?

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

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, I think you're confusing this particular budget with the estimates that we will do in the spring in which will report on how much we do intend to spend on recap and maintenance of roads. That would not be under this particular budget. This particular budget would include major development on highways, but in particular with recap that would not fall under this budget. It falls under the estimates in the spring.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So this budget would include only new roads or just major projects, you're saying?

Ms. Biggar: Correct.

Mr. Trivers: Interesting. Of course, I wouldn't have to ask these questions if we would have a breakdown of the projects under each summary line so we would know what was allocated there to begin with.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: That's all for me, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Going back – the minister of transportation just answered to the opposition leader – the \$2.8 million that was in the Island Community Fund, was it not supposed to go – so what happened to that? I kind of missed the last part of that. Could you explain that to me?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Chair.

Just to go back to 2007 when the agreement was put together with the federal government for that particular funding of infrastructure to communities, that agreement was from 2007 to 2015, which at that time included criteria for small communities similar to what we were involved in with the Island Community Fund – was a portion of it was set aside under that particular agreement.

That particular agreement ended with the federal government. The federal government of the day put in a new Build Canada Fund of which there is a small portion of that, it's called Small Communities Fund. However, setting the criteria for that – that particular program that we had previously was no longer eligible based on the criteria that was set by the federal government with the new agreement. Under this particular fund there is no provision under that which allows small, non-profit groups to do the similar projects that we did in the past.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

So where is that \$2.8 million now?

Mr. Roach: In Ottawa.

Ms. Biggar: The project ended. When the project ended, there was a new amount of money put forward under the new Build Canada fund. There were no monies –

Mr. MacKay: I guess what I'm asking –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I guess what I'm asking is, I'm trying to figure out where my New London fire department money is going to be. Does it fall in under this or not?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: It doesn't fall within this project.

Chair: Excuse me, hon. members.

Could we have some quiet, please, so we can hear the question?

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque has the floor.

Mr. MacKay: I've been struggling to find out where that money for the New London department is going because every time I make any phone calls or try to make any headway, I don't seem to accomplish anything.

I've been told that we're supposed to – the members from the fire department are supposed to receive some calls now. There's somebody been waiting by the phone for two weeks.

I'm just wondering, maybe, if someone from government could call him and let them know yes or no. Because he should get out and get some exercise. He's been sitting by the phone for two weeks there.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism would like to answer this question.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. I've spoken to the hon. member on this several times and we assured him that the New London fire department, at their request, was going to get what they desired in the way of equipment and support in that regard.

I just had an email about an hour ago in saying that they've been trying to get a hold of the fire chief, my friend, so –

Mr. MacKay: So it's safe to say –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: – that the New London fire department is getting money by when? When do they expect to get that money?

Mr. MacDonald: We'll deal directly with the chief on that, but he has been – there have been messages left on his machine. So I don't know if he's away, or –

Mr. Roach: But (Indistinct) not a government asset. It's not a government building. It's not a piece of government equipment.

Mr. MacKay: Right.

Mr. Roach: It does not fall within this budget.

Mr. MacKay: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I understand there was – a year ago there was a report being done on rink infrastructure in PEI. Can you update me on that?

Mr. Roach: I'm sorry. On what infrastructure?

Mr. MacEwen: A rink infrastructure.

Mr. Roach: A rink infrastructure.

Mr. MacEwen: On all the rinks in PEI, there was an –

Mr. LaVie: R-I-N-K. Arena.

Mr. Roach: I'm not aware of the report. I haven't seen it.

Ms. Biggar: It's not in our –

Mr. Myers: It's collecting dust on a shelf somewhere.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Roach: But I will –

Mr. MacEwen: I was going to say: Would you –

Mr. Roach: I will look into that and see if I can –

Mr. MacEwen: – ask and see?

Mr. Roach: – find out what –

Mr. Myers: Look on the dusty shelf.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

There's a group in Morell, Northside Communities Initiative, that are working quite hard. They're raising money, they're looking at their options for the rink in Morell. They've looked at all their options. The full monty, nice facility like the Member from Evangeline-Miscouche has, to just a – to renovation, all the options kind of thing.

But minister, I guess we're waiting to see how the federal infrastructure funds come. I'm wondering: Will the provincial government be there like they have been in the past with other facilities? If Morell has a good business case and has their end of the money raised, is the provincial government willing to partner on a new arena infrastructure type thing in the area?

Mr. Roach: What I can say is that any request like that does not fall within this budget, within this financial statement that's here.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: We're going to be doing Capital Budgets every year and you say it is fluid. Would the government consider that request when it comes, when – I know the committee has met with a couple ministers already on it and have been – they're encouraged by the response. Would the government be willing to partner in something like that, like they have done with other facilities?

Mr. Roach: It would (Indistinct) within this budget. This budget is for provincially-

owned infrastructures, hospitals, government buildings.

Mr. MacEwen: True.

Mr. Roach: Government infrastructure like IT, hospital equipment. Government-owned and operated resources.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, I understand that. But would the provincial government be willing to partner with the community and the federal government to leverage those federal funds for a facility, if the business case was there?

Mr. Roach: I can't make that commitment under this budget.

Mr. MacEwen: No, I understand that.

Mr. Roach: Because this budget does not fall within what you're asking for. But I think any community that has a business plan, that are arranging for funds – I don't know what the infrastructure dollars are going to look like. That may or may not come down from the federal government. I don't know what their policies are going to look like.

Until such time as we can assess that it wouldn't be the proper thing to make a commitment that we can't keep.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, minister. But there's no moratorium on funding for that. Like, you're willing to listen and, you know –

Mr. Roach: Always willing to listen.

Mr. LaVie: Always?

Mr. Roach: The door is always open. We'll certainly listen. But again, unfortunately, under this particular budget –

Mr. MacEwen: No, I understand –

Mr. Roach: – would not fall –

Mr. MacEwen: And I do appreciate your letting me ask this question outside –

Mr. Roach: Make no mistake. Let's be clear. If the new infrastructure funding comes down and there are provisions in there that allow that to happen, of course we'll look at it.

Mr. MacEwen: And you'll –

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: – ask your fellow Cabinet members about that report on rink infrastructure, to bring that back? You'll ask again about a rink infrastructure report –

Mr. Roach: I can find out who has that report.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah. If it was done.

Mr. Roach: What the ask is, what department and –

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

Chair: Okay?

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

I know there was some work done this past summer on the Hillsborough bridge. I've been talking about it, now, since I was elected in 2011. Accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists alike, there's a real need for it, safe access to and fro.

I'm wondering what the work that was done this summer showed us as far as the capability of the bridge being able to carry more infrastructure on it.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hon. member, at the present time, there is a walking lane for pedestrians on the bridge. As you know, we've had a number of meetings around the stress test on the bridge. We haven't gotten that report back as yet.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

I'd encourage the minister of transportation to come walk across the bridge someday, or ride a bicycle across it. It's actually an extremely scary experience. It is.

We see it in other major centres all across North America where they actually have a safe protected lane to either bike or walk on. We have had several accidents where individuals, particularly cyclists, have been injured by be it truck mirrors or flying debris on the bridge.

So I guess that's what I'm asking for, is: Where is this report? What were the results? And: How soon can we look forward to moving ahead with a project to add a safe pedestrian lane to the Hillsborough bridge?

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

Ms. Biggar: We are aware that there are challenges crossing the bridge, certainly, for pedestrians and/or cyclists. That report is not back, hon. member, so it would be too premature to say when or what the recommendations would be.

But we'll certainly continue to work with the Stratford council. We've met with the mayor on that. It's been part of our discussions as well, as a municipality. We'll continue to work on that with them and yourself.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

The final report hasn't been finished yet, but I'm wondering if the minister has received an initial briefing on it that she could share any information at this time.

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

Ms. Biggar: No, hon. member. Since our last meeting with Mayor Dunphy we have not received any further updates from the company that's doing the assessments.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

One last question. I just want to ask the minister: Is this a priority for your government to ensure that, in the very near future, we will have a safe, accessible pedestrian bicycle lane on the Hillsborough bridge? It goes hand and hand with what the minister of health is always talking about. We need to get people out, we need to get fit. We need to stay active. Go! PEI, you may have heard of that.

It's imperative that the residents of Stratford-Kinlock and the residents of Charlottetown or, for that matter, our tourists or any Islander, has safe access across the Hillsborough bridge.

Can you assure me, right now, here, that that is a priority of your government?

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

Ms. Biggar: Safety is always a priority, as I've said before, hon. member. We'll continue to work towards that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Following on from the hon. member's recent comments, I'm assuming but I just want to check that there's no money laid aside in this capital budget specifically for bike infrastructure?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm talking about bike lanes and such.

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

Ms. Biggar: It's all part of a going forward strategy. We've met with the biking associations and we know that is a concern. As we do forward planning, we will try to implement more space on the roads for bikers.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: On page 23 there's \$149,000 set aside for the Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Committee. Could you just explain what that money will be used for, please?

Ms. Biggar: Sure.

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

Ms. Biggar: That is to finish up our commitment in working with the committee on finalizing the park area.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Expanding the trails (Indistinct)?

Ms. Biggar: It's to finalize the trails that are there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I see, going forward, that there's no money in subsequent years for the Bonshaw Hills public lands. So this will be the final installment?

Ms. Biggar: Yes. It's our final part of the phases that we put in there to develop that. That's the final commitment dollars that we had, just to finish up the area there in particular.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Final question. I may be straying outside the capital budget but I hope you're generous enough to consider answering it.

In my own district, at the corner of Sandy Point Road and the Trans-Canada Highway, there was a tender went out to remove two buildings there just a couple weeks ago. I'm wondering if you could share with my community what the plan is there and will it include raising the speed limit?

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

Ms. Biggar: I'll get some information for you on that, hon. member, and discuss –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'd appreciate that.

Ms. Biggar: I don't have it here.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Just a quick question. I want to go back to snowplowing for a minute. I understand restraints and all that kind of stuff, but we gave money to Summerside and Charlottetown last winter because of the heavy burden they had on snowplowing. Why were other towns or communities that paid for snowplowing not also considered in that?

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

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) advisement, hon. member. I'm aware that the cities of Summerside and Charlottetown received extra funding for bringing in extra equipment that was needed. The other areas, the province does mainly do those smaller communities as part of our requirement with our –

Mr. LaVie: We pay for it.

Ms. Biggar: – highways and snow removal.

Mr. LaVie: We pay for our own.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) mentioned in the House was the town of Borden-Carleton. The town of Borden-Carleton is responsible for a certain percentage of its own streets. They do them under their budget, under their tax base and everything.

The question they asked me is: They gave it to Summerside and Charlottetown. Why didn't they give it to Borden-Carleton? Then that raised – three or four communities said the exact same thing: Yeah, we have to pay. How come we (Indistinct). Anyway (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: I'll take it under advisement.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Any further questions?

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall the schedule carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair, and that the Chair make report to Mr. Speaker.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: I move the title.

Chair: *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2016.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal servants, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island, towards appropriating the several supplies raised for the exigencies of Her Majesty's Government and for the other purposes hereinafter mentioned, do humbly beseech that it be enacted:

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair, and that the Chair make report to Mr. Speaker.

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 *Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2016*, 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 Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the 29th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 29, *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act*, Bill No. 46, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, 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 call now upon the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness to chair the Committee of the Whole.

Chair (Henderson): The House is now in Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act*.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Chair, could I please take Mark Victor on the floor with me?

Okay. Maybe we won't need him.

Mr. Henderson: Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Aylward: Chair, we've actually had this bill in committee for quite some time and we have finished with our questions on it. So we –

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, hon. members.

I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: 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.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. 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 Electric Power Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, that the 27th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 27, *An Act to Amend the Medical Act*, Bill No. 45, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Medical Act*, Bill No. 45, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, 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.

The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Dumville): 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 Medical Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Aylward: Chair, if we could just have an overview, please, to begin with.

Mr. Currie: This is the medical act. This bill requires the college to accept certification from accredited bodies without requiring further examinations to be taken by the applicant; (b) sets out the criteria to determine proficiency in the English language; (c) provides ministerial powers of oversight; (d) requires regulatory changes to be approved by LGIC; and (e) repeals the proclaimed *Medical Act*.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, did you have questions on this?

Mr. LaVie: Yes, questions.

Chair: Go ahead, (Indistinct) –

Mr. Currie: Could I ask permission, Chair, to bring Nichola Hewitt on?

Chair: Permission to bring a stranger?

Mr. LaVie: Oh, he needs help.

Mr. Currie: Okay, fire away. Let's go.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Nichola Hewitt, Department of Health and Wellness, legislative specialist and solicitor.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, you have the floor.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Where did this bill come from? Why all of a sudden this bill?

Mr. Currie: First of all it's not all of a sudden. We've been in discussions with the College of Physicians and Surgeons now for some time looking at changes. It's been some time now.

Obviously there's been examples, particularly in rural areas of Prince Edward Island, where there's been a level of challenge with physicians who wanted to come to the province to work, whether it be in permanent positions. There's been other physicians that were locum physicians that, for example, were working and licensed, for example, at St. Joseph Hospital in the emergency room in Hamilton, Ontario that wanted to come here for the summer, do a locum and take some vacation, and got frustrated with the requirements to get the license.

It's been an ongoing issue. There's been back and forth from the college and we felt that this is a good piece of legislation for recruitment, particularly in rural communities. We don't have the same challenges other than locum issues in Charlottetown and Summerside. This has been more of a distracter for us attracting physicians on a more permanent basis to rural parts of the province.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

So why more rural than in the city?

Mr. Currie: Pardon?

Mr. LaVie: What's the difference between rural and in the city when it comes to recruiting doctors to PEI? What's the difference?

Mr. Currie: First of all – and I want to be clear, that the college has the responsibility and the mandate to licensed physicians.

That's not government's job. That's not our job as elected officials, that's their mandate, and we want to continue to allow them that.

Our only vacancies right now in respect to recruitment tend to be – there's a couple of vacancies in Souris, there's one in Tyne Valley, and one in O'Leary. It's not about rural and urban, it's just that in order to – we've had physicians that we want to go and work in those areas that would indicate they wanted to go to a community and get so frustrated and leave and go to the other side of the Confederation Bridge and start working without any issues.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

When you come to a community – if it's up west or it's up in Souris or wherever and you promised a doctor, your Premier promised a doctor – did you check with the college of physicians before you made that promise in the election?

Mr. Currie: It's recruitment. They have the responsibility to license.

Mr. LaVie: Why did you make the promise?

Mr. Currie: I think we've done a pretty decent job. If you look in 2007 we had 199 physicians in the province and today we've got about 249, so we've made some inroads.

This is not about the number of physicians, this is about accessing physician services, and this has been an ongoing challenge in certain part of the province. If you look at various areas, we've had stability for periods of time. If you looked at coming into government there was gaps in recruitment, they've been refilled with locums. Permanent physicians would come in, then they would leave.

Our inability to backfill those positions – for example, if we use your community, Member from Souris-Elmira, we came in in 2007, we were down to two physicians. We moved it up to three. At times I believe we had four and now with Henbest leaving the community we're back down to two. As you are aware, we have a locum that's currently working that is going through the current processes on getting her license with the

college. That has nothing to do with the department.

Mr. LaVie: Who is the college of physicians, what's it made up of?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: The college of physicians is a statutory body created in the *Medical Act*. I believe on the council of the college there's five physicians and one lay member.

Mr. LaVie: Five physicians?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: These physicians, are they specialists or just family doctors?

Mr. Currie: Mixed.

Mr. LaVie: Mixed. They all work in Charlottetown or they work from Tignish to Souris?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: I don't know what the geographical disbursement is.

Mr. LaVie: Does this bill overrule –

Mr. Currie: This amendment –

Mr. LaVie: – the college of physicians?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: What we have in the current act and the one that's been in the media is the problem with the language proficiency requirement. What the current act says is that they must be proficient in English and that's been left very open to interpretation and a very narrow interpretation of English proficiency.

What we've done is we looked at Ontario and what they had done since 1993 with respect to English language proficiency, and those are the provisions you see in this amendment. We've just given the college some guidance on what constitutes proficiency in the English language.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. LaVie: No, thanks for the next question.

Chair: Oh, I (Indistinct) somebody else and come back to you?

Mr. LaVie: Sure, yes.

Chair: Just to move it around.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I only have a couple of comments maybe, and questions, and then I'll be happy to turn it back.

First of all, minister, I want to congratulate you on moving this forward. I'll say for the record that if Dr. Madigane was alive today she'd be thanking you, too. From my community I want to thank you because it's been a major frustration in our community. Through recruitment and retention I have been working with the community but there have been many instances, I will say, over the years going back probably to 2007 where we – our community is very involved, as you know, minister, with potential doctors that come to our community. Our community gets very engaged. We have experienced firsthand the challenges of meeting a doctor at the plane and trying to work through some issues with college of physicians.

So this will, I think, move things along in terms of recruitment to our community that are very open to still receiving a new doctor and I appreciate the work that's been done on this and moving it forward. With the challenges right across Prince Edward Island, I think it's very important that we work out those barriers.

Minister, this may or may not be in this but for the record I would like to ask this question. At the present time, with fee-for-service doctors, the records belong to the doctor. There is a perception, I think, in the community of Islanders that the records belong to Health PEI and their records stay with the health. There has been some concern about the cost that people have to pay to obtain their records from a fee-for-service doctor who is no longer practicing or who may be deceased. Is there any effort to have discussions to have the department of

health, going forward, maintain all records in regard to fee-for-service doctors?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: You are correct. Fee-for-service physicians across the country own their records. Salaried physicians, their records are owned by Health PEI. We have the yet un-proclaimed Health Information Act which will spell out, among other things, the costs associated with obtaining records, personal health information that is held by these custodians. So that would be your fee-for-service physicians, and it will set out maximum prices, fees that can be charged by these to a patient who wants to access their records.

Ms. Biggar: Just a follow-up question –

Chair: One more question?

Ms. Biggar: – to that.

The other concern is security of those records. I have spoken to several doctors who took over practices of former fee-for-service doctors and the records were sitting in a garage up in an attic. That is personal information that anybody would have access to. It's a major concern about security of information and so I just will ask that that be taken under advisement for future changes.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Again, in the Health Information Act there are requirements imposed on custodians which would even include executors for deceased physicians on the storage and retention and destruction of records, and if they fail to abide by the contravening act and regulations there are penalties associated with that.

Hopefully once we (Indistinct) it should address a lot of those concerns.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, I just want to raise it as a major concern –

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – because I think, again, Islanders do not know that certain physicians own their records.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: As one last thing, I think also as the Canadian Medical Protective Association who (Indistinct)

physicians, I think they impose record-keeping requirements, both on the physicians and possibly on their executors as well. So it may be, you know –

Ms. Biggar: Again, minister, congratulations on bringing this forward.

Mr. Currie: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Just a couple of examples on this and for the change.

We would have a physician who grew up in Canada, whose first language was English and was educated in the public school system here in Canada, but went to an international school to be trained. They would still have to come, in order to get their license here in the province, would have to be required to go through a pretty rigorous language proficiency test. We saw a couple of stories of that publicly where they were just not happy with doing that and they left the province, and the next day showed up to work in whether it be Pictou or whether it be in New Brunswick.

The other one is that it could be a physician who's practiced, whether it be in Ontario, had their license but was a licensed physician, got their medical degree outside the country – they would still have to go through the same process.

It was all about the frustration. This act provides more flexibility and discretion to fall in line with other jurisdictions so we can be more competitive to retain physicians. It's a good day for recruitment in Prince Edward Island.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I know this bill won't necessarily alleviate all the stresses on the system. I have one in particular that I'm getting bashed with pretty hard in my area. When Dr. Hambly left he had a large patient base and over half of his patients got letters – I don't know if they're

from Health PEI or from the new doctor or whoever – saying, basically, that they weren't being picked up by the new doctor.

I have a lot of seniors, in particular, who were quite upset because they have kind of a regular appointment schedule they had with Dr. Hambly because they have different ailments that they're dealing with. How best can I recommend these people deal with that shortage while they wait for another doctor to come to the area?

Mr. Currie: I've been getting phone calls. I mean, we recognize that Dr. Hambly was a very seasoned physician who had, I believe, over 2,000 patients on his load. He was leaving. A new physician came in. At that time there was an understanding that there would be (Indistinct) transition, but realistically, to transition and take all of the 2,000 patients on the day you sort of turn the key to take the office is not realistic.

We are currently working on a solution to this issue. We've been in discussion with the core of physicians in that community. The physician that replaced Dr. Hambly took on a volume and is continuously adding, but I guess my concern is that there's a gap because there is approximately 1,000 right now that are in transition. My concern with Health PEI is that we need to do a better job of sort of that transition and maybe messaging (Indistinct) a few weeks you may be out a family physician. But there is a plan in place and we're in discussions right now, and the physicians are very engaged in the solution so I'll keep you updated on that.

That would be my – we're aware and we're working towards a more immediate solution.

Mr. Myers: Okay, I appreciate that.

I'm wondering if for the people who got the letters if they could get a follow-up letter kind of explaining a little better that they're not being left in the cold forever, that somebody is working on it. Because I won't overstep my boundaries and I'm certainly not a doctor, but I would like to help the people in my area to the best of my ability.

Mr. Currie: It is a very legitimate concern. We had 2,000 people that were comfortably in place who had a physician and then once the physician changed there was some

understanding, things don't always roll out the way, but there's 1,000 people that are a little anxious right now, seniors in the community, and we need a follow-up plan.

We need to make sure that we learn from this, and that if he's not going to take the full load and transfer right over, there needs to be a bit of a communication plan in place for that volume of people. It's a very good question –

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Mr. Currie: - and we'll follow up with details on how we respond back, but we are currently – my deputy is working closely with and updating me daily on sort of an immediate plan to resolve that volume of people that are not currently attached to that new physician.

Mr. Myers: Perfect, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River and then to the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters has stolen my questions –

Mr. Myers: Ask it again.

Ms. Compton: I do have the same concern. I have patients of Dr. Hamby's. One, for instance, that is a cancer survivor. Very anxious about the fact that they would have to go to an outpatient clinic and not have a doctor who has their history. I just would ask that moving forward we understand doctors are coming and they want a better quality of life and are not taking on the patient load that our retiring doctors have.

Is there a plan in place by the province, by Health PEI, to address that? We can understand that any doctor that retires now, probably the new doctor is not going to take that load.

Mr. Currie: It's a very legitimate concern. We recognize that physicians who are retiring, they have established their patient registry or their patient loads over decades. They are very familiar. Patients are very comfortable with their relationship they

have with their physicians. (Indistinct) to the new physicians coming in, sort of they're given their 1,000 or 1,200 names. They're trying to find sort of – to get adjusted, but with all that being said, we need a better transition plan in place, we need to look at communicating to patients so we don't need to be raising all this anxiety.

There should have been some correspondence sent out and said that there is going to be some changes in fairness to the new physician, he'll take a certain amount of (Indistinct).

Right now we're looking at how we're going to respond to that volume of patients. If he can't take on that entire patient load we should have had that conversation before that new physician started. It's a legitimate concern.

Ms. Compton: I do appreciate that, minister. We have from you that those patients that are without a doctor right now will get something in writing that there is a transition happening.

Mr. Currie: We'll have some correspondence. My immediate focus since Dr. Hambly left was: We need a solution to be more engaging. We're engaging all the physicians down in that area. I must say, great core of physicians in KCMH. Very busy hospital doing great things and there'll need to be a follow up messaging. This is all part of the conversation we're having with Health PEI – Dr. Alf Morais who oversees that in discussion with the physician complement. These are all pieces of that conversation that we need to continue to tighten up on.

When you're a constituent who is dealing with cancer or whether it's an elderly couple, when they lose their physician it's a difficult adjustment and it raises a lot of anxiety. I get the emails, I get the phone calls. We need to do a better job. We're working through this particular situation, but how do we prevent that in the future?

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Just on that note, I thank you for sending out the letters,, I think that's very important. It's no slight on the new doctors that are

coming, I'm sure that they're doing their very best.

I can just comment on the fact that a week ago, the total topic at the Deuce is Loose in Belfast was: Did you get a letter and were you accepted or were you denied?

Mr. Currie: This is the struggle I had as a minister in this province and it's the same type of struggle I have with licensing. These are things that – we just need to go to school on these situations and we just need to be just a little better messaging. People will understand.

If they're a communicator and they understand that there will be a short period of time where you'll be without a family physician, but here's the plan we're working towards – we got the physician complement from you – (Indistinct) a meeting tomorrow with the med society. There's some good stuff going on but I just think we need to be much more.

We talk about patient-centered and we talk about these types of conversations, and I just think that these things can be avoided. I know we're all busy but you just have to be sensitive to particularly our seniors in the community that this is a very important issue to them. Very much so.

Chair: Chair recognizes the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

A couple of quick questions. Minister, has this issue ever come up in the past? You said you had numbers of doctors come to PEI; Has this issue ever come up? Is this the first time?

Mr. Currie: They've come up in the past.

Mr. LaVie: This issue right here?

Mr. Currie: Yes, it's been raised in the past.

Mr. LaVie: These doctors were turned down and sent home?

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: It happened in the past?

Mr. Currie: Well, not necessarily turned down. Some of them more didn't meet the qualifications of the licensing, which we have the (Indistinct) safety element here, but some just got frustrated and left.

Mr. LaVie: This just changes the legislation for the college of physicians. This doesn't give you any more power?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: We've added the language requirements. We've also put in ministerial powers. All other health legislation has some element of ministerial oversight because the minister is accountable. But the way the *Medical Act* is currently drafted, there is no nexus between

Mr. LaVie: So I'll just put in a bill (Indistinct)

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: – the college and the ministry at all.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) give me a pat on the back.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: This will, yeah.

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct) calling people.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah (Indistinct). One quick question and I'm done. Section 66 (2) and (3) – you're not giving yourself any power in section 66.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: The powers put in this act are exactly what's in regulated health and it will apply to all professions. This isn't anything special or unusual. In fact, the powers that are in here given to the minister are (Indistinct) in all the other jurisdictions that have umbrella type legislation. The exception is – I think it's Alberta and Ontario – that have even stronger ministerial powers than what we've contemplated here.

Mr. LaVie: Is there any more legislation that we have to look at for change in recruitment?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: The intention here – and it's been communicated to the college of physicians – the intention is to transition physicians in to regulated health. But until such time as that has been

completed we put in ministerial powers to ensure that there is a level of accountability between the minister and the college.

Mr. LaVie: I think the minister should sit on the board of the College of Physicians.

Mr. Currie: Oh, I don't know if we want to get in to licensing fees, anyways.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Currie: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Medical Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Currie: 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. Currie: Mr. Speaker, I move the Speaker take the chair and 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 Medical 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 Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, that the 25th order of the day be now read.

Clerk: Order No. 25, *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 44, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 44, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Mundy): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Aylward: Chair, actually can we just have an overview to begin with?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: All this is is more housekeeping. Adds additional regulation making authority with respect to (a) the oversight and performance of reserved activities, and (b) the establishment of committees to formulate and maintain a list of classes and types of drugs that a member can be competent to prescribe.

It ties into the scope issues and just tightens up the responsibilities.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Trivers: Just one quick question.

Chair: One question.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Does this –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) has nothing to do with capital.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: Thank you. This is an operations budget question.

An Hon. Member: I couldn't resist.

Mr. Trivers: Does this relate to allowing medical professionals like pharmacists, for example, allowing them to prescribe drugs? Does that change any powers that they've had in the past? Is that what this is about?

Mr. Currie: It just continues to move us forward on the responsibilities and the mandate of expanding scope of practices for pharmacists. Good question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Have you considered allowing renewal of prescriptions using e-health? Say, via video conference instead of in person?

Mr. Currie: Yeah, you know what? We're just starting to move into that area. There's been a number of suggestions. We're not that far along, but those are lots of discussions that are taking place at ELT and looking at pilots and so on, yes.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Currie: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act (No. 2)*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Currie: 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. Currie: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and 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 Regulated Health Professions Act (No. 2)*, 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 Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 28th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 28, *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act*, Bill No. 47, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act*, Bill No. 47, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, 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.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Gallant): 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 Financial Administration Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Aylward: If we could just have an overview?

Chair: An overview?

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Sure.

With these amendments all amounts that are recommended for write-offs or cancellation will need to be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which in turn generates an Order in Council, which is a public document.

We are also adding a section to allow us to disclose the name of the debtor in these cases as well.

It is all part of a commitment we made during the spring session. These are the legislative changes that are required to meet those objectives.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Roach: Can I bring a staff member on the floor?

Chair: Is it okay to bring a staff member on?

Mr. MacEwen: Absolutely.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Could you please introduce yourself for Hansard?

Thank you.

Gordon MacFadyen: Gordon MacFadyen, comptroller for the province.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, a question was brought to my attention by a couple of good constituents. I guess it's more of a public perception.

They have a loan with the lending agency and have always made their payment, and when they hear on the news or they see loans being wrote-off or large companies – whatever it may be going off – it irks them because they've been paying diligently for years and years. They mentioned to me: Is there ever a break for the people that have been paying it off, good small businesses in PEI that have been diligent in keeping up their payments and that type of thing?

They ask me these. They say: Is there ever some sort of a program to help our small Island business? Maybe if they have been good with their loans for that long, to help them out with some sort of interest relief down the road? Because they see so many of these other loans that get wrote-off and they feel wronged by it. I'm just wondering has government ever considered something like that or is it even possible?

Mr. Roach: Yes we have, and in fact I think most people in this legislature are well aware of the low interest loans in the fishers program so there are times when many businesses will come in and deal with lending agencies and sometimes, as an example, they may withhold payments and let them pay interest only or something like that until they get their feet back under them. But in most instances, when loans are written off usually it's a result of a bankruptcy.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, minister. But are there rates or interest relief, like is that negotiable at all? If someone came in and – I guess I'm just trying to say there are so many good businesses out there that a little break for them, some kind of a small business incentive, like if you have been this good for so long, and I guess if they just – you know

what I mean. They're making ends meet, they're paying it, and then all of sudden they see in the front page of the paper another loan wrote off.

I guess it beats down on them. I'm just wondering, is that negotiable? Is it something that they –

Mr. Roach: I think there's always an opportunity for any business that has loans with the government. I mean, Finance PEI is not much different than a bank or a lending institution, and if I were you I would tell them to go in and talk to the (Indistinct) –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you very much.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report progress and begs leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The House will recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may be seated.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the opposition Motion 66 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I'm pleased to rise in the Legislative Assembly this evening to urge this government to take action to provide improved parking options for patients and visitors to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

As stated in a recent *CBC Marketplace* report, hospital fees amount to a tax on the sick and I cannot help but agree.

Our caucus has brought forth Island concerns about these fees in several past legislative sessions yet government continues to ignore our concerns and those of Islanders. I think we have put forth some compelling arguments. Even one of their own MLAs has called for parking fees to be free for the first hour rather than the first half hour.

Our caucus would support that move but we believe the consideration should also be given to the prospect of eliminating the fees altogether. I believe the government member also made a similar suggestion.

I'm somewhat bewildered by the fact that Prince Edward Islanders who utilize other hospitals in our province do not have to pay a fee. Why is it the patients who arrive at our main referral hospital find themselves having to do so? Is that not discriminatory?

I realize that dollars do not come out of thin air and any dollars that can be raised could be substantial, but I'm sure that if parking fees were vital to the future of health care services, then they would be in place at all of our hospitals.

Why is it that a patient who goes to Charlottetown for orthopedic surgery will have to pay for the cost of parking while they are there while the same patient, if he gets his surgery in Prince County at the hospital does not have to pay? It hardly seems fair.

Someone who is rushing out the door to visit a sick relative or a friend shouldn't have to be thinking about whether they have change in their pockets to pay for parking once they get there.

As you know, Prince Edward Island's population is aging and we already have one of the largest elderly populations in Canada. Some find even the prospects of driving into the QEH parking lot daunting. They have to get close enough to put the money in the toll booth without dropping their money and get a time slip when it pops out. If you can't reach it, you have to jump out and get back in the car before the bar goes back down.

That's one example in one of the parking lots, but of course, the main parking lot, we realize when you drive in, you take the slip, the ticket out of the machine, you then search for a parking spot. Then upon your completion of business at the hospital you drive out, and there is when you pay to the commissionaire.

The whole concept of charging parking fees for those who need treatment at our public hospitals who are visiting a sick family member seems, to me at least, counterproductive. For one, it does cause stress. A parent who wants to stay with their child all day, or the child or spouse of a critically ill patient, should not have to be thinking about how much money they are going to have to pay at the end of the day.

These individuals have enough to worry about. Certainly in a worst case scenario where a parent or spouse or child dies the last thing they need to be doing is searching through their wallet to pay for a parking fee.

Many individuals have gone through much strain before their ill child or parent arrives in our main hospital. To get to the toll booth and then realize they have no change is like a slap in the face. It's something they just don't need at that particular moment. It is just one more unwanted situation to deal with.

I recall back several years ago in my previous career in the hospitality industry when the hotel – it was the Canadian Pacific hotel at the time – first instituted parking for underground services. The outrage by our clients at that time was unprecedented with regards to the number of complaints we got. But that's a corporate identity. That's owned by a corporation that's in business for profit. We're talking about our main referral hospital here on Prince Edward Island. We're talking about a facility that was built

by taxpayers' dollars. We're talking about a facility that is there to serve Islanders in their time of need.

By simply nickel-and-diming Islanders when they're going to our main referral hospital here on Prince Edward Island, I think it's just wrong.

CBC's *Marketplace* surveyed over 1,000 Canadians and found 52% said parking costs affect how often they visit a hospital or for how long, 38% said they couldn't visit a patient as frequently as they wanted, 20% said they couldn't afford to visit patients at all, 3% skipped medical appointments.

Friends and family of patients at the QEH are effectively being taxed for caring about their family member. I don't know what our QEH would do without its many volunteers but it was interesting to note that *Marketplace* also identified that many people who want to volunteer are deterred by having to pay parking fees. The survey also found 72% of hospital visitors said parking costs added stress to their visits, which can have a negative impact on their health.

Certainly our hospitals require revenue, but I do not feel it is fair to put that burden on families and individuals who may be ill or going through an emotional crisis with their loved ones. Surely there is a better way.

We are all well aware that our hospital is suffering from staff shortages in many areas. I know that nurses and LPNs are often grateful when a family member can sit with a patient or help them get to the washroom when they are sick. Often a caring family member can do many of the smaller tasks that the RNs or the LPNs wish they had time to do. It may be as simple as washing one's hair or helping them brush their teeth. Sometimes it's a matter of just playing with a child or reading to an elderly patient.

These efforts, I believe, are well worth the price of a \$7 ticket. Certainly it's a shame that someone who's providing much needed attention to a sick patient has to look at their clock and say: I'm sorry, I have to run, I only have \$1.50 with me. I know visitors who have had to borrow money from the sick patient because they ran out of money.

For those of us who may have had surgery, it is reassuring to open your eyes and see a loving family member smiling down with concern and love in their eyes. It is truly a great comfort. No one should be robbed of this care because someone couldn't afford to pay for their parking fees.

Based on this past fiscal year government takes in about \$340,000 a year from parking at the QEH, but I wonder how much these fees actually cost taxpayers in terms of health of our patients in hospital and the worry of their family members.

I would question government, if they were to look internally and actually look at efficiencies within the hospital and the services that are provided within the hospital. Surely there are many things that can be done to find efficiencies that would far out, surpass the \$340,000 that is collected by parking fees. Again, I feel another tax on Islanders.

I believe there is a cost in terms of the mental and physical well-being and those costs translate into slower recovery, and patient safety incidents such as falls. I hear complaints about these fees from my constituents. They use this facility for their own health care and they travel back and forth to visit with their family members who also live in this area.

As I stated to the media, many of my constituents, and I believe most Islanders, feel they are being nickel and dimed over and over again by having to pay for parking. It may seem like a small amount but it is not for individuals who visit the facility frequently. It adds up quickly. We can start talking about what other jurisdictions do in their hospitals, but we only have to look at what other provinces and other jurisdictions do throughout their other government facilities, whether it's a parking lot for government employees at a Legislative Assembly building or a department building. Many provinces do charge for parking, but we do not here in Prince Edward Island. Instead, we choose to tax Islanders by charging them to park at our main referral hospital, again, a hospital that was built and is staffed and provides services for Islanders through taxpayers' dollars.

I believe that many of you in this House agree that these fees are unfair. I believe that many of you have heard complaints from your constituents and I am sure you know that for some those fees are truly a financial burden. I would ask today for every member of this House to support our motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I really am pleased to rise today and second our motion which offers support to the extension of the grace period for parking to 60 minutes from the current 30 minutes at the QEH. Ultimately, though, our motion calls for the elimination of the parking fees at the QEH altogether.

I believe there is simply no doubt that patients benefit both physically and mentally from the presence of their family and friends during a hospital visit. They often help their loved ones get mobile by assisting them to walk after a surgery. They help with meals, they take individuals to the bathroom, they bring in new clothes and take away others for washing, they may take an individual down to the TV room in their wheelchair so they can watch TV or just get a change of scenery.

Sometimes they help when someone is physically sick – getting bowls, wipes and other items to make them more comfortable. They may also visit with their child that has just had a baby. They help look after the baby while the mother gets some rest or cuddle with a young child as they go to sleep.

These individuals are valuable to the overall health and care of our patients. Some may alert the nurses and physicians when someone suddenly takes a turn for the worse. Their presence may even save a life or a fall. Visitors who are looking after their family members often get food or drinks for their family member and, most importantly of all, their arrival often brings a welcomed smile to someone who has been feeling lonely or afraid or confused.

The cost of that kind of service is priceless. Yet parking fees can act as a deterrent to these visitors. As stated by the mover of this motion, Prince Edward Island's population is aging very quickly. Many, unfortunately, do not have access to private pensions. Many are living solely on old age security, the Canada Pension or disability. Many have friends who are at the age where hospitalization is a common occurrence perhaps due to falls, or flu or infections and diseases.

Many have lost their siblings and spouses and depend on their friends to visit and sit with them. Islanders are not big wage earners. Our lives are good here, yes, but most of us cannot be described as wealthy. Unfortunately, many live pay cheque to pay cheque and, as we all know, food bank use has been rising alarmingly in the past few years.

Many Islanders just do not have money to spare. Yet to visit their family members in hospital they are being asked to find precious dollars. Some who find themselves going for a treatment and having to wait for a longer period of time may find themselves having to pay even more. They may not have those dollars. They may look at the waiting line and simply leave. They may not get their visit. I am sure there has to be a better way. I think we need to stop penalizing people for being sick and for caring for their families. The costs, I believe, are far too high.

The CBC *Marketplace* report referred to by the mover of this motion found many Canadians are missing hospital appointments and experiencing added stress due to the costs of parking at their local health centre. One physician told *Marketplace* that his patients, quote: Have a lot of stress from the get-go, and with the addition of more stress with regards to the parking is sort of salt in the wound.

Hospitals should be about health care, they should not be about making profit and saving money. I know the Queen Elizabeth Hospital offers free-parking tokens for patients at the Cancer Treatment Centre and at the emergency room and the hemodialysis unit, and that's great. But it doesn't help the single mom who needs to take time off work with no pay and stay at the hospital with her

sick child. It doesn't help the patient that is transferred in from eastern Kings or Alberton whose family member or spouse drives down through miserable weather, pays for gas, meals, and then finds out they have to pay parking fees on top of that.

As I understand it, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* argues such parking fees are not allowed under the *Canada Health Act* and that the fees impose a barrier to patient care. I believe it is time for these fees to go. I believe it is time for real change. Our country is known as a compassionate and caring society and also as a generous one. The burden of parking fees on sick individuals and their families needs to be removed.

I believe we can find a way to replace the dollars that will not be available if parking fees are removed. I am sure there are many potential solutions. Perhaps there could be donation areas provided as you go in the door of the hospital. I'm not sure what the answer is, but I believe we can do better than charging parking fees to those who can't afford it.

I would ask all members to carefully consider this motion and provide it with their support.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise to speak to this motion. As we've all heard, no one likes to pay to park. The reality is that hospitals are expensive to run and continue to be very expensive to run. For many years Island hospitals have secured additional revenue resources to help them dedicate more of their funding to patient care.

They have been continuing to generate revenue throughout on-site services run by their foundations, auxiliaries, and volunteer services, and this is a common practice in facilities all across this country. Paid parking has been standard practice at most

of the larger Maritime hospitals for many years and at the QEH since 1993.

The QEH parking rates compare very favourably to other Maritime hospitals including Dartmouth General Hospital, the QE2, Cape Breton Regional Hospital, Saint John, Moncton, and Fredericton hospitals. The QEH is the only one of these hospitals that offers the first half hour free. This is something Islanders asked for and something that they very much appreciate.

The QEH rate for the first hour is the lowest of them all. Their hourly rate of \$1.50 is the second lowest in the region. Their daily rate of \$8 is the lowest of them all and their weekly and monthly rates also compare very favourably. Rates have not increased in at least eight years. When the HST was introduced it was built into existing rates. The QEH offers special rates for patients who have to make their frequent visits to the hospital for treatment and we work with families, particularly with our social workers, for those in unique circumstances.

For example, there is no charge for patients who come to the hospital for dialysis, to the Cancer Treatment Centre or to the emergency department. Special rates are made available to the families for long-term in-patients and to out-patients having long-term treatments.

I can assure Islanders that parking rates are kept as low as possible, and the QEH hospital staff is very respectful and considerate to the needs of its patients, and that the needs of the patients and families who must make frequent visits to the hospital are very carefully considered.

I recognize that this is a topic of interest to many Islanders, and as a government we are committed to looking at this further. I would like to introduce the following amendment. I'll have the MLA from West Royalty-Springvale second the amendment.

I certainly commend the opposition for bringing this motion. I recognize that this is sort of an issue that has been raised by a number of members in the Assembly, and as we move through the fiscal year the revenue generated from parking obviously goes back to services. It would be difficult to just make the change immediately, so what we'd like

to do, I'd like to make an amendment to the original motion, and I commend the Member from Stratford-Kinlock for bringing the motion forward.

I'll read it:

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is this province's main referral hospital and is the only hospital in the province of Prince Edward Island that charges fees for parking;

And whereas these fees cost patients \$1.50 per hour to a maximum of \$7.00 per day;

And whereas for many individuals and their families, these fees are cost prohibitive and can prevent family members, friends, parents and even spouses from visiting and providing much-needed support and comfort;

And whereas there have been occasions where individuals do not show up, or skip, much needed treatment at the hospital because they do not have money to pay for their parking fees;

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly urge government to consider extending the grace period during which people do not have to pay for parking to at least 60 minutes from the current 30 minutes.

Therefore be it further resolved that this Legislative Assembly encourage government to also give further consideration to the elimination of parking fees at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital altogether.

Thank you.

Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Myers: Point of order.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to call a point of order on that amendment.

The changes that the minister is proposing, basically he could have accomplished the

exact same result if he had just voted against it. He's open to consider it any day of the week which is what he has been doing and hasn't made any changes, so by putting "considering extending" in instead of "extend" he directly changes the motion and does what he could have done simply by having the government vote against it.

I'd like a ruling on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Yeah. I will take a few moments to consider that.

Mr. Myers: Sure.

Speaker: We will recess for five minutes or so.

[Recess]

Speaker's Ruling

Speaker: Hon. members, upon review, and according to citation §567 of Beauchesne, 6th Edition, under amendments: "The object of an amendment may be either to modify a question in such a way as to increase its acceptability or to present to the House a different proposition as an alternative to the original question."

I will now ask the seconder of the amendment to speak, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very passionate issue for me since 2017, and I commend the hon. member –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The motion as it was put is in order. The amendment is in order.

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking to the amendment?

Speaker: Yes, you're speaking to the amendment.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: You're the seconder.

Mr. Dumville: I've been very passionate about this and I commend the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, he's been with me all these past few years. Not to charge the sick or visitors to the sick. It's a very fundamental societal policy.

A lot of double standards are hidden and we should eliminate the obvious. There is a double standard here that we charge one referral hospital and we do not charge at the other referral hospital. I think an ideal goal would be to support a total elimination of this fee.

The CBC documentary, it was pretty hard-hitting, and it was basically talking about charging for hospitals and large cities and the stress that it puts on people. In the large centres it's very expensive, more expensive than we have here. Then there was the issue of towaways, where if you went over the time your car was towed away and there was a lot of expenses and that went back to the company that was looking after the parking.

Now, in our situation, our hospitals are not located in the downtown core where in larger cities these hospital parking lots, if they didn't charge, they'd end up being free parkades for everybody else doing business in the city. But PEI hospitals are remote, so this is a little different, it can be done.

We have great traditions here on Prince Edward Island. One of our traditions is when we meet a funeral we pull over. It's a wonderful tradition, but it's not practical on the 401, it just doesn't work. A lot of hospitals in the Mainland, they're in that situation. They have to charge for parking. I think we can be better. I think we can do this in regards to a half hour versus an hour.

The minister said, I hopefully quote him properly here, I think he said it would be \$130,000 that would hit his budget. Charlottetown is a half hour. Summerside is at 24 hours. How would we even go to say one hour in Charlottetown, one hour in Summerside, at the very least? If we did both referral hospitals it would be a little bit fairer, especially if it allowed us to get to the hour and maybe some today go totally free.

Another option – and I think the opposition has kind of put it forward – we could raise other funds. I think they suggested something about government parking lots. There's over 500-plus cars down at the Shaw, Sullivan, and Jones buildings. A \$30 a month permit would be a dollar a day, and 12 times a dollar a day – I know there's probably less than 30 working days in a month, but that comes to \$180,000. The minister would get his 130 and he'd have 50 to spare, and the people working in those buildings – a few less votes for me, I guess, but they can afford to pay it more than the people that are going out to the hospital sick or visiting the sick.

When you show up at the door that big hospital's looking down on you. It doesn't know what your socio-economic condition is. You may have only a couple of bucks in your pocket, and George wants to go and see Fred, but he's afraid he's going to run over his \$2 or so, so it puts a lot of pressure on everybody.

I will continue to advocate on behalf of the people of our hospitals to get this half hour extended to an hour, and eventually I would like to see it eliminated, but I also respect the minister's position because of budgetary considerations. This government has to have time to make those adjustments, and I think this amendment will satisfy the minister to give him time to make this adjustment. But I ask that the opposition and myself, we'll keep advocating for this change in this policy.

Thank you, Mister Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anybody else who would like to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Myers: Let him go first.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition speaking to the amendment.

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

To be honest, I really can't believe we're talking about this. We're talking about 30 minutes to 60 minutes. We're talking about a person in a stressful situation, he's called

to the hospital because his loved one's been taken in by an ambulance or may have taken a turn for the worse over a heart condition or something like that or a surgery, and all of a sudden in a minute the person gets a phone call: Your loved one's dying, or whatever's going to happen.

The person does whatever he does. He grabs his keys, he runs out the door, he starts the vehicle, he drives down the road. That's exactly what he does, and he races, and he gets to that hospital because he thinks that maybe this might be the last time for him to see his family or loved one. He rides to the hospital, parks wherever he can, probably loses two or three minutes or five minutes of trying to find a place to park, and all of a sudden now he's got 30 minutes.

He runs in the front door, runs down the hallway, tries to find out where he's going to, gets some help from a nurse or an orderly, gets to the room. That's probably choked up 15 minutes. Gets a quick briefing, now he's up to 20 minutes, you've got to run back out the door and get to his car and move it, try to find a parking space.

We have to tax, and we're that chintzy that we can't move from 30 minutes to 60 minutes, I think there's something wrong with the system. It goes back to what I said a while back: you always touch the front line. We tax the people who don't have time or can't afford it or in a position where something's wrong.

Mr. Trivers: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: This is not out of reach of government. This is not out of reach of anybody in this House. Go from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. At the end of the day that's not much to give back or to allow a loved one or somebody in a dire straits situation to give them a little bit extra.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am a little disappointed in the amendment. I think it was a pretty tame motion by the

standards we've seen over the last four years here. It wasn't at all negative. It talked about extending that grace period from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. I think that's an important part to focus on. That's the only part that was really kind of laid out, that we wanted government to do. We wanted them to extend that period.

The other therefore clause talked about consideration to eliminating the parking altogether. The consideration part was to eliminate it altogether. We were really asking government to change the grace period from 30 minutes to 60 minutes.

Obviously I understand government is under a lot of fiscal strain, but it didn't take much for the Minister of Finance to stand in this House and act quite proud of bringing in a deficit that was \$13 million higher than what he had originally projected. I mean, when you're blowing through a budget and missing the targets by that much, what's a handful of dollars on parking for people who have sick children in the hospital, who have sick parents in the hospital, who are sick themselves and continually have to go there because that's where their doctor's appointment is? If you're seeing the surgeon, that's where you're most likely seeing them. You're not seeing them at their office. You're seeing them at the hospital because that's where they spend the majority of their time.

People that are dealing with major hospital scenarios in their lives have to deal with paying parking fees at the best of times. It's unfortunate that this is where the focus kind of is, that this motion didn't just kind of go through the way it was and that government wouldn't see fit to extending that 30 minutes to 60 minutes.

We are talking about people with sick family members and sick friends. There has to be some compassion. Even amongst Liberals, I would think there should be some compassion. Though, not surprisingly, there's not.

I think over here it's something that – I remember the member from Stratford, the very first time he asked that question, it was in budget estimates in the first year that he and I were elected. I remember thinking at the time: Yeah, that's a really good topic

because why is it fair? Why is it fair that it's only the Charlottetown hospital that – if you have a loved one that's in the Prince County Hospital, you don't have to pay to go visit them. If you have a sick child in any other hospital in Prince Edward Island you don't have to pay to go visit them.

But if you have a sick family member or a sick spouse or a sick child and they're in the Charlottetown hospital and you're going to see them every day, at \$7 a day or \$8 a day, as the minister says, that adds up.

If you think that having a sick child is a good reason to pile it on financially – there's probably a case where parents are – one or both parents have taken time off work so they could spend time with a sick child in the hospital. Their financial situation is probably much worse. There's probably a lot of stress in their home life because of it and you're charging them \$8 a day to boot to see their child who needs them.

Children need their parents. A sick child, in particular, needs their parents and they deserve to be able to see them without it costing their parents a fortune. This is so simple. This is so simple and I don't know how to make you guys have compassion for people. I guess after all these years of having it your way over there, having it all be good times, blowing through record number of dollars –

Mr. Aylward: Twenty-nine million in 2014.

Mr. Myers: – \$29 million. It doesn't seem to matter to you guys when it comes to spending money that you can benefit from. It's something that's going to make you happy or something that you can do with your friends or something that you can do with your colleagues. But heaven forbid that mom or dad has a sick child and somebody has to leave their job to look out for their child in the hospital and you guys charge them \$8 a day. It's sad.

I wasn't even planning on speaking to this motion because, quite frankly, I expected it to pass. I expected that this Assembly would have the good common sense to pass a simple motion that dealt with – motions aren't binding.

Look, we go back – two different times this Legislative Assembly has passed a motion to quit clawing back the RDSP and it's never happened. It's never ever happened. Twice, this very Assembly voted on a motion to quit clawing back the RDSP program that the federal government offers. Twice it's passed this Assembly and zero times it's actually happened, zero times this government actually did anything.

I can't understand the mentality over there. I really can't. Maybe it's been around too long. Sixty percent of Islanders thought so at the polls last time, 60% didn't vote for you, and it's about time you started showing some compassion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to speak to this amendment because I wanted to read the motion. It says "Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly urge government to extend the grace period" and now it's "urge government to consider extending".

In my opinion, that amendment doesn't even make sense because "urge government" is already saying: This is not something you have to do. We can't tell you to do that. We can't dictate that the government spend money or cut money. We can only urge government to do so.

I think it gives the minister all kinds of freedom to go out and work with the stakeholders to make way. I'm very confused as to why this amendment would be put in place.

I wanted to say that I think we are in a financial crisis in this province, as mentioned earlier today by the Leader of the Third Party. The third thing we spend the most money on with this government is financing our debt. We're talking tens and tens of thousands of dollars every day going to pay our debt. So it is extremely important

that we're fiscally prudent, right? But we don't want to compromise our core services. The member out from Milton was speaking about that earlier and saying: These are the most vulnerable people in their time of need that we're deciding: That's how we're going to save money and balance our budget.

It's just the wrong way to go. I think there's lots of room within this amendment to let the government seriously consider how we can serve the needs of our most vulnerable Islanders but still be fiscally prudent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I was really hoping that I wouldn't have to get up and speak to an amendment to this motion.

As the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald said, the amendment doesn't really even make sense as we're already simply urging government to consider or to look at it and extend the grace period.

Unlike the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, I guess I've sort of grown accustomed to it. Over the last five years I barely recall a motion that went through that the other side didn't feel it was incumbent upon them to amend the motion just for the simple fact of being confrontational.

We were asked to work collaboratively with this government and to bring a different tone to our motions. I'm sure the Speaker would agree, I know the Government House Leader has agreed, and the hon. Leader of the Third Party has agreed as well, that the motions that have been put forward this session have been very kind-spirited, professional manner, not argumentative.

But when we consider to see amendments such as this going against the fabric of what the Island should stand for, and that's helping Islanders when Islanders are in need of help, it begs the question as to why opposition should try to work with

government when government refuses time and time again to work with this opposition, all opposition, on this side of the House.

Now, I do want to bring a couple of items up that the minister mentioned while he was tabling his amendment. He mentioned that \$1.50 is currently the second-lowest in the region. That's great. But why can't we be the first in the region? Why can't we be the lowest in the region? Or, better yet, why can't we be the only free referral hospital in the region that doesn't pay for parking?

The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, I commend him for fighting this valiant fight for a number of years. I know even before I came along he was already hammering his head against this. But I guess it upsets me to the point where you start to feel like you're brow-beaten when you try continually to bring something forward that's going to benefit Islanders, particularly Islanders that need the help.

I've talked about the basic personal tax exemption over and over again here in the House. I've talked about the age exemption over and over again in this House. But this government refuses, yet again, to cut Islanders a break.

Now again, the minister talked about how when the HST came in it didn't impact the price for parking. Wonderful, but you know what? You guys campaigned on an election that you were not going to bring in the HST. About the day after you got elected: Hey, you know what? We're bringing in the HST. So, don't talk to us about bringing in the HST and it didn't impact parking. That was never on the table. HST should not impact parking at the hospital especially when you campaigned that you would not bring it in.

Now, as I said in my opening statements, or my moving statements on the original motion – and I'll relate it to the amendment – I talked about efficiencies. There's many efficiencies if you would just sit down and even strike a committee or get your deputy minister out of his ivory tower and get him to go out and talk to the frontline staff and actually understand what happens at the hospital on a daily basis, day-to-day operation, whether it's in food service, whether it's in laundry service, whether it's in the custodial department, whether it's

sitting down with the nurses, the frontline employees. They can tell you where the efficiencies are to be had.

You're generating \$340,000 for parking at the QEH. What you're realizing is a net profit of approximately – well, almost as much as the minister's salary, 130,000. What you really should be looking at, maybe doing what the minister of education is doing, getting rid of his board. We're going to see if we can save some money there. Let's look at maybe getting rid of the board of Health PEI. I'm sure there is savings to be had there.

Again, I implore this government to look internally to find those efficiencies and to correct those deficiencies so that we're not taxing Islanders by charging parking at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Now I'm going to try and figure out where they're going over there. We had a point of order because the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters stood up and said: I would have rather you had voted the thing down than amended it, which would have killed the whole issue. Whereas this amendment strictly says – and it's a budgetary item.

Mr. Myers: Noting surprises me out of your mouth because you don't understand the rules of the Legislature. You prove it on a daily basis.

An Hon. Member: Come on.

Mr. McIsaac: Do I have the floor?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) floor.

Mr. McIsaac: I didn't interrupt you, hon. member, okay?

Anyway, we were not defeating this motion; we were saying it is a budgetary item, right? We talked about the budget this afternoon and many other times. Every \$130,000 adds up.

What we're saying is here: We are urging the government to consider extending. We'll take it back. That's what we're saying, we'll take it back, we'll look at it. We'll look at the finance end of it. If it's feasible we'll do it. We're not voting it down, we're just simply saying we're going to look at it, okay?, which is very open, very congenial towards the general public, we're going to look at it. We didn't just say: No, we're not doing it. We're saying we're going to look at it.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) timeline. Put a date on it.

Mr. McIsaac: In that case I'm very much in favour of supporting this amendment. We will take it back, it is a budgetary item, and we will look at extending the time period as was stated in the amendment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

An Hon. Member: Question.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion was pretty basic and we made it a whole lot more complicated here. Excuse me if I'm out of turn on this, but if we were to change that amendment with a date on it and a time that shows we're both working together and trying to get this motion passed, is that something that could be possible?

Mr. Myers: Yeah, let's amend it.

Mr. Aylward: Let's amend it.

Mr. MacKay: So how do I do that?

Mr. Myers: Make an amendment. (Indistinct) date and time on it.

An Hon. Member: February 1st.

Mr. Myers: February 1st you want to hear back the results, February 1st.

Mr. MacKay: Is that something we can do?

I'd like to amend the amendment.

Speaker: So you want to amend the amendment.

Mr. MacKay: Amend the amendment and put a date in of February 1st to give government time to talk it over and see if there can be something done with it.

Mr. Aylward: West Royalty-Springvale, you want to second that? Give you another chance.

Mr. Dumville: (Indistinct) nobody over there'll second it for you?

Mr. Aylward: No, we got lots of it, I just thought I'd give you the opportunity because this was a particular issue for you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Dumville: Thanks for the offer though.

Speaker: Let's have some order here now so that we know exactly where we're travelling with this.

Mr. MacKay: I would like to amend the amendment line: and report back to the public by February 1st, 2016.

Leader of the Opposition: I'll second it.

An Hon. Member: Can I have a copy of that amendment?

Speaker: I'm going to ask the House if this wording for the amendment to the amendment is going to be acceptable:

Therefore be it resolved that this Legislative Assembly urge government to consider

extending the grace period with response from government by February 1st, 2016.

Mr. McIsaac: That's fine. (Indistinct).

Speaker: Okay?

An Hon. Member: Working together.

Speaker: Working together.

So now it's on the amended amendment.

You have moved that amendment to the amendment, you're the mover. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, you're the seconder. Would you like to speak to the amendment to the amendment?

Leader of the Opposition: That's fine, no.

Speaker: No?

Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Speaker: On the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Aylward: Standing vote.

Speaker: A recorded division is requested.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, can you ring the bell, please?

[The bell was rung]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: I think we agreed to it.

Mr. Speaker, government members are present for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Government Whip.

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, opposition's ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, assistant whip.

What we are doing now, members, is we are waiting for a copy or copies of the

amendment to the amendment to be printed so it can be distributed to the members.

Have all members had a chance to read the amendment to the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

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

All those voting in favour of the amendment to the amendment, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Kensington- Malpeque, the hon. Member from Belfast- Murray River, the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Speaker: The amendment to the amendment has passed and it unanimous.

Are there any members who would like to speak to the amended amendment?

Question?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

Speaker: All those voting in favour of the amended amendment, signify by saying "aye."

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: All those voting against the amended amendment, signify by saying "nay."

Mr. Trivers: Nay.

Speaker: The amended amendment is carried.

Ms. Biggar: You voted against your own amendment.

Mr. Trivers: I voted (Indistinct) –

Speaker: Now we're going back to the main motion.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: I still don't like it.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Now we're going to speak to the motion as amended. Do we have any members that would like to speak to the motion as amended?

Are you ready for the question?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Oh, the mover gets to close, you're right. Sorry about that

I will call upon the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock to close debate on the motion.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Mister Speaker. I'll be very brief.

I think there's a lot of very good points have been brought up in the House here this evening. Of course, Opposition does realize the financial limitations of this government after eight years of record-setting deficits, but what we're talking about here is pennies in comparison to what we're looking at, the overall debt of the province.

What we're talking about is in many cases some of the most vulnerable Islanders who – whether or not you want to believe it – but \$1.50 an hour or \$7 a day or eight as the minister would have us believe, is a lot of money to some people.

I don't think there's an individual that's sitting in here in the House that an hourly fee or a day fee would really have a hard impact on them, but we really need to realize and understand that there are many people out there, and the ones who come to my mind in particular – I know we talked about children and parents a lot, but the ones that I've heard from in my own district, my own constituents, typically are elderly people on a fixed income.

Quite often, as we age, our health deteriorates and quite often if you're ill you have an extended period of time that you're staying at the hospital. There could be various reasons for that. There could be an outright illness. It could be you're waiting for a long-term care facility bed and you could be in the hospital for months, at which time your spouse – and this is the example I'm talking about, that I'm hearing from my constituents – your spouse is having to visit and it is a considerable amount of money. It adds up.

Again, these people in most cases are on fixed income, so I just want the government to have compassion. We now have a deadline of February 1st for government to report back on this, of us urging them to consider extending from a half an hour to an hour of free parking. I don't think that's a lot to ask for, and with that I'll close the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those voting in favour of the motion as amended, signify by saying "yea."

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: All those voting against the motion as amended, signify by saying "nay."

The motion is carried and it is unanimous.

Ms. Biggar: The amendment.

Speaker: The motion as amended.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 67th opposition motion be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Motion No. 67.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the following motion:

WHEREAS in 2008 Bell Aliant received an \$8.2 million untendered contract to provide high speed Internet services to all Prince Edward Islanders regardless of where they live in this province;

AND WHEREAS it is now 2015 and many areas of the province and many Island households still cannot access this service;

AND WHEREAS the inability to utilize a high speed service is proving detrimental to many householders and Islanders who operate small businesses;

AND WHEREAS the lack of such service is proving to be a roadblock to companies that may wish to establish their businesses here;

AND WHEREAS the lack of such service can be a disincentive to rural communities retaining and growing their population;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly recognize the importance of high speed Internet connections in the development of our Island economy;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly direct the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development to review the issue and report back to the Assembly at its earliest opportunity.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to bring forward our motion aimed at ensuring that Prince Edward Islanders in every part of this province have access to high-speed Internet.

I am sure all Islanders remember government's commitment to provide rural broadband services throughout Prince Edward Island. In the 2008 Speech from the Throne the government proclaimed: A first initiative will be the provision of high speed Internet services to all areas of rural Prince Edward Island. This priority commitment was later reinforced in the 2008 budget and in the Island Prosperity: A Focus for Change, government's so-called prosperity strategy that resulted in deficit budgeting every year since this government took power.

Members of this House no doubt remember the \$8.2 million deal that was made with Bell Aliant in 2008. No tenders, no RFPs, the trademark of this administration. Part of Bell Aliant's commitment was to provide broadband access for any Islander with the work to be completed by 2009. As part of the agreement the provincial government renewed its telephone services contract with Bell Aliant for a further five years. A \$12-million contract, again, with no tenders called, no RFPs.

But this deal with Bell Aliant never came to fruition. Many Islanders learned they would have to rely on wireless technology and that would cost them more. Some were given access to turbo sticks but they didn't work well either. Complaints about the lack of service came from every area of our province. As a new MLA, I am still hearing complaints from many of my constituents that they do not have access to high-speed Internet. They are frustrated and angry.

I believe that the Premier's own North Shore Community has been circulating a petition all summer long calling for this service to be provided in their communities. I would assume that the Premier would be anxious to see that demand for service met.

Many Islanders and home-based businesses in rural areas are trying to operate businesses in a world where high-speed Internet is a way of life. I can only imagine the frustration and embarrassment that these individuals have to face in trying to compete

in a global market without a high-speed Internet connection. It would be similar to living in age of party-line telephone services, and I doubt there are too many of us who would like to return to those days.

Companies wishing to establish in our province are no doubt shocked when they learn that high-speed Internet is not available everywhere. No one even thinks of operating a business without new technology and most often state-of-the-art technology. We have drones and GPS helping our farmers in growing their crops, yet many businessmen and businesswomen can't even communicate by the Internet because they don't have rural broadband.

Shockingly, I have heard from businesses that are forced to rely on fax machines and letter mail to deal with their clients. How can these businesses expect to remain competitive? The truth is they cannot. Not only is the situation frustrating for them, but their clients as well. This state of affairs is simply not acceptable nor is it sustainable.

We cannot allow this situation to continue. We need to remove these stumbling blocks to economic development and ensure that all Island households and businesses have access to new technology and broadband service.

I would ask everyone in this House to support our motion today.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to second our motion this evening, although it is somewhat unbelievable that it is now nearing the end of 2015 and we are still demanding high-speed Internet for households across this province.

We have heard fine words in this Legislative Assembly from the members opposite about supporting our small businesses as the backbone of our economy. We heard them talk about the need for innovation and new technologies and state-of-the-art facilities.

Yet we still have Islanders and their families who cannot access high-speed Internet. I do not believe that is how we support innovation and entrepreneurship in our province.

I just want to digress from my notes for a second. I remember the deal when it came to fruition back in 2008. I worked in the opposition office very much behind the scenes back then and a lot of the members here were in the House at the same time and the opposition. We were shocked by the announcement. High-speed Internet for every Islander – I still remember it. I can still remember at this time the premier described the deal at the time as: Too good to be true. He said those words, it was November 13th, almost to the day in 2008, seven years ago. It was too good to be true, and we were shocked in opposition. We were happy, though. We were really happy because everybody heard it in the election back then and as I imagine many of the members have heard now.

Our schools will finally have new Wi-Fi networks and students are able to bring their own laptops, tablets and phones to use that Wi-Fi in the schools. This government has promised that all high schools will have Wi-Fi by the end of this school year. The remainder of schools will have it installed by the end of 2016. First off, I would hope that they do better on this promise than they did with the high-speed Internet promise.

But there will be those who, because of where they live, will not be able to access it. They will not be able to use their tablets or computers at home to access these online materials. What impact will that lack of service availability have on their ability to achieve in our school system? While it is great that these new students will have access to 7,000 new computers that are going into our schools, it is sad that once they leave school and arrive at their homes they are no longer connected.

We all heard in our districts and our rural ridings, we even heard it at caucus on the road this fall – I know all the members in here have heard it too – there are pockets out there that still cannot access and it needs to change.

Mr. Trivers: Big pockets.

Mr. MacEwen: The minister of education stated in announcing these new technology advances in our schools that: We have to prepare our students for the knowledge-based economy that they're heading into.

I believe it is important as well, but unfortunately without high-speed technology Islanders and their children are at a disadvantage. I believe that recently we were talking in this Legislature about the possibilities of even introducing coding into our school system. It's difficult to work on these kinds of programs if you do not have access from your home to help you become more familiar with these kinds of systems.

Families and individuals and businesses can find themselves isolated without the ability to utilize various forms of social media for the promotion of their business and to communicate with their clients and friends.

I have a great example. There's an innovative farm in our district, a potato farm, young entrepreneurial, and they are aggressive. It's really impressive to see. They are trying to use an intricate GPS system to fertilize their fields with – of course, as many people know with GPS the satellites sends signals to their station as well to the receiver on the tractor. In turn, the ground-base station sends a correction signal to the tractor. Then the tractor's on-board receiver puts all this information together to pinpoint the area of the field that the equipment is passing over in order to fertilize it appropriately. With these systems they can do soil testing, they can apply fertilizer and they can monitor yields. The benefits are less nutrients moving into the groundwater, less phosphates, lower fertilizer costs.

But they can't do it. They can't do it in a number of their fields. Why? They don't have Internet access. Here we are, young, impressive farmers – like, I mean, at the top of their game – new buildings, top-line equipment, they are efficient and they do everything right, and they can't do simple GPS technology in this day and age. It's ridiculous. Twenty-five minutes from downtown Charlottetown this farm is, 35 minutes to the fields. No Internet.

Far too many years have gone by. These individuals deserve to have access to the

latest technology just like anyone else in this province. It's an injustice and it's unfair in this day and age that they're not able to utilize this system and access the latest technological advances.

I urge the government to find the solution. You know our rural business community needs it. Please help out and please act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was an issue that we discussed most recently in the House. It is an important issue and I thank the Member from Kensington-Malpeque for bringing it forward.

The broadband deployment that began in 2008, which we're all talking about, guaranteed that all communities in PEI would have high-speed Internet access. Broadband high speed internet services to all communities in 2008, 2010, phase one, fibre op network in Charlottetown and Summerside, 2013, phase two, fibre op network to seven additional communities including Souris, Georgetown, Montague, Kensington, Miscouche, Alberton, and O'Leary.

Industry Canada's most recently announced funding for PEI is anticipated in November, December, and that was on the previous government. We assumed that we would have that funding in place by now. Forty-four disbursements of funding have been given out across Canada. The previous federal government, for some reason, didn't connect PEI to the Connecting Canadians program. But as a new government we'll be working on that as a priority.

We are keenly aware of the importance of high-speed Internet –

Mr. Trivers: Blame the feds again.

Mr. MacDonald: – to rural residents and business.

Just giving you the truth.

It's absolutely necessary in today's modern business and it's essential for families. Government has received very few calls from Islanders indicating they were unable to obtain high-speed access.

For those Islanders that reached out to government we were able to help them get high-speed access. We would encourage any Islanders who are still having an issue obtaining high-speed access to contact our government directly and right away, or contact their Internet service provider.

Now government is beginning to hear the higher speed access beyond what we were guaranteed in 2008. We are anticipating an announcement by the new Liberal federal government in the reasonably near future as part of their Connecting Canadians program and getting PEI back on track.

The program is providing funding to Internet service providers to provide higher speed access in rural areas across Canada. Internet service providers needed to submit a proposal. The federal government has made various announcements across the country, as I touched on. PEI is anticipating ours very soon.

Our government reached out and worked with our local Internet service providers to ensure they were aware of this program. As government we have heard from a few regions across the Island seeking higher speed access.

Technology is advancing so quickly we're going to have to continue to stay on top of this year after year after year. At the same time, it's important that we know exactly what our needs and our expectations are, in rural PEI, and beyond what this government had already provided.

On that, I do realize the importance of this motion and I do support it.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to speak in support of this motion. It's hard to understate how critical high-speed Internet access is, especially when it comes to micro business and businesses that are innovating.

We heard the Member from Morell-Mermaid talk about a farm that's trying to use innovative technology to increase their yields and to fertilize in a more environmentally and more efficient way.

But I know there are many individuals – when I say micro business, I mean one- and two-person companies operating out of their homes where it's critical they have high-speed because that's where their shops are. That's their connection to the world.

I know because, indeed, I actually ran one of those businesses with my wife doing web development. I was unable to actually start that business until 2010 when high-speed Internet, at least one version of it, came to our area in rural PEI.

I'm glad to hear that the minister of tourism and –

An Hon. Member: Economic Development.

Mr. Trivers: – Economic Development and Tourism, thank you, agrees that this is important and sees a path forward with this.

I would certainly hope to see all of the government members support this motion and fall in line with their minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise and support this motion whereas I have some constituents in my district that had problems obtaining high-speed internet. I'm glad to hear this and I support this motion.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I think we all know that access to the Internet has to be considered as an essential service in today's world.

As the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald just stated, if we want to revitalize our rural communities, if we want to re-invigorate the economy in rural Prince Edward Island, it is absolutely essential that every community from tip to tip has access to real high-speed Internet.

I know, I realize, that some of the work done by Bell Aliant was done in 2008 and that – the technology has moved so fast that that's so far outdated it's not funny. For us to have real high-speed broadband Internet across this Island, it's going to require a significant upgrade on our system.

I, too, have had several calls from constituents. I represent a rural district, District 17. Actually, just last week I had a call from a young person starting a business in the Bonshaw area unable to get a good enough Internet access connection to facilitate their business. So this is a real problem. We need to do something about it.

I'm delighted the government is going to support this motion and of course I rise in support of the motion too.

That's all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Any other members who would like to speak to the motion?

Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Yes.

I will ask the mover, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, to close debate on the motion.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank everybody for consideration on this motion. I'm sure we've all heard it in our backyards, this issue.

In I guess my second role as a realtor, believe it or not that's one of the first questions they ask when they're buying a house: Do they have high-speed Internet? If they do not have high-speed Internet the deal does not go through. It's such a necessity in today's world for people.

I urge everybody to support this motion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question!

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

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

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

Motion is carried and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that opposition Motion No. 47 be called back.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Aylward: I adjourned debate.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to read an excerpt from the commissionaires' website which outlines some of the commissionaires that have been hired by their firm.

Commissionaire Gilles Arcand:

"When I left the military after nearly 34 years of service, I was in my late 40s, looking for a new challenge and a second career. At Commissionaires Quebec, I found an employer that welcomes and respects military experience, helping to ease my transition into the private sector. It's like they're 'returning the favour' to the military community."

Since 2006 federal policy has required the corps of commissionaires to give a minimum of 60% of contracted work hours to veterans which, as of that year, also includes ex-RCMP officers honourably discharged.

The organization does have flexibility to hire non-vets because there can be shortages of bilingual guards in locations such as Ottawa or Montreal, and shortages of staffing with federal buildings in locations where few veterans reside. The corps hires about 1,000 veterans a year, and this would be comprised of both full- and part-time work.

The 2014 annual Nanos national Remembrance Day survey showed the vast majority of Canadians believe we have an obligation to ensure veterans find meaningful employment after their military service. The number hit an all-time high of 96% in 2014, up from 94% the previous year, and 90% in 2008.

The survey also showed that Canadians feel a deep commitment and gratitude towards our veterans and want to see them succeed in their second and third careers. Nearly 75% of Atlantic Canadians surveyed believe that honouring the milestone anniversaries of World War I and World War II is important in sustaining the public's attention on veterans' issues. This is the highest score across the country, significantly more than the national average of 62%.

The survey also indicates that most Canadians, nearly 63%, believe the support veterans receive after they leave the Canadian Armed Forces is inadequate or somewhat inadequate compared with only 4% who considered it adequate.

It is also interesting to note that on June 27th, 2014 a Return to Duty Memorandum of Understanding between The Canadian Corps of Commissionaires and the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces was signed in Ottawa.

The aim of this MOU is for the CAF and Commissionaires to work in concert where possible at local and regional levels to offer employment to anyone being honourably released by the CAF. Under the MOU, Commissionaires will employ selected injured/ill CAF members who are participating in the Return to Duty program and members of the CAF who are transitioning to civilian life and who wish assistance seeking employment opportunities.

This MOU was described as: a key initiative that will allow us to augment the care provided by the CAF in helping our military members over injury and sickness by providing them with meaningful employment opportunities tailored to their medical conditions. The goal is reintegration back to their military duties, or successful transition to a post-military career, said Bill Sutherland, Chair, National Board of Directors, Commissionaires.

On the national level I believe there is also discussion suggesting some revisions to the Commissionaires' program to ensure younger, lower-income veterans get first crack at these jobs.

The government's current standing offer expires by 2016 and again there is some thought of this program coming under a government department such as Veterans Affairs.

I mention this simply to say that we are aware of those discussions and to advise that the point of our Motion is to ensure that veterans and ex-law enforcement officers continue to have the opportunity to work as Commissionaires here on Prince Edward Island. We do not want to see these services provided by for-profit companies that do not support that principle.

I believe that the residents of our province embrace that principle and would like to see Commissionaire services maintained by our

ex-servicemen and law enforcement officers even if it costs a few dollars extra each year.

I would ask all members of this Legislative Assembly to support our Motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

There has been a trend recently in Prince Edward Island and in many jurisdictions to take money out of the pockets of the most needy and put it into the bank accounts of large corporations. I think the decision to transfer services for the commissionaires to Paladin is such an example of this.

It bothers me greatly. I have many friends who work as commissionaires in the institutions on Prince Edward Island that were affected by that decision. They did fine work for fairly low income. They were not paid a high wage, yet they did their work with enthusiasm and dignity and always served the public gracefully.

The amount of money being saved by the government in turning over this contract to Paladin is tiny. It's a few thousand dollars over the course of many years of a multi-million dollar contract. To my mind it will be a net loss to the economy of Prince Edward Island. Because the money that was paid, the paltry amount – I shouldn't say paltry amount – the amount that was paid in wages to the commissionaires was spent back into our economy. These were not people who were buying lavish jets and heading off around the world, they were spending the money back into our local economy. Any savings that we may create by turning this service over to Paladin has gone out of our economy. It's flowed out of Prince Edward Island.

I would suggest that this is a net loss to the Prince Edward Island economy. It's a bad decision and I stand in support of this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's an honour to stand and talk about the Canadian Corp of Commissionaires today. They have been in existence for over 90 years. They operate in all provinces and territories in this country and they employ over 19,000 people, hiring about 1,200 a year.

Our commissionaires perform important services at facilities throughout our provincial buildings and in government. In fact, here. We have approximately 18 who work at the provincial administration building complex, 10 at the Davies courthouse, and two at the Summerside courthouse, for a total of 30. Of those 30 commissionaires throughout government, 78% have backgrounds in the military or law enforcement. We also have a number that work here that I haven't yet mentioned.

So yes, the Corp of Commissionaires do perform a very good service and a function not only in this province but in this country for sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I rise to support this motion. I've been the health minister in this province now for a number of years and have gotten to know a number of commissionaires in a lot of our government facilities. I must add that the Corp of Commissionaires still are very present in a lot of government facilities across the Province of Prince Edward Island. I have friends who actually part of the staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

This was a very interesting situation because we have procurement agreements, we have processes, that as elected officials, as the minister, I have to respect and I will continue to respect as long as I'm an elected official in this Assembly.

The contract was a tender process under the Atlantic Procurement Agreement by the standards that are in place by government that we as elected officials in our positions that sit at the Executive Council table must respect, and I will continue to respect, as long as I have the privilege to be an elected official in this province.

This was a difficult one because there was a lot of pressure. Of course, as the health minister there's all kinds of competing demands. This wasn't about savings, this wasn't about the \$100,000 a year and half a million dollars over the life of the contract, this was about a procurement agreement, this was a tender process. I hope that the corp commissionaires do not get discouraged by this process and encourage them to continue. We'll be paying very close attention to this contract and making sure that the company that won the process fair and square meet their obligations.

As I indicated in the past I have tremendous respect. This was a difficult one because as the minister it didn't feel right, but at the same time, it wasn't appropriate for myself in my role to step in to a process that was a very open transparent public process and to make those changes. But we'll be paying very close attention as the minister – and there are comments here about efficiencies in the health care system.

I would welcome any member of this Assembly, if they want to sit down and meet with officials and myself, with Health PEI, to talk about PBMA exercises that have been going on and to look at the investment in new opportunities that our health care system has benefitted from that exercise, like the new youth mental health facility, the 24/7 youth facility, the under-65 generic program. Lots of efficiencies found in a time of very challenging fiscal.

I've tremendous respect for the Corp of Commissionaires. I will encourage them to continue to work with government in these processes. Unfortunately, as an elected official, I have to respect the procurement initiatives that are in place under Treasury Board Policy, and as long as I'm an elected official I'll continue to respect that mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to speak to the motion and the appreciation of our commissionaires. I'm so glad that they're still involved in government because they have a lot to offer.

Like the hon. Leader of the Third Party, I, too, have friends that are commissionaires and I, too, was disappointed that they did not win that contract out at the hospital. Also, there was a time when – and I'll speak for my RCMP colleagues – there was a time when people in our services and the RCMP, they were probably going to pension with their salaries at the time, they got their best three years and their pension was based on that. Then inflation just ballooned and these people were left with very limited income.

Today now it's more modern and I know the RCMP, they receive a very good salary and they receive a very good pension. It's not so crucial that they seek this type of employment for financial reasons, but it is important that people want to still be a beneficial member of society. They want to be involved and it's very important from that point of view.

Kudos to all the armed services and the RCMP and the Corp of Commissionaires, and I think they're wonderful people. As a community we got to support them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to rise in support of this motion. Of course commissionaires are individuals that deserve our respect, they're people that have served in their lives and we need to give them opportunities. But I think this whole process points at something that maybe fundamentally wrong with our entire procurement process with this province. We see it time and time again. It's about import

versus export. It's about keeping money on the Island and that's how we're going to dig ourselves out of the fiscal mess we're in.

Time and time again we're sending money off-Island. In this particular case the difference in wages, where did that money go? It's going to the company off-Island. We see that when we're tendering for our government institutions, for hospitals, for nursing homes, when we're purchasing all sorts of materials, including food.

I think we need to fundamentally look at how we issue our tenders and we have to use a measurement process that includes not just the dollar value but the overall benefit to the Island if the dollars stay here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

If not, then I will go back to the mover of the motion to close debate on the motion.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

This is an important motion, because it talks about veterans and commissionaires and ex-police officers that provide valuable service to the Island. It's good to hear members from all three parties talk in favour of the motion and they've realized how much we do need to support these people.

I can respect the minister, and I can understand the pressures that he's under. We have in this country (Indistinct) procurement agreements from province to province, and trade agreements, and sometimes that does go against what is good and bad. You know, the good of what we want to do to our Islanders, yet we have to abide by these agreements. But at the end of the day, sometimes it causes us to cause pain to people that are part of us right directly in the communities.

As the hon. member mentioned, we know them. They're our neighbours, they're friends. That's exactly what they are,

because this is a small place and it's hard to go anywhere and not know these individuals. When they're affected, we're affected.

With that, I will close debate on this. I think I can take it for granted that the House will support this motion, and going forward that we will support our use of our ex-servicemen and our military and police officers in our provincially operated facilities.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

All those voting in favour of the motion signify by saying "aye."

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

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

Motion is carried and it is unanimous.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, that opposition Motion 18 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 18.

The hon. Member from Rustico- Emerald moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell- Mermaid, the following motion:

WHEREAS Island waterways are an integral part of our natural environment;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island's watershed groups provide invaluable and necessary work in the restoration and preservation of our waterways;

AND WHEREAS it has been assessed that for every \$1 spent in support of our watershed groups this province reaps an additional \$10 in benefits;

AND WHEREAS the lack of sustainable funding results in project delays and uncertainty each year as to the amount of money they will receive and the number of summer students they will be able to hire;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly encourage government to examine the issue of funding for our local watershed groups with the intention of developing a multi-year sustainable funding arrangement.

Speaker: I will now call on the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the mover of the motion, to speak to the motion.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It really is an honour to rise in this Legislative Assembly today and move our opposition motion that urges this government to negotiate with our watershed organizations a multi-year funding agreement.

I want to underscore that it has been stated and agreed to in this House that funding to watershed groups brings an estimated 10 to one return. For every \$1 spent, there's a 10 times return, so this really should be a no-brainer.

I first off want to commend the hard work and dedication of these organizations in their efforts to improve and protect the environmental quality of Prince Edward Island watersheds. Our watershed organizations, with their hard work and perseverance, will ensure that our future generations will have access to clean and safe water. They are the promoters of environmental stewardship, and more and more Prince Edward Islanders are responding to the concerns and impacts of our human activity on our ecosystem.

Prince Edward Island is the most densely populated province in our country, and as such, what we do in our backyards, on our farms, and in our industries and businesses, can have a substantial impact on our environment and endanger our watersheds.

We have 33 watershed groups currently in our province today which employ roughly 200 Island residents each year. These groups also engage thousands of individuals in our

local communities and work in greater collaboration with all sectors of our economy, including farmers, fishers, our tourism industry, wildlife organizations, environmentalists, conservationists, shellfishers, foresters, and community and municipal councils. Very all encompassing.

They help to drive our economy through the use of materials and services provided locally and through their members who purchase their own personal items that help them participate in the activities of these groups. These are our volunteers that are very driven and self-financing.

District 18 Rustico-Emerald actually includes at least part of watersheds represented by seven different groups, and two unadopted areas on either side of New London Bay. These include: Bedeque Bay Environmental Management Association; Kensington North Watersheds Association; Trout River Environmental Committee; Hunter-Clyde Watershed Group; Wheatley River Improvement Group; Cornwall & Area Watershed Group; and the Central Queens Wildlife Federation.

Watershed groups with over 25,000 hectares can get three-year contracts with the Watershed Management Fund. So, three-year contracts, however, the funding isn't guaranteed. For instance, when watershed groups suffered a 3% cut a couple of years ago the three-year contracts were also cut 3%. The groups with three-year contracts get their money by April 30th, before the other groups, because the paperwork is already in place and ministers don't need to sign it each year.

Our watersheds, as we noted before in this House, need consistent annual funding so they can get their work going as soon as possible each year. That's what this motion is all about. Just to put that out there and make sure that the House unequivocally agrees that this should be the case.

As stated on the Watershed Alliance website, their work with our communities helps to ensure that conflicts are resolved, that support and consensus for activities is sought, and that the community better understands the environmental and watershed issues of their areas. Their work includes protection of our riparian zones,

fish habitat restoration, sediment removal, the protection and enhancement of waterfowl habitat and restoration of our forests. Really, a wide variety of very important activities.

Not only do they enhance and protect our watersheds, but they help to improve the recreational resources of our province by improving appropriate areas for hiking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, hunting, trapping, photography, birding, running, and cycling. These activities promote and enhance our tourism product while at the same time improving our health.

Watershed groups have a huge impact. They engage in the hard work of cleaning up our estuaries and, in so doing, enhance our overall fisheries and aqua-culture industries, improve property values, and therefore increase tax revenues. It's really easy to see why every dollar spent on watershed groups gives a 10-times return.

Members of our watershed groups can be seen in hip-waders and big boots clearing out streams and building protective barriers in our rivers, streams, and estuaries. Often their work involves hours, weeks, and days of back-breaking lifting and working in less than ideal conditions. They do this work primarily as volunteers and we are all indebted to their initiative. They help to educate Islanders and students about environmental sustainability and provide training for their volunteers in the proper methods of protecting our eco-systems.

In fact, many times I think they even consult with government and ask their opinion on how to proceed with different areas.

They monitor water levels and help deal with the aftermath of environmental impact of storms and tragedies such as fish kills. They carry out mitigation efforts aimed at curbing excessive soil runoff and sedimentation due to areas that are susceptible to high runoff in heavy rains and storms. Recently, we've seen that runoff that has closed fisheries on the north and south shores and if there was more funding for watershed groups perhaps they could have helped mitigate that impact.

Barriers to fish passage remain a serious problem in our province and our watershed

organizations are tackling many of the blockages that are caused by impoundments, road crossings and beaver dams. Many issues that are being addressed by our watershed groups, such as soil runoff into our estuaries, will worsen with the impact of global warming. It is anticipated as well that water temperatures will also increase in our warming climate and they will have an impact on our fish stocks and all life-forms in our river systems. We must support our watershed groups as they tackle these new challenges.

Our watershed organizations also play a role in identifying predators such as striped bass, seals, and double-crested cormorants whose populations are increasing and which can deplete fish stocks and impact the survival of species such as salmon in our province.

Our watershed groups require increased support from all levels of government to continue improving fish habitat and engaging local landowners in conservation efforts.

I was happy to read that government has endorsed the new PEI Watershed Strategy which states as part of their list of short-term strategies that: the Department of Communities, Land and Environment will provide watershed groups on Prince Edward Island with stable and adequate multi-year funding, through a transparent funding process.

I certainly hope that happens, and kudos to the minister.

I believe that it is imperative that we offer these volunteer and non-profit organizations as much support as possible for the work they do. Should government have to engage its own workers to clear out our streams and improve fish and wildlife habitat, the expenses are almost surely to be in the millions of dollars range. We are really blessed to have these individuals who work for free and who tackle each project with expertise and enthusiasm.

The work of our many watershed organizations is often hindered by the fact that watersheds, for the most part, never know how much funding they will get from one year to the next. It is difficult to plan projects when it is unknown whether the

dollars will be forthcoming to allow the work to be carried out. It's true. We need to make sure that, although government is saying this will happen, we need to make sure it happens sooner rather than later.

It is also difficult for the individual watershed to determine its employment needs when they don't know what their funding is. If they can only afford to carry out half of their objective in one year, then they would need to hire fewer students and vice-versa.

The lack of multi-year funding also impacts our students who are applying for jobs. If funding isn't made known to the watershed groups until the budget comes down, many students may have already been employed elsewhere. Every week worked is important to eligible students in terms of paying down their student loans. If the funding does not come through in time to allow for an early start to the project, the student may suffer as well.

Our watershed groups have been requesting more consistent funding so they can effectively plan on a long-term basis rather than year-to-year. I believe that the service of our watershed groups goes well beyond what they are currently receiving.

Although they are getting additional funding this year – not the amount that was promised, but some additional funding – government needs to be aware that these groups certainly could utilize more technical and financial support to carry out restoration projects on our river systems. Many of our watershed areas despite their work are still tackling significant issues in our streams and estuaries and in the protection of wetlands. These organizations indicate as well that they could utilize more scientific expertise in the area of fish stock assessment.

Annual delays in approval is causing significant burden to our watersheds. For example, the election itself postponed notification of acceptance and the hiring of summer employees. Some will only have started working now, and as we are well aware, our season is short and students will be heading back to school this year.

To close, I wanted to say that I just can't say enough about the amazing work that

watershed groups do and the amount of value they add. I'm going to throw out that 10-to-one return again. Every dollar we spend gives a 10-times return. It's a no-brainer. Please give them multi-year funding that's stable and allow them to do the great work that gives millions of dollars of effort. Let's make sure when this motion passes that this in fact does happen in reality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I will now call upon the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the seconder, to speak to the motion.

Mr. MacEwen: Who's going to call the hour?

Mr. Myers: I'm going to call it. They're only going to let you speak for 30 seconds.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud to second this motion. Quickly, I want to thank the minister for coming out to the district this summer to look at the projects they're doing at Mooney's Pond. Verbally I think I heard a pretty strong commitment there to continue the good work that they're doing with the new project that's coming, so we're really glad to hear that commitment and I hope it comes through.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, December 2nd, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Enjoy the rest of your evening.

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