

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, to say good afternoon to our guests in the gallery and those viewing at home, and of course, our colleagues here in the Chamber.

This, as was noted in the member's statement yesterday by the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, is Public Service Week 2015, an opportunity to celebrate the work of our public servants and their mission of providing good government for all Islanders.

By way of recognition joined to Public Service Week, tomorrow there will be awards to honour diversity leaders in the public service. I'm not at liberty to say who the recipients will be at this time, but there will be an individual, as well as a division, of the public service that will be recognized through this annual honour. That will take place at a barbeque that will occur on the grounds of the Shaw, Sullivan and Jones buildings between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. I invite all hon. members to join us for that barbeque, and an opportunity to recognize and honour all of our public servants, and notably the recipients of the diversity awards.

May I also recognize in the gallery Jamie MacPhail who is the executive director of the Liberal Association of Prince Edward Island and does a very good job for us.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I want to welcome everybody here this afternoon and those that are following along

at home and those that are here in the gallery.

A couple of things to note today. Today is the fifth anniversary of the opening of Reds Corner in Pooles Corner. I know they have some events going on there this weekend so if you're around, check it out. It's a great spot and it's a great spot to get a bite to eat.

I want to wish a happy birthday to my friend, Michael Drake. Michael was the chief of staff up in our office for a couple of years and a candidate in the last election.

Also, I would like to congratulate Norman and Michelle, they had a new baby boy last night. I know some of you may know Norman and Michelle from around the racetrack, but they're back – they had a baby last night so I want to congratulate both of them.

Thank you.

**Mr. Aylward:** Was that Norman (Indistinct) and Michelle (Indistinct)?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I would like to welcome three constituents from District 17, Chris Ortenburger, Jamie MacPhail and Lorne Yeo, all sitting in a row over there. Welcome.

I would also like to congratulate the PEI Brewing Company on recently winning the best brown ale in Canada for their –

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – yeah, their Iron Bridge Brown Ale. Tina tells me it's absolutely delicious.

Just today, actually, we learned that in Nova Scotia sales of their local artisanal beer and wine have increased by 25% just in the last year which indicates, of course, a growing market and preference for locally produced, high-quality products. I would just like to take this opportunity to encourage Islanders to support our local producers of which

there are many, of course. We have some great wineries, cheese makers, microbrewers, community-supported agricultural growers, and today is the first Wednesday opening of the Charlottetown Farmers Market. I encourage all Islanders to get out and support their local producers.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to send a shout-out to the children and staff of Camp Triumph in Malpeque. This is a great organization. It's for children whose parents have chronic illness or disability. I just wanted to say hello to them, and keep up the great work. You're doing a fantastic job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome everybody here in the gallery today.

Also I would like to congratulate all of the public servants that do such wonderful job of serving the residents of Prince Edward Island.

I would also like to point out that the West Royalty school is having a Drive-a-Fordathon today. Every drive that you take, a demo ride, gives the school \$20, so if anybody is in the area of West Royalty school, we greatly appreciate them helping us support that fundraising effort.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to welcome everyone here in the gallery, everyone viewing at home, online and on the television.

I would like to send a shout out to all of the teachers at Belfast Consolidated School and Southern Kings Consolidated. With each day that passes in June I think it becomes more of a challenge for the teachers to keep students attentive and listening, so I just want to say hello to them and I hope that they had a great day.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to shout out to the public service. We know how hard they all work and how much they support us.

Also, I had the opportunity to participate in a funeral today, Mr. Jim Fleming, who is a longtime resident of Cornwall-Meadowbank District 16, and also Eddie Lund's brother-in-law, who is a very familiar and friendly face in the gallery.

My son has a birthday today and I give a shout out to him, and also Jamie MacPhail in the gallery today. Jamie will be tying the knot in less than 10 days I think, so –

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald:** One other quick item is the Acadian Games 36th annual event being held here in Charlottetown. Over 1,000 athletes are participating, and a great opportunity to see their cultural and sporting activities come together. If you get the opportunity – some of them are even being done right over here at the Confederation Centre, so if you have the opportunity, stop by and say hello.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to give my thoughts to the Morrison family. I attended a funeral this morning of Ora Jean Morrison who passed away on the 13<sup>th</sup>. One thing I was very impressed by – you could tell how much the family really enjoyed this lady and how much she meant to the family in general.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, wanted to welcome the visitors in the gallery and those who are watching from EastLink or on the Internet, especially from District 18 Rustico-Emerald.

It's rhubarb season, and tonight the Wheatley River Women's Institute is having a rhubarb social. Looking forward to maybe getting there myself. It's at the Wheatley River Community Hall of course. If you see people walking around with a sour look on their face, it's probably just the rhubarb.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Aylward:** Are you sure it doesn't have anything to do with a pending budget?

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone back again today I notice in the gallery and especially those that are in District 1 watching on EastLink.

I'd like to give a big shout out to the medical first responders right across Prince Edward Island, especially in District 1. These medical first responders, they give up their nights, they give up their suppers, they give up their family at the call of duty. About 98% of these medical first responders live – or the calls are right in their own community, and that's hard on medical first responders. I'd just like to give a big shout out for the medical first responders and let

them now that we're all thinking about them.

One more thing. I'd like to say a big birthday to Laurie LeClair. Laurie's not watching EastLink so I'll reveal her age today. Laurie LeClair is 31 years old today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Statements by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

#### **Prince County Exhibition**

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in the House today to speak of one of my favorite events of the year, the Prince County Exhibition.

Prince County Exhibition has always proven to be one of the major attractions in West Prince throughout its many years. It was started in 1926 and is held on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday in mid-summer. All the events occur on the fairgrounds located on Church Street in Alberton.

There are many events and attractions that take place during the exhibition, such as the strongman and youth talent competitions, a horse pull, a miniature horse show and harness racing. There's also live entertainment and booths set up adjacent to Jacques Cartier Memorial Arena which is open to the public for the duration of the exhibition.

The Saturday morning parade is one of the most popular and largely attended events, featuring many entries such as floats, bands, antique cars, tractors, emergency vehicles, and much more. The exhibition is a great place for kids as there is a day dedicated to children with games, prizes, and treats.

There is also a midway with rides that are appropriate for all ages. There is so much going on at the exhibition that it is impossible to mention it all.

I encourage all members, take your family, make a trip up to West Prince this year – it's

not really that far from Charlottetown – and enjoy a West Prince tradition.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### Island Hill Farm

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I will be speaking about a very unique location in West Royalty-Springvale.

Island Hill Farm is a beautiful and educational venue for all ages and backgrounds. The owner/operator, Flory Sanderson, dedicates her time to the day-to-day operations of the farm as well as the educational portion that she has recently introduced. She is also on her way to opening a goat dairy operation in the near future.

All members of this House know the importance of the agriculture industry, but some may not understand how a farm is run, and what you will find on an Island farm. Flory saw this as an opportunity and turned her farm into a tourist destination. Different types of groups have taken time to visit Island Hill Farm including families from all across Canada, school groups, kindergarten and daycare students, newcomers, the Women's Institute, and 4-H, just to name a few.

Flory resides in Hampshire on the Island Hill Farm property with her husband Robert and has three daughters, Rebecca, Jennifer – who are currently studying in Perth, Australia – and Casey who'll be graduating from Bluefield high school next week. I would love to thank the whole family for opening their doors to the public and sharing their farm with the public.

To close, I would like to let the House know Flory is in a small business competition through CFIB. The business that receives the most tweets and Instagram posts with the hashtag SmallBizLove will be featured in a national marketing campaign to celebrate small business throughout October 2015.

I encourage all members of this House to use the hashtag SmallBizLove and support Island Hill Farm.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Souris Lions Club

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in the House when you get to speak to one of the volunteer groups in your own community.

The Souris Lions Club is an organization which has served the Eastern Kings area for the past 60 years.

The Souris Lions Club is a volunteer-based organization that was started in Souris in 1955. The Lions Club has many activities in the community and throughout the year including Canada Day barbecue, Community Garden, Lotto 200 Draw, tolls on the roads, Beef Draw, and the Christmas Box campaign. The list just goes on for this organization.

The Lions Club has always been a centre point of the community, showing leadership and in giving back to the community.

They recently held their 60<sup>th</sup> charter night banquet, June 13<sup>th</sup>, at the Eastern Kings Sportsplex, which I was able to attend. Their guest speaker was Carol Tracy from Portage Atlantic Youth Centre in Sussex.

A couple years ago me and my colleagues had the opportunity to go to Portage and spend the day with the youth over there. I'm glad that the Lions Club and the Souris Lions Club are great donators to the Portage addiction youth centre in Sussex. That's great.

It's organizations and it's groups like the Souris Lions Club that keep our communities vibrant and moving forward.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their successful 60 years in the community, and I wish them

continued success into the future as they continue to grow as strong as they are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**School staffing (further)**

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

Yesterday I asked the minister of education about the staffing numbers at the schools next year. The minister's non-answers created a lot of confusion, so let's simplify things.

Question to the minister: Is the staffing number that you provided the English Language School Board higher or lower than the number you provided them with last year?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department has been in communication with the board. We have two superintendents that have been involved in the process of the budget. I spoke with the superintendent, actually, just an hour ago. They know the preliminary numbers and they're working on staffing at this moment.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That wasn't the question that I asked. The question that I asked was: Is the number that you gave them higher or lower? So is the number you gave them higher or lower?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, like I said, the board, it's a preliminary number that they're working with and they're working out different scenarios at the moment. But nothing can be confirmed until the budget is actually on the floor.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pretty straightforward question, I'm going to try again. Will there be staffing reductions in the Island school system because of this budget for the upcoming school year?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department and our government are making very important investments to support our students. Education is a priority of this government and we are maximizing our spending in the classroom. We've made investments in education and we're going to continue to make investments in education.

Since coming in to forming government we've increased investments in education by 36%.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**School board gag order**

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

No doubt you heard the interview this morning on CBC radio with the board superintendent and chair. They told Islanders that this government won't allow them to share those staffing numbers with

their own senior management for planning purposes.

Question to the minister: Why have you placed a gag order on the school board? Is the news that bad?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I said a few minutes ago, I spoke with the superintendent. She has made these preliminary numbers aware to her senior management and they are working on staffing as we speak.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### **School board budget**

**Leader of the Opposition:** Back to the minister of education. Again, this morning on the radio the word was that the board was asked to find \$500,000 in cuts and they were asked to go back and cut twice more.

Question to the minister of education: How many times have you asked the board to go back and cut their budget?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, our focus is on student achievement, and any budget changes, we want to make sure that they have a minimal impact on the classroom.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Question to the minister of education: How many times have you asked the school board to cut their budget?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we're going back. We've been in communication with the board and we've been communicating with them on the general direction of the budget. The superintendent knows the preliminary numbers that we are dealing with and their senior management is working on staffing as we speak.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** This is twice I asked the question. Actually, I never got a single answer for a single question I asked so far.

It's quite a game of hot potato going on between this minister and the school board and Islanders can read between the lines, and Islanders know what's going on.

Question to the minister: If your plan is to force school boards to cut staffing then you have a responsibility to be up front about it. Why are you trying to shift the blame in the decisions that you are making?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? I do want to thank the school board and the teachers and the PEI Teachers' Federation for being very patient and for the great work that they do. They have challenging jobs and they have important jobs and they are here to support our students. I'm very pleased to say that I've had good communications with the school board, with the PEI Teachers' Federation, and will continue to do that.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say how much I appreciate what our teachers do in our system. Not only do they educate, but they motivate, they inspire and they lead. They're very influential on our young children and I think we have to show appreciation to our frontline teachers.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.



**Seniors' activity**

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

My question today is for the minister of health. Minister, as we're all aware we have an aging population and care for our seniors will only take on more and more priority as baby boomers age into retirement.

Question to the minister: Does the minister agree that it is desirable that seniors are as active and mobile as possible?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're very committed and have been very committed over the last number of years to supporting Island seniors. We recognize that Island seniors want to be as mobile and as active as they possibly can in their communities, and we have been engaging in a number of community-based initiatives, whether it be the goPEI! initiatives that are targeted towards our senior population, and we encourage aging well with our recent wellness strategy. But we also recognize that we do need to continue to find innovative ways to support seniors to stay in their homes as long as they possibly can.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I'm very glad that the minister agrees. Seniors who are active and mobile are better equipped to deal with assorted health issues like fluid buildup, agility, muscle strength and mental acuity, to name just a few.

Supplementary question to the minister: Does the minister agree that having seniors more active and mobile can bring health benefits to seniors and reduce health costs to taxpayers?

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

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

We have engaged – we're paying very close attention to the resolutions that are passed by the recent AGM from our seniors' federation. I think one of those initiatives they did pass – I think there were five resolutions that would be coming for further discussion. I must add that our relationship with the seniors' federation and the Seniors' Secretariat is very positive to gain insight and information in respect to the needs of seniors in communities all across Prince Edward Island.

I appreciate the line of questioning from the Member from Stratford-Kinlock. Our mandate and our priority is to create an environment of aging well. If you look at the work that's going on in communities all across Prince Edward Island, we're seeing some very positive partnerships with senior-based organizations right across the province. We encourage seniors to stay active and to be very viable, active contributors to their communities.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I'm very happy to hear that the minister has such a great relationship with the PEI Seniors' Federation. Actually, I attended their AGM back not that long ago across the street at the Murphy's Community Centre, as did several other MLAs here. I also had a follow-up meeting with their current president and executive director. It was a very insightful discussion around the resolutions that the minister speaks about.

**Seniors and lift assistant policy**

A new question to the minister: Minister, I've received calls from Islanders who are concerned by what appears to be a policy change in seniors' care around lift assistant for patients, helping patients out of bed to walk and exercise. Is the minister familiar with any policy changes for lift assistants for patients in seniors' care?

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

**Mr. Currie:** No, I'm not aware of any changes in policy, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we have launched late this winter the seniors' safe at home program with a budget of about \$250,000 which is targeted towards seniors over 60 that are eligible to provide supports and lift assistants, devices, to allow them to be functional and to live in their – whether it be their homes or their seniors' housing units.

We work very closely with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Prince County Hospital. When seniors are medically discharged we currently have a pilot or initiative going on right now with the Prince Edward Home which focuses on restorative care which gets our seniors mobile and are assessed and are transferred back. We are working with those seniors and their transfer plans to make sure that we do have the equipment and the supports in place.

We do have a program. I can get more information to the Member from Stratford-Kinlock. If they meet the criteria there are supports and resources available to support our seniors in-home.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I'd highly recommend that this minister get up to date on this policy change as quickly as possible because I'm hearing from concerned constituents of mine, and from Islanders across this Island. What I'm being told is that the policy now being followed is that daily walking exercise programs are no longer supported if a patient is unable to get out of bed themselves and take three steps forward and back under their own power.

Minister, do you agree with this new approach to supporting senior mobility?

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

**Mr. Currie:** I can't speak specifically about a specific policy change in my two departments, Mr. Speaker, but I'll certainly follow up, take that question under advisement, and bring the exact information back.

Our mandate in the Department of Family and Human Services is to support seniors, is to work very closely with the organizations like the seniors' federation, work with the seniors' organizations and communities.

If you look at our investments and our track record in supporting seniors in our communities across Prince Edward Island, whether you look at our over \$70 million investment in manor replacement, if you look at the introduction to the Catastrophic Drug Program, if you look at the investment we've made in seniors' home repair where over 2,500 Islanders have been able to stay in their homes, and recently in the last – we've announced our commitment to the under-65 Generic Drug Plan where anyone who has non-insurance will be able to access a range of medications at a cap of \$19.95.

We're very committed. We want to support our seniors and we want to allow them to have a quality of life that they deserve for their commitments that they've made to communities all across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

Again to the minister. Minister, I'm very happy to hear that you will look into this policy change. I'm still quite shocked and amazed that such a serious policy change wouldn't have at the very least come across your desk, or your deputy's desk, and that you wouldn't have been briefed on it. Again to the minister: If this policy is indeed happening, as I know it's happening, do you agree with it?

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

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

I will get clarification. I'm not totally aware of the policy that the Member from Stratford-Kinlock is referring to with my responsibilities, but I will commit to bringing that information back.

I do want to speak a little bit about government's commitment. If we want to look at supporting seniors in their homes, we only have to look at our investments in home care. Since 2007 we've increased home care spending by over 45%. We've added an additional total of 125 nurses. We've expanded our home program services and are expanding our reach into communities and homes, and it's a very well received, very popular, program to assess the needs of seniors, whether they're living with family members or living alone.

Our priority is to support, whether through home care or whether home and safe programs, to make sure the seniors have the choice and have the ability to stay in their homes as long as they desire to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

It's wonderful to have the minister of health get up and talk about what he's done in the past, what initiatives have been put in place, but we all know that seniors here on PEI are some of the most heavily taxed individuals in all of Canada. In many cases they are unable to access their family doctor, if they're lucky enough to have a family doctor.

The minister goes on and talks about many of these other programs, but what we're here talking about today, the questions I'm asking today, specifically have to do with seniors in senior care who essentially are languishing in their beds because of a policy change where the staff that work in these homes are no longer permitted to help these seniors get out of bed and assist them with the walking. In other words, they're just left in their beds.

Minister, if there has indeed been a policy change with respect to this, will you commit here today to changing that policy and ensure that Island seniors have the respect and the dignity that they deserve?

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

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

I'd indicate to the Member from Stratford-Kinlock that I will get more information on the specific line of questioning in respect to policy change.

I'm currently not aware, or I as minister have not made any changes of that nature, but will get briefed and ask the questions and bring that information back and bring that information forward.

Once again, our government's commitment is to build strong, vibrant, active communities. Whether it be investments in home care, whether it be the home safe supports that we put in place, whether it be seniors' home repair, whether it be additional home care nurses providing supports in Island homes all across this province.

We recognize the value and the contributions that seniors have made in our communities, and I will continue on behalf of our government to commit to providing as much support as we possibly can in our health care system to Island seniors.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted some clarification from this minister.

It's a very simple question: If this policy is in fact in place, will you commit here today to reversing that policy?

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

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

I would like, before I make decisions of any nature, I like to get the facts, because the history of line of questioning in this Assembly sometimes gets a little misconstrued. I usually like to go back and get the exact information and discuss any policy changes that may have occurred

under my watch that I'm not aware of and I will commit –

**Mr. Aylward:** (Indistinct) your watch because you're not watching it, it's being (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** The minister has the floor.

**Mr. Currie:** I will commit to coming back and asking the questions and getting some clarification, and I will commit to bringing it back to the House.

As long as I have the privilege and responsibility to be the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Minister of Family and Human Services and the minister responsible for seniors in this province, we will commit to making sure that we are very progressive and we're providing leadership and making sure that we provide supports and innovative initiatives to make sure that Island seniors feel supported, that they're in their homes, they feel safe, and they get the due care and attention that they do require. We will continue to make sure that we promote aging well, aging at home, and making sure that our communities are vibrant and strong with our seniors' population, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### Guidance on Water Act

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My questions today are for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

The issue of water quality and quantity is an issue on the minds of many Islanders. In the throne speech there was a reference to the much talked about and very important water act, and in the throne speech it said, and I quote: "...we will seek the guidance of Islanders with regard to a new *Water Act*..."

The question for the minister is: Minister, can you explain to the House how you will seek guidance of Islanders in putting in place a new water act?

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

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

Indeed, that is a great question from the opposite side of the House and one that I take great pride in answering today.

In the very near future, as you mentioned, there is a new water act going to be presented to Islanders. Currently there is a white paper in preparation. Basically at the end it's, for all intents and purposes, pretty well established. During the next few weeks that will be presented to Islanders as a rollout. It will give Islanders a chance all across Prince Edward Island to take a look at it, get some ideas as to how they think this should be handled.

Then, towards the latter part of the summer, we will be opening to public consultations all across Prince Edward Island from tip to tip. This will be done in a very open and consultative fashion for all Islanders to attend these events, to bring forward their ideas. There will be meetings for special NGO groups to come and have their opportunity to speak, as well as Islanders. We'll have an open mike fashion to bring all of their thoughts towards this a little bit later towards the end of the summer.

**Speaker:** We will now go to the hon. Leader of the Third Party for a question.

### Breakfast program and locally produced food

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

Last week in the House the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture announced an expansion to the school breakfast program. Funding was to be increased and the commitment made to use, and I quote: locally purchased food. Now that all sounds very lovely except that locally purchased food is not necessarily the same as locally produced food. Locally purchased food, of course, could mean going into the downtown Sobeys and buying a crate of Fruit Loops. I'm assuming that's not what the minister meant, but I ask for some clarification.

A question to the minister: Does locally purchased food mean food produced on Prince Edward Island by Prince Edward Island farmers?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question. As was announced last week, the breakfast program has been in existence quite some time in PEI. I have been involved with it myself through the Home and School associations. There are many students that do come to school that do need that breakfast to get them going in the day, and it has to be nutritious and healthy, and that's something that we're trying to promote.

Of course we want to support our local producers, and we encourage the schools to purchase locally from local producers as much as they possibly can.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party for a first supplementary question.

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

I'm pleased to hear that, but I'll be watching carefully to make sure that is indeed reflected in the implementation of the program. Because by purchasing food from Island farmers for our schools, hospitals, or any other government institution, we're supporting Island agriculture, we're stimulating our local economy, we're creating jobs here on Prince Edward Island, and we're improving the health of those people that receive the food.

I ask again: Will the minister make it clear in the implementation of this program that we are referring to locally produced food and not just locally bought food?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, a very good question. We do want to support our local producers regardless of what commodity it is, and I will encourage

the schools to buy locally from local producers.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party for a second supplementary.

### **Standards for healthy food**

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

The other stipulation in the minister's statement is that food be healthy. Lots of food products claim to be healthy, including Fruit Loops, by the way, and I quote: Made with whole grain oats, natural fruit flavourings, and low in fat and a source of seven essential nutrients.

Can the minister tell us what standards or criteria will be used in determining what qualifies as healthy food?

**Mr. Aylward:** Minister of fruit loops.

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

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, a very good question. It all goes back to giving our students the best start of the day. Breakfast is one of the most important meals and healthy snacks are another important part of their day. We do encourage, again, locally produced products. We will encourage nutritious food using Canada's Food Guide, for example, but also using or accessing dietary, I guess, education from dietitians.

I ask again, and I will ask the schools, to use that as part of their selection of choices in what they feed our students in the morning.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton and the Government Whip.

### **Prince Edward Home**

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

I have a question for the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

The old Prince Edward Home property sits on a parcel of land that is adjacent to and that borders on Victoria Park in the historic area of Charlottetown. In 1873 Governor William Cleaver Francis Robinson gave the city of Charlottetown the responsibility for caring for 40 acres of Fanningbank farm. This land was to and for the use of all Her Majesty's subjects as a park, promenade and pleasure ground. It was named Victoria Park in honour of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The PE Home has been vacant since the election ended. One of the primary polling stations was there. It's rapidly deteriorating and is becoming an eyesore and a hazard –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. J. Brown:** Question to the minister –

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, would the minister please delineate what the process will be that will be undertaken to determine what happens with the PE Home moving forward?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, and the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, I know that's very important to them because it's in their area, and we've had lots of discussions over the last little while with both of you on that, and with the residents. It's an important area of concern.

The department itself will be seeking direction from the Executive Council on the best way to proceed with this to ensure that we have the best outcome for the property, and that whatever we do in the future with that property, it will be used in the best way to benefit the public.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton and the Government Whip.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, hon. minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister indicated, the park is currently used by a number of different interest groups. On any given day you could go for a walk on peaceful woodland walking trails, go for a beautiful harbourfront walk on the boardwalk, or ball diamonds, tennis courts, a skateboard park, horseshoe pitch, splash pads, slides, swing sets, everything. It has been used to host many events in the past. I would say it's one of the hallmark spaces in Charlottetown.

First supplementary question to the minister: Will the minister advise this Legislature, what if any third parties have expressed any interest in the old PE Home and whether the property has been designated for any particular purpose at this point?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member notes, it is in a very key area of the city of Charlottetown. We are aware and have had conversations with the city of Charlottetown and have assured them that we will involve them in any discussions on this particular property going forward. The department has agreed to that. As soon as we get some direction on what the process will be from Executive Council.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton and the Government Whip for his second supplementary.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Speaker, second supplementary question to the minister again.

Madam Minister, will your department commit to the demolition of the PE home?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, I will say to you that until consultation has actually taken place with any interested parties, at this point it would be too premature to say we're going to actually tear the building down, but it will be an ongoing process. We'll endeavour to

work quickly to have an acceptable plan for this property that will actually be the greatest benefit to the public.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and the Deputy Speaker.

### **Route 2 and Goodrich Corner Road intersection**

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Madam Minister, I have a dangerous intersection in my district and it's at Route 2 and Goodrich Corner Road in Wellington Centre. There have been numerous close calls there. I was wondering if the minister's aware, or her department, of any dangers at this particular intersection?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, hon. member, that is an area that's shared by both myself and the hon. member, we're split right down the middle of that area, so I'm very familiar, being from my district as well, of that location and the traffic on the main highway.

At this point in time, hon. member, there hasn't been any particular safety –

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Review?

**Ms. Biggar:** – review – thank you, hon. Premier – done of that site, but it's something that we will certainly look at in the future going forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and the Deputy Speaker for his first supplementary.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Same question to Madam Minister. I think installing an eastbound right-hand turning lane would make the world of difference at

this intersection. Could the department consider that?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I will commit to is to have the engineers go up there and do a review of the area, do some traffic review, and have a look at that and how we can move – if it will fit into our plans for the future.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and the Deputy Speaker for his second supplementary.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Final supplementary to the same minister: If the department sees so fit, could you look at putting this in the capital budget this fall for a spring construction?

Thank you.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What will need to be done is to have a thorough review of that area, the costs associated with it. It's not in the capital budget at this time, but it's certainly something that we will consider and look at our budgetary process for capital budget and look at that plan for the future, hon. member.

**Speaker:** Now we'll get back to the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Draft of Water Act**

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You mentioned a white paper has already been written regarding the water act. Does that mean that the new water act has actually been drafted by your department already?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, actually, it doesn't, hon. member. What it means – the white paper is basically a format and a structure of some thoughts that Islanders should think about going forward.

As minister, I'm very excited about this rollout of the new water act and beginning with the presentation of this white paper. This will be a multi-phased approach, as I mentioned earlier. The rollout of the white paper act is phase I. After that, as I said, we will be going cross-Island for consultations with all Islanders from all parts of the Island and from all walks of life from the Island. I know we have quite a few members of our watershed groups in the gallery today and they will certainly have an extreme concern.

As Islanders, we are all concerned and very interested that we have the very best quality and quantity of water for our own life-sustaining purposes as well as the animals and wildlife in our ecosystem. This is a very important process. We expect to hear from Islanders of all walks as we develop through this multi-phase process to develop the very question you asked about, the exact water act.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've talked with many constituents – it was a big topic at the door during the last election period – that they want to have input into this, so it sounds to me like I'm hearing good things.

I mean, in the past we've seen industry and backroom donors work with the Premier, and sometimes the Cabinet hires high-priced consultants to write things like white papers and then it's sort of: We've got the legislation in place, toe the party line, and it's lip service.

### **Consultation on Water Act**

For the record again, can you commit to having a public consultation with real Islanders across the province at times and locations that they can make it to that facilitates real, two-way conversation?

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly can commit to that quite easily today, hon. member. This is something that we're taking very seriously. This is something that's been asked about for many years. It's time to proceed with this. It's been some years since the water act's been looked at.

This is something that the Environmental Advisory Council are going to be hands-on involved with. As you said, taking it across the Island for public consultations. We will not only do that once, but we will do that twice. After we listen to Islanders for the first time and develop the water act, we will be back to present this to Islanders and let them have their say on exactly what the act is going to look like going forward.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I believe you mentioned it earlier, but can you again confirm the timetable for when this public engagement process will begin?

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As far as the rollout of the white paper, we hope to do that within the next few weeks. We'd like to give Islanders the basic part of the summer to review that white paper, develop some thoughts about it, and be respectful to those in the primary industries on PEI who are currently fishing and farming and give them their opportunity to deal with their businesses, come back in the fall for these public consultations, which will begin all over the fall season where all these meetings will take place right across the Island to begin that process.



**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### **Deep-water well expansion and Water Act white paper**

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Does the white paper support deep-water well expansion on Prince Edward Island?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the white paper does is basically explain the situation of the water system on Prince Edward Island, how important it is for life-sustaining measures, how important it is to our ecosystems.

We anticipate and expect and fully encourage discussion on all aspects of the water system on Prince Edward Island as we deal with it today and as we go forward for many years into the future.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip for a question.

### **Doctors in Souris**

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the health minister. Our community recently lost a doctor who relocated, leaving us with only two doctors. Minister, can you give us an update on where we are with bringing new doctors into the community?

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

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

Yes, we do have a complement of four physicians in the Souris and outlying areas. Currently, we have three physicians that have been practicing and we've had a lot of success in that continuity of care by those three physicians. We also have a nurse practitioner, and we have a very unique

collaborative model that is doing some really unique health care service delivery.

My understanding is that one of those physicians has indicated that they will be leaving their assignment or their role and moving on. We do have a short-term locum coming in to backfill that third position. Meanwhile, we are continuing to recruit for the fourth, but my understanding right now, and we had this discussion with the Member from Souris-Elmira, is that to my knowledge we have nobody currently sitting on the registry in the Souris area. But we very much are committed to making sure that we provide quality health care services in all communities across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was talking to the minister about the registry and he said he was doing an impact study to see who was on the registry and who was not on the registry.

I'll let the minister know we don't have four doctors. We have two full-time doctors. You have a locum and you have a summer student. That's what you have for four doctors. There are two full-time doctors.

Minister, what directions and effort have you taken to fill these doctor vacancies as soon as possible?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Thank you very much.

As I indicated, we had three family physicians practicing with a nurse practitioner. One physician has decided that he would be leaving the Souris area. We have a locum, which will be a short-term backfill to support the other two physicians, and the nurse practitioner in the community.

What I did say, in respect to the patient registry, that to our knowledge we have nobody on the patient registry waiting for access to a family physician. I did indicate for the Member from Souris-Elmira that

anyone in his community or in that area of the province that is looking for a family physician, to make sure that they contact the patient registry and make sure that they are on that registry to give us an indication of the needs in the community.

What I did say in respect to – it wasn't an impact analysis – I was talking about – currently there's a complement, and the complement is the structure that was built in 1993 of how we position based on population and needs in the province. That complement is being reviewed. It was last done in 1993 to look at currently where our populations are and where the shifts have gone to allow us to better understand where the current needs are in respect to making sure that we get the best utilization of all our physicians in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the Opposition Whip, final question.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of health: Is this going to be one of your top priorities, bringing two physicians into the Souris hospital?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) in O'Leary.

**Mr. Aylward:** It was a campaign promise.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct).

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

I remember, we go way back to 2007, when we had the opportunity and the privilege to –

**Leader of the Opposition:** A doctor for every Islander.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Currie:** – take this opportunity to govern this great province.

I remember very clearly spending a lot of time that summer where we were on the brink of actually closing almost all of the services because we inherited a structure where there were almost no family physicians in the community of Souris-Elmira.

I am very committed. If you look at the commitments that we've made and you look at the number of family physicians that we've increased since 2007, if you look at the access, we have over 95% of Islanders that do have access to a family physician. We're ramping up the number of nurse practitioners from two up to 20 to make sure that we continue to build primary health care, and we're very committed to making sure that we provide good access to communities for physicians across Prince Edward Island.

We have five residency students that are graduating – four which have committed – and we will continue to make sure that we are filling our physician vacancies as quickly and as efficiently as we possibly can to make sure that Islanders have the best quality access to health care in this province.

Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Statements by Ministers

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

#### **Watershed Strategy**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of the provincial government to endorse the new Prince Edward Island Watershed Strategy.

The PEI Watershed Strategy provides a roadmap for us going forward as we work to improve watershed management across the province. It will ensure meaningful watershed enhancement and protection.

The strategy is a result of a strong partnership between the Island's Watershed Alliance and the provincial government.

I want to thank the committee members who worked hard on the development of this

strategy to ensure it will be an effective resource in the future of watershed planning.

The strategy is intended to be a guide for individuals, community groups, businesses and government agencies who are involved with the conservation and restoration of watersheds. It outlines how government and watershed groups will work together towards the achievement of noted long-term and short-term goals related to Island watersheds and presents collective responsibilities of action moving forward.

Objectives of the strategy include ensuring watersheds provide sustainable quantities of clean, safe water; enhancing watershed ecosystems; increasing capacity of individuals, organizations and industries to take responsibility for protecting and managing watersheds and ecosystems; enhancing partnerships to empower engagement on watershed management; and increasing public awareness.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize some special guests that are with us in the gallery today. With us we have Shawn Hill, the executive director of the Watershed Alliance; Cathy Corrigan, board member representing central PEI; Fred Cheverie, watershed coordinator at Souris and Area Branch; Jackie Bourgeois, executive director at Southeast Environmental Association; and Angela Douglas, watershed coordinator at Hillsborough and Area Watershed Co-op.

I look forward to continuing to work with the watershed groups in our province and supporting their valuable work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is truly a great statement. It is excellent to see so many representatives here today. I think, as we heard in the Speech From the Throne, this is a great example of collaboration of where we can move forward together and make this Island truly better for everyone.

Water is, probably next to people, our greatest resource. You could argue that chicken and egg, without the water you might not have the people, I suppose.

But thank you, minister, for that excellent statement, and thank you again for coming here today.

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

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

On Prince Edward Island so much – our communities are held together by volunteers, whether that be the natural community in this case or our social communities in our villages and towns and in our cities. I think there's no organization on Prince Edward Island for which you get a better return on your tax dollar than the watershed committees. They do unbelievable work. Islanders love their rivers, and with good reason. Our rivers are quite literally the lifeline of our communities, whether they be natural or human built.

I absolutely commend and applaud their work and I'm glad that the government continues to support this. Again, the volunteers in Prince Edward Island communities are what keep this province going to a large extent, so thank you for this.

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

### **Loan Write-Offs**

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government believes transparency and accountability are crucial to open and effective governance.

Recently, as members know, the Auditor General noted that write-offs of amounts owing to government were not being authorized at consistent levels inside government.

As minister responsible for Economic Development and Tourism, I committed in this Assembly to bringing forward changes.

Our government is committed to action and transparency.

Islanders expect and deserve insight into government's decision-making processes. Effective today, all future loan write-offs and cancellations of debt will require Cabinet approval.

This is an immediate step this government will make to ensure loan write-offs are more transparent.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacDonald:** Proactive disclosure of the names of companies that have defaulted on debts is not possible without legislative change.

Our government will be introducing changes to legislation in this Assembly for proactive disclosure of the companies whose loans are being written off, and the value of those loans at the time of the write-off. The legislation will be introduced in the fall session.

By requiring Cabinet approval and changing legislation to proceed with proactive disclosure, we are making our government more accountable to the people of Prince Edward Island.

Government lending programs are vital for our small and large businesses across this province. Our programs help businesses successfully get off the ground, or expand their operations. These programs have a direct impact on employment and they help increase our exports, which reached \$1 billion for the first time ever in 2014.

As important as these programs are, it is equally important that we provide Islanders with the best information possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, that's great news, and I'm sure Islanders are very happy to hear that. Obviously that's been a big issue over the last few years in peoples' minds and the taxpayers' dollars, so hats off to you for that.

These programs are beneficial for striving business on PEI, so hopefully going through Cabinet we can really focus on the businesses in need and strive the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Indeed, this is great news. We had a promise of openness and transparency. This seems like a really big step in that direction so I just want to echo what the hon. member there said, and thank you for this.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Prince Edward Island Watershed Strategy and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table Orders in Council EC2015-90 and EC2015-295 which is being reissued, pursuant to section 5(1) of the *Public Departments Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Government House Leader, 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:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Risk Management and Insurance Annual Report for 2013-2014 for the period ending March 31, 2014 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

**Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Premier, that the 1<sup>st</sup> order of the day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No.1, adjourned debate on the draft address. It was adjourned by the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Speaker:** We will now call on the hon. Leader of the Third Party to continue with speaking to the Speech From the Throne.

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

Yesterday I outlined going back over 150 years some of the traditions surrounding this House and of politics in general. I noted the family lineage that I have to this House and this province, my great-great-grandfather George Brown, who came here as part of the delegation from the Upper Canadians who were here for the Charlottetown Conference in 1864, and I talked about how the nobility and the selflessness that was displayed by some of those men back 150 years ago has largely become absent in contemporary politics.

I think we have an opportunity to turn that around.

I finished yesterday by reiterating the opening lines of the first ever speech that I

gave as a Green Party candidate over 20 years ago, never imagining it would make its way into a Hansard at some point, never mind twice, so I'm going to reiterate that now. It's rather sombre but it went like this:

“Future generations will look back at the decades we are now living in, and they will call them the crazy years. That time when humanity, with full knowledge of the consequences of their actions, carried out the systematic destruction of their only home, planet Earth.”

While we have done some impressive things, and of course I am appreciative of many of the accomplishments of the last 50 years, our conveniences and our comforts have come at times at great cost.

I believe it is time for us to re-evaluate our goals and priorities. We do not need more stuff, we need more compassion, we need more equality, we need more gratitude, we need more contentment. It will be one of my goals in this session to offer alternative narratives to which we can subscribe and aspire. Island traditions are rooted in community values and material modesty.

We know that happiness can be grasped without striving for great affluence or to outdo our neighbours, and to a larger extent than most of the rest North America, we have not bought into the rat race. It is one of the things that makes PEI so lovely, and it's in many respects the main reason my family and I moved here 15 years ago. PEI is not like the rest of the world, and in our uniqueness lies the beauty and the magic of Prince Edward Island.

The more we try to emulate everywhere else, to become like the rest of the world, the more we lose the essence of Prince Edward Island and of what matters most to Islanders. Our generation can still choose a different path. One that is better suited to our unique attributes here on PEI. We have the gift of jurisdiction, we are an Island, we have good soil, and rainfall and weather patterns that it appears in the face of climate change will allow us to continue to be the “Garden of the Gulf” long into the future. We have a culture that respects the land and we have knowledge to develop a thriving, sustainable economy here that respects the land.

In short, we can still choose the future we prefer, one that will provide for Islanders and which will protect the precious things that make PEI so special.

There was much said in the throne speech about our children, and rightly so. One of the other things I said in that maiden speech as a politician 25 years ago was this: I want to be able to look my children in the eye 20 years from now – in other words today – and to tell them that I did everything I could to create a secure future for them where they could live out their lives in fulfilling and meaningful ways.

I, like most parents, care deeply about what sort of world my children will inherit. We, as legislators, are tasked with making decisions for our community that will create the best opportunities for our children to lead successful and content lives.

I like to think of politics as succession planning on a grand scale. This requires, of course, long-term planning. But unfortunately, politics has become increasingly focused on the short-term, or perhaps more accurately, on the next term. The next term in office.

Sometimes an administration will make a bold and/or responsible decision. But more often than not policy is viewed primarily through the lens of winning the next election. When we craft our platforms and base decisions in this way, all too often the welfare of our children and of the world and planet that they will inherit takes a back seat or it gets ignored entirely.

I will support and promote policy which not only serves Islanders here today but will also ensure that our children and their children have the best possible environment in which to flourish.

We as legislators can accomplish this by, for example, crafting a water act that ensures a consistent quality and quantity of water for generations to come, by building communities across this province that offer all the amenities necessary to attract and keep young families, and by developing an economy that is sustainable and prosperous in the long term. We owe this to our children and our grandchildren.

I have viewed the Speech From the Throne through seven generations, from my great-great grandfather to our grandchildren. There is a tradition in some Native cultures to make all decisions with a view to how they will affect the seventh generation ahead. We would do well to emulate this.

I deeply believe that we can, with the right approach, create a place which can be a beacon of sustainability and hope in a rapidly changing and troubled world.

I am once again honoured and humbled to be a member of this Legislature, and I invite all members to join me in a sincere and a concerted effort to make Islanders proud, once again, of their politicians.

May we always remember what a critical job we have to do together and how privileged we are to have an opportunity to choose a future for Prince Edward Island which is at once bold, distinctive and beautiful.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** We will now go to the Hon. Premier to address the Speech From the Throne.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise in this House to speak in response to the Speech From the Throne that opened the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 65<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

In personal terms, it has great meaning to be here as a member of this Legislative Assembly to represent my home district of York-Oyster Bed where I was born and grew up and live today.

I thank the fine people of York-Oyster Bed who supported me in the election as well as those who opted to vote for others. Ours is a democratic system. On that note, I'm deeply appreciative of the excellent and good-natured team that worked hard and successfully on my campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your selection as Speaker. We are in good hands. I extend a sincere thank you to our three

colleagues who put their names forward in the vote to select a Speaker. This was an open and democratic process that speaks well of the spirit of collaboration and openness that I hope and trust will underpin the work of this House.

I firmly believe that this hope and trust are shared by the people of Prince Edward Island who sent us here. I note that we proceeded from the reading of the Speech From the Throne to a Speaker's Reception that was the best attended in many years.

I take that to be an indication of the optimism that the people have for what we will be able to accomplish in this Assembly.

I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on pulling off that fine reception together on such short notice considering that you had only been in your role less than an hour.

This, of course, reminds me that we are supported in this Legislative Assembly by an excellent, dedicated, and hardworking professional team. We know that they have worked diligently for months leading up to this session, notably to plan and implement the move of our Legislative Assembly to its new location in the Coles Building. We are very thankful for that as we are for the work that the Clerk and the staff do to ensure the smooth running of this Legislature on a daily basis.

As is true for many of the greatest things about our Island province, the team here at the Legislative Assembly proves that small can be big and nimble. And I might add to that phrase, good-natured.

On that note, I was struck when the Alberta legislature opened earlier this week by the fact that government and opposition members in Alberta enter and exit the legislative building through separate entrances. Things are different here, not just in scale but in the expectations of our community.

The throne speech concluded with the words: "Through their active participation in voting, the citizens of Prince Edward Island have underlined the importance of this Assembly... They rightly expect that the seriousness of attention and tone that

emanates from your work will honour them."

This phrase was picked up by regional columnist Russell Wangersky who wrote in the Transcontinental newspapers that our Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly might indeed be setting a different standard. In Wangersky's words, the closing request of our Speech From the Throne was, quote: "one that every provincial legislature should consider."

The higher standard or better nature which Wangersky considered praiseworthy was generously demonstrated by the excellent addresses offered by hon. Members from Charlottetown-Brighton and Summerside-St. Eleanors in moving and seconding the address in response to the Speech From the Throne. I was enormously proud of our recently elected colleagues and of our party in government to have two such motivated, thoughtful and relevant opening speeches in the throne speech debate. The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment followed with a compelling speech. All three of them stuck to the point and were respectful of the time and opportunity offered to them and by the opportunity to speak.

The Leader of the Opposition, on the other hand, got off to a shaky start in his remarks. He didn't get past the cover of the Speech From the Throne before making his first mistake. He misidentified the photo. If he had consulted with his caucus colleagues, the well-known Island scene would be familiar to the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque or to people who know about the considerable tourism economy that has developed around the works of L.M. Montgomery. That scene, of course, is from Parks Corner. Instead of taking his facts, the Leader of the Opposition chose to make an unfounded assertion, the first of many in his extensive response of the Speech From the Throne.

The remarks of the hon. Leader of the Third Party, whom I have the privilege to follow, gave serious consideration to the content of the Speech From the Throne and honoured our purpose in being here as legislators and public servants.

A Speech From the Throne, notably a

speech that opens a new General Assembly following an election, is a substantive exercise. It sets the tone, and offers a high-level road map, for the forthcoming legislative session and for the four-year mandate that we have been elected to serve.

It is natural and expected that the 2015 Speech From the Throne would outline how our government will follow through on and implement the policies and priorities outlined in the course of the recent election campaign. We were pleased that the reaction of discerning observers was that the speech had achieved this goal and that commentators were overwhelmingly favourable in their response to the speech.

The Speech From the Throne is organized around three themes, not surprisingly: engagement, people and communities, and prosperity.

Engagement has been very much on our minds since we were sworn in as a government in February. Openness and transparency are prominent commitments of our government as reflected in the Speech From the Throne.

We have heard from many Islanders that they like what they see in the initiatives that have been taken by our government to date, addressing conflict of interest for senior officials and political advisors, post-employment restrictions, and more extensive and automatic disclosure of expenses.

We have created a new commissioner of ethics and integrity and have been leading by example and living within our means.

The Speech From the Throne promises a White Paper on Democratic Renewal. In mapping our this course, it appears that Prince Edward Island is obviously onto something, as they say, given that this same language is used prominently in Alberta's recent speech from the throne, and that these issues appear likely to be front and centre in the upcoming federal election. As announced in the Speech From the Throne, this white paper will be turned over to a special committee of the legislature for consideration and consultation. That is likely to be, and almost certain to be, a lively and engaged process which we hope will produce a result that will build on the

considerable achievement that more than 86% of Islanders cast a ballot in the recent election. This level of voter turnout is something of which we can all be proud, not least because it reinforces what many commentators said about the tenor of the election campaign.

Our commitment to engagement extends to relations with other levels of government, notably the local and municipal governments and to our relations with First Nations. It extends to a more open and engaged policy process. We are committed to more open government and to greater transparency and collaboration. The throne speech announces that we will develop a policy, a whistleblower protection. This will go beyond offering a process and protections to those who believe that government can do better. It will promote a positive culture of a public service that acts on its classical professional duty to speak truth to power. Our government will pursue this objective through policy because we believe that properly articulated policies that embrace and implement public service values are the proper vehicle to promote this positive culture.

I have said previously in this House that our government believes that there are two primary vehicles through which we must strive to achieve good government: the Legislative Assembly and the executive branch. The latter consists of a professional public service under the political leadership of Executive Council which is, in turn, answerable to the legislature. As I reflect on where we stand at the beginning of the 65th General Assembly, I am mindful of just how precious is this place, Prince Edward Island, and just how valuable is our time. We work with scarce resources, as we will learn about in greater detail with the presentation of the budget.

We work with the reality that Prince Edward Island is not in the position to dictate terms to the rest of the world or to the rest of Canada. What we achieve will be determined by our talent, by our shared successes, and by attention to priorities, and by our collaboration and consorted efforts. We must work together with the aim of putting Prince Edward Island on the map and with the shared knowledge that it won't be easy.



While the scarcity of financial resources is a significant factor that we must grapple with in our province, an even more compelling challenge is our demographics. It is well known that we have an aging population, and that is true for Canada as a whole, and it is even more immediately concerning for our province and region. We have particular challenges in terms of serving the needs of our total population, notably when it comes to health care. In a word, we must rejuvenate. For this reason, we have a three-part commitment to recruit, retain, and repatriate. These comprise our population strategy.

At the core of our commitment to prosperity is the view that we must build on our successes starting with our province's historic strength in the resource and food-based sectors. While there have been comments in this House suggesting that the Speech From the Throne failed to mention agriculture and fisheries, I note that there are three full paragraphs on page 12 following the heading: The Strength to Succeed. That, indeed, is our initiative in the area of prosperity and building on our successes is centered on our primary industries and our reputation for producing world-class food. To achieve our prosperity goals we must do a better job of selling our high-quality products and services. To this end, we will develop Sales Force PEI and build a national and international brand as Canada's Food Island.

We will continue to develop a talented and dedicated workforce that serves us well as a factor of success at a competitive advantage. With this in mind, we have created a Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning to focus on workforce development from every aspect. Our commitment to prosperity includes what the throne speech refers to as: The Environment to Succeed. We embrace Prince Edward Island's, quote, "historic awareness of and desire to protect our natural environment." The Speech from the Throne notes that the two most important physical resources we have on Prince Edward Island are our land and our water, and with that in view we have created a dedicated ministry of Communities, Land and Environment. Key initiatives will include support for watershed groups, a concerted effort on land use planning, and a new water act.

While the Speech from the Throne does not reference climate change in so many words, as the Leader of the Third Party rightly pointed out yesterday, we openly acknowledge the seriousness and reality of climate change. The Speech From the Throne speaks of our concern for coastal erosion. Rising sea levels may be the most immediate and threatening manifestation of a changing global climate for our province. While we can be proud that almost 50% of our electrical generation is emission free, with 30% from wind at peak periods and almost 20% from Point Lepreau, this does not take away from our obligation to pursue all possible forms of renewable, emission-free energy, notably with a view to meeting the commitments that have been made as recently as this past week at the G7 meetings.

I might say, speaking as I did earlier of time, that 2050 may sound like it's a long time away, but it's barely 34 years, and for that matter, even if we take it out to the end of the century, we're talking today about building back-up electrical generating capacity that will live through most of that period, and we still have some very big issues to square up to in terms of the ability to generate emission-free electricity and other forms of energy that will ensure our continued sustainability and prosperity as a province.

As an Island we understand our vulnerability, and we were dramatically reminded of that essential fragility by the extreme rain storms that we suffered on 10 December 2014. We were further reminded of them, and I'm sure will be again when we see the budget, of the direct expense that's involved in responding to or mitigating events that can hit us on short notice and in a very short period of time. The Speech From the Throne includes numerous commitments to serve Islanders through improved health care, a stronger continuum of family and human services, continued priority for education and strength in communities. We are committed to sustained renewal in all parts of our province, and I note that the Speech from the Throne specifically promises to address, quote, "...the active development of rural Prince Edward Island..."

We conclude by recognizing that we have, quote, "...many opportunities ahead of us, and much work to do to provide Islanders with every chance to succeed as individuals, as families, and as communities." The overriding commitment and standard embraced by the Speech From the Throne is to put Prince Edward Island on the map, and we mean this in an economic sense, in a social sense, and in terms of our pride and identity in achievement collectively as a province. I am confident that this is a goal and a standard of excellence embraced by all members of this Assembly.

It has been heartening to listen to the words of recently elected colleagues from all parties in their speeches in response to the Speech From the Throne. This is a new General Assembly, our 65th. It is a time for optimism and a time for serious endeavour. I am proud and privileged to serve as our Premier. I am honoured to serve in this Chamber with dedicated colleagues from all parties, and I look forward to a productive and meaningful 1<sup>st</sup> Session of this 65th General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

Next speaking to the Speech from the Throne will be the hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

Just before I begin my response to the throne speech, I would just like to make a quick comment with regards to the Premier's response that we just heard.

Obviously, Mr. Premier, you're a new Premier. I congratulate you on your election and being named the Premier of Prince Edward Island. There will be times when we question what we read in the throne speech.

Mr. Premier, I've been fortunate to have represented the great community of Stratford-Kinlock for four short years for my first term. During that time I did have the opportunity to read, review, and respond to many throne speeches. I have to say, Mr.

Premier, I was not always satisfied with the eventual outcome of what the throne speech laid out and the results that we did see moving forward.

However, I'm here today to give you the benefit of the doubt, encourage you to do the right thing for all Islanders, and I truly hope and I trust that what I read here is factual and that we will be moving forward for the benefit of all Islanders, not just a few.

It's certainly an honor to rise today to reply to the Speech From the Throne and to address this Chamber once again on behalf of my constituents from the beautiful District of Stratford-Kinlock. I am honored that they have put their faith and trust in me to represent them once again in this Chamber. I humbly express my thanks.

I also want to take the opportunity to extend my congratulations to you, our new Speaker. I have a feeling that you may have your work cut out for you, but having served with you in various committees as chair, I am sure that you are up to meeting the challenge. I know for a fact that you will excel in your new duties. I wish to acknowledge, as I said, the presence of our new Premier and welcome to this Legislative Assembly.

I also wish to extend a special welcome to the hon. Leader of the Green Party and wish him well in his new position as Leader of the Third Party. I look forward to participating in debates with him in this House and as representatives for the people of our province. His input will be greatly appreciated. I also want to extend greetings to all former members of this Legislative Assembly and offer best wishes to our newly elected MLAs as they begin their new careers in public service.

The legislative process can be intimidating at times, but it is a rewarding career and a real privilege to take part in the process of government and hopefully help to make life a little better for our residents.

The community of Stratford is one of the fastest growing communities in our province, having experienced growth rates of over 22 % in just a few short years. In fact, just a few years ago we were actually the second fastest growing community in all

of Atlantic Canada, only behind Dieppe, New Brunswick.

It is bounded by Fullerton's Marsh, the Hillsborough River, the greater Charlottetown Harbour, the Hillsborough Bay, and its beautiful water views make it a very attractive location to raise a family and build a life. Today roughly 9,000 residents call it home.

Stratford has become the favorite location for many of our new immigrants to locate and invest in. We are in the process of growing our commercial core, and our business park is attracting more and more businesses each year.

Our waterfront should be a showcase of our community, but unfortunately the location of our lagoon at the entrance to our town is stifling development and is not an attractive attribute for our waterfront. I believe it's time for Stratford, in cooperation with this government, the city of Charlottetown, and the Charlottetown Area Development Corporation, to sit down and try to come up with a solution. It has to be an immediate priority, and as this town's MLA, I will be driving this issue until something is done. I would hope that any infrastructure funding available to the community will go towards solving this serious problem for my constituents.

Another prominent issue on my list of priorities is a realignment of the Trans-Canada Highway to include a left-hand turn lane off the main highway and onto the Kinlock Road. A left-hand turn would help to reduce the high number of accidents at this intersection and keep traffic from building up across the bridge and into the Charlottetown side of the bridge. Close to 40,000 vehicles travel this route daily. This is a matter of safety and I am sure our new Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy minister will want to make it one of her priorities.

Everyone today is talking about the need for exercise, yet, according to our Chief Health Officer, Islanders 65 years of age and older lag behind Canadians in cognition, hearing, and physical activity during leisure time, and Islanders 50 to 64 years of age were less likely than Canadians to have a healthy body mass index. It is especially concerning that

60% of Islanders – 18 years of age and older – are either overweight or obese.

I've heard time and time again from our constituents – we've seen it in the surveys the town of Stratford conducts with the residents – that there is a real need for a safe pedestrian access across the Hillsborough Bridge to Charlottetown. We know for a fact that many residents of Stratford-Kinnock would very much like to have the opportunity to either walk or bicycle to work or to activities in Charlottetown and return home in a safe manner as well.

I talked about it here in the House before. There are, I think, some very practical solutions to making this a reality. One would be simply to eliminate the sidewalk on one side of the bridge, move the four lanes over, take the existing sidewalk, double it with the one that you eliminated, put jersey barriers across and you would have a safe pedestrian walkway and pedway.

There are many issues that we could talk about today, not only in Stratford, but all of Prince Edward Island. I'm going to touch on a few more with regards to in particular our seniors, and how many of them would like to remain in their own homes, but they are finding costs of maintaining their properties is eating into their retirement funding and they are being forced to sell and seek housing in a senior's residence. Unfortunately, seniors' residences are not easy to find and often the costs are very high.

As we all know, funding for the Seniors' Home Repair Program is pretty well gone the day that the new applications are accepted. We quite often hear it's like a lottery. I believe that if improvements were made to the provision of the Seniors' Home Repair Program and assistance could be provided so the residents could maintain their properties, both inside and out, many of our seniors would choose to remain in their own homes for a much longer period of time.

The Premier has indicated that government will increase funding for home repair and renovations for low-income Islanders and seniors and I applaud that. I look forward to seeing that commitment upheld and to the

details of how this program will be expanded.

I would note that the Premier stated during the announcement of his senior's platform in the recent election that his government will help seniors remain independent and close to family and friends. Again, we will be looking for those details to be unveiled as the session progresses.

Another major concern of the town of Stratford is the need for government to finally address the municipal funding formula. Stratford is experiencing a \$2 million per year shortfall as the result of changes to the system. Our municipalities have been negotiating and in discussions with government since 2008 when the province first changed the funding formula for municipalities.

Again, the Premier addresses this in the throne speech. But I go back to my opening comments that I want to believe you, I want to work with you, I want to trust you, but you have to show me something because my past experience of the last four years has not given me the ability to trust government at this time.

It is now six years later, and communities like Stratford are finding it difficult to keep up with their budgetary commitments. It is time government stopped stalling and developed a new funding formula based on the previous tax credit formula. The Premier told the Federation of Municipalities during the election campaign that these talks will begin soon, but I believe the time for talk is over, it's now time for action.

I would remind the Premier, as well, that he has made a commitment for a new municipalities act to be tabled in the legislature this fall or in the spring of 2016. Our communities have heard enough of the double talk. Our residents pay some of the highest municipal and property taxes in this province. Our municipalities provide services like police and sewer and road repairs. They need this money to provide those services.

Many of my constituents work for governments, both federal and provincial. Just like their rural counterparts they are suffering from rising costs, high taxes and

an erosion of their disposable income. This government needs to begin now the serious job of reviewing our current tax system to ensure that our economy remains sustainable into the future.

My constituents, like all Islanders, are still paying too much for electricity and gas, and we hear that daily.

As to the throne speech itself, I am pleased that the Premier appears to be taking the issue of accountability seriously. Islanders will no longer tolerate a government that has no regard for their tax dollars and no regard for laws such as the *Financial Administration Act* which were put in place to ensure that the checks and balances are in place regarding loan write-offs and cancellations. This is an issue my caucus will be speaking to further during the session.

Prince Edward Islanders have seen millions of dollars squandered on lotteries and liquor stores. They have not had their questions answered about the Provincial Nominee Program or the e-gaming scheme and now the total failure of GeoSweep, resulting in Islanders being on the hook for upwards of \$4.8 million. Islanders simply want answers, and they want accountability, and as I stated the other day, Islanders know that they have to pay taxes in order to receive services. But all they're asking for is for their tax dollars to be handled with respect.

The throne speech also talks about a new era of engagement. Again, Islanders will be looking forward to consultation and discussions on the issues that affect them. They will not tolerate a government that closes their hospitals, shuts down elected school boards, closes schools and puts forth major changes to the health care system without consultation with their communities and front-line workers. Your throne speech calls it a new era of engagement. Let's hope so.

Again, I was happy to see in the document mention of whistleblower policy. I believe that our civil service employees should not fear for their jobs when they point out wrongdoing in government. We cannot have accountability in government if there is a climate of fear hanging over the workers. It will also be refreshing to see improvements

made to the freedom of information legislation. I believe we are all aware of the need for a strengthening of our conflict of interest legislation.

The throne speech commitment of a balanced budget in 2016-2017 will certainly be a challenge for a government that has been in power since 2007 and never came close to balancing the books. Islanders will be watching with great interest to see how the Premier brings this to fruition.

The throne speech suggests that one of the major components will be increasing revenues through increased trade and exports. Again, this government has not had a solid record on this front but we certainly wish for success.

The throne speech also indicates that government will be looking to reduce overall spending with a commitment to fairness and in protecting the most vulnerable in our population. I do hope the Premier will keep in mind that many of our government departments have already been slashed and are working short staffed. Many of our health care workers and teachers are suffering the strain of staff shortages in many areas. We just talked about it here a few days ago where we have upwards of 2,000 Islanders waiting for ultrasounds. We only have to look to our classrooms and the size of our teacher-student ratios. They're the highest in many parts of Canada.

The Speech From the Throne makes many promises for new programs and policies. We have heard many promises in the past, like a doctor for every Islander, like the closure of hospital emergency facilities is only temporary. The list of broken promises is very long.

The new government's plan includes tabling a White Paper on Democratic Renewal that will serve as a catalyst to further engage Islanders in the democratic process. Any debate that focuses on the democratic processes of government I believe is worthy. It serves the purpose of ensuring that we do not take for granted the freedoms we hold so dear, and it ensures that our current process of government serves the best interests of not just the political parties involved, but the people and the process of governance.

Certainly I applaud many initiatives in this document, but again, as I said before, the proof will be in the details.

The expansion of the role of our paramedics into our seniors' facilities is worthy of further consideration. However, I believe it is necessary to review this carefully to ensure that the response to emergency needs is not diminished and that the role of our home care professionals is not eroded.

Initiating an aggressive prospecting and sales strategy through Sales Force PEI. I will look forward to seeing this process unfold and to seeing an expansion of markets for our products.

Actively advancing Prince Edward Island as Canada's Food Island. We only have to look at many of our products here on the Island, and we often hear stories of people that travel the world and are extremely proud when they look on a menu at a restaurant, be it in California or locations in Europe or wherever, that they see Malpeque oysters on the menu or Prince Edward Island mussels, Atlantic lobster. Prince Edward Island is certainly gaining a reputation for its fine dining with the foodies of the world, and although I do not have the details of this program, if it can support the growth and production of our tourism industries and our agriculture industry, I believe it will be worthy of support.

As for the development of a poverty strategy, I would hope that this initiative will be much more comprehensive than in the past. Our PC caucus has been calling for such a strategy for some years now. I commend the efforts of organizations such as the Women's Network, who released their Paths to Prosperity, and the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, as well as groups such as ALERT and many others, who have tried to have made great efforts to have this issue addressed by this government. The strategies released previously by government were lacking in detail and not what is needed to deal with the needs of Islanders who are living below the poverty line and forced to use food banks to meet their food requirements.

I was pleased to see that the throne speech indicates that government will be launching a new youth mental health unit in

Charlottetown. Our PC caucus has been pressuring government on the subject of youth addictions for the past eight years and we are happy to see that finally government is beginning to respond and take this issue seriously. We brought forward several motions calling for a youth addictions facility and for additional beds to deal with addictions at the existing addiction facility.

We have tabled in the House this session a motion calling for a pilot program to try and determine alternative and more holistic methods of dealing with those who commit crimes in order to support their addictions. I believe that unless we treat the addiction we will never get rid of the crime.

There is much to be done to fix what is broken in our province, to right the wrongs of the past and to move our province in a new direction. Today, hopefully we are taking some first steps. Throne speeches are often big on words and short on action. We will be holding this government to account for its throne speech and its promises. We will be examining closely the details and ensuring that all these words are acted upon.

Mr. Speaker, that is my promise.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Next speaking to the Speech From the Throne will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As has been said many times, it really is my privilege and honour to be here in the House and to speak to the Speech From the Throne with my esteemed colleagues here.

Sometimes I have to pinch myself, I think I might be dreaming here, actually sitting here as the representative of District 18 Rustico-Emerald, that people have put a lot of faith in us as MLAs, and I for one don't take that very lightly.

I do want to thank the people of District 18 Rustico-Emerald, all who voted, again, regardless of party. I think the Premier had

alluded to that as well just recently, and the democratic process is really truly a wonderful thing, and it's amazing how things work out.

I especially want to thank all of the people who worked so hard, of course, on my campaign team. Really in the end, as I think we all know, it's not about us as individuals in the end, it's really us as representatives of the people who helped get us elected and so I will do my best to represent them here in this House.

I just wanted to say that on my first read through the Speech From the Throne I was very encouraged at what it had to say, and I still am. I like the areas it covered. I think that, as we have been criticized in some of our motions here in the House so far, we've kind of put some spin into our motions, a word here or a word there that perhaps the government hasn't liked and so they haven't been voted for some motions.

I think for the most part the Speech From the Throne is good, but there has been spin in there as well. For example, if we look at where it talks about the GDP of PEI increasing from 4.62 billion in 2007 to 5.79 billion in 2013, that's an increase of 1.17 billion.

But we have to realize during that same time period the debt was doubled as well and it was increased by \$1 billion. So if you look at the GDP going up by 1.17 billion, really we're talking about a net increase of 170,000. This is with the Speech From the Throne. I'm not sure we should look back at the past from 2007 to 2013.

Especially what I really like in the Speech From the Throne is what it's saying: Looking Forward. One of the biggest issues at the door, I think the biggest issue right from the very beginning of the election, was trust. I went to many doors where people would barely let me in the door because they said: You're a politician. It doesn't matter how I vote, it doesn't matter what party, you're all a bunch of people that I don't trust. I won't use the other words that might have been used at the door.

So I think that everyone in this House has a big task to win that trust back. I do think that, in spirit, the Speech From the Throne

does address that. I think part of winning that trust back, the first step, is transparency and accountability. I was very encouraged today to hear the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism talk about how the numbers will be published, especially with the loan write-offs, and I'm really looking forward to seeing that come to fruition.

I think that when we heard the questions, talking again today, about what's happening with education. We heard the superintendent talk about the fact that she knows the numbers but she's not allowed to share them with her senior staff. That worries me, again, because I think that takes away from the transparency and accountability. I know that budgets have to be secret to a certain extent until they're published, but I think I would like to see that sort of transparency as well. So we're watching you closely from over here in opposition. That's our job, to make sure that transparency and accountability occurs so that trust is restored to the people.

Right next, after that, I would say when I was at the doors people were very concerned about the debt that our province is in, the fact that we're \$3 billion or so gross debt, \$2 billion net debt. I think that although the Speech From the Throne doesn't address that directly, it does talk about living within our means. I think that's a really fundamental thing that we have to look at.

We're definitely going to hold government to account on that front. I think that there are going to be some very tough decisions made and I hope that, as the government makes those tough decisions, they do that in a transparent and accountable way and don't try to spin it and pull the wool over Islanders' eyes, as it were.

I really believe that Islanders understand that we have to live within our means and they want to see a realistic strategy for reducing the debt. That really also comes back to the portion of the Speech From the Throne that talks about planning. I really like the fact that it does talk about a vision and a plan. I think that, as the Leader of the Third Party talked about, we need to look past the next election. We need to look out, perhaps as the Premier talked about as well, 50 years, maybe even into the next century. We have to have that sort of vision in place.

I would like to see a vision put in place for each area of government, perhaps the way we have the departments broken down right now, and I would like to see the vision developed at grassroots level. Then I would like to see short-term, medium, and long-term plans put in place, of course with the appropriate level of details at those levels. A long-term plan might not have as many details as a short-term, but with very specific and measurable goals. Then we wouldn't be starting from scratch every four years and wondering where we should go. It would be very clear. The people would have a way to hold government to account as well. I think if we set those visions we'd have a much better chance of achieving them. But I'm glad that the Speech From the Throne does talk about a clear plan to build on our history. I just would like to see it really specifically talk about that long-term, medium-term and short-term planning and specific goals and, as well, grassroots engagement to make that happen.

The other thing that I heard at the doors was jobs: We want meaningful jobs on Prince Edward Island, jobs that will give us enough money to live in a good fashion.

What struck me going from door to door the most was how you could go to one house that was large and people were successful with a couple of new cars in the driveways and next door you could go to a run-down home where people were just struggling to get by, and it was very obvious.

In those homes there were two types of people. There were people who really did feel defeated and then there were people who were living the life they wanted although they were living at possibly a poverty level.

The working poor is an issue on our Island. Again, I think that the Speech From the Throne does allude to that and I'm looking forward to see how the government does address that.

One thing that I did notice going to those doors, regardless of whether it was a household that had money or one that was poor, no one, to a person, wanted to leave the Island. Everyone wanted to be here. That's something that struck me, as a come-from-away myself, is almost everybody that

lives here on PEI is an Islander, really, by choice. They want to be here. Right? Yes.

I myself like to say when people ask me how things are going on Prince Edward Island: I'm living the dream. Because, really, Prince Edward Island is just such an amazing spot to live. Of course, I'm partial to District 18 Rustico-Emerald but it really is an incredible Island.

People are going to choose to live here regardless. I think it's up to us as MLAs, working within the government, to make sure that people don't have to live below the poverty line.

Moving on, another thing that came up time and time again – and this goes along with reducing debt – is prioritized spending. People really want to see their taxpayer dollars spent on things that matter to them and things that they understand. One of those things that, again was brought up time and time again were the roads and transportation in general.

People understand roads. They use them every day. It's intuitive whether a road is good or whether it's bad or whether it needs to be fixed. If there's an area that we need to actually spend more money on, I would say that based on feedback from the constituents of District 18, I think that we need to spend more on transportation and really fix up our roads. I'll bring that to the table today.

I know in the Speech From the Throne it does mention about investing in infrastructure. I think there's just a little wee sentence about that. But I would like to see a bigger plan put in place for how we're going to deal with transportation on the Island. I think that's where Islanders would like to see their money spent, honestly.

The other thing I found when I was going door to door was people weren't necessarily sure what programs government offered, especially seniors. The Member from Borden-Kinkora had mentioned the seniors that really needed to improve their housing. You had mentioned one lady in your district that had garbage bags in the ceiling. I saw similar things in my district. I won't go into that. They weren't sure what programs were available and how they applied for them. My campaign team did some research and we

came up with, I believe, what was that, about a 179-page PDF you could download from the website.

That wasn't very useful to most seniors in my district. So we distilled that down into a one-page handout with numbers for each area where they could get help. That's where I think we need to do a better job in government, is communicating what programs are available.

I know I have a constituent I'm working with right now applying for the Catastrophic Drug Plan. It was really unclear to her how that worked. I know that's been a challenge of government in communicating those things, but I believe the Speech From the Throne does talk about grassroots communication and getting that out. We really need to look at a strategy of how government programs are communicated into the districts. Frankly, I think often we don't use MLAs enough in that strategy.

For example, I was out at Stanley Bridge and, as you know, there's a new roundabout planned there. It was fairly controversial. It wasn't necessarily controversial because people don't like roundabouts – although there are people like that – it was controversial because people read in the newspaper that a roundabout was being tendered for their community. It's simply a matter of communication to fix that. Within incorporated areas it's a little more straightforward because you have a municipality structure in place where you can go and work with the town council, as it were, to figure out how to move forward. But in unincorporated areas I think it should be made clear what the MLA role is there and how they should work. Especially like in Stanley Bridge. It's a border of a municipality and an unincorporated area.

Communication is key and I'd love to see government clarify MLAs' roles in communicating with districts.

It talks, specifically within the areas of education and health in the throne speech, about setting up additional committees, I believe. I'm not sure if we need to have those sort of additional committees in place. I don't think it should be targeted only for education and health. I think it needs to go across the board and I would like to see



consultation at locations and times that people in the district can actually attend.

We've got a great infrastructure of community halls especially – I'll speak from experience in District 18. I would like to see government use those community halls and rent them out for these consultations, and I think that's how we should communicate with our constituents.

Another thing when it comes to jobs, I really believe small business is the way to grow. I do see some of that in the Speech From the Throne. A term that was introduced to me on the campaign trail by one of my constituents was the term micro-business. A small business, I mean by definition here in Canada, can go up to a few hundred employees kind of thing, but a micro-business is one-person, two-person operations. I think there's a really a huge opportunity for us to grow that type of business here on Prince Edward Island.

We've seen just recently in the news there are a couple of people who have come back from Alberta, I believe working with a seismology company, and they've been able to find synergies where they receive the data and they work on the data and then the data's prepared three hours later when their coworkers come to work out in Alberta, these sorts of things.

The province has been able to help them with office space and that sort of thing. I know I can speak from experience. As well as a business owner that works in the information and technology sector, I work remotely with a lot of clients that I've never met before face to face. We communicate over Skype, by telephone, emails, text and it's becoming a more and more accepted way to go.

What I would like to see to encourage business – the capital programs in place are good. I think that we need more programs for small amounts of capital instead of giving a million dollars to one company and kind of putting all your eggs into one basket. I would like to see for example, \$10,000 loans to 100 people, or \$50,000 loans to 20. My math may be a little bit off, but I think you get the point.

The other thing that I really like to see –

**Mr. LaVie:** It's all right, you're not alone.

**Mr. Trivers:** – are tax credits for businesses. I mentioned this earlier today. It rewards those who are successful because the more money you make, the more you get back in tax credits.

Going along with this micro-business idea, and I'm really thinking of bringing this forward as a private member's bill at some point in the future, are tax credits for sole proprietors. It would be a very simple. If you're a sole proprietor and you have revenue that's coming in from off-Island, then you get a credit for that revenue and you don't have to pay tax on it.

More about that in the future, but I think we need to focus on – and there's a huge opportunity. I love what it says in the throne speech about repatriation of Islanders and new immigrants. I think that's one area in this micro-business that we could really grow.

One thing, going back to the communications side, I did want to talk about again: engaging Islanders at grassroots and how we can get new ideas on the floor. I just put together – and this was suggested by a constituent of mine, Sandra Skeffington. She said: Why don't we use the whatifPEI hashtag on Facebook and Twitter to collect new ideas? I thought that was a great idea. It hasn't really taken off quite yet but I'm hoping it will soon.

I also purchased the whatifpei.ca and whatifpei.com domains. You can go there today – there's not a lot yet – but I would encourage you to talk with your constituents and get them to use that hashtag whatifPEI to communicate some of their ideas to us here in government.

I just wanted to say again in closing my response to the Speech From the Throne that I am very encouraged by both the tone of the Speech From the Throne and the content. It's very high level, of course, as it would have to be. The devil is in the details, as the saying goes, and there is a great quote by Albert Einstein. He says: "In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice they are not."

I look forward to sitting here in opposition, and believe me, I'll do my best to hold your feet to the fire as government to see how you will implement what's in the Speech From the Throne and do it successfully for the betterment of this Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Next speaking to the throne speech will be the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my distinct pleasure to rise in the House today to respond to the Speech From the Throne. It's taken me a little while to get here. I said to a number of people, when you're swimming against the tide sometimes it takes a little bit longer, but I'm thrilled to be here. I want to thank everyone in District 4 for putting their vote of confidence in me, for all my volunteers and hard workers. We had a long winter and I really want to thank them for all their hard work.

To my family, my husband Russ, and my grown children, as everyone in the House knows, if you have grown children, when you wear this hat, they wear it too and they have to be on side. I want to thank everyone for all their help.

Each member in this Assembly has a unique district with different demands and needs. District 4 Belfast-Murray River is a very rural district comprising two small villages and many unique communities. We are one of the largest geographical districts on the Island. I was told by one of the road supervisors we have the most roads on PEI in our district, so that's a heads-up to the minister of transportation.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Ms. Compton:** Yeah, we'll have to measure.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct).

**Ms. Compton:** Yeah, that's right.

District 4 runs from the south side of the Newtown Road along the Trans-Canada to Wood Islands; along the Shore Road to Guernsey Cove through Murray Harbour; Murray River; Murray Harbour North and Cambridge; Peters Road through Caledonia; the Murray Harbour Road, through the hills, and back to the Newtown Road, and everything in the middle. It takes me about 35 minutes from the time I leave my house to get to the other end of the district.

While I was reading through the Speech From the Throne for the second or third time I highlighted the comments, or the lack thereof, that are a concern to everyone in District 4.

First, before I bring up those concerns, I want to make an observation, and it's come to the forefront since the House has been sitting. In the Speech From the Throne, and I quote: "From us, as elected representatives, Islanders expect serious and civil debate of their concerns. We owe them the very best of our energy, our commitment, and our professionalism over the next four years."

I believe that all previous MLAs have given their best and that we as elected officials strive to do so as well. That goes without saying.

Premier, I do have an issue of the tenor in government. The comment you made during the election campaign that speaks to that quote as well. You stated: It was the tenor of government that kept women from putting their name forward to run as a candidate. I would venture a guess that any woman in this Assembly can match their wits in political debate with any one of their male counterparts.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Compton:** The real problem with finding women to put their name forward has more to do with the traditional role that we play in families. Anyone who knows about raising a family and running a household knows the primary reason women do not put their name forward. Women are traditionally the caregivers of the home. The demands of time for constituency work, attending community events, fundraisers, wakes and benefits, and having a presence in your district, mostly are done after

traditional working hours. Taking that time away from family and having the support in the home for this to be possible is the real barrier to having more female candidates.

One of my greatest concerns in the Speech From the Throne is the lack of focus in rural PEI. We have endured eight years of centralized government from this government. Mr. Premier, during the election campaign you travelled the Island holding forums and supposedly listening to Islanders. You talk in the Speech From the Throne of a new era of progress and prosperity. It's something we all look forward to. Each of us, regardless of political stripe, was, and is hoping, that the new government will be different. Premier, that is what you campaigned on, new and different. We are in a dire place in rural communities and it was hoped by all Islanders that someone would take the reins and offer something new and different to all.

We understand the decline in rural communities. It's a nationwide trend. But I'll tell you something that was told to me when we purchased my family homestead from my uncle. Keep that 80 acres, get yourself a tractor and some livestock, because the day is going to come when you are going to have to be self-reliant and be able to feed your own family. If we can continue in that right direction maybe that quote will be true and I hope to see a difference.

I can remember, growing up, all the mixed farms in our area. Just about every place you passed had a herd of cattle, a few horses, pigs, chickens, and a large garden. We are dangerously close to losing that life entirely.

Farming in our region has changed drastically and you can count on one hand the number of farms that are left. Much of the district is leased out to growers outside of the district. You can still see many shore fields and inland fields cropped with potatoes, soybeans, corn, grain and oilseeds, but you would be hard pressed to know who is farming most of those fields. Bigger seems to be the focus with higher yield per acre. You can't blame this on the farmers, they are just trying to survive and have something left for retirement. We need to have the backs of farmers if we expect them to make changes. We need to have some

direction, to move in a better direction, let's say a better direction. I did not hear that vision in the Speech From the Throne.

As an Island, food security should be our number one priority. We have heard lip service to this and the talk of Canada's Food Island without even the mention of farming and fishing in the Speech From the Throne, with not a mention of the two most important industries in this province.

District 4 has a large fishing community. The wharfs are Pinette, MacAulay's, Wood Islands, Murray River, Murray Harbour, Beach Point or the Cape, MacLeod's Wharf and Grahams Pond, or the Creek. This is very important to our district. Each of the fishermen who fish from these ports want to hear vision about marketing and value-added ideas. Each of those fishermen are already disappointed in this government because there is no thought of them in the Speech From the Throne.

You state: "...My Government will focus on growing the economy and increasing trade and exports..." In our district we have a processing facility with the best rock crab anywhere in the world, Belle River Enterprises. Flash-frozen and vacuum-packed for shipment anywhere. There is a soybean plant in Belle River, the vision of a local farmer who encountered stumbling blocks from this government every step of the way. If you want to be a food Island, you want to be a major exporter, focus on getting three-phase power to places like Flat River and Belle River and O'Leary-Inverness. This is one way of growing the economy and increasing trade.

We have a large number of blueberry farms and growers and we have a Wymans's plant in the district. Belfast Mini-Mills supplies smaller mills for processing yarn from just about every animal you can imagine and ships those mills all around the world. We have two smaller sheep farms in the district, one in Pembroke – Pembroke Farms – and Harmony Meadow Farms in Eldon. Harmony Meadow's has wonderful lamb for anyone who is a lamb lover. Both are small, innovative farmers who want to farm and make a difference in rural communities.

Also, we have a number of home-based businesses. We have an architect in the

district, we have a new eyeglass company who is making eyeglass frames and they're sold on-line. We have writers in the district, and high-speed Internet is a large issue. I know where I live they say I have high-speed. I call it slow high-speed. That's a real concern for anyone trying to operate a business in our district.

**Mr. LaVie:** Mine's dead slow.

**Ms. Compton:** Dead slow.

You stated tourism visitation in 2014 reached the highest level in a decade. Not in District 4. A \$29 million party did not bring tourism to rural communities. In fact, many of them suffered. The comment was made to me by a local performer last summer: What would you do? Pay \$10 to come hear me, or go to town and see Burton Cummings for free? Rural tourism did suffer last summer.

We have wonderful attractions in District 4. Lighthouses that have daily tours in the summer: Cape Bear Lighthouse and Marconi Station, the Marconi Station that heard the first distress signal from the Titanic; Point Prim Lighthouse, the oldest lighthouse on PEI built in 1845; and Wood Islands Lighthouse and Museum down by the ferry terminal.

We have two award-winning wineries in the district: Rossignol down on the Shore Road – John Rossignol, who focuses on locally-grown grapes and berries for all his product – and Newman's Winery in Gladstone. Take the Gladstone Road to the Northumberland Arena and keep going, then when you think you're lost or you missed it, you're almost there. Mike Newman has moved to the Island and he wants to see a vibrant and rural community for his business. Those are both two great tourism experiences on PEI.

I guess we can contribute the wineries to the fact that we are the banana belt of PEI. We have the warmest temperatures. Someone is probably going to claim that too. We can see grapes growing in Eldon, Caledonia, Gladstone, and High Bank. We have a farmers' market in Murray Harbour at the community centre. Last year was the first year and it will open again in July.

We have agri-tourism at the corn maze and the Chuck Wagon Market in Eldon. Dave

and Rose Viaene advertise the business as food, fun, and agritainment, and it's a great way to spend an afternoon with a family. The design of the corn maze last year was the logo for 2014 with Prince Edward Island written in and 150. Rose and Dave will not divulge the secret as how they do that intricate pattern in the corn but it's quite a site from an aerial view.

We have two golf courses in our district. One is privately-owned in Murray River, Eagles View. It has the beautiful backdrop of MacLure's Pond and there are some really long holes, so I encourage everyone to take a cart. Belfast Highland Greens in Eldon, PEI, we just celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is run by the Belfast Development Corporation. It is also part of the development corporation's focus to run the Lord Selkirk Campground and pool. We took over the campground last summer when the province wanted to divest some of the provincial parks. It was, I guess, a risky proposition, but it has proved to be very successful. We did have to give up some park workers in our district.

I said all along during the discussion that it wasn't just a park, it also is the historic landing of Lord Selkirk in 1803. It has the Croft House for the Belfast Historical Society and it's the home of the Highland Games every year in the first weekend in August. I think very important tourist destinations in our province.

We still have three provincial parks. We have two day parks: Kings Castle, which is a wonderful place for a family outing, and we have Pinette Park, and it's the host to many family gatherings and reunions. Northumberland Provincial Park is camping on the Northumberland Strait with a great view of the ferry in the distance.

We have some amazing restaurants in the district. Only one is open year-round. It's the Millstone Grill in Murray River with great food and many theme nights throughout the winter. The Chowder House in Point Prim has a great array of local seafood. It's at the end of the point and it's a breathtaking view. Brehaut's Restaurant in Murray Harbour is a landmark destination for all in the summertime and I can't imagine there's an Islander who hasn't been there. We have a new upscale café restaurant

in Murray Harbour, 5 Café. It's a venture of two immigrants from New Zealand and it's proving to be very successful. We do have Companion Coffee on Main Street in Murray River. It's right next to, or across the street from, The Old General Store and the Map of Magik Dragon so you can go and spend your afternoon doing some shopping.

Another important part of the fabric of our Island can be found in the district. That is harness racing. Pinette has a top-quality matinee track, one of the best in all of the Maritimes. We have races every Wednesday night, and there will be races tonight at 6:00 p.m. Our track plays a huge role as a feeder facility for Red Shores and harness racing throughout the Maritimes. It is a place not only to train and race the horses, but it's a place for young and old alike to become involved in the industry. Whether it's drivers, trainers or announcers they all have a place to learn in Pinette. Why, just this month there was an article in *Trot Magazine* about our young announcer, Christopher MacRae. He's just 13 years old and he's been announcing for four years now. This province is the 'Kentucky of Canada' and we need to grow that distinction. Harness racing plays a major role in the economy of this Island and not just at the track: trainers, feed, veterinarian services, but also especially tourism are all spinoffs of the industry.

We have two elementary schools in our district, Southern Kings Consolidated School and Belfast Consolidated School, both feeder schools for Montague. Southern Kings is maintaining numbers at a better rate than Belfast. We are down to 97 students in Belfast. When Belfast Consolidated School opened I went into grade 3 and we had 400 students at that time. But there is an upside. Numbers are increasing, and we have approximately 13 kindergarteners for the fall. I know personally young people who are moving back to the area with young families. Your quote: "My Government will launch a comprehensive strategy to repatriate Islanders living away." We need to ensure that communities retain their schools to encourage those Islanders to come back to rural communities. That is progress and prosperity.

Communities, and the importance of community, are something every member in

the Legislative Assembly is very aware of. But another important part of community is volunteerism. When people talk about making a difference in a community, I always turn the table and say: The way to a vibrant community is for you to volunteer, for you to get involved. Any vibrant, successful community has wonderful volunteers.

We have great volunteer groups in our district: Belfast, Murray Harbour and Murray River fire departments, Cambridge, Murray Harbour Community Centre and Murray River Hall, the rinks, Belfast Rec Centre and the Northumberland Arena, Cape Bear Lighthouse & Marconi Station Committee, the Belfast Community Development Committee, and the Wood Island Welcome Centre Committee.

Finally, a quote from the Speech From the Throne: "Prince Edward Island is a special place. It is the people and the communities here that make it so. We should never take these realities for granted; indeed, we must do everything we can to continue to build and support strong communities on our Island." I look forward to working with and holding this government to account to fulfill that statement in District 4.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Next speaking to the throne speech will be the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the Speech From the Throne. There are some very interesting comments on here and I think it speaks to the future of our province, and I think especially to our natural resources. I think of agriculture and fisheries, which some believe was left out of this, but I think it has a very strong part of the speech for sure.

I do want to talk to – as we go through this it mentions about the: "It is imperative that we seek the best from ourselves in this House..." To tell you the honest truth, I am very pleased with how this is coming along

and I'm going to say again, as I said to the hon. Leader of the Third Party, it is a breath of fresh air to see people stand up in this House, speak very positively but very straightforward as to whether they like the tone, if they like the content. Hon. member, I think you did a very fine job of that and I'm really pleased to say that at this time.

We do need to work together. This is stated here: "From us as elected representatives, Islanders expect serious and civil debate of their concerns. We owe them the very best of our energy, our commitment, and our professionalism over the next four years." I look forward to that tone in this House, and even when we're not in this House but out among our districts or whatever that may be. I really look forward to that somewhat change in direction that is being brought about in the Speech From the Throne and spoken about by the leader of our party and the Premier of our province.

An era of engagement is working with partners, and I know a big piece of this and a big piece of what we talked about before, it comes back to our natural resources of agriculture and fisheries. The whole idea of shrinking that trade deficit that we have at the present time, the Sales Force PEI in making PEI Canada's Food Island. I think this is really key and I look forward to being the head of this department and a key part and player in that. I did note, too, in here, in which I think is really important, the way we set the tone for the 65<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. That was in the swearing in where we had participation by our First Nations in the drumming and the smudging and allowing them to be really focused and part of this. Because they really are a part of our province here and they are our first peoples, and I think we need to pay greater attention to that, and I'm really pleased that that took place in our swearing in.

The part I really want to concentrate on today is on building PEI and its primary resources. I'm going to quote from part of this with regards to that very item here, and I think it's on page 12 of the speech (Indistinct) talk about our future and working with the primary resources. The part that some people thought was left out. It starts off with:

"The Strength to Succeed

"Prince Edward Island's historic strength in the resource sector has allowed us to have sustained success in agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and food processing." That's right in our speech here. "Fully 10 per cent of our GDP is generated through primary agriculture and food processing, and 40 per cent of our international exports are from food and food processing, including seafood."

It says:

"My Government will build on this strength with a strategic emphasis on the Island's Food Sector... We will work with producers and processors to provide support for product development and innovation, marketing and branding, and access to financing... We will pay particular attention to involving the young people of Prince Edward Island as the future in this sector, working with primary industries... to provide opportunities for the next generations to become more actively involved in our food industry."

I think that's about as strong as you could say that the primary industries are a key part of this Speech From the Throne.

I just want to touch on those primary resources for a little bit and show you a little bit of the promotion that's going on at the present time and what we're looking at down the road.

Of course, everyone knows about Burger Love. The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, his constituent actually was the winner of that this year. Sixty restaurants this year partook in the Burger Love. It was interesting to hear from some people who tried to – I don't think they got to eat every one of them but some of them certainly gave it a great test. I think they got a van load of the guys who got together, and gals too perhaps, to go ahead and see how many of them they could try. I know my wife and I, we go out and we may split one, but we try to taste as many of them as we can as well, but not at one sitting –

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah, sure.

**Mr. McIsaac:** – and it was –

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Living within your means.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Living within my means, yeah. I didn't say we split it evenly, but (Indistinct). It was very good.

The Burger Love campaign is just a prime example for what we're doing in promotion. Again, that's great for the beef industry. Then the Porktoberfest in the fall, which is -

**Mr. Aylward:** (Indistinct) did a great job on that.

**An Hon. Member:** Good.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Yes, good. It was – yeah –

**Mr. Aylward:** (Indistinct) ideas like that.

**Mr. McIsaac:** That's exactly right. We take advantage of all the bright people in our province who come up with ideas like that, and promotional things.

I want to give you a little rundown on what we're doing in fisheries, which I think is absolutely fantastic, some of the events that are going on, and I encourage you to partake in some of these yourself. Of course, the Love Our Lobster spring promotion is going on right now in May and June. The idea behind that is to encourage Islanders and visitors to purchase Island lobster during the spring season. It started in 2009, and started as a radio awareness campaign. In 2013 the promotion progressed into a campaign with a call to action for buying local and purchasing Island lobster. We wanted to focus on small seafood retailers across the province.

Participation for 2015 was 23 retailers, where you could go in and you could fill out a ballot. We ended up, 2013, we had 2,700 ballots. In 2014 we had 4,400 ballots. An estimated value from that of going in and buying five pounds of lobster actually grew to \$154,000. That's what we realized from that promotional campaign. It was absolutely terrific.

Another one, seafood night at the races. For those of you who love the horse races, you can now partner and get some lobster there and sample that. It's a partnership we have with Red Shores during Old Home Week.

It's a celebration of PEI seafood for the industry during a high traffic tourism week. There's radio advertisements and web coverage.

The Red Shores dining room promotes seafood during that time. The industry sponsors the races and there's a seafood sample booth which really is an interesting part. Several thousand seafood samples were handed out, many trying some of our seafood, our lobsters, and our oysters for the very first time, which was terrific. That's how you get them started.

The fall lobster promotion is, again, a partnership with Red Shores, the food service campaign promoting Friday night surf and turf. This was to encourage Islanders and visitors to purchase Island lobster during the fall season. Several hundred thousand ballots were filled out on that as well, so it was great.

Out of the Sea and Over the Coals, there's one that's been going on now for several years. It's a seafood barbecue demonstration that attends events across the Island throughout the summer. If you have an event in your riding where Out of the Sea and Over the Coals is not attending and you'd like them to attend, certainly get a hold of my department and we'll try and set them up. I know the Member from Stratford-Kinlock and I would love to see that come there. We're actually working on bringing one, perhaps to the town hall. We can work that out this year because it hasn't been there. That certainly will be good because –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. McIsaac:** Yeah. It's the fastest growing area in the province so we want to encourage all our people there to come out and try that.

Anyway, the program promotes PEI seafood products to Islanders and visitors and it gives consumers handling, storing and cooking tips and recipe ideas. We have, right now, over 60 demos in the season, which is fantastic. It's growing for sure. The results from that were several thousand samples of seafood were handed out. It is now proven to generate retail sales and it generates seafood service sales and gives consumers confidence in purchasing and

cooking seafood. That's one of the big benefits of it for sure.

We have another campaign at the airport. It's the airport lobster campaign, which is a project that was led by the PEI Fishermen's Association to increase the awareness there of PEI lobster. It encourages visitors to purchase PEI lobster during their trip and to spread the message of PEI lobster, wild caught, natural, sustainable, quality, marketing material on buying, cooking, and storing. Again, information for the visitors as they come.

There is, of course, over 300,000 per year in airport foot traffic so it's a terrific spot to do some promotion of our lobster industry.

Go Lobster, Summerside Lobster Carnival, big event in July. Some of our members here would know about that for sure. It's held during the lobster carnival there. Go Lobster is a food service promotion for the Summerside region. There are 18 restaurants that participated in that in 2014. The results from that, 2014, three to five times increase in lobster sales, and it meant that the restaurants continued to keep lobster on their menus there, to some degree. The increased participation of the promotion is going to grow even in 2015.

The PEI lobster brand, we've gotten into that now. Actually one of the people who works in my shop, she's a great young lady doing the promotional materials there, actually came up with a design for a PEI lobster brand. She is just a ball of fire and getting involved with this lobster promotion and doing great things for the industry. It's new branding, especially for local sales and promotion.

It's put on bags for the peddler retailer use to satisfy and identify the product purchased from these peddlers. It's just a brand new thing we need to do. We're also looking at continuing that, growing that idea and where we can use that.

Also, PEI International Shellfish Festival, which is now in its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it's part of Fall Flavours Festival. There are competitions for culinary, oyster shucking, mussel sock tying. There's culinary demos, food sampling, background for international

chef's challenge, and background for incoming buyer missions.

Some of the results. We had over 10,000 people in attendance of that and there's continued to be growth there, and quickly becoming the festival to be like. This is a great promotion for that.

Our Savour Food and Wine was held here at the Confed Centre not that long ago, a great event. This is actually owned by the PEI Restaurant Association. There is a prestigious colour event for the food service industry to showcase their talent and highlight the Island food product. It's really neat. You have the chefs kind of competing against one another.

The PEI culinary alliance sponsors the Island food award, which is terrific to see that. It's great to sample too. You go down there and you can sample a lot of Island foods, even local beers and wines and lobster and beef. A lot of things. It's helping all our industries here, the primary producers, as was touched upon and spoken about in the Speech From the Throne. This is just an example of how we're doing this. We're going to grow on that, continue to expand on that for sure.

We had the oyster shucking masterclass. It's a partnership with the PEI Restaurant Association. It is the first oyster shucking masterclass. Last year the champion shucker, Phyllis Carr, led the demonstration. Out of that we now have – there was an attendance of 34 people came to do that, join the class. We now have 34 individuals who are able to serve properly shucked oysters and who are able to confidently sell oysters. So we're trying to work with all parts of our aquaculture in this for sure.

PEI Culinary Alliance Fall Flavours, it's a September festival actually involved with the Food Network, a Canada partnership. We use celebrity chefs to host signature events. It's really boosting, again, the products we produce here on PEI.

In 2014 there were 11 signature events, 55 other events and experiences. Two signature events in high demand showcasing seafood were the Feast and Frolic and the lobster party on the beach. So they're pretty popular for sure. We had ticket sales of \$282,000. In



2014 the signature events were 97% sold out. The festival continued to expand with new events, experience an extra capacity for the years to come.

Another one, of course, is the PEI Culinary Alliance Flavours Trail. It's a guide to Island restaurants, markets, fish retailers, farmers, artisan products, and culinary experiences. This is laid out by five regions across the province and 128 listings.

We had over 60,000 web hits per year. There are a lot of other events, too, but that's just a few of the ones that were happening in our shellfish industry and it's really exciting. We're going to continue to work with the industry there and help our producers to grow and expand on their markets and put a few extra dollars in their pockets. That's the goal of the whole thing.

But I think I'd like to stop from that on the promotional part of thing and just talk about agriculture and fisheries. What does it mean to our provincial economy? Just to give you a little bit of a breakdown on what's happening in agriculture and what's happening in fisheries.

So just agriculture at a glance. Agriculture is the key contributor to our economy. The industry generates half a billion dollars in cash receipts and it employs over 3,500 people. Agriculture and food products amount to 60% of the total exports of Prince Edward Island.

See how key the natural resources are? That's why there was great emphasis on it in our Speech From the Throne. The Island has a total area of 1.4 million acres with approximately 594 acres cleared for agriculture use.

If we break it down in commodities, potatoes, of course, is the largest agricultural commodity. In 2014 Island producers harvested a total of 26 million hundredweights of the product and the cash receipts were raised up to \$257 million last year. Approximately 90,500 acres of potatoes were planted in 2014. It is a major crop and a major stimulus to our economy here.

Grains and oil seeds. I had the pleasure this morning, with my deputy, to meet with the

grain elevators group and talk to them about the future and what they're looking at in their part to stimulate our economy and where we can grow and where we can help our farmers to look down the road, not just this season, but next season and so on, as we now grow so many grains, soybeans. What's the future on the soybeans, what's the future on the barley and the wheat and that sort of thing, so they can plan their plantings for years to come.

We don't want to throw all our eggs in one basket with soybeans if it looks down the road that milling wheat is going to be a great source of revenue for us and we can come up with the right brands to grow here on PEI. Milling wheat has a higher dollar factor, but we need to have the right varieties here and we're working at that. It's a really great bunch of ladies and gentlemen sitting around that table, looking at long term for our farmers that in the grains and mixed farming sector for sure.

It's normally grown on rotation with potatoes, which works well for our province as well. It's estimated there were 94,800 acres of wheat, oats, barley, and mixed grain and 61,000 acres of soybean grown in 2014. Approximately 14% of the soybean acreage in 2013 was exported to Japan. We are looking internationally, Taiwan, wherever there might be to grow this, and that's the idea of the Sales Force PEI helping out. Not reinventing the wheel, not taking over the responsibilities for that, but working with our potato farmers, our grain farmers, our oilseed farmers, whatever it might be, to help them in finding markets and returning, again, those extra dollars to their pockets. As the member from Charlottetown who said workforce had said: When the farmers are making money, the province is doing well. Not just Charlottetown but right across. We've heard that a couple of times from different members and that's so key.

In the fruit, blueberries now make up the largest acreage of commercial fruit crops at 13,000 acres. There are cranberry ponds and strawberry fields, 20,000 apple trees fill orchards across the province, and that's growing as well. There is a lot of interest in that, they're a high dollar value crop, and we're looking at it.

From that, also, the spin-off on that we get high quality honey which is also produced here on PEI by our beekeepers and we look at what can happen with honey. You look at the business we have going here on the Island there with the honey drop and such like that. It all works together and spins and builds off one another and that's what we need.

In the beef sector, which we talked about the Burger Love before for sure, it's part of – production is part of 40% of PEI farms. The mixed areas, we see the – I actually had the opportunity to be at the Angus field with the Leader of the Third Party on Thursday evening. Fantastic event. We had young heifer classes from across the Maritimes. The young people came there for junior showmanship and the quality show. It was impeccable. We had the president of the Angus association from Canada here looking at the heifers, the animals that were on display. He said those animals could compete anywhere across Canada.

I know the hon. Minister of Finance had noted Patrick Holland who was one of the show persons there that day. A terrific young fellow whose grandparents actually live in my riding, the McKinnon's. Fantastic people. That young fellow was chosen as ambassador for the Angus breeding for Canada for the next year and he will be travelling internationally and doing fantastic at that (Indistinct) –

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McIsaac:** He's just a breath of fresh air in that industry, but that industry is so strong and it will continue to be.

The Easter Beef Show and Sale this past year actually was down in numbers but that was because the price has finally gone up. I'm not saying it's up where – too high at all – it's up where perhaps it should have been in the last 10 years. We need to have our farmers receiving a proper cost of production at least. If we can hold that beef price there, that would be terrific, and working with the beef plant in Borden to make sure that's – they're all working together and we have a good future for that.

In the dairy – which is a little close to my heart for sure, as was the Angus because I

was raised on an Angus farm – the dairy industry, we have 180 farms in the province and we have about – that range in size from about 20 milk cows to over 300. A lot of mechanisms coming in now. We have a lot of robot milkers and we can see quite the growth in the technology in the dairy industry when you put robots in place and the cows can be milked not just twice a day or three times a day but they go in and are milked when they want to go. When they feel the pressure, they want to go in and get milked, they can be milked up to four or five times a day. We've seen an increase in production of up to 18% which again is efficiency and helps out our dairy farmers there before.

Breeding stock in the dairy industry, I think I've mentioned this in the House before. PEI is known for the genetics in the dairy industry, as they are in the beef when we saw the Angus group meet there the other day. Genetics on PEI in the beef and in the dairy and many of our commodities are absolutely fantastic.

Again, we talk about an embryo that we produced here and went on to be sold as a live animal for over \$1 million. Absolutely fantastic, but those genetics started here on PEI, and it's great.

In the hog industries, hog industry is perhaps one of the weaker points, unfortunately. We have 19 farms at the present time with around 66,000 hogs. The price here is definitely down too low and we will continue to help the hog industry through the Growing Forward 2 programs and whatever ways we can.

In the eggs, another area that – I was raised on a mixed farm, and we had Aberdeen Angus and my dad had laying hens and it is another supply managed commodity which is returning good returns to our farmers, to our egg farmers there.

It turned out in farm cash receipts last year of \$6.74 million just to our egg farmers. We have two egg grading stations here and we produced in 2013 approximately 3.42 million dozen eggs, which is fantastic for a little province for sure.

Organic farmers, too, that's increasing. I know the hon. Leader of the Third Party

certainly talks about the organic and we talk about that as well. We have 60 certified producers in the province and we will continue to work with them as well through Growing Forward 2 and whatever programs we can work with them there.

We are increasing the demand for food grade quality cereals and soybeans and it's stimulating the expansion of these field crops. It's a lot of work to get to the certified level, but farmers are taking that on to receive a little higher return for going in the organic area. We will work with the marketing on that as well through shrinking the trade deficit and being known as Canada's Food Island because we're going to put a lot of emphasis on this.

Fur production. We have 12 mink farms and three fox farms and they generated \$3.4 million from that.

Broiler production. Again back to the poultry. We have eight broiler farmers in PEI and 5 million kilograms of meat from that industry which is absolutely fantastic.

Do you want to – if we want to switch over to fisheries at a glance, I'll just give you a little rough idea of what's happening on the Island in our fishing industry.

It generates about \$250 million to the provincial economy and includes \$175 million in the fishing industry and \$75 million from the aquaculture sector, which is a lot of dollars. The Members from Souris-Elmira and Morell-Mermaid are quite involved with that, and it's great to see some of those members in the House here as well. Our Speaker as well spent many years in the lobster industry. It's a vital component of our fisheries industry for sure.

In the aquaculture sector which is fin fish, oysters, mussels, brought in \$30 million in 2007. That's now up to \$43 million in 2013 which is an increase of 42% which we're very pleased with, and we think we can continue to grow that and we know we can.

The value of the fish landings increased from \$122 million in 2010 to \$155 million in 2013. The fishing industry employs 8,600 people. It's a great job generator for our province and our seafood products are exported around the world.

The lobster, again the number one, it was \$117 million what it generated in 2014. Over 2,500 individuals were involved in the fishery. An additional 3,000 were generated from the wharves and from the fish plants. It's a great stimulus to our economy, to growing our jobs and helping our whole overall economy.

Mussels, 50 million pounds in 2012. In 1980 we had 100,000 pounds of mussels, 50 million pounds in 2012. Absolutely phenomenal, and Prince Edward Island is the largest producer of mussels in Canada, accounting for 80% of the total production with the annual production of 50 million pounds. But 80% of the Canadian production – absolutely fantastic.

I know when I was younger and I was taking swimming lessons down at the beach, we had those little black shells all over the place and it was no industry at all, it looked like a waste product, and from there, that was back – I better not go back to the actual date – but again, by 1980 it got up to 100,000 pounds, now it's up to 50 million pounds. It's just absolutely fantastic what the growth in that.

We have 100 mussel growers on PEI and 320 mussel leases that cover approximately 11,000 acres. We have six mussel plants and 1,500 people are employed in that industry again.

Oysters. PEI oyster production is the largest in Atlantic Canada, 7.3 million pounds with a total value of \$9.3 million to our economy. There are over 1,000 fishers and aquaculturists involved in the oyster industry. It's absolutely fantastic. One of my best friends is an oyster processor. I think I mentioned that before. His wife is an excellent cook preparing oysters and we benefit from that for sure, but a great growing industry.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. McIsaac:** Yeah, for sure. Yeah, well, I'm proud of it. Thank you.

Oysters are harvested both in the wild and in the oyster aquaculture sector, so it's growing there. It's absolutely fantastic, the oysters.

Snow crab. PEI has a fleet of 28 inshore oyster holders with individual quotas. Our

2014 landings were 3.4 million pounds for a landed value of \$9.88 million. Absolutely fantastic.

Rock crab. PEI landings were \$3.9 million in 2014 with a landed value of \$2.1 million. Twenty-five fishers in Area 25 have that quota and in Area 24 on the north side up to 20 licenses, but only a few of them are active.

Herring. In 2014 landings were 13.5 million pounds at a landed value of \$2.2 million.

Scallops. The 2014 landings were 803,000 pounds with a landed value of \$960,000.

Halibut. PEI's landings were 52,300 pounds with a value of \$309,000.

Blue fin tuna. PEI landings were 338,000 pounds at 2.1 million, and a lot of sport fisheries there as well, as the Member from Souris-Elmira would know. Absolutely fantastic, it added an additional \$1 million directly to the fishers.

Irish moss and fuscullaria. (Indistinct) 4.8 billion pounds of Irish moss, landed value of 632,000.

That's just a little bit of a picture of the people who are working in our agriculture and in our fisheries in our primary resources that are key to our province's success in our province's future. It was a key part to our platform. It's well exemplified in the Speech From the Throne, not left out in any way, just expanded on it a little bit here, but it shows the commitment of our government, the future of what we can do and how we're going to move this province forward.

I'm really pleased to lead this Department of Agriculture and Fisheries forward to grow our province, to grow our economy, to return extra dollars into the pockets of our farmers and our fishermen and I think our province will really grow and move forward from that. I expect from everyone in this House and from across the province, you take the opportunity, over the summer, buy some lobster, buy some burgers, buy some pork, whatever it is.

As was noted earlier this afternoon in the questions on buying local for our schools, we'll be looking at that, as the minister of

education has said. We're going to have a terrific summer with a lot of tourists, we need promotion, and I expect to get that from everyone here.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Next speaking to the Speech From the Throne will the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Leader of the Opposition:** Oh yeah, I can't wait, I'm gonna do it. (Indistinct) he starts talking I'll do it.

**Mr. R. Brown:** I'll be short, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. R. Brown:** Seeing that I got my short jacket on today.

It's a pleasure to stand, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the Speech From the Throne.

First of all I want to thank – I have an important seat here. The former member that sat here – I have a big seat to fill. I just want to say that we're having an event for him in Cornwall on Saturday night. It's supposed to be a celebration. It'll probably turn into a wedding by the end of it where everybody will want to get up and speak. You know how weddings get at the end. I'm going out. I got a few things I'm going to say about him for the 20 years we sat together.

But I want to thank the constituents in my district –

**Ms. Sherry:** Call the hour.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hour has been called.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

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

I, move, seconded by the Member from Alberton-Roseville, that this House adjourn until tomorrow afternoon at 2:00 p.m.

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