

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

First Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Thursday, 4 June 2015

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The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

[There was a technical malfunction]

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your selection as our Speaker and your role in this House.

Second, may I extend recognition to the Clerk, the Clerk Assistant, and all of our Province House staff who've done such wonderful work to make the transition from Province House to our new quarters here in the Coles Building, and it's a beautiful set up.

Third, I'd like to recognize our farmers and fishers and everyone in our agriculture and fishing community for the hard work that they're doing at this very productive time of year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I, too, want to congratulate you on your election yesterday. I want to welcome everybody that came to the gallery here today in our new quarters, and of course I want to welcome those who follow along at home via the Internet or EastLink.

I would like to welcome all of the new members, also, to this Legislative Assembly, on both sides of the floor. I hope that you enjoy the proceedings and get comfortable with the setting here.

I want to thank the people in District 2 for putting their faith back in me again for another term. It was greatly appreciated and I'll continue to try to do the work of the district that I have been doing for the last three and a half years.

Also, on the night that the election was called I know that the Premier decided he would take a swipe at me, and I did take exception to it because this was the Premier who was going to do business different here and I was disappointed. I felt it was a complete lack of respect, and I did use it as motivation during the whole campaign because I thought if I ever got the opportunity to get back to the floor of the legislature and face the Premier on it, that perhaps I could show him how I didn't forget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me be amongst the first of your colleagues to congratulate you and wish you the very best in your new role as our new presiding officer. I would also like to thank the residents of Charlottetown-Lewis Point for once again putting their trust in me for being their representative. I always appreciate their support and their advice.

As well, I would like to wish the Member of Parliament for Charlottetown a happy 27th wedding anniversary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to congratulate you on your new role. I'm sure you'll do a very good job. I would also like to welcome all of the new people to the Legislature today, and a great big thank you to the District of Evangeline-Miscouche for putting their trust in me to represent their area for the next four years.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you very much.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to congratulate you on your new chair. I know you will hold an utmost, esteemed – that new position that you are sitting in today – and I know you will keep good control of dialogue in the House.

I would like to begin by welcoming you all to the new public gallery that we have in our new Legislature today. There are many that I will see, no doubt, over the next coming few weeks. But there are two in the audience today, Elmer and Dianne Redmond, good residents from the Sherwood area, great friends of mine. It's great to have them in the House today. I've mentioned them in many comments during my recognition of guests, but I believe this is my first time in over eight-plus years that I've seen them in the House so it's great to have them in today.

Also, I would like to thank all of the residents of the Sherwood area for their well-wishes and congratulations over the past 10 days or so.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Or Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: First slip, I'll remember that.

The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We were all taking bets on which one was going to do that one, but thank Heavens it's not me. But I, too, want to wish you all the best in your new role. I know you'll be very successful and you have the support of the full House.

I'd also like to welcome all the new members here today, the opposition members, and our new colleagues. I'd also like to welcome the Pages. It's great to be back and I'm looking forward to a wonderful session. And the gallery here too, it's always great to see the gallery here interested in what's going on in our province.

I'd also like to send a thank you out to the residents of West Royalty-Springvale for putting their confidence in me a third time, and if they have any issues that they'd like

to have brought up in the legislature, I'd invite them to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to congratulate you here today. I would like to also say hello and welcome to my former colleagues from over the four years and all of the new colleagues that are here in the House today.

Also, I would like to welcome the guests that are here with us today and those that are at home watching us.

A special thanks and hello to District 3 who, again, have been very supportive.

Just want to make a quick note – it's something that's gone on in the House for years – and I'd like to mention that Gillis' Drive-In has been open now for some time. Unfortunately we weren't able to be here for the grand opening. They opened some time ago.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, congratulations to you and welcome to all our colleagues in the Legislative Assembly today, and our visitors, of course.

I just want to take a moment to thank all my constituents from the District of Tyne Valley-Linkletter and am very proud to be a representative in Cabinet on behalf of all Islanders and the city of Summerside as well.

Just a note as well, an event taking place tonight on behalf of the Women's Network. They'll be hosting an event at the Watermark Theatre in New Rustico tonight at 7:00 p.m. As the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, I just want to

encourage everyone to support that great cause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I, too, want to congratulate you; I think it's absolutely fantastic. I think a few people may make a mistake of the introductory part but that's quite okay.

I do want to welcome everyone back to the floor of the Legislature and I want to congratulate those who did the change-over. I think it's terrific, and hopefully they'll get the parliament building house fixed up and we'll get a chance sit in there before the session is over, but no guarantee on that, that's for sure.

I do want to put a big welcome out to the members of Vernon River-Stratford, especially the agriculture members who are really busy on the farm at the present time, and to remember safety first and foremost for sure. I also want to wish all the best to the fishers who are on the water, and be it fisheries, lobster or agriculture, whatever that might be, and hopefully we do have a great season.

I do want to welcome those who are in the gallery and I have one of my farmer residents here with me, Fred Martens. I want to welcome him. Of course, Eddie Lund is here, who has a better record in the House than perhaps any one of us here as well. The rest of the gallery, welcome them as well.

I want to say happy birthday to my third son who turned 32 today. He's studying at Concordia.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all my colleagues back in the House and especially the newer crew here. It's good to see a few new faces in, I guess as long as I'm not one of them – or my seat is not one of them.

I'd like to pass on my congrats to you, Mr. Speaker. I know you'll do a great job.

I'd also like to thank all the good people of Alberton-Roseville for putting their faith back into me for a third term. I really appreciate that and I pledge to do my best to see that their interests are looked after here in the Legislative Assembly.

On a little sadder note, I'd like to pass on my condolences to the Gard family in Mill River on the passing of their loved one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to congratulate you on your new role. I want to send a big shout out to District 20 Kensington-Malpeque for all their support, and a big hello to my campaign team that put a lot of effort into getting me here, so thank you.

I want to wish Todd Murphy a happy belated birthday which he celebrated yesterday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you. It's quite a privilege to be here in the Legislative Assembly today. I'd first like to thank my wife Anita and our three children, Rylan, Mason and Mara for all their love and support over the past few months. I'd like to thank the people of District 7 Morell-Mermaid for their advice and support over the past few months as well. Thank you to my campaign team. We had a great run. I'd also really like to thank

all the members in here today for the extreme warm welcome that we've received.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in this House again and to thank the residents of Stratford-Kinlock, my district of course, for entrusting their faith in me to represent them here in the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island. It is an honour, one I do not take lightly.

I'd also, of course, like to congratulate all the MLAs in this Legislative Assembly for their hard work over the last number of months during the election campaign, and congratulate every one of you for either winning your seat or retaining your seat. Well done, and I look forward to working with you.

I'd also like to welcome, of course, the media back here. It is always fair and impartial, (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to congratulate you on your new position as Speaker of the House, and I want to also thank you for your work over the last number of years as vice-chair on Public Accounts. You certainly will be missed in that role.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great privilege for me to be here today. I do not take this very lightly. I think it's very humbling to be elected by District 19 Borden-Kinkora. I thank my family, especially my wife Debby, and the campaign team and all the other voters that

were in the area that supported us this term. I hope that we can all be fair to each other and take care as we carry on our business.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: It's a long ways over here.

Speaker: O'Leary (Indistinct) 25.

Mr. Henderson: But anyway, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of O'Leary-Inverness, I want to congratulate you on your selection as Speaker of this House.

I'm sure you'll do a fabulous job and I look forward to working with you in providing good governance to this province.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of O'Leary-Inverness for putting their trust in me for another term. This is my third term and I'm always humbled by the experience of going and visiting people door to door and look forward to doing that over the next three or four years, five years, whatever, however long the term might be.

Also want to acknowledge those people from O'Leary-Inverness that are watching on EastLink and online. I've got a pretty good feeling my mom and dad, George and Brenda Henderson, will be watching. They're always curious how things are going on in the proceedings of the House, and probably my wife Sandra's probably watching online as well.

Also want to take the opportunity to wish the potato growers of O'Leary-Inverness – as you're well aware, Mr. Speaker, that O'Leary-Inverness is our self-proclaimed capital of the potato industry in Prince Edward Island and the home of the Canadian Potato Museum, and I want to wish them a successful, safe planting season. I'm told that the growers in my district are approximately a little over half done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Now I'll call on the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, want to send my congratulations off on your new role; I know you'll do a great job with it.

I want to welcome all our returning and new MLAs to the House today. Also want to say welcome to our gallery, especially to the chair of the English Language School Board, Fred Osborne, welcome.

A heartfelt thank you to all the people of District 27 for putting your support and confidence in me to represent you back here in the Legislature.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you.

Next we'll go to the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone back here today. It's an honour to be back in here and I want to thank the people of District 1 for having the confidence in me once again to re-elect me.

I want to thank the clerks. The clerks do an amazing job. The assistant clerk, I want to thank them very much. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your appointment, and especially the Pages. I want to thank the Pages. The Pages do a lot for us, especially – I have a little favourite Page here, Megan O'Hanley. She makes the best coffee in Eastern Kings.

I want to thank the media for once again coming back to cover us and looking after us and treating us well.

I want to thank the people in the gallery. It's great to see the gallery full, to see democracy work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Next we'll go to the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to congratulate you on your new role. I'm thrilled and honoured to be here, and I want to thank my district, District 4 Belfast-Murray River, for putting that confidence and trust in me.

I'd like to also say hello and congratulate the hard workers in the district who helped me get here.

I'd also like to recognize the farmers, fishers and tourist operators in my district because right now it's a very busy time for them and I know that they're really looking forward to a wonderful and successful season.

Lastly, I'd just like to say what a wonderful drive it was in to Charlottetown today, to see some green and see some fields that are finally starting to sprout some crops.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like the other MLAs, I also wanted to thank a few people and just say how great it is to be here in this Legislative Assembly amongst so many of you with such great qualifications and experience.

I wanted to thank the Clerk and the Clerk Assistant for the excellent orientation session. I learned a lot about the history and you did a great job on that.

But of course my wife Karen and my children – Alex who's five, and Annika who's eight – I wanted to recognize them for so much that they gave up to help me get to this position. Of course my campaign teams and all the workers in District 18 that helped me get to where I am today. Because really I am just their face, after all, as we all are. I wanted to recognize specifically Ken Sampson who chaired the campaign in 2011 and Scott Hammill who did this time around, 2015.

I also wanted to just thank all of the voters in District 18 Rustico-Emerald who

exercised their democratic right to vote, because that's so important. It was great to see a record turnout, and that's democracy at its greatest.

I haven't forgotten that I will have office hours at times and locations where people can reach me and that is coming, I say that to my constituents.

Spring really is a hub of activity for many people in District 18 and across the Island. The farmers are out sowing the fields, of course, the fishermen are hauling in their traps with delicious things to eat, tourism operators are really getting back at it. A lot of people are back to work in earnest. So I'm thinking of all them and bringing greetings on their behalf.

Communities really are starting to ramp up as well. Communities are cleaning up their parks, for example, and lots of volunteers coming out to do that. There are many community socials that are coming up, probably starting with rhubarb and moving on to blueberry and strawberry a little later on. I'm looking very much forward to attending those functions as I know many of my constituents are.

Of course, on the sports scene, we've got spring hockey finishing up and minor soccer starting.

So I'll close just to say that I'm also thinking of all those who are ill in the district, especially Kenneth Parker who worked so hard on my campaign.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Now we'll call on the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland.

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

It is indeed a tremendous honour and privilege to stand up in this House for the

first time as the Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland.

I want to start, also, by adding my congratulations to yourself on your election as our Speaker. I want to thank the constituents of Kellys Cross-Cumberland for their faith in me – some might say their leap of faith – in putting me here in the House.

Indeed I want to thank all Islanders who voted for alternative politics this time around, and I look forward to representing them in this House, and to work collaboratively with all of the new members and the old members of this House to finding the best solutions to the many problems that we have and to improve the lives of all Islanders.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you.

We'll call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I'd like to first congratulate you on your victory in becoming Speaker. I'd like to thank everybody for the warm welcome to this honoured hall and I hope that I can represent the people of District 13 Charlottetown-Brighton as they would have me.

I'd like to thank all those who worked on my campaign, and mostly my wife and two children for giving me up for the time that they did.

I would like to, as well, recognize a group called Fusion Charlottetown who are having their kickoff event tonight at 7:00 at the brewery. They're a group that's assembled – mostly comprised of engaged young individuals from Charlottetown that are essentially looking to make Charlottetown a better place to work, live and do business.

I'd like to recognize Sam Ferguson who's in the gallery here today who worked tirelessly on our party's campaign.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to welcome all our guests to the gallery today and a special welcome to all the new members. It's been a very interesting past four years to see the people who have come and gone out of this Assembly, and I certainly look forward to working with everyone here in this Assembly.

I want to acknowledge in the gallery today, we have the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI. Rob Lantz has joined us, and welcome to him. Looking forward to a very productive four weeks.

A special thank you to all of the constituents in District 11 who've once again showed confidence in me to return to be their MLA, to do the work that I've been doing over the last eight years, and continue to do.

And I want to give a special shout out to my daughter who was part of the Charlottetown Rural rugby team last night who won in overtime with a try to capture the gold medal in the high school rugby league for grade 10s.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour and a privilege to be part of this democratic process. I look forward to the debates and the professionalism in the House.

I want to thank my family, first of all, for allowing me to do this, and of course my campaign team, my constituents who ultimately put me here. I also want to give notice that the Liberal youth election for a new president is being held in District 16, by the way, on Saturday, and I hope all their

successes as well and those ones that are vying for the position.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Sherry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will join with the colleagues on the floor of the House to say congratulations, Mr. Speaker, on your new role, and to say I believe I have every confidence that you will do a wonderful job in that role in keeping the tenor high on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

To also say thank you to my constituents in District 21 Summerside-Wilmot for placing their confidence in me, and to recognize the faith in the democracy as a whole with such a large turnout at election time.

To certainly welcome the guests in the gallery and wish everyone well throughout the upcoming session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to also add my congratulations on your victory yesterday. I'm looking forward to the next four years serving under you as Speaker.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues for the last two weeks – your support and encouragement – and ask for your continued patience over the next little while as we navigate this huge learning curve.

I'd also like to thank my family for their love and support. Without them we are nothing, and I'd like to ask for their patience as well over the next four years because there won't be too many homemade suppers, I can guarantee that.

I'd also like to thank the residents of District 22 for their faith in me as well, and I look forward to working hard for them and being their voice here at Legislature over the next four years.

I'd also like to wish a happy birthday to the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland for his birthday yesterday. We did have a little celebration last evening, and happy birthday, Peter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Did I miss anybody?

[There was a technical malfunction]

There's a few (Indistinct) also (Indistinct) over the years, (Indistinct) decades ago (Indistinct).

Resolutions of Sympathy

Speaker: Now, next on the agenda.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the following resolution of sympathy:

Whereas Dr. Albert "Bud" Ings, a former Member of the Legislative Assembly for 3rd Kings, passed away on March 20th, 2015;

Therefore be it resolved that this House recognize the contributions made by the late assemblyman Dr Albert "Bud" Ings.

I had the privilege, as have other members, of knowing Bud Ings. In 1970 he was elected in the Alex Campbell government as the MLA for 3rd Kings, and again in 1974, becoming minister of agriculture and then minister of health and social services in 1978. He became president of the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island in the early 1980s.

Dr. Ings began his veterinarian clinic practice in Fortune before moving to Montague where he established Montague Veterinary Clinic and Brudenell Animal Hospital. Dr. Ings was proud to have contributed to the establishment of the Atlantic Veterinary College.

A member of Montague Town Council, he was an active community resident and shared his passion and his musical abilities with many local organizations. In later years, Dr. Ings became an author, writing a book of personal memoir and Prince Edward Island heritage.

His contributions to our province were recognized through various awards including the Eugene Whelan Green Hat Award, as an inductee of the Atlantic Agriculture Hall of Fame, and as a member of the Order of Prince Edward Island.

I know that all Members of the Legislative Assembly will join me in offering our condolences to his daughters, Jeanne, Joanne, Jayne, his cherished granddaughters, his sisters Eileen and Lillian, and his brother Harley. Our deepest sympathy to them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker's Remarks

Speaker: Could everybody please rise?

Hon. members, I wish to advise that I am in receipt of correspondence from the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland requesting that I officially recognize him as Leader of the Third Party within the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

I have reviewed the precedent established by the Speaker of this Legislative Assembly in 1997 and the rules of this House. As a result, and given:

1. The hon. member is the Leader of a registered political party in the province and has served in that capacity since 2012,
2. The hon. member offered, and was elected, in the recent general election as the Leader of his party, and,
3. The clear precedent set in this Legislative Assembly in 1997 by my predecessor.

I wish to advise this House that the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland will be officially recognized as Leader of the Third Party in this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Blanche Hogg

Ms. Sherry: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise in the House to recognize a special lady from the Summerside area.

If you opened the *Journal Pioneer* on Tuesday and flipped to the sports section, you would have seen the headline “Farewell to Fame.” The half page tribute was to the PEI Hall of Fame golfer Blanche Hogg.

A veteran of the Second World War, Hogg took up golf in 1946. Throughout her outstanding career she won eight provincial amateur titles between 1955 and 1967, three senior provincial championships in 1975, 1976 and 1982, and 12 Summerside club championships between 1955 and 1973.

She also won three Green Gables Labour Day weekend tournaments, the Moncton City Championship, and the Harold E. Gaudet Memorial Trophy. On top of all these tremendous accolades, she represented Prince Edward Island at seven national championships at the amateur and senior level.

Her countless awards and long resume saw her inducted into the PEI Sports Hall of Fame in 1976.

With her talent in golf and experiences in bowling, badminton and hockey, Hogg was a trailblazer for females in sport when it was often considered unladylike.

Unfortunately, Blanche recently passed away. At her passing she was the oldest Prince Edward Island Sports Hall of Fame member. Blanche was indeed a trailblazer and her legacy shall live on forever.

I would like to extend my sympathies on behalf of myself and this Legislature and to say a very special thank you to her family for sharing her with us for the past 96 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

100 Women Who Care PEI

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today in the House to congratulate the Prince Edward Island chapter of 100 Women Who Care on their first anniversary.

This chapter started when Aileen Matters, a member of the Saint John chapter, relocated back to the Island. She recognized that there were many caring women on the Island as well as charities who were in need of assistance. Aileen suggested to a few friends that a 100 Women Who Care chapter would be ideal for Prince Edward Island.

The group started to recruit 100 women who would commit \$100 four times a year. The idea was that these women would have \$10,000 to give immediately to charity.

The first meeting was a huge success: 112 women joined, and the DARE program of the Charlottetown Police Department was the successful and grateful recipient of \$11,200.

I am pleased to report that we now have 157 members, and on June 9th at the Confederation Centre three more local charities will have a chance to receive \$15,700 from this generous group of women.

To date, the group has raised \$54,100. The Humane Society, the Salvation Army Christmas baskets, the Adventure Group and, as previously mentioned, the DARE program received funding in the first year.

New members are always welcome and encouraged to join. Our next meeting is June 9th at Confederation Centre. Registration is 5:00 p.m. and the meeting starts at 5:30 p.m.

More information can be found online at www.100womenpei.com or check us out on Facebook.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Pat Mella

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour for me to rise in this House today and speak about an amazing Islander.

Pat Mella, former Leader of the Opposition, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, minister of finance, chair of Treasury Board, minister responsible for the PEI Public Service Commission, PEI Lending Agency, PEI Liquor Control Commission, and the Status of Women under Pat Binns.

She can now add one more title to her resume, Dr. Pat Mella, after receiving an honorary doctorate of law degree from the University of Prince Edward Island this spring where she addressed the graduates.

Dr. Mella exemplifies all of the qualities of a good leader and has shown that time and time again in her community.

Ms. Mella received her early education in Bloomfield and Kinkora and graduated in 1965 from St. Dunstan's University with a major in English. She received her Master's degree in medical sociology from the Catholic University of America and, in 1973, a Bachelor of Education from UPEI.

Ms. Mella enjoyed an extensive teaching career in Washington, DC; Ottawa and Kingston, Ontario; and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Lucky for us, she returned to PEI in 1979, teaching political science and English at four Charlottetown area schools: Colonel Gray, Queen Charlotte, Birchwood, and Charlottetown Rural.

Dr. Mella has become a well-respected figure on Prince Edward Island and is a leader we can all look up to, and I am more than happy to have her as a constituent in Stratford-Kinlock and as my mentor.

I want to congratulate Pat on her accomplishments and wish her all the best in her future.

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.

Potato needle crisis

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

Question to the Premier: Premier, why wasn't there a single mention in the throne speech about the potato needle crisis that's currently facing Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government will be placing this on the order paper today as a matter of urgency for discussion in this House and it's an indication of how seriously we take this matter that it's going to be brought forward on our very first day of business.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's being brought forward because we're giving it time and we're doing a joint motion. We didn't have a choice. We couldn't put anything in the Speech From the Throne, and you wrote it yourself.

Question again to the Premier: Do you not recognize how grave this situation is for Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed I do. I've been in discussions with the farming community and on farms that

are experiencing this situation. As a government we've had discussions with farming organizations at a very senior level, as well as with other orders of government, and of course that will come out in the course of the discussion later today.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Visiting a couple of farmers on their farm I don't think is nearly enough. I mean, you could have put this in the Speech From the Throne that we know he wrote himself. I'm wondering: Why would he leave this out?

Question again to the Premier. The throne speech lays out the government's vision for the coming year. Is the safety and security of the potato industry on Prince Edward Island not part of your vision?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, indeed it is, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm surprised with such a key detail being left out of the Speech From the Throne, which he wrote himself – and as we know his attention to detail on the speech – I can't understand why he would leave it out.

Question again to the Premier: Premier, did you forget this detail when you were writing the speech?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we have been very much on top of this issue and in active discussion.

It's something that we've been treating with the utmost seriousness throughout

government. We are standing together with the farming community in addressing this issue. Indeed, it's a very serious concern to the farming community, and I may add, to the entire economy of the province given the role that the potato sector plays in our total economic success.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm not sure that the Premier really does understand because he left it out of the throne speech. He has done nothing at all besides visit a couple of farms – his own words. Gail Shea came right forward with money. The federal government has money on the table. This province doesn't have five cents on the table for farmers. The throne speech talked at length about the need to grow our exports in the primary industries here on Prince Edward Island.

Question to the Premier: Does the Premier not think that criminal sabotage to our potato industry will have an impact on this?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, indeed I do, Mr. Speaker.

We are, of course, addressing the issue and we're quite seriously concerned about it and about the effect that it could have in terms of our ability to continue to build on the success. Indeed, our position in the Speech From the Throne and many other places, including our platform, and right across government, has been that we are building on success. We are emphasizing the food sector as a very important part of our overall provincial economy and our total community and we intend to deal with this, and have been dealing with it, with the utmost seriousness.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There's a whole lot words to say we've done nothing. Gail Shea was right here on the ground putting money on the table, this Premier's done nothing. He's been in office while this was going on. He had an opportunity to put money on the table to help farmers. He didn't even put it in the Speech From the Throne. With the Premier's keen attention to detail, I'm really surprised by this.

Question to the Premier. In the speech the Premier wrote he talked about the historic strength of our food sector. How does he expect that strength to hold up when this industry is under assault?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the initiatives that I'm sure my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, would be pleased to expand upon that have been taken between the province and the federal government based on discussions with Minister Ritz, Minister Shea – I met with Minister Shea – are based on the Growing Forward Program which is a joint federal-provincial program. We're proud to be supporting the initiatives taken under that program. The Growing Forward Program is a joint federal-provincial program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier's already passing the buck. Six questions in, first Question Period, he passed the buck to the agriculture minister.

This is a very important thing and a very important industry here on Prince Edward Island. This government, I would think, would see it at least fit to put it in the Speech From the Throne. Didn't do that. Maybe met with Gayle Shea, maybe not. I'm not 100% sure on that because it took six questions to even get that out, even though I brought up three times that Gayle Shea has money on the table and you haven't put anything on the table.

We heard a lot about the branding of our province as Canada's food island to increase our prosperity. Question to the Premier. How can our producers achieve that prosperity while trying to deal with the criminal assault to their livelihood?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, our potato sector is very capable.

They work directly with their customers, they work through the potato board, and of course the potato industry acknowledges the seriousness of the metal objects –

Leader of the Opposition: This isn't any different from the last guy.

Premier MacLauchlan: – the metal objects found (Indistinct) –

Leader of the Opposition: More of the same.

Speaker: Hon. member, the Premier has the floor.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and this is something that in fact has been a top priority and continues to be for the province.

Leader of the Opposition: Same old, same old.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Leader of the Opposition: Heard this song and dance already.

Speaker: We'll go now to the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Potato needle crisis (further)

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The ongoing criminal act of foreign objects with potatoes is a big issue here on Prince Edward Island.

My question goes to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Minister, do you agree that this is an important issue for the industry in our province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

The hon. member is quite right, this is an absolutely fantastic bad news in our industry. That's why I have met with the Leader of the Opposition, the Member from Stratford-Kinlock, and he offered to give up time so we could share this, and I'm very pleased that you, as Member from Souris-Elmira, are going to second the motion this afternoon, because both parties up till now seem to have been on the side that this is the most crucial issue facing our agriculture industry.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) the Speech From the Throne.

Mr. McIsaac: I spoke with Minister Ritz and Minister Shea both about this. They have federal money, we have provincial money, in this issue trying to get it going forward. This is crucial. It's 60% federal and 40% provincial money through the Growing Forward program. We have put money into the potato board to help with the reward to capture the people who are doing this.

But I am so pleased that the opposition would come forward, offer some time, that you yourself, hon. member, would come forward and second the motion so that we show as a continuity, a group, that are working together to show our producers in this province that the potato industry is so crucial and so important to this issue and not picky-picky like it's happening here.

We have to show the people of our province this is the most crucial issue facing our producers at this present time.

Leader of the Opposition: Maybe you should take the lead. The other fella's asleep. Maybe you should take the lead. (Indistinct) Premier's (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: I agree. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree, this is an important issue, I agree, and it should have been in the Speech From the Throne and we're awful shocked that it wasn't, so we did agree to do the motion. We did agree to do the motion.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries inform the House what steps the potato board has taken on this situation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

The potato board is working in concert with our department on this very issue where they have put forward a reward. They've met with me, I think it was actually the first day I was in office. I met with the members from the potato board, they came forward to talk about what can we do further. Since that time I've spoken both with Minister Ritz and with Minister Shea to see if we can expand upon this.

This is a very crucial issue and we as a group in this House need to come together on this and show the people of our province and the producers of our province we have their back. I am very pleased to say that I think the motion and working on the motion this afternoon will actually send that message to our producers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, the motion will send a message, but we do – they need help. They're getting it from the feds and we need it from you fellas. We need the help right here from this floor. Right here.

Can you please tell Islanders what steps your government is taking to deal with this issue?

Leader of the Opposition: Their Premier was on a farm.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

We have gone forward in helping our producers to purchase metal detection equipment, 35% up to \$30,000 for smaller items for the individual farm. We're actually at 35% of \$100,000 for metal detection equipment for the larger farms where you pack for four or five more people. This is crucial and we are working to see if we can get more of this equipment in place.

It is a darn shame that we have to do this, but this is our major agricultural product. It makes up over half of the farm receipts from our agricultural economy, and it is crucial that we get to the bottom of this. We – and the potato wart as well –

Leader of the Opposition: Tell the Premier that too, eh?

Mr. McIsaac: – are working with the RCMP to make sure we get to the bottom –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) the Premier.

Mr. McIsaac: – of this and solve it. Because again, I don't need to repeat myself but I will, this is crucial to our agriculture industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We get it that this is a serious issue. You're getting up. This is a serious issue. We all understand the issue. We know it's an issue. It's a serious issue. We get that.

What is the province doing to help the industry to protect the crops from these criminal acts?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much to the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Again, really serious issue. We're working in concert with the potato board to try and

find who is doing this, and with the RCMP, and there is a reward out for that. The RCMP is looking and has been working on this for some time now. I've been in touch with the RCMP with regards to that to see what the follow up is on that.

We are also putting money forward, as I had said, to look at financing and helping finance. We have done some already. I think it's seven machines we've got in. Seven farms we've helped already. I think there's upwards of a lineup of 20 farms that are looking for this equipment. We're looking at the funding for that. We have dollars in place in concert on a 60-40 split through Growing Forward 2. With the federal government we will get that money out, we'll get those machines in place.

But again, I say, it is a darn shame that we have to do this. But we have to support our industry and we have to show support from everyone from this House to our potato producers that this is crucial. We want the best potatoes in the world, that are grown here in PEI, to be considered that by the consumers of our province and right around the world.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No. We have the best potatoes in the world right here on Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Have the best potatoes now. Now.

When will you be announcing aid for the farmers to help them increase food safety from this threat? When will you be announcing it?

Leader of the Opposition: Good questions.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much.

You're right. As I said earlier, we have the number one potatoes in the world, it's well known, and we have to make sure we safeguard that.

As for dollars going forward to the farm community, we can look back to the previous minister of agriculture who started that funding towards the farmers to help them out there. We are continuing on that.

Mr. LaVie: Let's go forward. (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: New way of doing business.

Mr. McIsaac: We will continue to do that.

Leader of the Opposition: New way of doing business.

Mr. McIsaac: Seven farms at the present time have received the funding.

Leader of the Opposition: Transparency, openness.

Mr. McIsaac: More funding is going forward.

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. McIsaac: There are dollars in our budget –

Speaker: Let the minister talk.

Mr. McIsaac: – through the Growing Forward 2 to help our producers with this. And we're working even further –

Leader of the Opposition: I believe –

Mr. McIsaac: – in concert with the federal minister Ritz and Minister Shea to make sure that we continue to get that dollars forward to the producers who need it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: We'll go to the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Power cable

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Northumberland power cable project is vitally important to the security of the province.

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Can the minister update the House on the status of this important infrastructure project?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it is one of the top priorities for our government to ensure that we get the funding in place, in concert with the federal government, to start the construction of that cable. Just as early as last week there was a meeting with Minister Shea to reiterate to her the importance of this project to us. It's a \$150 million project.

There was some commitment from the federal government that they would come on as a partner. But as yet –

Leader of the Opposition: Some commitment?

Ms. Biggar: – there has been no agreement signed.

Leader of the Opposition: Fifty-million dollars worth is some?

Ms. Biggar: There has been no agreement signed on that –

Leader of the Opposition: Fifty-million dollars.

Ms. Biggar: – and we will continue to have communication with them –

Leader of the Opposition: Some commitment.

Ms. Biggar: – on that.

Leader of the Opposition: I hope Gail's not watching.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations to the minister on her appointment.

A supplementary question to the minister: Minister, how many new jobs on PEI will this \$150 million project generate?

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

Ms. Biggar: Right now we have an RFP out on that particular project to put a number of pieces in place. In terms of how many jobs that's going to create, we'll have to get that project going first before we can certainly see how many resources we're going to need.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Supplementary question to the minister: When do you anticipate the project to get underway?

Speaker: (Indistinct).

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

Speaker: Go ahead, minister.

Ms. Biggar: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, we're still in negotiations with the federal government to get that agreement signed. We're ready to go here on our side –

Mr. LaVie: No you're not.

Ms. Biggar: – so we look forward to moving on that. But as I said, there is an RFP out to start some of the planning and we look forward to that starting.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that they are ready to go. Has the minister confirmed provincial funds to Maritime Electric and committed the funds to the project?

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

Leader of the Opposition: It was in the speech, didn't you read it? Oh, wait. It's not in the speech either.

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, thank you very much for the question. As I said, we're ready to continue negotiations with the federal government and move forward on that project.

Mr. LaVie: So there's no funding?

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) for you. (Indistinct) of business.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: New question to the minister, Mr. Speaker.

How long do you anticipate the project will take to complete?

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

Go ahead.

Ms. Biggar: Go ahead – sorry, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, as soon as we can get that agreement signed we'll be moving forward with the project.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Power cable RFP extension

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, the RFP for the new Northumberland Strait power project was originally slated to close on May 20th. It has now been extended until June 19th.

New question for the minister. Why was this extension given?

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

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, thank you. I'll look for some more information on that as to

why the reason was that and bring that back to you tomorrow.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker.

Madam Minister, to date how many proposals have been received under this RFP?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. member, that's an ongoing process, so once it's all closed we'll have that information.

An Hon. Member: We just want to know how (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Minister, Mr. Speaker, the RFP states that 60 days (Indistinct) being set aside to complete the regulatory approval process.

Question to the minister: Do you anticipate IRAC signing off on this time frame?

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

Ms. Biggar: We'll be having a number of discussions with IRAC and Maritime Electric in regard to moving forward with this project and we expect that we'll have ongoing communication around that, hon. member.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

TIE minister and Maritime Electric

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, minister, you said this was a top priority.

You haven't committed to that this funding has been allotted to the province, or to Maritime Electric by the province.

I have already met with members of Maritime Electric and the federal government on this project. Has the minister met with Maritime Electric on the project to this date?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We met last week with the member, Gail Shea, on behalf of the federal government.

Leader of the Opposition: When did she start working (Indistinct)?

Mr. LaVie: She doesn't work (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: It's a \$150 million project. We need to have that commitment from the federal government and have them sign onto this, and we will continue negotiations and communications –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) never met.

Ms. Biggar: – with Maritime Electric on this project.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) business. Look at the old boss (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: To date, hon. members I haven't had any direct sit down communication with Maritime Electric.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Thank you.

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

Power cable funding status

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Finance. First off, I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment, minister.

My question is, what is the current funding status on the power cable project?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, the current funding status – we're still, again, in negotiations with the federal government, and until those are finalized we won't have those complete numbers.

Thank you.

Speaker: We'll turn now to questions from members.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd just like to preface my first question by saying that during the recent election there was considerable excitement and optimism, I believe, among the electorate for a renewal of our decorum here in the House. I have to say that I'm somewhat disappointed in what I have seen in the first session here. I think the public of Prince Edward Island is hungry for some civility in this House and for members treating each other with respect. To disagree indeed, and you will indeed find some searching questions from me, but let's disagree with civility, please.

Ammonium nitrate import amount

A question for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. Firstly, congratulations on your appointment.

Cavendish Farms has recently submitted a proposal to build a storage facility that would increase the capacity for imported fertilizers. Could the minister please provide the House with the amount of ammonium nitrate currently being imported on a yearly basis to Prince Edward Island for agricultural purposes?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the hon. member for that question. Today I do not have that full data on the amount of fertilizers that have been brought in. I will be able to accumulate that data over the next few hours, I'm sure, get that in a document for him, and present it back to the House.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Supplementary question.

Thank you, minister, and I thank you for taking that under advisement.

We know that we already have elevated nitrate levels in groundwater across Prince Edward Island. This new storage facility may lead – in fact, almost certainly will lead – to increased use of ammonium nitrate across our land. Given this government's commitment to improved water quality and the health and wellness of Islanders, could the minister please explain how increasing the use of ammonium nitrate will lead to an advancement of these goals?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I can at this point in time assure the hon. member is that currently there is an environmental impact assessment in the process. The hon. member will know that is a timely process. There are a lot of layers to that. Currently, they'll be taking submissions from the public, both written and verbal. There will also be a chance for public input towards that. So the process will follow out going forward, hon. member, and I'm sure all of those things will be coming forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Summerside youth addictions facility

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Minister, back in the fall the government announced a youth treatment facility for the city of Summerside. This facility is a very important avenue when treating youth for addictions to ensure they get their lives back on track.

Mr. Minister, could you update this House on the progress of the Summerside youth addictions facility?

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

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

One of the most complex, emotional, challenging issues that I've had to work at has been the challenge to meet the growing change of addictions in the Province of Prince Edward Island, which I must add is no different than a lot of jurisdictions across our country.

In 2009 we opened the Strength Program, which is a day program which existed and provided day programs. Last spring, as part of a three-year, \$9 million investment, we announced the opening of the new 24/7 residential facility which is located in Summerside, but is a provincial facility for youth and to provide supports for families struggling with youth addictions.

Speaker: One supplementary.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Having a local youth addictions facility in Summerside is great for the whole province. This is an issue that needs as many resources as possible.

Combatting youth addictions

The supplementary question to the same minister: On top of this new facility, what else is the province doing to help combat youth addictions?

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

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

As part of that announcement, obviously the addition of more front-line staff, the expansion of community-based programs to support youth as they transition out of the 24/7 facility, but most importantly, we're

currently working at finalizing the opening date of our new youth mental health unit, along with the new behavioural unit, which is a team which is part of the announcements that were made last fall as part of the \$9 million investment.

I must say that we have made substantial investment in the area. I think over the last number of years there's been a 30% increase in spending as we are faced with the changing face of addictions here in our province.

We're committed to supporting youth and families as they transition to recover, and as I've said numerous times in this Assembly, there is hope in recovery.

Thank you.

Speaker: Now we'll go to the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Watershed funding

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

As the minister is aware, PEI's numerous watershed groups all across this province are working very hard at improving wildlife habitat and fish habitat, and they also promote sustainable economic practices and work with landowners in resolving economic risks.

PEI Watershed Alliance represents over 21 regions, and in the past the provincial government has committed about \$1 million to core watershed funding, although at this point they've only received – about \$800,000 has been allocated.

Can the minister enlighten this Legislature what criteria is used to fund individual watersheds and how that money's been divided up to those watersheds?

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

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

I'd like to thank the Member from O'Leary-Inverness for this question today, and I might point out that it's a very timely question. Just in the last few days I did receive some correspondence from the watershed alliance asking to meet and have some discussion regarding the structure of funding and some other issues that they have.

I, as the new minister, am very well aware of the great work that these watershed groups do to enhance these waterways, to enhance the ecosystem, and as well as the sport fishing industry. Mr. Speaker, you and I had the opportunity last week to visit one of these very valuable watersheds.

I'm very well aware of the great work they do and I am very interested in working in collaboration and cooperation with the watershed alliance on a go-forward basis. They're looking for maybe some new structure for the 2016 season and I'm very interested in sitting down with them.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Supplementary –

Speaker: One supplementary.

Mr. Henderson: One supplementary.

Anyway, as the minister may be well aware, the riding of O'Leary-Inverness does have four watersheds. We have Harmony, Trout Unlimited, West Point, and Lot 11.

I want to bring a little bit of enlightenment to the Lot 11 watershed which is one of the larger watersheds in the riding and has been in existence since 2008 and comprises actually about nine watersheds within its boundaries. It covers an area of about 15,000 hectares and yet its core funding is actually only about \$26,000 annually while other watersheds of similar size are getting actually about \$35,000 annually.

Speaker: Do you have a question, member?

Mr. Henderson: Will the minister correct these discrepancies in the Lot 11 watershed and treat that watershed fairly?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do get the idea that the watershed alliance does have concerns on how these funds may be dispersed. By all means, I have a very strong commitment to sit down and have a discussion with them if there's – as I said, it's a collaborative approach that I will be taking, a bottom up approach with the watershed group. I know that if there are some areas where they feel are being underfunded or overfunded we can definitely deal with that in a go-forward way during these coming months.

We'd be pleased to visit some of these watersheds, especially in the O'Leary-Inverness area with the member in the coming months, and see them first hand.

Speaker: Revert to the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Power cable cost-sharing

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Supplementary question to the Minister of Finance: The three partners in the power cable project, the feds, the province and Maritime Electric, how is this project going to be cost-shared?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. member for that question.

Obviously this is a \$150 million project. It's a very important project to the Province of Prince Edward Island, to everyone who's involved in the many different industries that we have here, as well as to our homeowners. So there is a lot of work to be done on at file.

We have had some great negotiations so far with our partners in this and those negotiations will continue. As always, we'll be there looking for the best possible deal that we can get for the Province of Prince Edward Island and for our ratepayers and taxpayers.

Thank you.

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

Power cable provincial funding

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A second supplementary question to the minister: What is the province's share going to be of the cable project?

Ms. Biggar: As the minister of energy, I'll take that question.

Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: We have an application in for funding. We've had ongoing negotiations –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – with the federal government. An application went into Infrastructure Canada in June of 2014. We've had ongoing negotiations since then. A part of those negotiations is to get 50-50 funding on that.

Mr. LaVie: You put an application in with the finance minister?

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, the application is in to the Canada Fund. We're looking for 50-50 dollars on that. That was where our negotiations started with the federal government.

There seems to be some –

Leader of the Opposition: About seven years ago.

Ms. Biggar: – change in what their commitment is to that. So we'll have ongoing negotiations with them –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – on that.

[There was a technical malfunction]

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

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) the Minister of Finance.

On March 20th Gail Shea announced federal funding of \$50 million for this project. It's a major step forward. When will the province be announcing its share of the funding for the project?

Speaker: Who wants to take the –

Ms. Biggar: I'll take that question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In regard to the commitment that was made by the federal government, which was a great commitment, but as I said it's an ongoing negotiation. As yet there hasn't been a signed agreement, and I look forward to working together with the opposition to bring that message to the hon. Gail Shea and the federal government how really important this cable is to Prince Edward Island and the need to have secure power. I would look forward to working together with you on that project and make sure that we get them signed on so we can get this going for Islanders.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm a little surprised that to date we've had no announcement on the funding. It's supposedly been a priority for the last seven years. So I'm just going to ask a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance or infrastructure: Why hasn't, to date, the province announced any funding? What is the reasoning?

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

Leader of the Opposition: The last premier and finance minister broke the province.

Ms. Biggar: As a province we work closely with the government. Our application is in there. We're waiting for them to make a final commitment to us so that we can sit down together and sign that agreement until we're – like, we know we're going after 50-

50 dollars and we have that negotiation on the table. As soon as the federal government wants to come and sign –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – that agreement, we'll be ready to get going on the project.

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

Power cable funding confirmation

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

New question for the minister: With the announcement of \$50 million from the federal government, the Premier stated he was reviewing his options. With that review, when are we going to have that funding confirmed? It's a question all Islanders would like the answer for.

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

Ms. Biggar: That's a question, certainly, we ask every time we meet with the federal government. It is, as I said, a \$150 million project. Originally they committed 50% of that. Right now they're only committing 50 million, and we're hoping they will come forward with the other 20 million so that we can finish our negotiations on that.

But, again, we're looking forward to continuing those negotiations with Minister Shea. As the federal minister representing Prince Edward Island, I'm sure she knows how important this project is to all Islanders –

Leader of the Opposition: She gave you \$50 million –

Ms. Biggar: – and as soon as we sit down together and sign that agreement we'll be ready to go.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A supplementary question to the Minister of Finance or infrastructure. We are still questioning why the reason for the delay

from the province. We want a commitment from the province. Is the funding delay because the province will not cooperate? Or is it because you cannot cooperate with the funding?

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

Ms Biggar: Thank you.

We are looking – just to follow up on an earlier question about starting the project. It depends on getting the cable supplies as well. But in terms of the funding itself, we still need to finalize the negotiations. The federal government has come back a number of times for further information, which has been provided to them in terms of the application that we have in, and we'll continue to work with them on that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden - Kinkora.

Power cable provincial funding (further)

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

I'm confused, because when I met with Maritime Electric two weeks ago they told me they had a commitment from the federal government for \$50 million.

I was at the announcement in Summerside where Minister Gail Shea announced the \$50 million. I think the Premier was there. So in my meeting with Maritime Electric they said that they had their money ready to go. The fed money is ready to go. They said, and told me that they had no commitment from the provincial government, your office, on the commitment to put money into this project.

Are you supporting the project? Do you have the money available?

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

Ms Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There was an announcement, yes, that was a great announcement. But with any announcement comes an agreement that

needs to be signed, and we're looking forward to having that signed.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, the minister is not answering the question.

Do you have money available to put into the project?

Speaker: (Indistinct). The hon. minister –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) to answer. Now when no one gets up, go back to him.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we're looking forward to next week when we announce our budget and we're looking forward to, again as I said earlier, trying to get the best deal we can for Prince Edward Island. We look out for Islanders, and we certainly appreciate the fact that the federal government has come forward and offered their funds, and we appreciate the fact that Maritime Electric has done the same.

But still, we have a budget that's coming forward next week, and again, I'll reiterate that there's no deal officially signed yet and up until the last moment we'll do everything we can to negotiate perhaps a little bit better deal for Islanders so that down the road there'll be less there in terms of a burden on Island taxpayers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, final question.

Power cable provincial funding (further)

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

We find out today that the Premier didn't bother to put anything about the potato needle into the Speech From the Throne. Also we find out today they didn't bother to put anything in about the cable nor is there any arrangement signed – because, I don't know what they're doing over there, but

they don't seem to be able to negotiate anything. They're not ready for this project. They can't seem to answer questions. All day long they hide and evade. This isn't a new way of doing business. This isn't transparency. This isn't openness.

Question to the Premier, and I hope you'll answer it: Do you have your portion of the cable ready to put into this project?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The implementation of the cable project will be a multi-party arrangement that will include the federal government, it will include Maritime Electric, and it will include the province.

The process will be first to determine the actual cost of the project. It will be to confirm that when the federal government announced that it had – it will be to confirm with the federal government that the portion through federal infrastructure funding that we've been talking about will in fact be there, and it will be to confirm the part that will be played through ongoing commitments through the ratepayers to Maritime Electric.

This is a complicated process and it's not something that –

Leader of the Opposition: It's not complicated. We asked you if you have the money.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's not something that's done until you finally have a negotiation –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) complicated –

Speaker: The Premier has the floor.

Premier MacLauchlan: It's not something that's done until you finally have a negotiation completed.

Anyone that's been involved and negotiating what, in fact, is the biggest project that we've done in this province since the Confederation Bridge is not going to stand

here and tell you what all the cards are that we're putting on the table until we determine that our partners on the other side are there in the measure that we want them to be.

Thank you.

Speaker: That's the end of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Supporting Prince Edward Island's Potato Industry

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

I rise in the House today to recognize Prince Edward Island's potato industry and the hard-working farmers who make their living in Prince Edward Island's potato fields.

The potato industry is an extremely important contributor to our province, creating economic development and jobs in our rural communities. In my own district it is the primary industry and the largest employer.

I believe that a strong, sustainable potato industry requires many partners and I'm pleased that I, along with my staff, can work with our growers and the PEI Potato Board to continue to move the industry forward.

Potatoes have always been one of the first things associated with Prince Edward Island. We are Canada's largest potato producer and our potatoes are known nationally and internationally for their high quality.

As a province, we need to continue to build on this success and the success of our other primary industries. We are a place where, as part of our culture, we care about producing quality food in all of our farming and fishing sectors. This quality cannot be duplicated anywhere else. We have a great opportunity to take advantage of PEI's reputation as a producer of high quality land and sea-based products in a new way that will lead to significant growth – creating demand for fishers' and farmers' products.

Moving forward, our government is working with industry and the federal government to develop a PEI Food Strategy. When successfully implemented, this strategy will set us apart, benefitting our food producers and processors as well as our tourism sector. We plan to work with industry to establish and promote Prince Edward Island as "Canada's Food Island."

For the potato industry, that includes building on our current successes and meeting ongoing issues with cooperation and resiliency to keep the industry strong.

This afternoon I will be introducing a motion that reiterates government's commitment to the industry in light of recent criminal acts, and I hope that all Members of the Legislative Assembly will support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to say Speaker. I'm not going to say mister or madam, I'm just going to say Speaker because I don't think anybody in this House said "Madam Speaker" any more than Charlottetown-Victoria Park there was (Indistinct). (Indistinct), Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, just a response. Farming is an important industry on Prince Edward Island. It puts billions of dollars into the economy of Prince Edward Island. You just look at when you drive through the country and you see the car dealers and you see the construction companies.

When you go into a farmer's house and you look up on the wall and there are pictures on the wall of the farms when it was first started, and then a picture of the farm 20 or 25 years later after the children took over the farm, and then there are pictures with their grandchildren took over the farm, and then you go into a car dealer or a construction company and you see a little plaque on the wall or on the desk or something, you know, they're 50 years in business or 30 years in business, and you say to that business: How did you accomplish 30 years of business or 50 years of business? These companies will

tell you: That came from the farmers and the fishermen.

That's how important farming is on Prince Edward Island. The farmers, not only back in the day, but the farmers today, they look after their land. You see them out – the regulations that are put on farmers today, and these farmers work to their best to look after these regulations that are put forward to them.

When the motion comes to the floor this afternoon I'm sure everybody in the House will speak to this motion. I'm privileged to second this motion. The minister of agriculture asked me to second this motion. It was a privilege to second this motion, especially in one of the most important industries on Prince Edward Island today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Pharmacy Act Amendments

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are invaluable members of our health care team.

Every day they play a key role at the front line of health care delivery in pharmacies throughout the Island.

Pharmacists provide expert advice to physicians on the best medications for their patients. With the assistance of pharmacy assistants and technicians, they ensure Islanders get their medications as safely and efficiently as possible. Pharmacy staff are very highly trained and skilled.

We continue to tap and transfer their knowledge and skills as extraordinary new drugs become available and as they manage more and more specialized information.

By expanding the role of pharmacists and other professionals, such as nurse practitioners and paramedics, they are now authorized to provide more services for which they are fully trained.

This spring we will introduce *An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act* to clarify and expand the roles and responsibilities of pharmacy assistants, pharmacy technicians and pharmacists in dispensaries. This will ensure that each of their roles is clearly defined and updated in the legislation. It will allow these highly trained professionals to fully use their valuable skills.

People are the most important element in high quality health care. We will continue to ensure they are working collaboratively and to their full scope and capacity so that Islanders have access to the care they need, when and where they need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I very much look forward to this information coming forward and discovering what the expanded scope is for the assistants and technicians. I have been in constant conversation with many pharmacists across Prince Edward Island over the last several months during the campaign, and previous to that as well.

I am hearing many concerns from the pharmacists and the pharmaceutical community here on Prince Edward Island with regards to how there unfortunately is not a level playing field currently with regards to how the new scope of practice is being rolled out. There's still, unfortunately, many areas with regards to billing structure, availability of vaccines, etc. The pharmacists could, and should, play a much larger role in providing and helping to alleviate the wait times to see physicians, the chronic mass of Islanders that just seem to couch surf from clinic to clinic.

We quite often talked about the shortage of doctors here on Prince Edward Island with regards to the lack of family physicians. I know the minister has spoke before that roughly 94% of Islanders now have a family physician. We know that to be inaccurate due to the fact that many people have simply

fallen off the register and now rely on clinics to see a doctor, and it's just not a good way to provide proper health care for Islanders.

As I started off, I will look forward to seeing what these regs and scope is, and until I see that and have a chance to digest it, I'll leave it at that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Annual Report for the Department of Environment, Labour and Justice for the period ending March 31st, 2014 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Environment Tax Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Environment Tax Act*, Bill No. 3, read a first time.

Speaker: Minister, do you have an overview?

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, this is really just to clean up some wording in the act itself.

There's no substantial changes in there other than that.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*, Bill No. 4, read a first time.

Speaker: Minister, would you care to give an overview?

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These changes will pave the way for Island police officers to have quick access to emerging new technologies to combat drug impaired driving as soon as they receive federal approval. It'll allow the enforcement to begin immediately using oral fluid screening devices and all the technologists once they are recognized in the Criminal Code of Canada. Also, make amendments so that drivers convicted of drug impaired driving will face the same mandatory addiction treatment that is currently received for alcohol impaired drivers. And it will do further updates to reflect that the dangers of driving impaired are as serious as those with drugs as those with drinking and driving.

Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I have another bill.

Speaker: Go ahead, Madam Minister.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act*, Bill No. 6, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you like to give an brief overview of that, also?

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The main purpose of the amendments is to remove the existing 15% renewable portfolio standard. By removing the standard it will make the environmental attributes associated with the production of renewable power more attractive for sale, thereby enabling the PEI Energy Corporation to sell them for government.

Also, it will allow government to more fully monetize value of environmental attributes associated with wind power.

This act also repeals – and on the claims section that would have required public utilities to obtain 100% of their electricity from renewable resources by 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Animal Welfare Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Animal Welfare Act*, Bill No. 2, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, could you give an overview of what that is?

Mr. McIsaac: This is a long awaited act. It was actually introduced the last session and died on the order paper. But it allows our department to look after the welfare of all the animals across this province, and we look forward to getting it passed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act*, Bill No. 5, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, would you like to give an overview?

Mr. Currie: *An Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act*.

This amendment clarifies and expands the roles and responsibilities of pharmacy assistants, pharmacy technicians and pharmacists in dispensaries. It also provides for consistent record retention periods and expands regulation making authority. This amendment is fully supported by the pharmacy association and the College of Pharmacists.

Speaker: Thank you.

Motions Other Than Government?

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, at this time the opposition, as a sign of cooperation, wishes to offer some of our time to the government as we co-author and debate a very important motion which is based on one of our primary industries here on Prince Edward Island pertaining to the potato industry.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Government would like to seek unanimous consent to bring forward Motion No. 19.

Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Government Motions

Speaker: The Clerk.

Clerk: Motion No. 19.

The hon. Minister for Agriculture and Forestry gives notice that he will move, seconded by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, the following motion:

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island is Canada's largest potato producer;

AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island potatoes have a world-class reputation for quality;

AND WHEREAS the potato industry accounts for approximately one-half of total farm cash receipts;

AND WHEREAS potato producers attach the utmost priority to consumer safety;

AND WHEREAS recent incidents of potato tampering throughout the Atlantic provinces pose a threat to the integrity of the industry;

AND WHEREAS these criminal acts are financially costly to producers and processors and threaten to undermine the reputation of the industry;

AND WHEREAS safety protocols have been put in place at the processing level, with similar measures being developed for fresh pack operations;

AND WHEREAS the Prince Edward Island Potato Board and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries have offered financial rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for illegal tampering;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Legislative Assembly condemn, in the strongest possible terms, these senseless criminal acts;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly strongly express its continued support for the Island potato industry and their ongoing commitment to food safety;

AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge both the provincial and federal government to partner with the potato industry on measures as required to further strengthen food safety for consumers.

Speaker: I'll ask the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, would you move the motion?

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

First off, I want to thank the opposition. It's been great working so far with the house leader from the opposition side and also from the Member from Souris-Elmira who was quite willing to cooperate on this. They gave us their time so that we could do a joint motion on here. I really appreciate that and I appreciate the fact that we received –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: – unanimous consent from our Third Party as well.

Before I begin, I would like to say that I am really honoured to be to some degree coming home and being appointed the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, and I look forward to working with all the groups out there, the fishers, the farmers and growing our Island into Canada's Food Island, I think that's a terrific goal and we need to really count on our primary resources and our primary industries if we're going to reach that goal.

Our primary industries are an important contributor to our province, creating economic development and jobs in our rural communities. The agriculture industry generates almost half a billion dollars in cash receipts and employs approximately 3,500 people.

The total farm cash receipts in Prince Edward Island were \$488.1 million in 2014. The total crop receipts were up by 1.6% and livestock receipts were up by .7%. Agriculture is the backbone of many Island communities, including my own district, where potato production is not only the primary industry but also almost the largest in play.

If you were to drive through Vernon River-Stratford you would see farms growing cabbage, cauliflower, tulips, soy beans, other grains, hay and silage. There are hog farms, beef farms and dairy farms, sheep farms, and of course potato farms. These all contribute greatly to our provincial economy, the farm cash receipts, job creation and tax revenue for our province, and they add the real lush beauty to our province.

Potatoes have always been one of the first things associated with Prince Edward Island. We are Canada's largest potato producer and our potatoes are known nationally and internationally for their high quality. Potatoes represent the single largest agriculture commodity in Prince Edward Island in terms of farm cash receipts. In 2014 the potato receipts were \$248.4 million, the second-highest on record. Economic impact and spinoffs through PEI's economy from the potato industry exceeds \$1 billion annually.

As a province we need to continue to build on this success and the success of our other primary industries. We are a place where, as part of our culture, we care about producing quality food in all of our farming and fishing sectors. This quality cannot be duplicated anywhere else. Prince Edward Island has a global reputation as a producer of quality foods.

In agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, the quality of our products and the skills of our producers and processors are truly world class. We have a great opportunity to take advantage of PEI's reputation as a producer of quality land and sea-based products in a new way that will lead to significant growth, creating demand for farmers' and fishers' products.

Moving forward, our government is working with industry and the federal government to develop a PEI food strategy. When successfully implemented this strategy will set us apart, benefiting our food producers and processors as well as our tourism sector. We will work with industry to establish and promote Prince Edward Island as Canada's Food Island. Prince Edward Island's food sector is a vital component of our provincial economy.

We believe that concerted efforts are essential to continue to grow and diversify our agriculture, fishery and aquaculture and food processing companies. For the potato industry, that includes building on our current successes and meeting ongoing issues with cooperation and resiliency to keep our industry strong.

This afternoon, with this motion, I would like to voice my support for Prince Edward Island's potato industry as it deals with an act of criminal and malicious intent. Issues affecting the potato industry have the potential to have a significant impact on the Island's economy. We need to support the potato industry as cases of potato tampering continue to happen. The integrity of PEI's potato crop is of the utmost importance. Lack of consumer confidence in the safety of our potatoes would have significant impact on potato sales.

Since the first incident of potato tampering came to light last October, the industry, government and the RCMP have been working together to ensure that the incidents are managed as best as possible to protect food safety. Thanks to strong traceability practices, the product origin was easily identified. Since that time, enhanced safety protocols have been put in place. Our department is providing financial assistance to the industry as it attempts to recover from this issue. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has approved a project under the Growing Forward 2 Assurance Systems Program.

The program provides financial assistance to those producers purchasing and installing foreign material detection equipment. There are two tiers of funding: 35% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$30,000 – this funding is for individual producers; the second is 35% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$100,000. This higher level of funding is for larger custom packing sheds who would provide a service to others, as it was mentioned during Question Period today. That shows how we are getting involved in this industry and working with our producers.

We have also helped fund a project in cooperation with Innovation PEI, ACOA and the PEI Potato Board to evaluate potato packing processes on PEI and research

options that may provide added security. We have also contributed \$10,000 to the PEI Potato Board for their reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for illegal tampering.

Our Liberal government has made a commitment to work with the potato industry and the federal government to assist growers and processors in acquiring scanning and metal detection technologies.

This is a senseless act. Not only could it put consumers at risk, but it puts our industry at risk if consumers can no longer be confident in PEI potato products. Members of the Legislative Assembly, acts such as this cannot be tolerated, and I would ask that each member of this Legislative Assembly support this motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: To second the motion, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour to rise here today and speak to this motion. It expresses our support for the potato industry and recognizes the hard work and endurance of our potato farmers here on Prince Edward Island.

This motion is about our Island farming community and our farmers who literally carved out our beautiful landscaped province with the sweat of their brow and the bend of their backs – 594,000 acres of Prince Edward Island soil has been cleared for agriculture use. Last year alone 90,000 acres of potatoes were planted in our province – 90,000. Those acres represent not only thousands of hours of back-breaking work, but months of worry – worrying about too much rain, not enough sun, too much sun, not enough rain, frost, snow, getting the crops in, getting the crops out. It represents equipment breakdowns, anxieties, bills and more bills.

I would ask everyone in this Legislative Assembly to think about their community where they were born and raised. Think about your local co-op, your restaurants,

your hardware stores, your harness racing industry, your garages, banks, pharmacies. Think about your community of volunteers, your Women's Institute, your local fire departments, your hospital boards, your local rinks, your hockey coaches, your baseball teams, your churches, your Lions Clubs and your community festivals.

How many of the individuals who served your community, who buy from your restaurants, who purchase equipments and supplies, new trucks, build cottages, and support your community businesses and volunteer agencies, how many are farmers? How many are potato farmers?

Many of our Island communities exist today because of an endurance of our agriculture industry and those who work on our farms and built businesses to support them.

Islanders in all walks of life benefit in one way or another from our agriculture community and our potato industry. Our farmers contribute not only to the economic prosperity of our province but to the culture and identity.

I'm proud of our potato industry, and if Stompin' Tom Connors likes to say – and I won't sing it, I'll say it: It's Bud the Spud from the great red mud – and I'm darn proud of it. He's right. But lately our industry has been under attack by sources unknown. It's being sabotaged by a cowardly criminal and cowardly acts. It's frightening, and hard to believe that someone could try to destroy our farm families and the livelihood of those who earn their living potato farming and support our businesses in a potato business.

I can't understand the mind or minds that take such action without any thought for the individuals that they are hurting or the financial hardship that they are causing to our province and the people in it.

Certainly there has been lots of speculation about who's doing this. We commend the efforts of the RCMP and our industry who have been doing all they can to try and figure this out. It was needles, then nails. Are they connected? We don't know.

There are many questions, but simply too few answers. What we do know is that the reputation of our industry is being hurt, that

the livelihood of our potato farmers is threatened. Some, such as Linkletter Farms in Summerside, PEI, which shipped its potatoes to the Cavendish Farm plant, have already paid dearly for these crimes. There have been no arrests to date. Roughly 800,000 pounds of potatoes from their farm were destroyed at Cavendish Farms alone.

I believe it's time that Islanders and their elected officials stood up for potato growers. I know many of us feel their frustration and their anger. I have a lot of farms, a lot of potato farms, in my own district and I hear from them all the time, and these potato farmers are worried. They're worried today. They're worried for their future. They're worried for their family farms. They're worried for the families. These farms were passed down to these farmers. These farmers want to pass these farms down to their children. They're very worried.

I know many of us feel their frustration and their anger. I know many of us have a sense of hopelessness and wonder what can we do? Maybe there isn't a lot we can do. We can be diligent and watchful for any possible culprits, but most of all we can be vocal. We can support our growers, many of whom are neighbours, friends, family.

Thus far there have been no injuries as a result of these criminal acts, and we certainly pray that will continue to be the case. We also pray that the latest incident will be the last. Our farmers are now busy on the fields doing what they do so well and that is growing food. If there is any consolation from such tragic circumstances it's that our industry has inspired support from so many across Prince Edward Island.

It was particularly heartwarming to read that our industry has received financial support from counterparts in other provinces including Peaks of the Market, a Manitoba grower-owned vegetable supplier that has provided quality produce in Manitoba for 72 years. He contacted the PEI Potato Board and Linkletter Farms to offer a substantial donation to the reward fund. It allowed the industry to increase its reward for any information from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

The chairman of the board of the Manitoba company was quoted in the media as stating: "As an industry we cannot stand by and

allow others to interfere in the supply of safe food."

I believe that this is a sentiment that our Legislation can support. It's unfortunate that there are those out there who would attack food products and put the safety of our consumers in jeopardy for their own self-interest.

If there is anything good that can be said to come from this mess it's the sense of solidarity and perhaps a growing respect of our farming community.

I believe our farmers produce some of the healthiest food in the world. Today's farmers are concerned about their environment, about their soil. They need to protect so they can grow crops. Never before has there been such emphasis on the sustainability of the industry, and today farms are spending thousands of dollars ensuring that they can take care of their land – their future.

We should be proud of our industry's efforts and ensure that the programs and supports are there to assist them to initiate the best practice. Metal detectors might prove helpful to ensure food safety, but they are not the answer to the challenges facing our potato industry in dealing with the criminal intent that's harming our producers. It's unfortunate that we even have to resort to this kind of equipments, but since it appears necessary, I believe our government should find a means of supporting the industry financially in this area and other ways that lead to greater food production.

We're all hoping that the culprits or culprit involved in this criminal activity will be found and prosecuted. In the meantime, I believe we all have a role to play in supporting our industry through this crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Now speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise in this Legislative Assembly to support this motion in support of our potato industry.

Prince Edward Island continues to be the largest potato-producing province in Canada, growing one-quarter of the potatoes in this country. That is an achievement that I believe we should be very proud of, and I am.

I have the privilege of representing a district where many of the constituents work for the fields and derive their hard-earned dollars from potato production, and I am honoured to speak out for their industry in this motion.

Our industry is innovative, responsive to the changes in the marketplace, and has earned a reputation for its product that is first-class and worldwide. I have often said we grow the best potatoes in the world.

It has been nine months since the first needles were found in Island products. Since then, needles and nails are being found in products right across the Atlantic region and scattered locations across the country right up until yesterday.

Why would someone want to do this? It is incomprehensible, and I believe this is an act of terrorism not only against the industry but against all of us.

I want to commend our potato industry, particularly Linkletter Farms, Cavendish Farms and Morley Wood family farm, for moving so quickly to deal with this situation in an open and transparent manner in bringing the necessary equipment to detect foreign objects.

Linkletter Farms did not hesitate to notify CFIA to ensure that this product was recalled. It is comforting to know that our industry puts the safety of their consumers first whenever their livelihood is at stake.

I would also like to commend the potato board for all of its efforts in terms of a \$100,000 reward and believe this should be substantially raised.

The potato board is trying to assist farmers who are trying to find equipment that might help them improve food safety, and ACOA is assisting. The PEI Potato Board went so far as to hire a consultant to look at technology farmers could use to find these foreign objects. The consultants looked at metal detectors, x-ray technology, near-

infrared technology and chemical imaging technology. These systems detect different things such as using chemical imaging technology to find defects or x-rays to see inside the potatoes. The price of this equipment varies from \$36,000 for a metal detector that can scan 50,000 pounds of potatoes an hour to \$636,000 for a chemical imaging technology scanner that can handle 100,000 pounds of product per hour.

Our potato industry is being responsive to this crisis and some are spending a lot of money to ensure food safety, to protect the reputation of all products in the marketplace.

Like those who spoke before me, I cannot put into words my concern about this continued criminal activity that is plaguing our potato industry. I, like everyone in this House, just want it to stop.

The potato industry makes up almost half of our agriculture cash receipts each year and is worth over \$1 billion to the Island economy annually.

Again, this motion is not about the positive economic impact of our potato industry in this province. It's about the lives of the farmers who work the fields and contribute to our communities. It is about the survival of our local businesses that rely heavily on our farmers for our businesses. It's about the population having access to safe food across the marketplace.

I, like all Islanders, am hopeful that soon there will be a break in the investigation and, with the extension of the \$100,000 reward until October this year, surely someone will come forward with solid information.

According to the potato PEI website, approximately 60% of Prince Edward Island's potatoes are destined for processing, 30% go to the fresh market to retail or food service, while 10% are grown for seed purposes. Seed and table potatoes are shipped to over 20 countries annually, including the United States, Puerto Rico, the Ukraine, Italy and Thailand.

Prince Edward Island shipping season begins in late July with early or new potatoes hitting the marketplace in Atlantic Canada. The main crop is harvested starting

in September. Shipments to the markets begin at that time.

Let's have a closer look at this industry. The potato board indicates that 60 % of our Island's potato crop is destined for processing. We used to have two processing plants but unfortunately, as everybody knows, my region recently suffered the loss of 110-plus jobs when the McCain's facility closed. I will address that issue at a later date. The other over 100 jobs Borden-Kinkora lost in the last year.

Cavendish Farms employs roughly 800 workers. Think about that. Some of our Island's communities have less than 800 people as their population base. Our Island communities are already suffering from the loss of our workforce which is continuing to be attracted to high-paying jobs in other parts of the country. This is detrimental to the growth and development of our communities and even to business development.

We need our families to stay on the Island to buy our products, to build their homes, send their children to Island schools, support our volunteer agencies and our recreation facilities, to run for government, and to work for our businesses. We need to ensure that the jobs in our potato industry are sustained and the paycheques are spent in our home areas. We need a workforce here to attract new businesses and grow our economy. We need the truck drivers to deliver the products and the goods and the services to the plant and to the consumer. We need the employment that is generated for the field workers, harvesters, graders, shippers and receivers. We need the ships that travel into the ports to load our potato for oversea markets. We need the jobs in our fertilizer plants and our agro-businesses. We need the jobs in our small businesses and the local garages that fix the farm machinery and that sell machinery. I can tell you first-hand that if the farmers and their workers are enjoying prosperous times, then so are the small businesses. We need the researchers who are creating new varieties of products and working in the fields to test plots, who are trying to find new use for our potato products in our food and science labs.

Potatoes create a lot of work for our Island population and support a lot of local businesses.

It used to be said that the price that the farmers receive for their products was what determined how the rest of the Island economy fared. There is also a song by Joni Mitchell that says: You don't know what you've got 'till it's gone. If we do not start supporting our industry it will be gone. Our industry should be proud of its contribution to the economy, of our province and the lives of ordinary Islanders who rely on potatoes to earn their income. Certainly do not want Islanders to continue on the road to the west.

Our potato industry is progressing with new and modern ways of farming the land and sustaining and ensuring food for many people across the globe. Our population worldwide is growing at an alarming rate and food supply, as it is now, will continue to be a concern.

Today our industry is under a real threat and it seems to be intensifying. This is terrorism. This is serious. I would ask that this Legislative Assembly support the motion, and in doing so support our industry as they face this dire crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Now speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to rise today in support of this motion and to show my support for the potato industry of our province as well.

I, too, have a large number of farmers in my district, and many are where there are small, table stock producers who simply cannot afford the costs associated with metal detection equipment. They're worried about the long-term impact that these crimes will have on their farm operations. As stated earlier, there are over 8,000 Islanders who are employed directly in the industry in our province, and that number is much larger when you include their families who also rely on this income. There are numerous

businesses in my district that could suffer as well if this situation should escalate.

It's really hard to believe that someone out there hasn't heard something that could lead to the apprehension of those that are responsible for this. I hope that our motion will serve to show just how serious this situation is and how harmful this criminal activity is to our Island economy, and I'm proud to offer my support to this motion and to those potato producers who work so hard in this industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wish to rise today in support of this motion and the potato industry of our province. Many of my constituents are proud farmers and many rely on this industry for their livelihood. They are greatly concerned about how these crimes will impact their futures.

It was particularly disheartening to pick up the newspaper this week and see yet another story about nails being found in potatoes in two more Atlantic stores. These stores were in Newfoundland. I believe there was also a nail found in a bag of potatoes a few days ago from a Berwick Foodland store in Nova Scotia.

I understand that several of our farmers are purchasing metal detection equipment for their farms. I commend those farmers, as food safety is also a concern for our consumers. It is a shame that this is happening. I wish I had the answers for our industry. Hopefully those involved will soon be found and this threat to our industry, our reputation and our consumers will end.

I really just want our farmers to know that I wholeheartedly support this motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also speaking to the motion, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I am very happy to stand and support this motion. It is a very important motion for a very important industry here on Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island is known for producing potatoes. It's a very large industry on Prince Edward Island and we're known right across North America for it, and parts of the world.

The potato industry, and it does account for a large portion of our farmer's seats here on Prince Edward Island, and I do believe that this industry needs support now because they are going through a troubling period. Like the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora mentioned, it's like terrorism. It's certainly an attack on our industry and I think that we can't, as Islanders, allow this industry to go by the wayside because a handful of people that are hiding and doing things in the dark of night, and very cowardly moves, try to control the industries in Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island needs this industry. The potato industry is very important. In the area that I represent there's quite a bit of different farming, but I do know that the potato farmers in my area and in eastern Prince Edward Island do provide a lot of income into the area. There are a lot of jobs in times of the year when there wouldn't necessarily be jobs. I know for many years, if people were having trouble finding enough work to get unemployment, they could always go dig potatoes, and that's still the case in many parts of my area.

Though the potato farms are much bigger than they once were, because of that there are a lot more jobs on trucks and there's a lot more room on digging equipment and there's a lot more room in the warehouses. I know when I was out last fall during the digging season visiting some of the farmers, I know down at Irwin Jay's he had – I was in where they were running the bin piler and there was a lot of people around there, not only driving trucks but running equipment and making sure that everything was put away the way they wanted.

It is very important for our economy in Prince Edward Island, not just for the receipts that comes with it, but there are a

number of jobs that come with it, and there are a number of spinoffs that come into the economy with it. Anybody who has a machine shop or a welding shop or whatnot could tell you how much extra work they have whenever the farmers are on the fields in the spring and the fall.

There's a group of people trying to create fear and I think that's something that I fundamentally disagree with. I don't believe in a culture of fear. I don't believe that people should try to create a culture of fear, and that's obviously what this group is trying to do. There are a number of safety protocols that have now been put in place in different farms across Prince Edward Island, and I know there are some farms that are looking at the option and struggling with the costs associated with putting this in place.

Cavendish Farms has some state-of-the-art equipment up there to help protect their consumers. I think that's great that they are able to do that because as the member previous to me had said, it's a very important facility and 800 jobs working at Cavendish Farms. I mean, that's a very important production to have here on Prince Edward Island.

We do have to look and see: What can the government do to make sure that they're looking out for the rest of the farmers who are right on the cusp, who aren't quite big enough, maybe, to handle that expenditure right now and they do need the equipment, particularly the ones that are running table stock right now? Because table stock seems to be where it's turned up the most, and it's largely because, like I said previously, anything that's going straight to the manufacturing sector, those large manufacturers have been able to put the type of equipment in that they need to help protect their interests in it. We need to make sure that the interests of the smaller farmers are protected, and a lot of them are bagging potatoes themselves and putting them onto the open market.

I know it was mentioned in Question Period today, but Gail Shea has been on board and I know ACOA has several farms that they've been trying to help and meeting with and going over some pricings and some ideas, and I know there's a group around that has put together a package for farms to say:

Here's the type of things that you can have and the costs associated with owning that type of equipment.

I think it's important that, not only just as the Legislative Assembly – and I think that we'll get the support we need in this motion to pass it – but I think it's important from a government's perspective to make sure that government is cognizant of the fact that things are going to happen along that way that nobody planned for, but it doesn't mean that they need to be ignored. I know that the health minister could probably tell you that happens to him quite a bit. There are things that he doesn't get to plan for but have to be dealt with when they happen, and this is something that has to be dealt with because it happened.

We need government to be leaders on it, and I think that's where government has failed over the years here in Prince Edward Island, is that they failed to be leaders. I know the past premier here – I'm not sure that he ever wanted to be a leader and it was certainly evident every day that he came to work.

I think now is the crucial time to show leadership. I think that's it's an industry that's very vital to Prince Edward Island. I think that there is definitely a crisis and I do think that protection is one thing. It's important that we rally behind a way to help protect the farmers, but it's also important that justice is served on this. I do think that right across Prince Edward Island many people would like to see those responsible for these attacks caught and brought to the justice for them. I think that law enforcement has taken it very seriously. I know that they are working really hard and I know the potato board is taking it really seriously. I know that farmers are taking it really seriously and I think that it's very crucial that the people that are responsible are brought to justice. This motion condemns the criminal act.

I do think that we will probably be pretty close to passing it, and I think that's a very great message that we're going to send, not only to the industry, to all Islanders and to those that are responsible for these cowardly attacks, that we as a legislative body here on Prince Edward Island can stand together and say: No, we won't stand for this, we won't stand for these cowardly attacks, we support

this industry. It's important to Prince Edward Island and it's important to Islanders.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your time and I do hope that everyone is able to support this motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion is the Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

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

I, too, want to rise to lend my support to this particular motion, a very important motion for one of the most important industries, not only in this province, but certainly the most important industry in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness.

It's hard to imagine how some demented or dastardly individual, or individuals, would possibly come up with an idea to do such a thing to such an important industry to the province. I also was a potato producer at one time in my life. To note that there's about 90,000 acres of potatoes grown in this province, it employs numerous people from truck drivers, potato labourers to the farmers themselves, to all the support industries that go with that particular industry is phenomenal, and it's really the backbone of the Prince Edward Island economy.

I wanted to talk a little bit about why O'Leary-Inverness is such a – obviously the potato is our number one industry in our riding, it's our number one employer, but the potato has always been celebrated as an important attribute to the O'Leary-Inverness economy. Obviously the whole community was founded – O'Leary was founded as a railway station, the location for the farmers in that area to ship their goods and services, and predominantly potatoes – also butter, there's a butter factory there, and lobsters were shipped off Island. O'Leary happened to be the railway transacted right at the main O'Leary road, hence that's where the community was formed.

Since then, we started out – and celebrating the potato, and it's important to the

community with the PEI Blossom Festival. Every community has its – whether it's a lobster festival or Irish Moss Festival, oyster festival in our community, and in my riding it's the Potato Blossom Festival. This year I think it's July 11-19th. It's one of those signature events in our community. It's a great tourism attraction and draw. We have parades, we have special events, there's a farmers' banquet to celebrate all the farm workers. I know a number of my colleagues in the past, and hopefully in the future, have attended that particular banquet. I think it's an important thing to note and celebrate those farmers that work so hard in producing this wonderful crop.

As part of the Potato Blossom Festival we have a Miss Potato Blossom, and this year, for 2014, it was Janelle Perry. She once again represents our community at different events, whether it's the opening of the rink and the first drop of the puck or the New Years Levy, all of those types of things.

In fact, even other events that we have there, we have the third annual – this year it's going to be the third annual Summerside Chrysler Dodge Adult Singing Competition, and there's a \$1,000 up for prizes. Warren Ellis is one of the major sponsors of that particular event, and his sons. In fact, I'm actually the MC for that event, have been for the last couple of years. I don't sing, but I do introduce the performers.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) guitar apart, but anyway, we do enjoy music and do enjoy lots of talent.

The other main thing about O'Leary, and not only having the celebration of the festival, is the Canadian Potato Museum. It's located in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness and it's our major tourism draw within our community. Last year over 10,000 visitors went through the museum component of the museum. On top of that, we have a tater kitchen and it also had a lot of people come and get different potato treats. I guess one of the things, we have one of the best French fries in the country, as well as, I think in the O'Leary – the Clerk might acknowledge this a little bit – but as Pat's Take Out in O'Leary was noticed – it was even the – Wayne Ronstadt, I believe, even had a t.v.

show, as the first place where they had fries with the works. Once again, it was kind of a new creation with French fries, peas and gravy and hamburger.

Those are just little things that are kind of unique about our particular riding and why we celebrated that. But at the potato museum, it was opened in 1993 and it's a living testament to the humble tuber. To those who have tilled the soil it's an evolution and celebrates all things potato. It happens to have the world's largest potato sculpture, and it's probably one of the number one photographed locations on Prince Edward Island. Just about everybody has to get their picture in front of the large potato sculpture. In fact, when they were doing the YouTube video there for I think it was MS, or cystic fibrosis, or something, I happened to do my ice bucket challenge right in front of the large potato.

Other things to note about the potato museum is that you can go and have farm tours there. It's actually \$79 a person. You get a tour of the museum, you can get a tour of meeting potato farmers, actually go out into the fields and tour and see – it's about a three to four-hour tour about how potatoes are grown and how they're produced and go through a packing plant.

What else can I say? Another component that we have is the amazing potato exhibit which was actually purchased out of a museum in Ottawa and it was taken to Prince Edward Island. It talks all about all the things that potatoes have been famous for. I think it even has a sculpture of the world's largest potato which I believe happened to be grown in England. Anyway, there are all those kinds of things that are kind of interesting about the potato museum. What else can I say? Also, there's antique potato equipment there.

One of the things that we've done – I guess when I had the opportunity to be minister of tourism we really developed the Fall Flavours concept and worked out a partnership with the PEI Potato Board and the Canadian Potato Museum, and it had the opportunity to host a signature event at the museum. Last year Lynn Crawford was the chef, I think this year it might be Chuck Hughes, I'm not totally certain of that. That particular event is going to be on September

25th and it's noted at the Toe Taps & Taters Event and it usually sells out. Last year I had the opportunity to attend a lot of the different Fall Flavours events. I thought that was one of the more fun events of all of them. They all had the opportunity to do potato sculptors and Mr. Potato Heads and things like that. It's all those types of things. The fact it was one of the first Fall Flavours events to sell out. Shows that the public has an interest in potatoes and why Prince Edward Island is so special about growing potatoes.

When you make that link to a celebratory chef and a really good product and then you mix a little bit of fun into the event, you're going to attract visitors to Prince Edward Island. Predominantly, most of those visitors were from off-Island.

Another event that the potato museum was involved with was the world's largest potato exhibit. One would wonder what that's all about. But the Canadian Potato Museum partnered with W.P. Griffin from the riding of Alberton-Roseville, Sobeys, and they put together one of the world's largest exhibits to sell potatoes. All of the profits and proceeds went to the Canadian Potato Museum. It was also a partnership with the PEI Department of Tourism when we offered a pre-golf getaway to a particular winner. I think that event has raised about \$100,000 for the potato museum over the last, I think, two or three years.

Those are real good events that not only highlight and promote potatoes and the importance of this industry in the province, but also do good things for tourism perspective, as well as the community's perspective.

The other thing that we done and shows the importance of the potato to the industry – when we did some changes to the liquor store in O'Leary, we went and did a whole bunch of murals of pictures that were important to – and one of the main predominating pictures beside – there's the West Point Lighthouse, and the other is a couple of people out harvesting potatoes, and that's a big picture in the main street of O'Leary. It just shows that those things are extremely important to our community and our riding, but it's also important to the Province of Prince Edward Island.

I think the other thing I wanted to say a little bit about PEI potatoes, we've been growing potatoes on PEI for over 200 years. Growing PEI potatoes just isn't a business on PEI, it's our nature. We've been growing spuds for over 200 years and our soil is ideally suited for growing potatoes. That's I think actually a quote on the PEI Potato Board's website. I think that just also says a lot about it.

But I think one of the special things about growing potatoes on Prince Edward Island – and like I say, I've been a grower for a number of years in my lifetime – is I think the one thing is that our soil is a little bit unique than most places. There's a high theme of iron oxide in our soil in Prince Edward Island. I think that makes a little bit of a special mix when we grow potatoes. I mean, obviously potatoes are grown all around the world. They're one of the major food products for individuals when they're hungry. It's how the Irish potato famine – they came here to try to feed themselves.

I think it's really important to – when you add in the sort of maybe the salty air mix when we're growing – the tubers are growing in a plant form, it just makes something a little bit extra special, so we need to celebrate that and we need to promote the good in what we do here in Prince Edward Island. I think when somebody or some individuals happen to do some sort of a dastardly act that they're doing we have to fight back as best we can.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the processors and growers in our region in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness. Around the area we have Cavendish Produce, that's a potato packing plant that grows table potatoes, and once again employs – if you go by that location at any particular time, there's probably 40 or 50 vehicles in the parking lot, there are trucks coming and going, so it just shows the economic impact that that particular location has.

W.P. Griffin's, I've had the opportunity to help them with some of their particular issues in expanding and coming up with new innovative ways to package potatoes to where they mix different colors of tubers together, different mixes to make them better for microwavable and all those types of things. The Member for Alberton-Roseville and myself had toured that plant

on a number of occasions and we've done what we could to try to help them out. They employ a lot of people there and once again, extremely modern technology, they're really aggressive growers and they're doing good things to promote Prince Edward Island.

We obviously have the McCain's plant. There are still a lot of growers in my riding that grow for McCain's, they are taking them over to New Brunswick at the moment, trucking them over, which they have for some time anyway, and then Cavendish Farms.

The other one that's of notice – I have about twenty some growers in my district or in the region anyway that grow for Hostess Frito Lay for the potato chip market. I know they had an application in to try to get some help with some of this metal detection equipment, and I'm hopeful that the minister will provide the remuneration and support to help them to get their approval especially now that this seems to be an issue that's actually Maritime-wide.

Anyway, I have 25 growers from the region that grow for Hostess Frito Lay and one of the issues – I did have a little bit of an issue with the department of agriculture in their approval process is that they felt that it has to be on PEI. Well, these 25 growers take their potatoes over to Nova Scotia. It logically make a lot of sense for them to load their potatoes up at a warehouse in O'Leary, as an example, take them and unload them, put them through a metal detection device and then load them back up and then take them over the Nova Scotia. Hopefully we can work something out where they can get an approval so to have the metal detection equipment maybe at the source so where they can unload their potatoes so all 25 growers, instead of having individual metal detection pieces of equipment, they can get it at one site. I hope the minister of agriculture will take that into consideration. I know the PEI Potato Board has supported their application.

I think that when I look, the other thing that always gives me a sense of pride when I have the chance to drive around my district is when I see the signs that will say award winning grower for Cavendish Farms, or award winning grower for McCain's or

Hostess Frito Lay, and there are a number of signs that are up.

I know one of the farms in my riding – the Triple S Farms has won numerous awards for environmentally sustainable agricultural production. I think it won the Gilbert R. Clements Award here recently for environmentally sustainable economic development in the province. I have Harris Brothers, they have a sign up as one of the particular growers that were winners for the most profitable crop of potatoes in that particular year. There's Avar Smallman's do the same thing – they've got awards up. MacLennan Farms is another one in West Cape has an award, a sign up, and there's John Sweet, Ralph Smallman's and Jeff Smallman, all significant growers that produce some of the finest quality potatoes in this province.

I just wanted to say that as a producer I had the opportunity to grow potatoes. It's a wonderful profession, it's a risky profession. I know from my own perspective I've had some good years and had a few poor ones, too, when it came to growing potatoes, but I grew about 100 acres of potatoes mostly for the seed market. Grew different varieties. Red Pontiacs, Green Mountains, Russet Burbanks, Shepody, Kennebec, were some of the varieties that I've grown in my particular farm. We grow a real good, first-class product and it's an honour to be an MLA that understands the potato industry.

I wish it all the very best of success in working through this particular difficult time. Hopefully the potato board, or the RCMP, or whoever's involved, can find out who is the individual that does this. I think whatever it takes for the Province of Prince Edward Island to play an important role in making sure that we bring these people to justice, I will certainly be supporting this motion that hopefully will lead to that conclusion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Now speaking to the motion, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I rise to speak to this issue to substantially support it, but to suggest a minor amendment.

As this is the first motion on which I will speak in the House, I have to first admit my inexperience, my lack of familiarity, with the procedures of the Legislature, so I want to ask in advance the House's forgiveness for any procedural missteps I may make. I'm as green in my naivety as I am in my politics at present.

I want to start by saying that I and the Green Party support and care about Island farmers and that we recognize, of course, the critical role that agriculture plays both in our economy and our culture. PEI has been a world leader in agriculture in the past and I think can and will be again in the future.

Island farmers face many challenges, and government indeed has a role to play in aiding them succeed in the future. Many initiatives that were discussed in the recent election campaign, and there were lots of them, had a high degree of accord between all of the parties that were there. With all the challenges we face on PEI, it's my intention to search for solutions in collaboration with other members and other parties in a way that will improve the lives of all Islanders.

It is my belief that Island farmers can and should be supported in a transition to a sustainable agricultural, a model that encourages greater diversity and an expansion of value-added products. The move towards sustainability will inevitably involve a change in our emphasis, which is currently on potato production for a specific market, towards a more diversified system.

I recognize the efforts that have been made by the potato industry on Prince Edward Island, but a system which continuously relies on vast inputs of pesticides and fertilizers is inherently unsustainable both economically and ecologically.

While I support unconditionally the essence of this motion which I believe is to condemn, in the strongest terms, the criminal acts which threaten to cripple our potato industry, the second operative clause of the motion, which is the one I want to bring members' attention to, as written asks the House not only for condemnation of

these acts but, and I quote, to "...strongly express its continued support for the Island potato industry..."

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, the following amendment to this clause:

That the words "the potato industry and the ongoing commitment to food safety" be deleted and replaced by "food safety in Island agriculture" so that the second operative clause of the motion now reads as this:

And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly strongly expresses its continued support for food safety in Island agriculture.

For me, this clarifies the intent of the motion that is indeed food safety while not promoting continued support for a specific model of the potato industry that is unsustainable both economically and ecologically and is particularly impactful on soil, water and farmers' profits.

I want to reiterate before I sit that my alignment with this House in support of our farmers and in condemning, in the strongest terms, this criminal act of tampering with Prince Edward Island potatoes is absolutely intact. I want to reiterate that my alignment with this House for those matters is entirely intact. I just want to bring attention to the fact that the wording of this motion is not something I'm comfortable to support.

Thank you.

Speaker: We call on the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors to speak to the amendment.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, like my colleague to the right of me here, apologize for my greenness just in not knowing the actual procedures.

So I do apologize if I've made any misstep but I will second the motion.

Speaker: Any members or further members want to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

I want to commend the Leader of the Third Party for most what he has to say, and I appreciate the Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors in cooperating with allowing him to put his amendment to the floor. I had spoken to the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland about this issue before and said that we would offer our assistance to get amendments or motions seconded to allow them to come to the floor for debate.

I really want to say right off the bat a lot of the positive stuff you said is really what we're saying here.

The reason I disagree and cannot support your motion, hon. member, is the fact that you eliminate one of the things we're really talking about here and is that is continued support for the Island potato industry.

I think this is really the guts and the whole matter of this motion, is that we need to support our potato industry here in PEI. It is the number one agriculture commodity that we have. It offered \$1 billion to the economy of our province. We have producers whose livelihoods depend upon this crop. We produce the number one potatoes in the world.

There are jobs involved with this industry. So many things – what we do not like is the fact that people would interrupt and tamper, and I am fully aware that you disagree completely with that point of view and I fully commend you for that.

But I think in the spirit of the motion, to remove the words "continued support for the Island", "that the Legislative Assembly strongly express its continued support for the Island potato industry", I don't think we can really take that out.

To me, as minister of agriculture, and I'm sure to some of the other colleagues in this House, that is fundamental to the debate. We certainly condemn what is happening in our industry, but we first and foremost must express in this House, as supporters of our agriculture community, that we really

continue and show our support for our Island potato industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Speaking to the amendment is the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I, like the minister, cannot support the amendment to this motion. I think it has to do with the fact that the motion is about the potato industry and how important the potato industry is to Prince Edward Island.

I know the member over here maybe doesn't understand that, but this is about potatoes and this is who it's happening to, and these are the people that are being hurt today. They're being hurt today and we need it to stop and we need there to be support for the farmers. I think that's what this House is trying to do today, is show that we support this industry, the farmers that are in it, the people that are employed by it, and the people – which is all of us – who benefit from the farm receipts here on Prince Edward Island and what it does for our economy.

I'm not sure what makes the hon. member think it's not sustainable, but I certainly tell you, this is an industry that's been kicking around Prince Edward Island for a long time. Though it's gone through a number of changes, I don't think that having, basically, people terrorize the industry in a cowardly way is something that we shouldn't be able to all stand and support together without making amendments to motions.

The spirit of cooperation that was in this motion up until now, I think, was important, and we were showing all Islanders that we do understand the importance of this industry for Prince Edward Island, we do understand that this industry is one of the key economic drivers on Prince Edward Island. It's the potato industry. That's what we're talking about. That's the industry that's being attacked. That's the industry that you're reading about on the front pages of the newspaper every day. It's that industry.

It's important for us, as legislators in this province, to show that we support this industry, the potato industry of Prince Edward Island.

The Island potato industry is committed to food safety. That clause is important because they are committed to food safety. These farmers, who were putting their own money up to put up screening devices so that they can take care of the food safety of their product, do care about food safety in this province, and every member in this Legislative Assembly should do the same. Cavendish Farms has taken care of their food safety. They've added equipment.

Why would we make any move to take away from the great work the potato industry has done during this time? This industry is committed to food safety. If you hear Greg Donald talk about it – Greg Donald has been a great spokesperson for the potato industry. It doesn't mean you have to agree with everything he says, but he's a good spokesperson. Through this troubling time he's talked to the great commitment of food safety this industry has for itself.

I certainly can't support a motion that takes away from the whole basis of the motion which was the potato industry.

This is an important industry to Prince Edward Island. This is an important industry to my area and this is an important industry to all Islanders. Because all Islanders, whether you are a rural MLA or an urban MLA, benefit from this industry.

This industry drives the farm cash receipts in this province. Whether you like it or not, it's an important industry for Prince Edward Island. I support farmers in Prince Edward Island. I support the potato industry on Prince Edward Island. I will continue to support both the farmers and that industry on Prince Edward Island and I will vote against this amendment.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Speaking on the amendment, The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to raise some comments and take some umbrage, maybe, with the third party leader, the Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland, on some of the comments that are – I do respect his comments and opinions and views significantly but the reality is the potato industry is an important industry.

To say that we as a Legislature do not want to support the potato industry as part of a statement that, as part of an amendment or part of a motion, I think is unfortunate. But I do believe that this is an industry that is sustainable. It's been a significant industry in this province for 200 years, like I said earlier when I spoke about the motion.

There's been really no indication that it's not a sustainable industry. There's still that approximate number of about 90,000 acres, which have been growing on Prince Edward Island. Since probably, I think, the early 1900s that amount of acreages has been growing. Maybe the model of agriculture is different than it was back at that point in time, but the sustainability, as far as a province, has been able to grow those amount of acres to provide the proper crop rotations, has been proven. The farmers in O'Leary-Inverness, as well as all across Prince Edward Island that grow potatoes for those markets, they are using all of the proper rules, techniques, tools within their farming toolbox to become sustainable.

With that, I would find it very difficult to support that particular amendment to the motion and will be voting against it.

Thank you.

Speaker: Next to speak to the amendment is the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

Former mayor Jack "Spy" Ready used to say all the time in city council: If the agriculture community in the rural areas of Prince Edward Island is doing bad, so are the residents of the city of Charlottetown.

If farmers are doing badly, we feel it inside the city of Charlottetown. Farmers do not have the income to come to the city to buy cars, to buy trucks or to buy repairs for their

equipment, to visit our restaurants and other activities in the city. That causes businesses in the city to suffer and thus they are laying off people in the city.

As the Leader of the Opposition has indicated, this is a province-wide issue and it must be addressed on a province-wide issue. The acts that have been occurring by the individuals or individual in putting these foreign bodies in the potatoes is bad. I ask the people that are doing this to at least inform us of any more areas that they have infected. At least we can stop this immediately.

If they're not going to come forward, at least issue a statement somehow to tell us where the rest of the bodies are in order – so we can stop this.

I cannot support the motion either because I, in my previous role as minister of environment, know that farmers are working continuously day and day in order to improve their practices and to make them more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Let's work with our agriculture community, let the people that are doing this stop doing it, and let them at least inform us of any more foreign bodies that are in the potatoes out there.

Thank you.

Speaker: Speaking to the amendment, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise and express my concern about the amendment because when we say the potato industry, it's not a faceless entity. It's all about the families, the people who work on those farms, the farm families themselves who have been there for four generations on our Island, and the young farmers that are getting into the farming business today.

I know in my own district I have the Dennises, and the Premier and I had gone to Linkletter Farms and visited the young Marchbanks and how that family is taking over and working together. The impact that it has made on the farms across Prince Edward Island is one that I cannot support in

terms of this particular amendment because we must stand strong and united with our potato industry and the families that are working in that industry on Prince Edward Island, and implore that we do continue to work with them in making sure that the person or persons who feel that they are attacking the potato industry, and are really attacking the families, the children, of that industry and I cannot support the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also speaking to the amendment is the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I can't support the amendment to this motion either because we're attempting to take the words 'potato industry' and make those words have a negative connotation to them. It's not the potato industry that is bad. The potato industry is good, and so many have said that it provides so much for this Island and it is so core, especially to the rural parts of this Island.

If there are improvements that can be made in irrigation practices, in the way that fertilization is done, in crop rotations – perhaps in tools to help protect the environment that surround the practices of the potato, for example, the size of buffer zones or the canopy around waterways – those are things that are outside of the words 'potato industry' and I don't think potato industry should have a negative connotation.

It's like saying that the word 'corporation' is bad, and any corporation is bad, which is simply false. The potato industry is good for this Island, and I think if we amend the motion to remove that, we assign a negative connotation to those terms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also speaking to the amendment is the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand here to speak to the amendment. I cannot support the amendment. The minister put a motion on the floor and it was a very important motion and all of the members got to speak to it, and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters mentioned it. Greg Donaldson. Greg is a good guy and he has the potato board there. They take their jobs very seriously, Greg Donaldson and the PEI Potato Board, and they look out for all Islanders, not just themselves, not the PEI Potato Board. They look out for all Islanders.

The potato farmers are a driving force. They're the driving force for PEI, and as the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park mentioned, when these farmers are doing good – and I've heard it a number of times in the House – when these farmers are doing good Charlottetown is doing good. If Charlottetown is doing good, rural PEI is doing good, and that's what drives rural PEI.

All of the regulations that the farmers have today, and you never hear of a farmer complaining about a regulation and you never hear them, you know? There are no complaints. Whenever a regulation is given to the farmer, the farmer abides by it and does it. They take the regulation, they go by the regulation, and they follow the policies. I've got young farmers in my district, and some of these farms are well looked after. I've been in some farms and you could – they're bagging potatoes and you can pretty near eat off the floor at the same time. These farmers are really taking care of their farms. They take pride in their farms.

This is an Island-wide issue. So if you get this issue Island-wide, somebody is going to suffer. Somebody is going to suffer if this continues, and this has got to stop. It's got to stop. These farmers deserve respect. It's all the farmers are asking for is for respect. All they want to do is they want to grow potatoes. They are hard workers. They are really hard workers, and they just deserve respect.

We, as a Legislative Assembly, have got to show the farmers respect. I supported the motion, I'll continue to support the motion, and I'll continue to support the farmers. I'm proud to be the critic for the farming industry of Prince Edward Island. It's an

honour. It's one of our major industries on PEI right here today is the potato farming.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

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

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government would like to return to debate on the amendment to Motion 19.

Speaker: We'll continue on with the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying earlier, the farmers in this province are great stewards of the land for sure. They take great pride in what they do. Most of these farmers, it's family farms, small farms. When you get a family working together they have great pride in what they do and great care of their farms.

The amendment to the motion – the member from the Green Party stood up and said he didn't know the procedures in the House here and he's been trying to get inside the rail for the last 19 years, and when he finally gets in here he doesn't know the procedures. To stand up and say that he didn't know the procedures of the House for making amendments.

I do not support the amendment that he did make. I fully support the original motion. I feel bad for the farmers out there because it's all about the farmers, when these farmers are working so hard on the fields. They're on the fields now as we speak. They were late getting on the fields this year. Everything was a year behind so the farmers are late getting on the fields.

As I was travelling in this morning the machines are in the fields. The fields are looking good, the soy beans look good. I'd say by the looks of things the farmers will have a good year this year and I'm looking

forward to getting out this year and speaking with the farmers right across our Island.

There's young farmers out there and they have just as much pride in their farm as their fathers or grandfathers did in their day. It's great to see young farmers into the farming because that just keeps it going, and we got to have young people into the farming the same as we got to get young people into the fishery. That's the backbone of our Island, the fishing and the farming is what keeps our economy going. When the farmers are doing good all PEI does good. You see your car dealers are doing good, your construction industry does better, your welding shop does better, your hydraulic shops – it just keeps growing and growing. The effects that the farmers have on PEI, it just goes on and on. Not only do they take good care of their fields, they take good care of their farms today.

You go into a farm today and you'll see the buildings are well cared for. They're always tidy and they're clean and the grass is always cut on a farm today. It takes a lot of work to look after a farm today. There's not as many but they're bigger today. It's a bigger operation than it used to be. Years ago a farmer was lucky to have two tractors. Now a farmer – the tractors they need today to do the job today – you just couldn't do it with what they had.

But years ago what they had was what they needed, but today it's not the case, they need the equipment today. There's lots of equipment – it's great that they use all this equipment, but it just keeps the economy going again. It's never-ending job growth. It's just job growth on PEI that these farmers survive. These farmers with all their regulations, you never hear a farmer complain about regulations, they just take the regulation and they go with it.

With that, I support the original motion. I don't support the amended motion.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, can I have permission to recognize a guest?

I'd like to recognize – she was late coming like – I shouldn't say, but she's usually late. But anyway, it's my daughter Natasha. This is the first time she was ever in to see me at the real action. She should come in some

day at Question Period if you want to see some real action.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, you'd be shocked.

Mr. LaVie: And, Mr. Speaker, she's an RCW at the Prince Edward room. Or –

Mr. R. Brown: Home.

Mr. LaVie: Prince Edward Home. She just got home from Italy. Her brother just got married over in Italy.

Mr. R. Brown: That's a good one.

Mr. LaVie: And with my work I wasn't able to attend it, and I'm sorry for that. But I'd just like to recognize Natasha, my daughter.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Before I move on I, too, would like to welcome some guests in the visitor's gallery. A former member here and former minister, Gerard Greenan and his wife Elizabeth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Now, next addressing the amendment is the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

Before I begin, I, too, would like to recognize my former officemate with yourself and I, the former MLA from the Summerside area, St. Eleanors, Gerard Greenan, and his lovely wife Elizabeth who are in this evening. To be quite frank, I thought they'd be in earlier today. So it's good to see them in tonight.

I'd like to make a few comments in regards to, first, the amended motion, of course. As I do that, I will probably take the opportunity to wear a couple of hats this evening.

As the new minister of Communities, Land and Environment, there is no other department within government that I work more closely with than the department of

agriculture, and in particular with the potato industry.

The department that I recently took over as minister of have, over the last number of years, worked diligently in making progress and working solidly within the area of land protection and developing and creating and working on, on a daily basis, mechanisms to avoid those instances that the Leader of the Third Party brought forward earlier today.

I know, as minister, there is much work still to be done. We are continuing some work on the *Lands Protection Act*. We deal continuously with farmers, and in particular the potato industry, to encourage and develop new principles with them, go forward to alleviate any issues as the member spoke about earlier.

I'd like to give him the opportunity to have full confidence and comfort in the department that those mechanisms that you spoke of are in place. We continue to monitor in areas of water quality, soil, all those things that you mentioned earlier.

I'm hoping that, as a takeaway this evening, you do have some comfort levels that we as a department are working diligently on those areas.

Secondly, I'd like to put on my MLA hat. Some people that may not know my background are wondering: What would an urban MLA, member of the Legislature, know about potato farming? The reality is, of course, that I grew up in rural Prince Edward Island in the community of Fort Augustus. Grew up in my father's community store and, as a young lad, had the opportunity to work on many farms in my community with the Dunn farm and the Callaghan farm and MacRae farm. I worked. Picked potatoes off an old potato beater, digger, as they call it, and put them in the baskets and moved on. Then we advanced to the two-bag harvester, and that was really a development in our world back in that day.

But I know full well the value of the potato industry on Prince Edward Island, the value of it as an economic driver. Even back in those days when I was very young helping my dad in the grocery store, if the potato farmer in our area – and I mentioned some of the names – if they did well, we did well.

We did well as a family because the dollars were coming in, they were buying the fuel, they were getting their groceries, they were getting the other aspects of the farm. They needed their barbed wire, their bailer twine. The money was flowing.

I learned very early that this agriculture industry in particular was a very important one to Prince Edward Island. As I mentioned those farms, and later on in life – the Leader of the Opposition mentioned Irwin Jay, and of course he is a very prominent potato farmer on Prince Edward Island, excels in the area of land stewardship and air stewardship and water stewardship. Actually, in the house that I lived, eventually Irwin had picked up the property and every third year would have potatoes in the fields behind me and my family, and did everything in his power to show us just what type of a good farmer, what good practices he had.

I guess with that, my point is I cannot support the amendment. I do hope to give the member of the Third Party some comfort in the fact that his concerns are being worked on on a daily basis and will continue to be. I hope with that that he's able to consider that when he makes up his mind in the vote tonight as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the amendment will be the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion, the main motion, has come forward as a multi-party initiative, and it means a lot to launch our first day of our sitting with this collaboration. It's also a day when the Third Party has been granted official status. I wish to indicate that I won't be supporting the amendment, but I do believe that throughout the House there's wide support for this initiative, and justly so.

The reference to the potato industry in the motion is not, as several members have said, a faceless entity. The potato industry represents families, family farms, communities, related industries, workers and

suppliers. In effect, it represents an Island way of life. It is apparently this collective entity, the potato industry, that is being targeted by the diabolical mind or minds that lie behind placing the foreign objects in Prince Edward Island potatoes.

Its objective, or the objective of these acts, appears to be to harm, and to seriously harm, the potato industry. Therefore, in a multi-partisan resolution aimed at condemning these acts and expressing support for this important aspect of our Prince Edward Island community, our economy and our way of life, it makes perfect sense to emphasize support for our potato industry, and it would be contrary to the spirit and purpose of the resolution to delete that reference. I will therefore vote against the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask that we adjourn the discussion of the amended motion at this time?

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, that we call the first order of the day.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Consideration of the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the present session.

Speaker: We'll call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton to move the motion.

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

It is with great honour and a sense of pride that I rise as the representative for Charlottetown-Brighton to move the 2015 Speech From the Throne.

I would like to take this time to recognize and thank my family, including my wife Amy, my mother-in-law, and my own mother for helping take care of my two young boys, a two-year-old and a four-month-old – four months now, I guess, so he

was about a month-and-a-half when the election process started – during the campaign, and our friends and the good folks of Charlottetown-Brighton for giving me the opportunity to represent them in the Legislative Assembly.

I am truly humbled and grateful for the love and kindness that was shown to me throughout the campaign. The District of Charlottetown-Brighton is encompassed within the territory which used to comprise 6th Queens, for which my grandfather, the late Addie MacDonald, stood as a representative in this House and Government Whip from 1970 through 1978.

I was equally pleased and honoured to have been asked to serve as Government Whip through this session. It means a lot to me that –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: It means a lot to me that I have been bestowed that honour, as well as the honour of standing in this Legislative Assembly –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: – the same place that my grandfather so faithfully served for eight years.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: Until I was roughly 10 years of age I was babysat by my grandmother, the late Olave MacDonald, and my grandfather at 40 Brighton Rd.

Approximately five years ago my wife Amy and I moved in approximately three blocks up the road from my grandparents' former home. Since that I've had an opportunity to reacquaint myself with the Charlottetown-Brighton area. I feel truly blessed to live in this area.

Charlottetown-Brighton is one of the most diverse electoral districts on Prince Edward Island. Within a small geographical area the district encompasses portions of the heart of Charlottetown and the more suburban areas just outside. It is home to some diverse mix of families of various backgrounds. It is populated by recent immigrants and families

that have been in the area for generations. Its residents range from young folks just having moved to Charlottetown from other parts of the Province, or from further away, to families at all stages, to senior citizens. In short, the residents of District 13 represent a great sample of the Island's overall population.

Never did I have a greater sense of this than as I canvassed the district during the recent election campaign. As I went door-to-door taking time to get to the heart of the issues of those that live in Charlottetown Brighton, it became very apparent that the issues facing Islanders are very broad and profound.

This confirmed to me that to make our province better it would be crucial that the government engage Islanders in an effort to work together to tackle the serious and profound issues facing them.

I am very pleased to see a commitment to continued effort to engage all Islanders in the government of this province. As alluded to in the throne speech, engagement is a fundamental aspect of our democracy. Our government has committed to engaging with Islanders from tip-to-tip, and all walks of life, on issues of importance to them. What this really means, as the speech indicates, is that government needs to involve its constituents in its decision-making processes early and often. It also means that the input, when given, must be seriously considered and weighed in shaping new policy.

It is through engagement of this sort that we, as a government, must maintain the trust and respect of Islanders. Openness, transparency and accountability are related tenets of engagement that are required to build and maintain the trust of Islanders.

I am very pleased that our government has committed to renewed levels of openness, transparency and accountability through the implementation of an ethics commissioner and tightening of conflict of interest legislation. As I canvassed my district in the recent election, this was a matter of significant importance for a large number of my constituents.

I am pleased to say that I know the newly appointed ethics commissioner who, herself,

is a resident of Charlottetown-Brighton, and by all accounts she is an individual of the highest integrity.

The residents of Charlottetown Brighton, and Islanders generally, are networkers. We are always looking to build bridges or to make connections, and to get involved. However, as people we seem to have a healthy dose of skepticism. In order to be truly engaged we need to feel confident in the trust we place in our government. I feel that the initiatives announced in the Speech From the Throne will go a long way to building that trust and confidence.

In the recent election we had a voter turnout of over 93% in Charlottetown-Brighton. As I went door to door my constituents repeatedly, and sometimes reluctantly, engaged me in discussion surrounding a number of issues. They were not always forthcoming, particularly in expressing their frustrations, as Islanders are inherently polite. When they did open up it was clear to me that the constituents of District 13 wish to voice their concerns and to be engaged and involved in our efforts to tackle them.

I am also pleased with the focus on youth and youth engagement in the Speech From the Throne. The fire in my belly has been stoked by the birth of my two boys who, as I mentioned, are two years and four months of age and who I would literally do anything for, and by my desire to make PEI a place that they will choose to live, raise a family, and a place where they can get a first-rate education and have a fulfilling career.

Our economy on Prince Edward Island is inextricably linked to the way we live. So many of our best and brightest and our skilled trades people and new graduates leave this province after we have contributed so much to educate them because they can't find what they feel to be fulfilling work.

Conversely, our businesses are often saying that they need more qualified employees. We have committed to do more to ensure that the education we are providing Islanders meets the needs of our employers. We also need to encourage our students to be entrepreneurial.

Our throne speech prioritizes the need to invest in our youth and to help them plan for

a brighter future. Our government has committed to working closely with our youth to guide them through a pathway of education tailored to them in the early years of their education which we believe will help our students in their quest to realize their full potential.

We need to encourage immigration to Prince Edward Island, whether by way of new immigrants or repatriating former Islanders, as our work force needs to continue to expand to support our aging demographic and increasing health and education costs.

My education, my career as a lawyer advising entrepreneurs and my involvement with community organizations such as 21 Inc., have opened my eyes to possibilities created by forward thinking, collaboration, and strategic investment. My experiences have given me insight as to the differences that can be made with a small amount of infrastructure, some optimism, some planning and solid leadership.

To this end, it is crucial that we as a government increase our efforts to engage and empower our youth. As indicated in the Speech From the Throne, we are facing an aging population on Prince Edward Island. The Speech From the Throne outlines efforts that will be undertaken to recruit and repatriate our best and brightest, along with young immigrants, in a targeted way which will support our key sectors. We feel that this will allow businesses in our key sectors to continue to renew and innovate which is required in fostering their success, which is, in turn, what is required to build a thriving economy on Prince Edward Island.

In this regard, I provide the example of a relatively young client of mine who partnered with a young person from South Africa, who is now also a constituent of mine, to purchase a Prince Edward Island-based manufacturing business. They have drawn upon their diverse backgrounds and skills, and collaborated with other local and foreign businesses, to innovate and expand this business into new areas, creating new, meaningful, year-round jobs and meaningful exports from Prince Edward Island, all right here on Prince Edward Island.

Initiatives such as Salesforce PEI will allow businesses such as this to continue to

prosper and to grow. This, in turn, will create further opportunities right here on Prince Edward Island.

With the proper leadership of government, a focus on strategic investment and collaboration with our university and colleges in an atmosphere of increasing confidence in the private sector, it is my belief that our economy has the opportunity to take off.

We have committed to fostering collaboration between our educational institutions. This initiative, and the resulting partnerships, particularly when combined with recent emphasis on increasing high school students' focus on planning for their future in the workforce, will result in a better trained and more effective workforce, which is a further requirement of sustainable growth in the Island's economy.

With programs like the George Coles Bursary, the Island Student Award, and the George Coles Graduate Scholarship, we are helping young Islanders start their post-secondary journey on the right financial footing. These programs also demonstrate to students taking advantage of them the potential to start and maintain their careers right here in Prince Edward Island.

Steven Stewart, of Vector Aerospace, spoke at the Premier's most recent forum on the economy. He spoke passionately about the quality of workmanship coming from Islanders working in their company, as well as the calibre and reliability of their Island employees. In fact, Mr. Stewart indicated that of four to five locations Vector Aerospace maintains around the globe, Vector's benchmarks for service and reliability are continually set by their Prince Edward Island workforce. I think that's an accomplishment that our labour force here on Prince Edward Island should be very proud of, particularly where it's coming from a company such as that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: This being the case, Mr. Stewart also indicated that the single biggest threat facing Vector Aerospace was that if a sizeable contract were to come their way, from one of their larger clients, there is a good chance they would not be able to

recruit the number of workers required to conduct the work they do, on Prince Edward Island.

Collaboration between our educational institutions, and better education of our students who are about to enter the workforce, will help to address issues such as this, in the medium and longer term.

Our government has committed to continued development of creative and entrepreneurship spaces. As I have come to see first-hand through my involvement in 21 Inc., an organization that exists to promote, develop and repatriate young leaders in Atlantic Canada, the development of an entrepreneurial atmosphere and the framework required to do so requires very little. The key ingredients seemed to me to be the fostering of an entrepreneurial attitude, the encouragement to collaborate with a diverse group of people, and a minimal amount of infrastructure and guidance.

In other jurisdictions in Canada, and indeed in the Atlantic provinces, these investments have paid large dividends, both financially and in the development of a can-do attitude, which is required to be competitive.

In the spirit of collaboration, I am also very pleased that our government has made a priority of collaborating with our municipalities in the province, and with the federal government, to provide Islanders with the infrastructure and services they need and deserve.

I personally have a great relationship with the deputy mayor of Charlottetown, Mike Duffy, and councillor Mitchell Tweel, these two city of Charlottetown councillors whose wards collectively cover my district. In the short time I have represented the district we have met or spoken on numerous occasions to do better and more seamlessly deal with the issues confronting our constituents. I look forward to continuing to foster these relationships, and to building a relationship with Mayor Lee and the other city councillors, particularly as many of them chair city departments that provide services to my constituents.

As we have likely all seen in the news, the city of Charlottetown has been dealing with

water scarcity issues lately. The city draws much of its water from wells outside of the city's boundaries. The city is currently drawing close to its maximum capacity from the Winter River watershed. It is in the process of constructing a series of new well sites which are due to come online in the next couple of years.

In the meantime, the city, under the guidance of the utility chair, Councillor Rice, has been forced to implement water conservation measures which have demonstrated the importance of the management of the use of this limited resource for all Islanders. I look forward to working on behalf of the province and with city councillors on solutions that will benefit the lives of our constituents.

To this end, I anticipate that the development and implementation of a water act, and the commitment to doing so through an engaging, open and inclusive process, guided by a new, dedicated department appropriately entitled Communities, Land and Environment, will be an announcement welcomed by the residents of Charlottetown-Brighton, and indeed the whole Island.

Likewise, to undertake infrastructure projects, such as the city of Charlottetown is currently undertaking in developing its new water sources, is a costly endeavour. In order to plan and provide for such undertakings our municipalities rely on a stable source of funding. I am pleased that our government has committed to work to improve the stability and predictability of our municipal funding, and to work more closely, where appropriate, with our municipalities and our federal government to upgrade and renew needed infrastructure.

Before I close, I would like again emphasize the importance of youth engagement piece that was outlined in this year's throne speech as a priority for our government. It is important that our youth have meaningful input in the efforts to shape their future, and the futures of Prince Edward Island. Our youth are our future. You will rely on them in our old age to be our stewards, thus it is crucial for them and for us that they are engaged and that they want to create an Island where they see a future.

Tonight, as I mentioned this afternoon, is the kick-off event for Fusion Charlottetown. Fusion Charlottetown is a new non-profit organization which challenges young professionals to be active in shaping our city's future. They connect, engage and inspire friends and neighbours to make Charlottetown a great place to live, work, and play.

This unique organization is early in its history, but is already making waves. I plan to engage with this group as much as I can. With its immediate success, I would love to see it grow to an Island-wide focus. I can only imagine the impact it would have on the future of Prince Edward Island and the example that it would set for the rest of Islanders were this inspirational group of young Islanders to make a real difference in the city of Charlottetown.

I would like to thank you all for your attention here tonight as I respond to the Speech From the Throne. I would like to end my speech tonight with some thoughtful words from Thoreau as he contemplated lessons from his past, words that may be helpful to all of us here as we stand in this House to represent our constituents and our communities: "I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

With that, I move the Speech From the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I will now call on the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors to second the Speech From the Throne.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my honour and pleasure this evening to second the 2015 Speech From the Throne.

This sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island is one of my many firsts. I am thrilled to be one of the 10 first-time, newly-elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. I know they, too,

share the same sense of pride and privilege to serve in this House.

As you are aware, Province House is under renovations and for the first time the legislature is sitting in here in the George Coles Building. It is a building that resonates with the history of this Island, and we got a sense of that yesterday.

For those hon. members who have served in the Legislature for years, I hope you still have the sense of wonder and respect for our institutions and this Chamber that I felt yesterday, because whether or not it is the usual place this Assembly meets, this Chamber still carries with it all the weight of our Island democracy. I confess that I was startled when the doors were closed and there was a loud rap, then another and another, and then the Queen's representative asked the Speaker for permission to enter.

Just think of that, our head of state, the Queen, must ask our permission to enter this Chamber because this is our place. This place is the domain of the people of Prince Edward Island. This is where we meet to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to us by our constituents, and where they can come freely to watch us as we honour our commitment to them.

This session will be a first for the provincial Green Party having their first elected member to sit in the Legislature. This is especially exciting to see because it really shows us the true power of democracy. The hon. member will add value and insight that this House has never seen before. Tonight, for me, there is another first. This is the first time I rise in the House and speak to my fellow members and Islanders watching at home and in the gallery. I promise you that as I do so, I feel humbled and inspired by both where I am and by the company I keep, the hon. members on all sides of the Chamber who are kind enough to grant me their attention.

I spent time at the doors with mothers holding babies, young men and women seeking their post-secondary aspirations in Summerside, and with seniors and with all ages in between. Oh, and dogs, lots of dogs. I learned that my most indispensable campaigning tools were a clipboard, a bottle of hand sanitizer, and a big bag of doggy

treats. Almost everywhere I went I was treated politely, even by those who had no intention of voting for me. They sincerely believed another candidate would best serve them.

They didn't do it out of spite, they were simply doing what they saw was best for Summerside and the province, and reflecting back on that I realize my responsibilities lie not just with those who cast their ballots my way, but also with those who differed with me or my party. I come into this Chamber humbled, happy, and hungry to get to work. I am ready, willing and able to work hard for each and every resident in my district, and given the opportunity, all Islanders.

Yesterday we listened as our esteemed Lieutenant Governor delivered to this Chamber the 2015 Speech From the Throne. It is an important document, this government's agenda for this 1st Session of the 65th General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, a blueprint, if you will, for what Islanders can expect from their newly-elected government.

The speech was filled with measures to address the everyday needs of ordinary Islanders from tip-to-tip. It holds out the promise of bettering the lives of thousands of Islanders, combining solid economic practices with sensitivity to social issues and the plight of our most vulnerable citizens. My constituents, like those in every other riding across the province, rely on key government services like education, health care and social services.

I know this from first-hand experience. The traditional family dynamic is not the same as it used to be, and many of our institutions are formed to support what used to be the tradition. I, as a single mother, put three children through the educational system on Prince Edward Island. I know the challenges being faced by parents out there. As the mother of a child who faces challenges learning, I know what it's like when your child isn't being taught in a way they can learn. I have spent countless hours in parent-teacher meetings and have come away with a deep respect for the professionals in our schools. But we need to ensure the schools meet the broader needs of our communities, and the establishment of district advisory councils will help focus our school

administrators on local concerns that may have gotten lost in our bureaucracy.

We need to make sure our schools are equipped to meet the challenges of today. We live in a connected environment, and ensuring that all Island schools have Wi-Fi by the end of 2016 will help our students thrive. Post-secondary education is another key to preparing our young people for success. University and college can have a huge impact on family budgets. I've felt it. I'm sure other members have as well. You want to do the best for your kids, but the tuition and travel and housing and books and all the other bills can strain any family's resources. This Island should be proud of the George Coles bursaries, which have helped 5,200 students as they try to scrape together enough for a solid education. In this session we will work to enhance the collaboration between our three post-secondary institutions to contribute to the preservation and enrichment of Acadian and Francophone culture.

We live on an Island of around 146,000 people. We should be proud that we are the only Atlantic Canadian province to see population growth recently. We live out our day to day, and we can only hope that the people we love will be safe and happy. But as a government we can't only hope. We have a responsibility to make sure that the people of our Island have access to the best possible health care. We will continue to work to attract and keep doctors and nurses, building on the successes of the past decade. We will increase the numbers of nurse practitioners to relieve some of the strain on our systems. We will enhance the role of paramedics and community pharmacists.

As I ran from door to door to door, and I literally ran from door to door in Summeride-St. Eleanors, access to health care was a critical concern to almost everyone I spoke with. I know other members heard this also. Every member in this Chamber is committed to seeing that the people of this Island receive the health care they need. Whether it be critical care, long-term care, addictions treatment, a cohesive mental health strategy, or investments in infrastructure, we share a common goal. We share a common goal in seeing that our most vulnerable citizens get the assistance they need. Poverty knows no geography. Every

single district on this Island has people struggling not just to make ends meet, but to even find the ends.

This is why I am so thrilled with the plan to amend the *Income Tax Act*. This amendment will help out 12,000 Island families and actually eliminating personal income tax for 2,000 of those families. They need that money. Anyone who has lived on the edge of financial distress – and yes, I have – knows how important even a little help can be.

One of the things I love most about being from Summerside is the fierce devotion to community. You can feel it at public events like the Lobster Carnival or a Western Capitals games. You feel it walking along Water Street or taking in a show at the College of Piping or even jogging along the boardwalk on Green's Shore. I know that pride in your community is not something that is unique to Summerside. We all feel it. It's what first drew me into the world of politics. I wanted to make my community a better place, and I had ideas of how to do that. I ran for city council and felt the same thrill we've all felt when I was elected. I was excited to chair the Police, Fire, and Emergency Services Committee, I was humbled to chair the Human Resources and Legal Committee, thrilled to chair the Technical Services and Planning Board, and passionate about my chair as Cultural Summerside.

Community politics is close to the ground. You have an immediate sense of who you are serving and what they need because your constituents meet you on the street, in the farmers' markets and in the coffee shop, and they aren't afraid to tell you. You understand that people rely on you, and boy oh boy, this is politics right where people live. You're listed in the phone book. I'd get calls at night about barking dogs, calls about snowplows filling in driveways. I'd get so many late night calls about loud parties that after a while I was tempted to go over just to see what they were serving.

I respected that intimacy, but I also felt energized by it. It was my chance to make things as right as I knew how, my chance to make the place I lived better for my kids, better for my constituents, and better for people I didn't even know. But another thing

happened during my time on Summerside city council. I became aware of how interrelated the levels of government are, how our communities rely on the province for funding, for infrastructure and even, to some extent, direction. That is why I am excited about the new *Municipal Government Act* will emphasize and reward accountability, responsiveness and efficiency. We will work to improve the stability and reliability of long-term funding. This act is an important step forward that will help our communities deliver services where the rubber meets the road.

One of the things I loved best about raising my kids here on the Island was the sheer, all-encompassing natural beauty. From North Cape to the West Point lighthouse, along Cousin's Shore, through the heart of the Island, the patchwork of fields and woodlots around Stanchel and Brookvale, Tea Hill beach at low tide, all the way to Red Point and the East Point lighthouse. We live in paradise. It is an enormous privilege, but with privilege comes great responsibility.

This government accepts that responsibility to protect and defend our Island environment. The commitment to protecting water quality and to enhance measures to guard against soil erosion are key components of our environmental policy. We know that some of the most ardent protectors of the environment are those who rely on the land for their livelihood. We will partner with landowners and the farm community to make sure we can deliver a pristine environment to our grandchildren. If there was one overriding issue I heard about day after day as I talked to my constituents, it was the issue of accountability. This really resonated with my constituents. It lies at the core of the trust our citizens place in their elected representatives.

The one thing I know is that when our Premier talks about accountability, he is serious. It is more than an empty political promise. It is a deep seated philosophical commitment and it will be at the core of this government. During the election campaign we heard the word 'change' a lot. Sadly, it's one of those words that has lost a lot of its impact. Everybody promises change. But I honestly believe we are going to see some real change in how things are done. I think

Islanders will see a government that is open and direct, accountable and takes responsibility. I am excited by the commitment to build prosperity.

I am energized by the commitment to engage new Islanders and collaborate with the private sector in creating a healthy economic environment. I am also thrilled with the commitment to retain our young people and repatriate those who have left. As a mother of three I of course want my children close by. Who doesn't? But more importantly, I want them to be happy, and you know what? If my kids want to move to Ontario, Alberta or BC to seek their fortunes, then I support that. I support them. Having a choice of where you live and work is the Canadian way, it is our right.

But more and more our young people don't have that choice. We all know someone living in Fort MacMurray or Peace River or Vancouver or Toronto, not because they want to be there but because it's the only place they can find work. If we give our young people a good reason to stay we can stop the flow of talent, energy, and youth towards the west, towards the oil fields of Alberta, which are built on the tears of Atlantic Canadians. We need to offer our kids the choice to go or to stay, and that begins with building prosperity.

We all know how legislatures have worked in the past. I respect the position of the loyal Opposition, and I know the Premier does, too. The hon. members opposite bring a wealth of talent and experience to this Chamber, and I expect to learn as much from them as I do from my caucus colleagues. I know there will be times when we might differ on the details of how a service might be delivered or how a program should work. But I do believe that, like me, and like every member on this side, we come to this Chamber with a shared goal, simply: We want this Island to be a better place. In that there will always be more that unites us than divides us.

With that, I am proud to second the motion to accept the Speech From the Throne.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I will now call upon the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask for the podium as well. While I'm waiting for the podium to arrive here, if I may, I would like to recognize another person in the gallery seeing that I neglected to a few moments ago. A Charlottetown-Sherwood resident, Mike MacAdam, is with us in the far end of the gallery tonight, so it's great to have Mike in as well. I apologize for neglecting to get you a little earlier, Mike.

It is a great pleasure to rise and take part in the debate on the Speech From the Throne. I am deeply impressed with its vision and scope and the direction it sets for the future of this province and its people. It reflects the major commitments made by this government in the recent provincial general election campaign, and outlines the direction the government will follow over the next four years.

I am deeply honoured by the support and confidence I received from the people of Charlottetown-Sherwood in the recent provincial election. It has been a great privilege to have served them in the Legislative Assembly since 2007 and I look forward to continue to work hard for them into the future. I want to congratulate my fellow MLAs on their election and look forward to working closely with them on behalf of all Islanders.

I would also like to congratulate all the candidates who ran in the election campaign for their dedication to public service and for their contributions to the discussions on issues that matter most to Islanders. It is a great honour for me to serve under the outstanding leadership of the Premier. He has demonstrated his commitment to work for the well-being of all Islanders and to lead this province into a new era of progress and prosperity. The promise of a better future has earned him the support and confidence of the people of this province.

I was honoured to be asked to be a member of this new government, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in

government and in this Legislature to help build a more prosperous and caring society. It is a distinct opportunity for me to assume responsibility for a new department of government, the Department of Communities, Land and Environment. The new department is a reflection of government's commitment to work with all Islanders to protect our environment and to strengthen our local government. The protection of our land, air and water for future generations is a fundamental responsibility of our government, and a shared vision among Islanders on how best to protect our environmental resources is essential for success. Prince Edward Island is known for its pristine landscape. Our province's natural beauty is something all Islanders are proud of and a reason why so many visitors choose to travel here.

The new department assumes responsibility for several major initiatives of government. These include the implementation of the Thompson report on land use and local governance and the development of a new water act. The department will have lead responsibility for working with local governments to build a stronger and more stable system in our province.

As announced in the throne speech, we will work with local governments to begin this process of developing a new municipalities act.

For the information of members, the Department of Communities, Land and Environment includes the following divisions which previously existed in other departments. These are: the environment division of the former department of environment, labour and justice; the municipal affairs and provincial planning division of the former department of finance, energy and municipal affairs; and the forest, fish and wildlife division of the former department of agriculture and forestry.

I am pleased to report that the new department came together in a very effective and efficient manner. That is a tribute to the dedication and professionalism of our public servants and I want to publicly thank them for their continued hard work on behalf of all Islanders.

We have a lot of work to do. Our municipalities play a key role in providing services to our citizens. Many of the day-to-day needs of municipal residents are met by their local government. Members of local government work hard, often without recognition, to provide those services in a timely and efficient manner. As minister, I look forward to working with them to strengthen their role and to increase cooperation and collaboration with other local government and with other levels of government as well.

Municipalities also play a key role in land use planning. By combining municipalities, land use, and environment into one department, we are confident that we can more effectively address the needs to improve land use planning and to the protection of the environment of the total province that will have many positive impacts on decisions affecting infrastructure, the engagement of citizens and in development of decisions and the predictability of land use policies.

As previously announced, government will work to improve the predictability of municipal funding. One of the more contentious issues at the local level is concern on how municipalities can better work together as separate governments by joining forces together. As minister I hope to be able to work with municipalities to address this very important issue.

One of the major priorities of the new Department of Communities, Land and Environment is to address the issues of land and water use. Land and water are two of our most important natural resources and it is essential that they be protected and managed in a very responsible manner.

One of the most challenging issues facing Islanders is that of land use. Over the past half century or so the issue has been examined by royal commissions, legislative committees, task forces and other bodies set up specifically to find solutions to land use and land ownership issues. The major challenge is that of reconciling private and public interests in the ways in which land is owned and managed.

The new department represents a shift in perspective and in approach. Proper land use

is essential to environmental protection and requires engagement with Islanders at these local levels. We must act quickly and effectively to deal with this longstanding issue. There is a clear need for comprehensive land use policies that will apply to all Island land under both provincial and municipal jurisdictions with provincial support and community engagement. We believe that Prince Edward Island has an opportunity to be a model for the rest of Canada in the public development of smart principles and smart practices. Environmental quality and stewardship are vital in Prince Edward Island and land use is key to environmental protection.

It is the intent of this government, through active engagement in local communities, to develop a renewed planning act and continue with the process of revising the *Lands Protection Act*. Land is one of our most important natural resources, and it is imperative that we establish sound land use and ownership policies for the benefit of present and future generation of Islanders.

When it comes to the environment, this government recognizes that a healthy environment is key to the health of our economy and to the wellbeing of our society. The health of our environment is a responsibility that is shared by all Islanders. This government will help lead the establishment of policies that protect and enhance the environment in this province. We will work with landowners, with watershed groups, with environmental organizations, with the First Nation and others to ensure that our environment is managed in a sustainable manner.

In the coming weeks I will be announcing a process leading to the development of a water act for this province. This act will be aimed at protecting the quality and quantity of water in Prince Edward Island and it will also address other water-related issues. I will be encouraging all Islanders to share their views and opinions on what a water act on Prince Edward Island will look like. As new minister I very much look forward to addressing these and other priorities that affect each and every Islander in at least some way.

I am honoured with being given the opportunity to deal with matters relating to

our communities, our land and our environment. I look forward to working with all of you to help ensure that we adopt policies that make this province a place where people want to live and visit for a long, long time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: We will now move to the hon. Leader of the Opposition to speak to the Speech From the Throne.

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

It actually is a great honour to go behind the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, probably the person on that side who I still believe is the best choice for a leader over there, though he pulled his name out, I'm sure there's probably others that would agree with me.

I pick up the Speech From the Throne and I notice that right off we have a picture from the backyard of the Premier's estate, which is cute.

During the election the current government talked about people, prosperity and engagement. I know, from my perspective, and watching how this government has rolled and is already rolling, "people" certainly to them means their party friends, prosperity is for the few, and engagement is to seemingly cover their own tracks. That seems to be what's most important to this government and this Premier.

"The people of Prince Edward Island placed their trust in My Government to lead our province into a new era of prosperity." Actually, 60% of Islanders did not put their trust in this government, 60% of Islanders did not choose this Premier, 60% of Islanders did not want this government in place.

I think that's something that's very important for this Premier to think about when he moves forward: He does not speak for the majority of Islanders. He speaks for 40%. I think that if he thinks that he carries the voice of Islanders simply because he's Premier, he's dead wrong. I think that's

because the face of politics has changed here on Prince Edward Island. It certainly appeared to in the last election.

I think it would be shortsighted of this Premier to be too over-confident that he's got a great following out there and that people are waiting for him to do great things. As a matter of fact, I'm sure that 60% are waiting for you to fall on your face.

So in the speech it talks about "My Government's vision..." This is a vision that doesn't include anything about our current crisis for farming in Prince Edward Island. It's something that we talked about today. This is a vision that doesn't care about farmers. This is a vision that doesn't care about the potato industry or the issues that it's facing today. This is a vision that is no vision when it comes to: How do we fix problems that are right on top of us?

It's great to be able to look 25 years down the road, but when you're tripping over the problems of today and choosing to ignore them and choosing not to deal with them, you're creating more problems.

I'm sure that that's something that maybe some of the experienced people around the Premier could let him in on. I know there are a number of experienced members in this House who could probably help him out.

This is a vision that doesn't include any talk about funding for a cable. As a matter of fact, during Question Period today when it was talked about was there a plan for funding this cable, the Premier talked about not wanting to show all the cards that were on the table. Because we Islanders wouldn't deserve to know what cards were on the table. In a government that's transparent and open, why would you let Islanders know what you're doing. Why would you put your cards on the table? My heavens, there's a novel idea. It sounds a lot like government for years. Seemed to be a lot of hope that this Premier was going to do things different. Two days in he's talking like any other premier ever talked. Going to hide things from Islanders. Good on him, he'll go down in the history books. Perhaps someday somebody will write a book about him. I think they wrote one – they stole the name already – they wrote it about John Turner.

It's funny when the Premier talks about in the Speech From the Throne: "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'm not sure what the Premier thinks that we do over here. I don't know if he doesn't think I don't take my job seriously. I don't know if he thinks that when I ask him questions it's a joke. I don't know if he thinks that because my job is to oppose government that I'm not civil? It's not civil to ask questions? I don't know. I think it's only fair that the opposition asks questions of the government. I think that's our job. Maybe the Premier will come to learn that over the next four years.

It's funny, and I talked about it this morning, the night that he called the election, he abandoned that. When he took a swipe at me, when he brought me up, I wasn't the leader of the party, I wasn't running to be leader. I wasn't going to debate him in public. I was in my district knocking on doors and he was taking swipes at me. Interesting. So he adds it in the speech, expects me to abide by it, but he abandoned it the night he called the election. Very interesting.

Let me tell you something from my perspective. I knocked on all the doors of my district – you can laugh if you like, Mr. Premier, but it's not funny. You think it's funny to take a swipe at me? You think it's – yeah, you'll find it funny before it's said and done.

I was on my doorsteps knocking on doors, trying to get re-elected in my district. The Premier thought it was hilarious that he'd take a poke at me even though I was talking about our party on doorsteps, I was talking about our platform on doorsteps. How we were going to move forward. Never once did I talk about him. Not once in all the weeks I was campaigning did I talk about him. I didn't have to. That's not what politics is about, that's not what campaigning is about. I don't need to take wild swipes at him on doorsteps to win. I need to show Islanders who I am. I need to show my district who I am and how I can represent them. Anyways, so that's how we are where are today. I guess we've abandoned that and it's because the Premier chose to abandon it.

I, too, and it says in the speech here commend – and I do commend every candidate who came forward and put their name on a ballot. I do think that it's very important that we do have people run for parties, regardless what party they are. It's a very grueling task running an election. It's a very humbling experience to hear from Islanders and what they have to say. As the member from Summerside mentioned, not everyone necessarily agrees with you when you're on the doorsteps but you have to deal with that. You get the good and you get the bad and that's what it's all about.

It's truly great to have that level of engagement, and I know it gives a great eye-opener to what the issues are specifically today in having an election in the time of year that it was. There were a lot of issues around the weather had been cold, it was a long winter, people were running out of wood, people were running out of oil, people weren't back to work yet, they were worried that they were going to run out of unemployment before they did and their bills were high. I mean, there was a lot of that in my district.

I did enjoy that, and I hope everyone who put their name on a ballot did enjoy that opportunity to get out and to campaign and to talk to Islanders and to hear what's on their mind.

The new era of engagement, it kind of struck me – "...engaging Islanders in the decisions that shape their future..." This shouldn't be something new, this shouldn't be something that's done for the first time. This is what governing is about. It's about engaging the people that you represent and representing them.

It's sad that we've reached a stage in democracy where we need to outline in the Speech From the Throne that we're actually going to engage the people that we represent. I'm not sure why openness and transparency should be something new. A standard of ethics, why that should be something new. Why managing the finances wisely should be something new. That's what everyone should be striving towards. That's what the people who you represent want. That's what they're asking for.

I'm not sure that – I think that by adding it there, it actually says: If I didn't write this in here, we wouldn't do it. If I didn't write this in here, we wouldn't engage you, we wouldn't be fiscally prudent, we wouldn't be open and transparent. That's what its saying. This is the Premier who shut down the debate on e-gaming. This is the Premier who shut down the debate on PNP. How is that different, how is that open, how is that transparent? How is that allowing the opposition to hold government accountable? How is that allowing us as opposition to hold government to a higher standard of ethics? It's not, it simply isn't.

The government is going to create a White Paper on Democratic Renewal, like – now it's got a new name. It's a glossy pamphlet, it's going to lie on a shelf somewhere. I mean, this is this government – these members have been a part of that for seven years now, creating documents. The minister of health has more documents with dust on them than you can shake a stick at. They'd be piled so high you probably have a room built in off your office just to pile your dusty reports on.

That's not what Islanders are looking for. Islanders aren't looking for report upon report. Islanders want a government of action, a government with a vision. Clearly this isn't this government because this government doesn't have any vision. There's certainly no vision in this plan. There's certainly no vision when you leave out the power cable. There's certainly no vision when the single biggest industry on Prince Edward Island – the potato industry right now is struggling and it's not talked about in here. It's not talked about. We the government will help, we the government will engage the farming community, we the government will make sure that the current crisis in the agriculture industry is dealt with.

I don't know, now I'm the one laughing. See how it goes? It's funny now, right?

A new municipality act. This has been talked about for so long I don't even know if it's worth commenting on until I actually see something come forward because this has been kicked around, everybody's looking for it. Government doesn't want to do it, I don't know. It's funny and it stresses again the

point about accountability, accessibility, transparency, responsibility. This is something that this government should have practiced itself because today in Question Period there was a whole lot of evasive answers to very pointed, simple questions. Questions as simple as: Do you have the money for the cable? Nobody could answer that because the cards have to be hidden. We can't show you our cards. Why would we do that? It's only your money. I'm not sure why Islanders deserve to know what you're planning on doing with their money or if you have money. I guess we'll have to find out when there's a budget coming if in fact you do have money.

Get into the topic of advisory boards. There's going to be advisory boards developed for health and education systems. I don't know if that's on top of the boards that we already have, if it's more boards, or if we're getting rid of boards and you're going to create paper boards who just advise government, if they're going to be more handpicked boards, so that you only hear what you want to hear, which seems to be the way. Fine, if that's how you think government should be run, that you handpick boards and they'll say: Oh yes, sir, you're right, that's a good idea, and clap when you walk into a room and that's great. I'm not sure that that's the kind of action that government should be pursuing right now. Certainly have an elected school board would be a start. Elections for the school board have been punted down the road over and over again and it seems to be something that this government is afraid of. They're afraid of allowing Islanders to choose who would represent them, like democracy in their mind doesn't work or isn't effective.

There's a new initiative talked about here, youth engagement. I personally truly believe in real youth engagement. I'm afraid this government just uses this buzzword because it's a great buzz word to build a couple of paragraphs in this speech. True, youth engagement comes from action. I know there are some members across the floor that do understand that, I truly believe that. I just hope that it's not put there because it sounds catchy. It sounds like something that people would say: Hey, that's great, they're going to engage youth, and they never do it because it seems to appear in speeches all over the place. I never hear youth say: I feel

like they really care, I feel like I'm really involved, I feel like they really want to know what's best for my future. Quite often it isn't the case.

This idea of working together – “My Government firmly believes that ‘working together’ applies not just to implementation but also to design.” Again, I don't why that's new. Who did you think you were going to do this with? Why did that have to be in the speech? Who did you think you were going to build this future with? Alone, just you guys. Didn't need to ask anyone. Thought Islanders thought that they were going to be engaged and I thought all the parties talked about how they were going to engage Islanders. I think that's an important thing for parties and I think it's important for government. I think it's important for the opposition parties to engage with Islanders to know what Islanders want. From the opposition perspective, if government isn't giving it to them, then it's our job to point that out, that what Islanders want is this and what you're doing is different. I would think that that would be the norm. If we've gotten away from that – and it appears that over on that side it's thought that that's something that doesn't exist anymore. It is sad because we do want to have proper engagement, it's not something that needs to be pointed out that we're going to do it. Everyone should just assume that it's being done.

Again, there's talk about a Water Act. The Water Act has been kicked around for a long time. It's in good hands. I'm not going to knock you, you're a good guy. I think it's in good hands. Take control of it, take it away from him and go do it. I think you can do it. No more talking about it. We've heard so much about it, let's roll on it.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy. This is one that pops up all the time and it's almost like a buzz word because there's no act, there's not even a policy. It's just a strategy which means it's a document that government will create. There was one. The former member from District 17 there had one. It was criticized openly by everyone, all the poverty groups. Nobody thought it was a good idea but her. Then nothing happened.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy, it's not that it's something new, it's old. I know if a strategy is what's needed. How about some

action? How about doing something? You're going to write another report, have a big press conference, talk about all the great things you're going to do, and then not do it. That's not new, that's not a new way of doing business. That's the same old way of doing business. I don't think that's what people want. I think if you look at the percentage breakdown of the votes in the last election it should tell you that that that's not what people want. People are looking for something different. If they can't find it from about what we're perceived as the two main parties for the past 100 years, then they're going to look for it elsewhere and it's because they're looking for action, they're not looking for the same old – promise you the moon and deliver you nothing.

The Municipal Government Act is also something that's old. Like I said before, people are looking for this. It's been asked for over and over again.

I highlight this, too, because I kind of got a kick out of it, that they're going to be mindful that face-to-face communication is vitally important. I was going to comment on it. I just changed my mind there on the fly.

The implementation of a “whistleblower policy.” I noticed the word policy because it's not an act, it's not legislation, it's something that on any given Cabinet meeting government can change and not tell anyone. Why not have an act? Why not have something that has to be changed right here, that's enacted right here? We'll debate it, agree or disagree, it'll pass because it's a government bill. If there's changes need to be made that are substantial, then it comes here because that's what each and every one of us are elected to do, whether we're on government or an opposition party. That's what we're elected to do, to help make decisions for Islanders, not just government. You think that's part of the problem, that government doesn't want to debate things and doesn't want to be criticized on things. And yeah, granted, being criticized is hard. It's not that I haven't been criticized myself, but you learn how to deal with it.

I know the minister of health, his shoulder has gotten a lot bigger since I've been hammering on him for the last four years.

That's just the way it goes, right? It's okay to have opposing views and it's okay to have to explain why you're right if you're right, or it's okay to listen to why maybe somebody else doesn't think you're right if they don't think you're right, and maybe they have an idea that you're like: Okay, that's something that I never thought of. It's okay to be open to new ideas. It's okay to realize that out of 27 people who sit in these chairs that there's somebody in here who maybe has a specific life experience that could apply to the situation that you're talking about. They could be an expert in something and you didn't know it, or they could have a life experience that specifically applies to what you're debating today, and they may be able to bring a perspective that you or the people that helped develop a bill didn't have, and that's okay. That's how good decisions are made.

If you're on a board where everybody was independent and there were no parties, that would happen all the time. Every baseball board or hockey board or 4-H or whatever, every one of those boards there would be discussion and somebody may bring a unique perspective and change everyone's minds.

I don't know why not bringing whistleblower legislation to the floor would be a decision that would be made by this government. I guess notwithstanding the fact that there is a specific case right now of somebody who's being punished for speaking out. A policy perhaps isn't good enough. Perhaps it's time for legislation. It's been called for before. They may have even come in as a private member. I know I've seen copies of it. Whether or not it ever got to the floor here or not, I'm not sure. But what's wrong with legislation and what's wrong with debating legislation?

"A greater range of provincial government information Will routinely be made public." That's great. There's nothing wrong with that, except for this is the government that blocked the request for committee to look into e-gaming, to try to find answers about e-gaming, what happened, what went wrong, who was involved, why did they do it, what did it cost us. This is the government that blocked that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Why would you block that? This is also the government that, based on Alan Rankin's column, shut down any debate on how the PNP file was administered. This wasn't a witch hunt, this wasn't to find out who got it, this was to find out how was it administered. Because what he insinuated in his column was that the premier at the time enjoyed it so much that he wanted to get his own hands into it.

We thought, from a Prince Edward Island perspective, that it'd be important that Islanders got to know first-hand why and we were wanting to bring in Alan Rankin to talk about it. He even told Teresa Wright from the *Guardian* that he wouldn't necessarily be opposed to coming in and talking about it. Nobody was really running from it except this government and they shut it down. I don't know how routine that is, but it's certainly provincial government information that I feel like was blocked, and there really was no need for it.

All of those committees are still – government members still outnumber opposition. There are lots of strategies, I guess, that you could use to keep us from being able to ask 100 questions to somebody. You only have a set amount of time to have them there. I mean, I've seen them in action before so it's not that – and we weren't looking to bring Allan Rankin in and railroad him. We wanted him to elaborate on what was it that he meant when he talked about how Robert Ghiz wanted to have his hand in the decision making on who got PNP, the administration only. As far as who got it, that's yesterday's news, unless the Premier is scared that something will come to light about who got it that we don't know about. I'm not sure.

Again, the ethics and integrity commissioner finally – there's no two ways about it, she's a very fine lady and I'm sure will do a wonderful job, but if government was truly open and transparent, you wouldn't really need somebody to make sure that you are acting with integrity. It wasn't something that was necessarily needed before, and let's face it, it was because whatever it was that Chris LeClair did with the e-gaming that you guys are hiding from us and you don't want to tell us. That's what it's about. Because you had upper-level civil servants in the premier's office doing things that they

shouldn't have been doing, and what they are, we'll find out. It will come to light, so you can only run from that for so long.

I think that when it talks about building prosperity and it talks about the work of getting the budget balanced, this is something that, since I've been elected, I've heard – there have been dates set – I've seen more dates set than you can shake a stick at. Every time I saw a date it was a different date or it was a new year, or it was kicked down the road or it was because this happened and the world went out of control and poor Wes couldn't do anything about it and he spent all that money, that front-loaded money. It was all gone and he blew it. He blew it all and they had to clean up the mess the next year and they couldn't balance the budget that year because they blew all that money that the federal government sent down to help.

I don't think there's anything wrong with living within our financial means. I really don't. I'm not sure that – there are many faces here who have been around for a number of years who watched how the premier and the former finance minister handled the finances of this province, and nobody, apparently, tried to stop them. I'm not sure that there are enough bodies over there who actually buy into that need for fiscal accountability and fiscal prudence and a balanced budget.

When it comes to one of the more interesting parts, and it talks about how the government looks forward to enhancing their collaboration with federal partners. So there it is, right? So this is what it comes down to. The only way that we can live within our means is if the federal government gives us more money, right? I don't know how it worked for other people, but I know when I was growing up I had a job and that was my financial means. If I ran out, I couldn't go to mom and dad and say: Give me money. They would be like: You have a job, where did you spend all of your money, and you'll have to spend your money more wisely next time. Yes, I know there are some members over there nodding so that's the way it was. That's the way it works.

We know what we have for money. If we spend more than that, we can't go to Ottawa

and say: But dad, we just spent too much, we just couldn't control how we spent our money, dad, give us more. That seems to be what's in the book here. Now, maybe there are members over there who were able to do that growing up. I certainly wasn't one of them.

This paragraph particularly caught me off guard because it says: "Even with rigorous expenditure control, forecasts make it clear that attaining fiscal balance this year will require a range and scope of additional measures that would cause undue hardship for Islanders and disruption to government services and programs."

Yet, the government is going to balance the budget in two years and it's not going to create undue hardship for Islanders if you do it in two years versus one? Oh right, because you're going to ask dad for more money and you're hoping that he'll give it to you before you have to do anything, right? Is that why? I guess that's why because none of the rest of it makes sense. You can't say that in order to bring our expenditures under control, it would cause too much hardship for Islanders and disruption of government services and programs, but we can do it in two years. Because it won't cause hardship and disruption to government services and programs if you do it over two years? Okay? Good, that's okay. Good, then.

"To date, much of our revenue growth has been attained through changes in taxes and increases in fees." Finally. Finally, it has been admitted what I have been saying here for the last four years: taxing Islanders to death. Any time you go to pay your bills, you just go back and you tax them more. Okay, so let's think about this for a second. This is the government that brought in HST. They didn't just bring in HST. They didn't just say: It's good for business, it's a business tax, we've going to bring it in because it's good for business and we're going to offset it so that it's not a money maker for us. No, government used us to increase their revenues, right? Government chose to increase their revenues by bringing in HST, not make it better for business.

Who did that come from? Where did that extra money come from? It came from everyone's pocket. It came from all Islanders' pockets. This is the government

that also decided that they would tie all the fees to government. Every fee to government is going to be tied to CPI, every single one of them. Where does that money come from? From Islanders' pockets. You're talking about undue hardship in the paragraph before to Islanders. This is a government who has pounded Islanders with undue hardship, has pounded them by continually reaching into their pockets.

Why is it that you guys think that you can spend money, Islanders' money, better than they can? What makes you guys think that that money is better served having you spend than it is by them spending it on the things that they need, like food? I know the member back here is laughing. He was on CBC radio talking about how Islanders should be able to learn to live on \$100 a month on a political panel. One hundred dollars a month? This guy back here, the Brighton lawyer. Good Lord.

The government talks about growing the economy and increasing trade exports. This has been the case forever. This has been the case for absolutely ever. This has been a problem of Prince Edward Island throughout time, and we've had several bright premiers, several bright Cabinet ministers, some good governments of both sides through all of the years, and this has always been a problem. Okay? This hasn't just been thought of, this wasn't just invited or wasn't just – the new Premier comes in and he says: Guess what? We've got to increase trade and she'll all be fixed. It was Alex Campbell who talked about it in development plan and he failed at it, and he was proven to be a good premier and he failed at it.

I just don't know where this Premier thinks he just parachuted into. I don't know if he thinks that none of us are as smart as him, but that now that he's here we're saved. He's got all the answers. This has been a problem for eternity here in Prince Edward Island. This has been a problem forever. He talks about the national programs and new federal investments in Prince Edward Island, something he has no control over at all. I'm not sure how this Premier thinks he's going to go to Ottawa and say: I need more money, I need new programs, ones that you're not even thinking of, and here's what they'll be and you just tell me where to sign and where to pick up my cheque. Okay. New

programs. New programs, new federal money.

This is the problem with governments on Prince Edward Island. They don't even believe that we can do it ourselves. We're out there trying to convince Islanders that we can. We're out there trying to convince Islanders that we're as good as anybody and we're smart as anybody – because we are – but our own government has to say: But we can't do it unless the feds help us. That's the only answer every time, is: How can the feds bail me out? How can the feds bail me out because I can't make decisions?

“On the expenditure side” the budget speech is going to set out “a number of measures to reduce spending where possible and to maximize the impact on value for money on all expenditures.” So much time has been spent talking about money here in this portion of the speech and how the government was going to go to Ottawa and ask them to bail them out and ask them to up the ante and ask them to create new programs. They're going to ask them for money for the cable. They're not even willing to talk to the government with the \$50 million that Gail Shea put on the table. They think they know better than everyone.

Why did this have to wait until budget day? What's the big secret? Let us know. You're going to reduce spending? You're going to have all these change and measures brought into place? If it's measures that are being brought into place, this is where they belong. Are you cutting the civil service? Are you cutting programs? Are you cutting services to Islanders? Are you closing hospitals? Are you closing schools?

This book. Your vision. This book is your vision so this book is where you'd lay that out. This book is where you would tell Islanders: This is how, this is what we plan to do.

This is the government who has all but gutted rural Prince Edward Island. I know because I live there. I know the impact that this government has had on rural Prince Edward Island. This is the government who let the shipyard in Georgetown close. The only government that this yard has ever been closed under is a Liberal government. Never been closed under the Tories. Never been

closed under the Tories and that's the truth. You can look it up.

Since 1996 until it closed, that was due in large part to Mike Currie. We know Mike Currie brought over 20,000 jobs to Prince Edward Island. It's that type of vision that's needed, it's that type of vision that Islanders are looking for.

"Our professional and skilled public service will continue to play a key role in finding the best ways to contain expenditures..." I'm not sure from what I'm hearing in government – from what I'm hearing in government, no messages were being communicated at all. I know that Friday afternoon email that went out to everybody that said: Don't worry. I wonder why. It's because they were all worried. Because nobody told them what was happening, nobody told them what the new department is. Nobody told them where payroll was going to be sent to. No. Seriously, there was panic. There was panic and that's why that email went out that day.

So you're going to continue to rely on them, tell them nothing, and the Premier's going to micro-manage them, which is basically what they think's happening, which is basically what's happened. Because perception is reality. This is the business we're in.

So this government is "committed to leading by example." Interesting. There's been some great examples here. There's some great examples in this room. This government's going to lead by example. Okay. Well, time's going to tell on that one.

"Growing our Means." This is an interesting section because it says: "We have historic strength in our food-based sector, where receipts and landings reached all-time record highs in 2013 and 2014." Okay. Good. We're relying heavily on that food sector. Good. Good for – oh no, wait. No, wait. This is the government that is ignoring potato farmers right now. This is the government who completely ignored the fact that there's needles in potatoes. This is the government that didn't put it in its speech. This is the government when I asked the Premier today what has he done about it, he said: I met with farmers, I went to a farm once. One time I went to a farm. That's

pretty interesting. I mean, it takes more than that.

And these farmers – you know what? Farmers work hard, and I don't really feel like there's been a whole lot of ask over the years from farmers, I really don't. I feel like they work hard, they care for the land, they feed us. Our food sector is strong. But can it stay strong if this government continues to ignore potatoes, people who are packing, people who are having issues, people who are having product sent back, people who don't know can they afford to put in new equipment, can they afford to stay in the industry, can they afford to be ignored by government?

Good question. There's many, probably, who can't afford to be ignored by government. I think that's an issue.

Then we move into the tourism visitation. "The tourism visitation in 2014 reached the highest level in a decade." Anyone want to guess why? Twenty-eight million reasons why. We spent \$28 million last year on tourism. All well and good, but it reached the highest in a decade only. So it's not the highest it ever was, it was just the highest in the decade. It was the highest in the decade. So 2014, it was four years in this decade. So it's the highest it's been in four years and it cost us \$28 million to do that. This government had the audacity to tell us here in this House last fall that it was going to be increased forever because of this one year, that people will always come back forever because they'll – what, will they go down and see the venue that's not there anymore?

All the things this government was able to leave behind as legacy. Oh wait. Right. There was no legacy. And that's the fault of this government, spending \$28 million and not leaving a legacy.

"We will work with businesses, tourism and cultural groups, post-secondary institutions, and capital sources to ensure that Prince Edward Island has a vibrant economic development strategy." We're going to have a vibrant economic development strategy. Another strategy. Didn't Michael Mayne have one of these? His was the prosperity strategy. Same thing. Honestly, here's a guy that if you were going to shuffle somebody out of government, he failed – everything

he's ever done, he failed. He was a complete failure. He authored a report on a strategy that said we were going to have wages as high as Alberta when the strategy ended, which ended last year. We do have wages high in Alberta. It's the people that are in Alberta. Yeah, so he was right. He got one part right. We got the wages in Alberta. Unfortunately, everybody's in Alberta getting them.

So government's committed to lead by example. I talked about that before. Government's going to continue to lead by example with a new economic development strategy. I hope that you don't put Michael Mayne in charge of it, is all I can say. Because we don't need another failed strategy from his hands.

"Central to our collective success will be increasing our trade activity." Increase both our total exports and reduce the gap in the trade balance. Now again, this is something that has been talked about before. This isn't new. If you go back to years gone by, these were all things that were talked about. It's all believed because it's true. If we could just get a balance in trade, things would be great. Okay. We're going to set up oil rigs?

I'm not sure where the Premier thinks all this economic activity is. Does he think that nobody has ever thought of anything before? Before he came along we just sat here like drones and did nothing, had no ideas. There was nothing new. There was no innovative plans. There were no smart ministers. There were no great politicians. There were no good premiers. There was no good anything. Then all of a sudden he comes along and says: Okay, time to go to work, you've been waiting for 150 years for me, I'm here, time to get going. Oh boy.

This government's going to work to "build greater accessible pools of capital for business growth." This is also the government that wrote off how many millions of dollars?

Mr. LaVie: You're listening. How many millions was it?

Leader of the Opposition: A lot, it was a lot. This is – government – so is this the type of capital the government's talking about? Money to friends, write it off. That's not a

loan, that's a gift. Where I come from we call that a gift, that's not a loan. When somebody gives you money and plans to write it off, it's a gift. That's not capital, it's a gift to your friends.

This is the government that gave a lot of gifts to a lot of friends, so accessible pools of capital by government or by making it easy to do business here in Prince Edward Island so that people want to invest here, so that people with money actually see a value with doing business here or setting up business here. There's an idea, it happens in other places. Venture capitalists will come in if they see a prosperous area where their money can be used to grow. If they can grow their money, they see value in investing in your company. Venture capitalists, if you made it easier to do business here, if you didn't have such high taxes, if you didn't make it so hard for the workforce to stay and live here, perhaps.

Mr. LaVie: Red tape.

Leader of the Opposition: Perhaps. Red tape, there's too much red tape.

"Of equal importance in our economic growth is the need to diversify and rejuvenate our population. Sustainable economic prosperity is contingent on our ability to grow our labour force and increase the number of skilled workers."

We do have a lot of really smart and skilled people have moved to Prince Edward Island, there's no question about that. There's been a great addition to Prince Edward Island largely through the PNP and it has been a wonderful addition to the communities in Prince Edward Island.

To grow our labour force and increase the number of skilled workers for what? This government hasn't increased job growth in years. What are all these people coming to do? Here's a novel idea, why don't we actually engage our youth? Why don't we go back to youth engagement, and why don't we actually engage our youth? Why don't we teach our children to take risks in school? Why don't we teach our children to be innovators? Why don't we teach them that it's okay to think innovatively and think outside the box? Why don't we let them expand their own horizons? Take

opportunities. Teach them that they can be the leaders here. Teach them to take risks here in Prince Edward Island. Teach them that we'll support them if they'll do that, that we'll help them with the wealth of experience of businesspeople and entrepreneurs that already exist. Why don't we engage our youth?

Yes, it will take longer and you won't be able to put it in next year's speech, but it will actually accomplish something. Long-term planning for our children that are in our education system. I've said this before about our education system: it's okay to be different. It's okay for Prince Edward Island to have a unique education system. That's what Finland's is. Yeah, it's made up of components of things that work in all different jurisdictions of the world. That's okay, but they've tailored it to meet their needs. It's a made-in-Finland solution for them. We could have that.

You know what? I've said it here in this Legislature before. First of all, we need to know what is it that we want. What do Islanders want? Let's build an actual future that will give them that, and start it with our education system. Tie in our health care system, tie in our municipal systems, tie in our whole government into making sure that that plan is executed.

An Hon. Member: You're getting it.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm getting it, I got it for a long time.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: It's not the speech at all.

Mr. LaVie: Good listener. Nice to see you listening.

Leader of the Opposition: You said it was – the only way out was to attract a labour force, increase the – I'm talking about an education system that's world class. Nowhere is that mentioned in here, not even once, did you mention a world-class education system.

Not even once did you talk about real youth engagement. Not even once did you talk about how we would take children and make

them believe that there's a future here for them. Our job as leaders is to be responsible for the next generation. Let's be leaders. Let's not talk about it, let's not use buzz words, let's not say – let's not teach our children that there's only two ways to prosperity on Prince Edward Island is you leaving, and other people coming, and she'll all be fixed, but you'll never get to live here.

That's basically what you're saying there, right there, is that only way out is to grow a labour force and increase the number of skilled workers. Not talking about how do we engage our youth to be entrepreneurs, to think for themselves, to take risks, to take chances, to be innovators. To think outside the box. To take chances.

Everyone who sits here took a chance and for some it was much bigger than others, it was a risk of putting yourself out there, putting your name on a ballot, knocking on doors, maybe failing. Each and every person took that risk. Risk doesn't always turn out bad, but sometimes it does because there's people who did what we've done and weren't successful. There's people who are here who weren't successful and tried again and did make it. There's an opportunity to teach that with risk sometimes you get what you want. Sometimes you get the opportunity that you're looking for, but sometimes you get failure, but it's okay. Dust yourself off, get up and do it again. We could be teaching that.

We could be teaching that to our children. We teach that – I coach hockey, that's the – our strategy for hockey is yeah, okay, so you messed up and here's what you did, let's try to correct that and let's not do it again. I don't want you to not play hard or I don't want you to be scared of making another mistake, I want you to know that it was a mistake only and move on.

It's how you teach people that in order to get better you have to keep trying. Wow, it's –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah. This government's talking about attracting Islanders back home. I have so many people that are friends of mine that are out in Alberta who would love to come back home. Attracting them is not going to be a

problem. What would they do? What would you have them do while they're here? There's the issue. The area that I represent, what would you have them do? What will they come back and do? You have 45 welders in Alberta, how many welding jobs are there –

Mr. LaVie: That's a good question. You should (Indistinct) in Question Period.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, put that down for Question Period, I'll move on.

This is one that interests me and I brought it up on the floor of the Legislature here before.

“We will partner with local landowners and the farming community, many of who have taken positive steps to improve our environment, to enforce buffer zones around our waterways and pursue additional measure to reduce soil erosion.”

That's good, there's nothing wrong with that. That's actually very good and responsible, and it's responsible that we have a responsible farming community who's willing to take that on. A farming community who I feel, like, thinks that they're blamed for everything that happens. I think that it's time that we do show them the supports they need to make sure that they are where they need to be and that we can do this together.

Here's the problem with it. All over Prince Edward Island there are government roads that aren't paved and they're on hills, they run down over little culverts that are on streams that are the tributaries to some of our river systems on Prince Edward Island. Some of them have old wooden structures that go over – I'm thinking of one down your way, it's up past the high school there, the lone road. Now, that particular – it was the Maritime Electric dam when I was a kid, I don't know if they still call it that or not, but when I was young, you fished there with a boat and you had to get a boat in there, it was really deep.

If you go down there today, it's just a skiff of water over sand forever. Look there in the springtime and watch how much silt is running right down that road. It's coming down the road. I'm not blaming it all on the

road because there are other factors too. But together should also mean maybe government has a closer look at those roads. I'm not saying close them, but there are ways to trap silt, to slant the roads, to change them. I'm not a highways engineer, but they're all over Prince Edward Island and I'm just thinking that that was a good example because I –

Mr. R. Brown: You've got an engineer behind you.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, we'll maybe we'll engage him to fix your problems. We don't mind fixing your problems if you'll listen to us and that's – that's what I'm saying here today, right? That's what I was saying earlier about bringing the whistleblower act to the floor was that maybe together we can get somewhere. You want to work together, let's work together, but if you take something and call it a policy, it means only government can say what's in it, only government can discuss it and it only happens at Cabinet meetings. So the rest of us who aren't in Cabinet, which is the majority of the members in this House, don't get to see what's in it or don't get a say of what's in it.

There are 27 members representing all of Prince Edward Island and a handful of you get to decide what's in a policy on whistleblowers and no one gets to hear it debated, and people that are interested don't get to hear it debated or get to hear what the issue is, and I think that was my point.

“...[A]cross Canada and from the Island to find work opportunities and be part of our economic and community growth.” I think it's great to attract students from around the world and across Canada here to go school. I think it's fantastic. I think that the university is doing a great job of it. Alaa is really engaged in that and I think it's fantastic. I had the opportunity to go to – oh, I can't remember, it was the Atlantic Association of University Presidents had a thing back in February, and they talked about how they could bring innovation to the education system and kind of fall in line, and it had to do with the report in Nova Scotia. Anyway, when it was all said and done there was talk about people who were trying to move here, and there were some really bright people

who came through the system and how they were trying to move and set up a business here, and I thought: What a great opportunity.

The problem is, unless the people that are trying to stay here are of the innovative type who want to start their own business, it's – because I keep looking and it says the same time every time.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: You guys might be bored, it may feel like that over there –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: They're listening, they're listening.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, good.

Mr. LaVie: You got their attention.

Leader of the Opposition: So, unless they're of the innovative type and they want to come here and start a business, which is fantastic if they do, there's really not –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) stop time.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: I stop time. I know time must feel like I'm going slow for you when I talk anyway –

An Hon. Member: Standing still –

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, standing still.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: But there is no real opportunity here in Prince Edward Island, I guess, is my point.

The government also talks about the progress that they made towards securing the pensions here for the future, and they did kind of. They came in and they kind of submarined the unions, didn't work with them, told them what they were going to get, called it a negotiations, barged it through the Legislature here, had protests out front – all that thing. I guess that's what the Premier is

talking about happening at UPEI and Holland College. He wants them to do the same type of thing, submarine their employees and drastically change their pension without a negotiation, because that's what happened here.

That's exactly what happened with provincial employees. That's exactly what this government did to them, so I find it – I'm not sure if the Premier and his two pensions at UPEI, he plans to give some of those back in the process, or if it's okay for him to keep his and for everybody else to get theirs cut, but I don't know if they're going to use the strategy that was employed by their government already in the civil service. I'd be stunned because there was no negotiation. They showed no respect for their employees. They treated them poorly and –

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Leader of the Opposition: – barged it through in the Legislature.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, 5 June, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.