

HANSARD



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: Hon. Greg Deighan

Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-Second General Assembly

27 JUNE 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS	3277
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	3280
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Bluegrass and Old Time Music Festival)	3280
CHARLOTTETOWN-SPRING PARK (Tribute to J.P. Simmonds)	3280
CHARLOTTETOWN-KINGS SQUARE (School Graduations)	3282
ORAL QUESTIONS	3282
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Northumberland Strait Lobster Fishery)	3282
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Detour From Midgell Bridge Construction)	3285
NORTH RIVER-RICE POINT (Inadequate Signage at Bonshaw)	3286
NORTH RIVER-RICE POINT (Assistance to Fishermen)	3287
NORTH RIVER-RICE POINT (Habitat in the Strait)	3288
NORTH RIVER-RICE POINT (Sewage in Harbour)	3289
BORDEN-KINKORA (Gateway Village)	3289
NORTH RIVER-RICE POINT (Federal Aid to Farmers)	3289
CHARLOTTETOWN-KINGS SQUARE (Appeal re Human Rights Act Decision-further)	3290
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS	3296
PREMIER (Electoral Boundaries Debate)	3296
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS (Don Barlow Memoriam)	3302
COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (Atlantic Ministers of Labour Conference in PEI)	3302
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	3303
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT)	3304
BUDGET RESPONSE	3304

The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to be back. A special sitting of the House and it is a beautiful day on Prince Edward Island. I want to take the opportunity of welcoming all members back to this special sitting, certainly you, Mr. Speaker, the Clerks, the Pages, and the staff who make this place work in addition to what seen on the floor here.

I want to take a moment to welcome visitors to the public gallery. I know there was a lot of people out around Province House today. There certainly appears to be a number of tourists in the gallery and visiting in the area. Of course they have the opportunity of visiting this Chamber, this historic building where Confederation began. So I want to welcome all of them here.

We are here to complete business which I believe we must in order to put boundaries in place for the next election. So I hope that members will take this work seriously to complete this task.

I want to congratulate the opposition leader on his recent marriage. I don't know if this quick sitting perhaps cut his honeymoon a little bit short, but if it did we would hope that he would continue after this and I wish him many years of happiness.

To all watching on television, I hope they enjoy the proceedings today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I, too, would like to welcome everyone back to the Legislature. It's great to see some of the Pages here back as well, and of course the Clerk and the Clerk Assistant and all of the staff. It's great to see everyone back.

Especially it's great to see the Member from Souris-Elmira, who was out with an illness. I'm sure I can join all our colleagues in saying it's great to see him back in his seat here in the Legislature.

I know we have a lot of tourists in town. I'd like to welcome them all to the Legislature.

Et puis c'est (Indistinct) les touristes ici qui viennent de la belle province du Québec. Je vous dis et vous souhaite la bienvenue ici à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

And it's (Indistinct) the tourists here who come from the beautiful province of Québec. I welcome you here to Prince Edward Island.

Also a couple of people that I should mention in the gallery today. I see Dean Constable, who is the leader of the Island's New Democrat Party in the Legislature today. It's great to see him. I also see or thought I saw Nancy Wallace, the chairperson from the community of O'Leary, and I saw some familiar face, who I don't know if I ever met before and I apologize if I get his last name wrong, but Peter Rukavina is his name. I follow it on his website and I know he had a great tour I think through Europe recently, and I'm glad he was able to provide all that information for us.

So I'd like to welcome everyone back and

hope everyone enjoys the proceedings today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to welcome all the visitors to the gallery today and all the folks viewing at home. I'd just like to thank everyone for their support when I was out there for a little spurt. I tell you I got cards and letters from across the province and it was very much appreciated.

Our family has had a tough run this spring. Our father had five bypasses and Saturday he had surgery due to a loss of circulation in his feet and lost one leg below the knee. So it's been a tough go. Mom and Dad's 56th anniversary was yesterday so it was kind of hard for him to be in. But I think things are coming along great and the support of our community and the people of Prince Edward Island are just second to none.

So I just want to say thank you to everyone for the support our family has got from the community. So thank you very much and welcome everyone back.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed.

Ms. MacKenzie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery. It's lovely to be here in this nice warm weather. I'd like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his recent

marriage. I hope their cruise was enjoyable and I hope they look forward to many more.

It's very nice to have our member back with us from Souris-Elmira and I hope that we can keep looking after him and he can tell us what to do and we'll keep him in line maybe a little bit more and keep him healthy.

To those people who are visiting, I hope you enjoy this afternoon's proceedings. We're not actors and actresses here. We really are conducting business for the province. On a sad note, yesterday we buried a 38 year old man, his name is Ronnie MacLennan, and he suffered with Lou Gehrig's disease. I shouldn't say the word suffered. He was very strong throughout his illness and his wife Colleen nursed him at home and he passed away at home. He is the son-in-law of Mark Gallant who I would say most people in the House would know. His funeral was at St. Augustine church. The Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove, she sang two solos and her voice is beautiful. She was absolutely beautiful in the songs that she sang.

He was buried in Hunter River and there were three fire trucks that led the procession, and the hearse followed. At one point going through the rolling hills of New Glasgow, you could see in the distance the fire trucks and there was easily two miles of traffic following.

So my condolences to the family and also to the MacLean family, the Gallant family, the MacLennans, Colleen, Chad and Kandice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I, too, want to welcome everybody to the gallery and the viewers on television. I also want to welcome Peter Rukavina. (Indistinct) Peter had done a tremendous job especially promoting the Internet on Prince Edward Island. Peter was one of the first people involved in the Internet on Prince Edward Island. Matter of fact, he was one of the main people behind the government web pages and he deserve a lot of credit.

I know this must be a very important session because I see Allan Lee in the gallery there. There must be something in the wind if he's here. So I want to welcome him also.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

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

It's going to be a roasting afternoon in here, with the heat. There's no air conditioning in the House. But also, if you want to come to a roast, the Tories have been after me to roast on Thursday night at 6:00 at the APM centre. All proceeds are going to the Community 13 Inc. We've got stars like Pat Mella - can I say Andy Mooney for this (Indistinct) time. I guess (Indistinct) he'll be roasting me.

I won't say his name. The Leader of the Liberal Party is going to be there and everybody knows him, and Gary Evans and Ross Young. They've roasted me a few times, and Nancy Key has roasted me a few times on the radio. But I'll tell you it's going to be quite a roast. I hear the Tories are just lining up because they've been trying to roast me in here for years and the only way they thought they could roast me was to bring me back on a hot afternoon.

They figured the Minister of Tourism figured it was a good way to increase the tourists here that you'd have real live politicians for you and they were not actors, or we act sometimes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

With that introduction I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery, especially the visitors to our province. We're just delighted that you chose Prince Edward Island as part of your vacation this year. It's a great place, Prince Edward Island in the summertime and we really hope that you enjoy your stay with us.

I want to make mention of Mr. Don Cudmore, Executive Director of the Tourism Industry Association on Prince Edward Island. He's in the gallery today. Delighted to see you here, Don does a great job on behalf of all the industry association in representing the interest of tourism.

A lot of people in the gallery. I'd like to make mention of them all, but I won't, except for two ladies from District 25, Ellen Larter and Eileen McCarthy, who are here. The member from District 25 I think is attending Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meetings in Newfoundland, so I'm sure she will be with us tomorrow. But delighted to see you guys here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Collins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Very briefly I too would like to take this opportunity to welcome all visitors to the public gallery today, particularly visitors to Prince Edward Island. But also my constituents: Mr. Paul Kelly, it's a pleasure to see you here again today, and Mrs. Ann Kelly, she is the president of the Progressive Conservative Association of Prince Edward Island. Nice to see her in the gallery today as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Bluegrass and Old Time Music Festival

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Within the next few days, all roads will lead to Rollo Bay, which is in my district. On July 7th, 8th, and 9th the Rollo Bay festival grounds will host the 21st annual PEI Bluegrass and Old Time Musical Festival. Definitely a weekend not to be missed.

There will be people come to Rollo Bay's Field of Dreams to attend this festival. It's probably one of the top bluegrass festivals in all of eastern Canada. Last year we had over 700 RVs come to the site and we've got tremendous entertainment lined up this year. We have a band called Open Road featuring Jefferson Hamer, all the way from Colorado; New Found Road from Ohio; Ray Legere and Acoustic Horizons from New Brunswick; and the Hunger Mountain Boys out of Massachusetts. In addition, many Island favourites such as Janet McGarry and Wind River, Bluestreak, Jerico Road, West Wind, and that's just to name a few. There's very many tremendous Island artists and artists from around the Atlantic region that

will be playing.

The program starts with an open mike on Thursday evening and most of the open mike is pickers from around the field that have a chance to play on stage. Then the actual stage show will start at 10:00 on Friday and pretty well runs right through until Sunday evening. Sunday morning they have a gospel session with a church service. So this is just a tremendous weekend. It's a weekend that we look forward to in our area. We have a lot of people from across the country that come. Shortly thereafter we have the fiddle festival, and the fiddle festival is going to hit on the 14th, 15th, and 16th and this is their 30th anniversary festival.

The Chaissons that own the field out there are to be commended. They've kept it just immaculate over the years and they've done so much to help people in the area. The proceeds and any profits from the fiddle festival have gone on to put on free fiddle lessons for youth or even youth up to 90 years old, I guess. Through the winter they put on free lessons and most of the people you see playing at benefits and things have been taught to play fiddles by the Chaissons.

So I tell you, we look forward to summer and we look forward to having all you folks come up, and all Islanders and people from across the country. So thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to J.P. Simmonds

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park.

Mr. MacAleer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think since we've been in this Chamber for 16 minutes, the temperature must have increased 10 degrees. So I hope all the participants in the gallery share the heat that

we're experiencing here.

On a more serious vein, on June 18th Island entrepreneur and dairyman John Simmonds died at the age of 86. For 70 years, from 1921 to 1990, Mr. Simmonds and his family were leaders in the Island dairy business.

This is really about a success story. In 1921 when J.P. Simmonds, John's father, started Central Creameries Limited in Charlottetown, J.P. Simmonds was a butter maker. The company provided quality products and grew. By 1940, the company had 100 employees. In 1941, with his brother Perce Simmonds overseas serving as a paratrooper and his father, J.P. Simmonds, becoming ill, it fell to the son, John Simmonds to take over the business.

At the time, John Simmonds was 21 years old, young for being a leader but he'd already been working in the business since age 12. When Perce returned from serving in the war effort the two brothers continued to lead the business until Perce's retirement in 1976. In 1976 Central Creameries became better known today as Perfection Foods Limited with John and his son operating the business.

Through four decades - the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s - Perfection Foods Limited expanded to become the largest milk processor in Atlantic Canada. The product line included an array of products including evaporated milk, milk powder, butter, cream, popsicles, chocolates dips, cheddar cheese for Kraft Foods, President's Choice sweetened condensed milk, juices, and yogurt.

In 1953 the company entered the evaporated milk business in Atlantic Canada and had since expanded its sales to central Canada.

By 1988, 85% of the company business was off-Island, including shipping \$150 million

worth of evaporated milk to destinations as far away as Africa, the Carribean, and Asia. In Atlantic Canada Perfection had 10 distribution centres with three processing plants covering all Atlantic provinces.

By 1990 Perfection Foods' annual sales were \$80 million annually. The company was buying milk from 450 farms, the annual payroll was \$9 million, and employed 350 persons, many of whom had been with the company for over 40 or more years. Employees like Amos Hubley, Sterling Gillispie, Chebbie Acorn, Lem McDougall, Kayo Clow, and Phyllis Brown had spent their whole lifetime working for Perfection Foods. It was an extension of their family.

This Island-owned company served to provide for a lifetime a place for people to make a living for their families and their children and to support the community they grew up in.

John Simmonds was both a community and a family man. For more than 50 years he served as director, and in 1979 Chairman of the National Dairy Council of Canada. Other affiliations included commodore of the Charlottetown Yacht Club. He was president of the Charlottetown Rotary Club, YMCA director, United Way fundraiser, member of the Masons and Shriners, Charlottetown Curling Club, and a founding member of the Spring Park United Church.

Mr. Simmonds is survived by his wife, M. Lavina (Viney) Simmonds - she was born Watts - to whom he was married for 61 years, and they together had five children: Jack, Bill, Donald, Jamie, Anne, as well as nine grandchildren.

Our condolences go out to Mrs. Simmonds and the family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

School graduations

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

I rise today to congratulate all the students across Prince Edward Island that are graduating out of our elementary schools, junior highs and high schools. UPEI and Holland College had theirs a month ago but I had the pleasure to attend last night Birchwood Junior High graduation. A lot of young future Islanders or future people, business people on Prince Edward Island or workers on Prince Edward Island, were graduating last night. I was proud to see all the children going up and getting their diplomas and moving on in life.

Today at 1:00 was the Prince Street School graduation. It's great to see all the young people graduating out of that, going on to Birchwood and other high schools. Tonight is Colonel Gray's graduation, and my daughter is graduating tonight. My son graduated from Birchwood last night. So I'll be there tonight, of course, seeing my daughter graduate from high school. It's a major event for us, and many Islanders.

I was quite proud to see the number of people attending these graduations: parents, grandparents, friends of the students. These students have worked hard over the year and it's great to see them getting their diplomas and getting their degrees and moving on in life. I like the schools in my district as Birchwood and Prince Street. They are great schools because they are diversified schools. There are many children in Birchwood school from both socio-economics from a broad range and it's great to see the children interact there and all work together. There are children there from different

nationalities and different languages. It is a great school.

We often hear in this House how it's detrimental to the agriculture industry for a monolithic crop, and I think that's also important in our schools. We should be diversified in our schools and we should encourage our schools to be diversified. We should bring children together from all across Prince Edward Island. The Prince Street School and Birchwood School (Indistinct) not represent just downtown Charlottetown. Children from the region come here and it's great to see them working together and playing together and doing their work together.

So I honour them all and I congratulate each and every student. I hope you do better or just as good as you did in this term and go on for better education, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Northumberland Strait lobster fishery

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

My first question today is going to be for the minister of fisheries. There are many good reasons to call the Legislature back into session, but perhaps none is more obvious than the need to address the crisis in our fishery. The economic analysis of lobster fishing enterprises in LFA 25 and 26A is a call to action, as the minister well knows. It is a call to action to prevent the collapse of

the lobster fishery in the Northumberland Strait.

I'm wondering: Will the minister commit in this House today to the implementation of an emergency low-interest loan program to help fishers in the Northumberland Strait?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is a good question and it's a question that's been asked to me, not just today, a number of times in the last while. Our department has been dealing with this issue, and at the present time we are looking at putting together a package but we don't know to what extent as yet. Our staff is working on something for me as we speak but that will have to come and be reviewed. But right now the season is coming to an end and, yes, we are looking at putting something together.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: That was a disappointing answer, Mr. Speaker, for many Island families in Prince Edward Island.

I've got a new question for the same minister. The fact that this Legislature is back in session tells us a lot about the Conservative priorities. When it comes to gerrymandering and political boundaries, this government will put political considerations above all else. However, the lobster fishery can't wait for the minister and his Conservative colleagues to get out of map-making mode and into addressing the issues that are important to Islanders.

When will the fishers in 25 and 26A see a low-interest loan program and when will they see some progress on a licensed buy-back system?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, I think I answered the other question.

We are working on that at the present time. As far as the buy-back, I have been working on that extensively in the last month. I have met three times in the last month with the minister of fisheries. As a matter of fact, I have a commitment from the minister of fisheries to come to Prince Edward Island. We are setting up a summit dealing with the Northumberland Strait fisheries and we will be meeting with fishers, industry, and all stakeholders to deal with the Northumberland Strait issue. Because you just can't do one thing without responding with others. I mean, yes, a buyout is a major part of it and it's something that I've been lobbying the federal minister on since the report came out.

But there's habitat and there's other areas that have to be dealt with in the fisheries and that's part of it. A low-interest loan is another area that's going to be dealt with. But we also have to look at the future of the fisheries too.

So this summit is actually a good step. I've got the federal minister coming in. He's prepared to meet with fishers, he's prepared to meet with industry and the PEIFA. Plus we're also bringing in the ministers from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia because Northumberland Strait works on their area. So we're having those ministers come in also and we're addressing this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, we see the Conservatives and their priorities, applauding for delay, delay, delay, and excuse, excuse, excuse. But that's been the history of this party over the last 10 years. This minister now will do anything he can to avoid taking responsibility.

He's right. Something has to be done, something has to be done long term but we have to act now. The longer we wait the more expensive it's going to be in the long run. That's why we're pushing for immediate help for our fishers.

But this minister complained that the consulting report into LFA 25 and 26A was somehow incomplete. He criticized the research for not being complete. He criticized fishers for not opening up their books to the government paid accountants. Imagine the gall of this minister. Here is a government that gave out \$14 million to the shareholders of Polar Foods and did not even ask for their financial statements, yet individual fishers struggling to get by looking for low-interest loans are held to a different standard. They're supposed to open up their books.

Mr. Minister, why the hypocrisy? Why the double standard when it comes to how fishers are treated in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, there's never a double standard when it comes to dealing with fishers.

The report that came out was sanctioned by our department. We put the report out. We

wanted to find out the state of the industry. We sent out 750 letters. We had 60 responses, 30 people with financial analysis done. It gives us an idea that, yes, there is a problem in the Northumberland Fisheries and we're going to deal with it. But, like, it didn't happen overnight and we're trying to make sure that whatever we do allows for their viability into the future. You can't just do one thing without putting other parts of the recommendations together and that's what we're looking at. We're going to address the issues and we'll deal with them, but we have to do it right.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, this minister and this government had no problem approving \$14 million without telling Island taxpayers about it, but yet when fishers need help in this province, they're only looking to delay tactics, and it's quite shameful. This minister of fisheries is so busy now drawing maps that he's completely out of touch with what Islanders need.

Last week CBC followed up on the original consulting report into the lobster fishery in the Northumberland Strait. The report found that the economic climate was so difficult that some fishers were forced to turn to the processors for loans. According to the author of the consulting report, fishers are paying as much as 27% interest to processors. No wonder they're having trouble making ends meet.

Mr. Minister, what more proof do you need that the fisheries is in a crisis? What more financial evidence do you require to get some action done on this file?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture,

Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with that report and we've been dealing with it.

It's been a history of fishermen over the years. They've taken loans with their packers for years and years and years. It's not something new, but is it the best way for them? No. We understand that. They probably pay more interest and we know that. But we are dealing with this and we will have some concrete information as we go along. But we are dealing with an issue that has to be dealt with properly and we're trying to deal with it properly here.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Detour from Midgell bridge construction

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

By properly, I hope that the minister is not talking about the same way as they handled the Polar file. But I'm going to move on now to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

I've received quite a few calls, I've received some direct correspondence, from residents of St. Peter's who are very concerned about what some are calling the bridge fiasco at Midgell. Residents are concerned, particularly those in the tourism business, about sending our tourists on a detour that is poorly lit and consisting of only dirt roads. The detour is on route 331. Madam Minister, why could this construction not have taken place in the fall after our heavy tourist season?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the residents of that area for their cooperation around the bridge construction at Midgell Bridge. There is quite a bit of activity at that site right now and traffic is flowing across the new bridge, but unfortunately, there will be a two-week window where there will have to be a detour, and that detour will take place during the last two weeks of August. So it should steer away from the busier tourist time.

Our department has worked very hard to have minor disruptions for the travelling public in that area. Because normally a bridge of this magnitude could have had a detour for several months but the detour, as a result of the hard work of the Department of Transportation and Public Works and good planning, the detour is down to a couple of weeks.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I appreciate some of the candour in the minister's answer, but unfortunately, I think the last two weeks of August are a high season in our tourism sector, leading up to Labour Day. We all know that that time of the year the weather is just phenomenal here in the province. I'm wondering: Has the minister considered moving that two week window to perhaps the first week of November or something along those lines? These are some of the issues that I'm hearing from the people in that area.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have done some of the work actually into last fall and completed a lot of the work. As I said before, there is a contract. I'm sure the contractor has a schedule. The contractor probably has other jobs besides the Midgell bridge. Hopefully the last two weeks of August will ensure good weather. We did stay away from the Old Home Week festivity week and we also are avoiding the St. Peter's Blueberry Festival, which I think takes place around the first of August. So we're doing everything we can to ensure minimum disruption to the travelling public.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

One of the reasons why I heard why it's not taking place perhaps at the end of October or November is you're not sure about the weather. There could be snow. I don't think we have too much snow here in October or November, or at least not in recent memory. I'm wondering: Can the minister please come back to this House with an answer and let us know whether or not that is a possibility, to move that two week window to the fall season?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know when you're dealing with contractors and if you, as the department, ask for a change in the schedule, then that will cost additional monies. I will go back and ask the question, but I'm sure that a detour for a couple of weeks is certainly some short-term pain for some long-term gain. Because I know the people in that area have been asking to have the Midgell Bridge replaced for an awful long time. This will be a state-of-the-art bridge that will last for

many years into the future.

So as I said before, I want to thank the residents and the tourists who come to PEI for being patient with our road work, but that's how we make progress and improvements, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Inadequate road signage at Bonshaw

Mr. MacKinley: Thank you very much.

A question to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works. I had a phone call on the way in here today and a guy was very concerned that in the road from Bonshaw over to the Argyle Shore Road - I believe, it's 19 - at the very end of it there's a stop sign. The gentleman's wife was travelling last night heading out to the cottage, didn't realize there was a stop sign there. It was dark, black. You couldn't see. Madam Minister, this is the third such accident that's happened there within the last short period of time. Has your department been looking at putting a flashing light by the stop sign so people can see, especially with the busy tourists that are here this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure the hon. member has called the department and made them aware of the situation and I'm sure it will be looked into.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Mr. MacKinley: I just got the phone call on the way in here. I can do a lot but I can't do too much. The reason I'm bringing it up in Question Period, I hope your department is

looking at it, Mr. MacLean, and that he'll do something about it.

This is a very serious thing. It's all right on a bright evening, but on a dark, cloudy night when it's raining - that's three people that have gone through this, right through there, over the ditch, and into the field. There's something wrong with that intersection. So would you instruct your department right after Question Period, if they're not listening - I imagine they are. You always have them listen, you even take your hand palms into the House to give your answer. So would you instruct your department? Would you instruct your department? Will you instruct your department to look at this immediately, Madam Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our department has on several occasions gone out and checked out intersections and ended up putting either flashing lights or rumble strips in to alert the travelling public that there is an approaching intersection. So as I said, I'm sure the hon. member has already called my department, since he's known it's been a problem for a long time, and so we'll certainly see if we can have it looked at.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Mr. MacKinley: See, this is the trouble with this minister. She doesn't realize. I just found out about the situation on the way into work. The gentleman that phoned me told me that there were two other people who had already went through there, so I could count and his wife made three.

So I'm asking you, will you, instead of coming back with quick remarks that don't

mean much here, trying to dispute the facts, will you get your department just as soon as Question Period is over - it's not dark yet - to get some type of light out there, flashing light, Madam Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I certainly will have someone to go out and look at the intersection.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Assistance to fishermen

Mr. MacKinley: And I will say when I'm on my feet, I want to thank the minister for the quick action in getting a turning sign down to the Clyde River Golf Course going up the hill there in Clyde River. Your department did make a good job in putting up the sign there, and it's not all negative.

Question goes to the minister of agriculture. Mr. Minister, when you were in the House here - and we're on to the fishermen in 25 and 26A - they were calling for low interest rates at that particular time, loans with low interest rates. I know the buy-back program is going to take some negotiation with the federal government. I know you got to get New Brunswick and Nova Scotia on side also for buying back licenses. But I did tell you at that time that you can direct a low-interest loan to these fishermen immediately.

Now you stalled it when it was in the House. The report didn't come out, but I do give you credit for coming out and delivering it to me. I want to thank you very much for that. You kept your word on that one. But, Mr. Minister, will you direct your department to come up with money so the

finance, the lending authority, can put out low-interest loans to these fishermen? Because the season is just about over, Mr. Minister.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, hon. member.

I think maybe you didn't hear earlier, but I already said that I gave my staff direction to be looking into a program and we are trying to put a program together as we speak and we will be dealing with that in the very near future. So his question - it's already in the works.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Mr. MacKinley: Here's a gentleman that sat on the Electoral Boundaries Commission Review. When his own seat was in jeopardy he wasn't long turning it over to Mr. Croken. Then, when they didn't like it, they weren't long drawing another map up to come before here so that's what you call action when it affects the MLAs. So what I'm asking for: Will you give the same action to these fishermen?

Because every day is a time to them. You've had ample opportunity since the House closed, since you gave me that report. I told you what the problem was beforehand. The fishermen told you what the problem was beforehand. If you want to bring in the minister of fisheries and have a nice social gathering, photo opportunity, that's fine too, but we need actions right now. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know that fishermen on the south side are having difficulty. We know that there are different areas in the fishery on the south side that are in worse shape than others, and we know that there's financial difficulties out there. That's why I've asked my staff to look at putting something together to take to treasury, and that's what I'm doing. We are looking at that at the present time and we will be dealing with it and that's the biggest commitment I can make right now. But I have got the wheels in motion and I am working on it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Habitat in the Strait

Mr. MacKinley: The minister of agriculture, you also mentioned, when you were referring back to an answer to the leader of our party here, the Leader of the Opposition, you also mentioned to him there was problems with the habitat of where the fish are. Could you explain that a little bit?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, actually, what's happened in the Strait and over the years, we're into a problem where the bottom of the strait is - the habitat or rocks and everything in the Strait that the fish grow on and manufacture and produce, you know, but what's happening there's no sandy bottom there and there's no protection from predators and there's no protection there for growth.

So what's happening is we have to look at it. As a matter of fact, DFO are doing, are mapping the bottom at the present time, this summer, dealing with that issue. We're trying to find out exactly where and what we

have to do with habitat in the area. That may be bringing in rock or it might be building some habitat that we can put down and allow for growth to take place around them. But that's basically where it is, and right now fishers will tell you that in the Strait it's like a desert there in the bottom of the ocean. There's no habitat, no rock. There really is concern that if we don't get some habitat and don't get some small lobsters developing in that area, that we're still going to have the same problem down the road. So the habitat part of it, and for the future, is a major player in how we proceed with this, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Sewage in harbour

Mr. MacKinley: (Indistinct) he talks about DFO, and I know that's a federal agency, but what the fishermen are telling me - and you and the Premier, I want to give you thanks for coming out to my riding when the fishermen had that session that evening, and I want to give you and the Premier credit for coming out. But there was one fisherman got up there and he asked the question: Why did the minister of environment and DFO, why were there no charges laid when the minister of environment and DFO, there was 66 million litres of raw sewerage out in the harbour, which we all know goes out in the Northumberland Strait? What did you say to your minister of environment about that situation, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, it's being cleaned up. There's work being done on this issue through infrastructure programs that are going to hopefully eliminate that problem from happening again.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Gateway Village

Mr. McCardle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Development and Technology. I noticed in the newspaper recently the province is seeking private sector input through an expression of interest for possible sale of Gateway Village in Borden-Carleton. Gateway Village is an important first step into our province for a large number of tourists. It is also an important employer for our district. Could the minister outline what government hopes to achieve (Indistinct) the potential sale of Gateway Village?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology.

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, tourism, of course, is an important part of our economy.

A number of years ago we've taken steps to build infrastructure that would, I guess, showcase the product that we're very proud of on PEI. Certainly we feel now that that product and that infrastructure is mature and we feel that the private sector has certainly been on our doorstep a number of times asking about: Is any part of that infrastructure or part of Gateway Village for sale? We are now going to entertain some possible expressions of interest for the sale of Gateway Village. But it'll only be if, of course, they protect the integrity of the product that we want to showcase here on PEI. If we do not get that, then we won't be selling the assets.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Federal aid to farmers

Mr. MacKinley: A new question goes to the minister of agriculture. Mr. Minister, I believe you were meeting in Newfoundland with the federal counterparts and your colleagues, your other ministers of agriculture. Could you give us an update on when does that extra money that the Harper government has put into farmers, when would they expect to be seeing some cheques?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, they're working on it now. There'll be movement very shortly, according to the minister. They're just waiting for the exact formula to come out. But my understanding is that'll be coming within two weeks and then cases can be reviewed and information will start to come.

Speaker: The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Mr. MacKinley: So I take the minister at his word and I take the federal minister at his word. They're going to (indistinct) in a couple of weeks. How long will your department then take to review the information before the cheques actually go out to farmers? Will it take them two weeks, a month, or a week?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Mr. Bagnall: My understanding from a gentleman who looks after the program - because I asked that question the other day, I said: How fast can we get that out? - and he tells me that once they get everything that they know exactly how it's going to be calculated and forwarded, that they can move very quickly on this and cheques can be going out within a week after. Because they can review them and they can get

things moving

We're waiting until we get that information. Our department is ready to roll on them and we'll move forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Appeal re *Human Rights Act* decision (further)

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

My question is to the Attorney General. It's concerning the court case in the Supreme Court of Canada. I'm just wondering now that you've had another couple of weeks there, how many provinces have joined you in your court case for the violation of the Charter of Rights in Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, the question went to the Supreme Court. We're still waiting for word as to whether or not they're going to hear the case. But to the best of my knowledge, I haven't heard that any other province to date has signed on.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the minister indicated during this session that this was of national importance, this case, and that other provinces will be joining onto this case because of its importance. Basically, the case is that this Legislature should have the authority and the power to override the Charter of Rights of Canada through legislation, which I disagree with.

If it's of such national importance, don't you think that you should have as many

provinces on board in order to encourage the federal court to take this case on?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question. (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, the question that we're asking the federal court is whether or not the justice system, the judiciary, can actually impose rules on the Legislature.

From any of the court cases that I have heard about so far, and even one quoted earlier today, it indicated in past decisions that in actual fact the judiciary does not control the Legislature. It's actually the other way around. So when we presented the case to the Supreme Court to ask to be heard, it was our anticipation that because this is a question that provinces and territories have struggled with across this great nation of ours that there might well be other provinces that could join the case. It seems to me, though, that other provinces would probably keep their powder dry until such time as they find out whether or not the Supreme Court is actually going to hear the case.

The Supreme Court will not be, in my view, making a decision based on the number of provinces that intend to intervene, they will look at the circumstances of the case. They will decide whether or not it's of national importance, and they will make a decision about whether or not they'll hear it. At that point, it would be my understanding that the other provinces and territories would indicate that they would support PEI in the process as they proceed.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

Would the minister agree that the Charter of Rights is the law that all other laws should be tabled on, and that this Legislature should not have the authority or the power to override those fundamental principles? Meaning that we have a fundamental set of principles here in this country, and in a lot of other countries, and that's the freedom of assembly, the freedom of association, a freedom to be a person in a country.

Do you think that this Legislature has the authority and the right - are you telling Islanders that this Legislature has the authority and the right - to override those fundamental freedoms, that we as 26 people or 27 people in this House have the authority to go out and override those fundamental rights of individuals?

An Hon. Member: No.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is incorrect in the sense that the question being asked of the Supreme Court is not: Did the people in PEI have the right to associate with a political party? That's not the question that was decided in the court here and that's not the question that will be asked of the Supreme Court. The question being asked of the Supreme Court is whether or not the decision of the court here on PEI - which said that the Legislature didn't have the right to make the ruling it did, and that was the question that went to the federal court - did the province as the Legislature here, did the Legislature have the right to make a ruling in relation to the compensation package that was offered?

The court is saying that the province didn't have the right, the Legislature didn't have the right, and what we're saying to the Supreme Court is the Legislature is the

representation of the people of this province, and the judiciary, the courts, do not overrule the voices of the Legislative Assembly.

So that's the question that's being posed to the federal government. It's not: Do people have the rights under the Charter? That's not what the federal court will make a decision on. That's not what we asked them to make a decision on. So I think the hon. member is stretching it a little to say that we're asking the federal court to overturn the Charter of Rights. That's certainly not what we're asking.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I have the province's memorandum of agreement. This is the province's arguments to the Supreme Court on why it feels it has a right to do this, and this is one of the quotes from it: Defining the prohibitive grounds of discrimination and the remedies available under the human rights legislation is just one example. The power of the Legislature to enact such legislation and the circumstances under which such legislation might violate the Charter of protected Rights or Freedoms is an issue which should be dealt with by this court.

Might violate the Charter of Rights. What gives you the right to override our fundamental freedoms in this country, the Charter of Rights?

Leader of the Opposition: Shame!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that it is not my intention nor the intention of this House to overrule the Charter of Rights.

What we're asking the federal government to decide is whether or not the Legislature had the right to rule as it did. The provincial court said: No, it didn't. We are of the understanding that the Legislative Assembly represents the people of the province. This is the voice of Islanders. We feel that the voice of the Legislative Assembly cannot be overruled by the courts.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

Does the minister not think that our fundamental right, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is above every other law and every other law should be written under, do you not agree that all our laws should conform to the Charter of Rights?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: The hon. member couldn't have been listening because what I was saying was that what we're asking the federal court to rule on and what this provincial Legislature ruled had nothing to do with trying to take away people's rights under the Charter. That's not what the issue is about. The issue that's going before the court is just as I stated it was, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to read the quote again from the factum that has been sent by this province, this Attorney General, this Premier, to the Supreme Court of Canada.

This is what they want, the Supreme Court of Canada: ability of government to define statutory benefit regimes is an important issue. The power of the Legislature to enact

such legislation and the circumstances under which such legislation might violate the Charter of protected Rights or Freedoms is an issue which should be dealt with by this court.

So you want the courts to deal with your right to override our fundamental principles in this country. You've already been found guilty of violating 2(b) and 2(d): freedom of association, freedom of assembly. Two basic rights of an individual. Freedom to associate with anybody else. You've been found guilty of violating that. You've been found guilty of violating people's rights under section 15(1). Now you want the federal court to go along with those violations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: No, Mr. Speaker.

The simple answer to the member's question is no. The importance of the Canadian Charter of Rights is something that all of us here in the House would stand and attest to, but the hon. member is incorrect in his summary of the findings of the court, and he's also incorrect in what the province is asking the court to make a decision about.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, let's get this issue in context.

This government came to power, fired 850 people. Those 850 people went to the Human Rights Commission to seek a remedy, and under the Charter of Rights those people were found to be in violation. Now I know the minister is going to get up and say: No, they weren't. This government then, upon those applications, came to this Legislature, changed the *Human Rights Act*, changed it just before Christmas, in order to

deny those people the rights of a remedy. Would the minister not agree: No remedy, no law?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, again I would argue that the hon. member is incorrect.

The cases that he's talking about did not go to the Human Rights Commission to be decided upon. The Human Rights Commission never said that the government had discriminated against a certain individual or individuals. We did not change the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It's not our intention to do that. The court was asked whether or not the government had the right to offer them compensation, as we did, and there is a disagreement even within the court system as to whether or not the Legislature had the right to do that. So what we're asking the federal court to do is to make a decision about the rights of the Legislative Assembly in making decisions relative to such compensation.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, another question to the Attorney General.

What this Legislature did and what this government did in the middle of the night was to change the *Human Rights Act*, the Prince Edward Island charter, *Human Rights Act*, which is basically Prince Edward Island's charter of rights. They changed it so those people couldn't go to the Human Rights Commission. You changed the legislation that said: You cannot go to the *Human Rights Act*. Here's what you will get out of your complaint. By admitting a fee to pay to these individuals, you admitted to discrimination. Now, there's no mistake about that.

Why wouldn't you have allowed those people to continue their rights under the *Human Rights Act*? Why did you intervene in the middle of Christmas, almost, and change the *Human Rights Act* so these people couldn't get a fair hearing before the *Human Rights Act*?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, again I would disagree with the hon. member.

I don't remember sitting in the middle of the night doing a changing of the *Human Rights Act*. That didn't happen. What we offered to the people who felt that they should not have lost their positions, what we offered to them was a compensation package. It was based on fair compensation at the time. They were offered the opportunity to accept the compensation package and most of them did. In fact, I would argue that the hon. member is totally incorrect in relation to his perception of how the whole thing unfolded and how it has unfolded since that time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, one of the remedies available under the *Human Rights Act* was the right to get their jobs back. Why didn't you allow those 850 people that remedy to get their jobs back? Why did you pay them 3.45% of their income and not give them the other remedy of getting their jobs back?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member can understand by looking at the number who took the case to court, there

were very few who felt that they had been unfairly treated, and in actual fact, some of the members who appeared before the court are still working for government. I know that in my district there were people who were part of the discrimination packet that went before the court but continued to work, and actually got more time under our government than they had been getting under the previous administration.

So I think the hon. member has a misconception of how the whole thing unfolded. I think it's fine to stand and hold up the Charter of Rights but in actual fact that's not how it happened. The case before the Supreme Court will make a decision, if they hear the case, as to whether or not the province was in the right.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, let's make no mistake about it.

I was here when the legislation was being passed, close to Christmas Eve. We in the Opposition at that time went into the night sessions. Now this is just before Christmas. The minister goes on as though this was a wonderful package. Let's get it back into context here what happened at that time. It was Christmastime coming up. A lot of these people were denied employment, denied their employment back, told to go home. Even if you read some of the affidavits of some of these people, they were called by ministers and told: Don't show up to your job tomorrow. There is no job for you tomorrow. Affidavits that are filed in the court from ministers of this government said to these people.

An Hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. R. Brown: So do you think that just before Christmas a family with a couple of

kids - no money, no income -, and that's a fair package, 3.4% of their previous year's employment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may say that he was here and he heard that ministers phoned up members to say: Don't come back.

I mean I know he likes to become dramatic about this whole scene, but it didn't happen quite that way. The Legislature may have run close to Christmas, but that's fine. We could have come back after Christmas. But the point of the matter is that the people who were affected did have legal advice. They were provided with that. They were advised of what was being offered. They were asked whether or not they understood what was being offered. There was no way that anybody put a rope around anybody's neck or put a knife against anybody's chest. They were actually offered the right to a lawyer. The lawyer was there. The lawyer advised them, and they perfectly understood the compensation package. It's not as the hon. member would like to portray it at all, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Final question, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I agree with the minister, you know, when she said, a rope around their necks. There was a rope around their necks. A knife on their backs - there was a knife on their backs. The minister is right. Those were the tactics that were used. Now let's go over the scenario that was (Indistinct). A person called into the lawyer's office and said: The Legislature of Prince Edward Island is in the process of changing the *Human Rights Act* that you have no remedy. You have no

recourse to the courts. You take this or you get nothing. That's what was offered to them.

These individuals who said no to that and took it to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island - who ruled that you violated the Charter of Rights - and then you appealed that to the Appeals Division. Another unanimous decision of the Appeals Division said you violated the Charter of Rights in three sections, three violations of the Charter of Rights: 15, 2(b) and 2(d), freedom of association

Speaker: Question, hon. member.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Will you not consider abandoning this frugal case, this case that just is for your own vanity to prove - or to delay it until after the next election or some other election?

Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. R. Brown: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Will you not consider just packing it in? You have no provinces on board. Just pack it in and take the Supreme Court of PEI's decision.

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member obviously didn't listen, which is a habit of his.

I did not say that there was a knife held to them or a rope. I said there wasn't, that they had legal advice, but let me clarify something here that the hon. member seems to be forgetting.

In the years that led up to 1996 when our

government got into power, the Opposition party, the party that was in government at the time - until Islanders realized the error of their ways - they had been benefiting - if he wants to talk about vanity - they were benefiting, because every year people had to come and beg for their jobs back again.

We said that wasn't good enough. We set up a policy of automatic recall. As long as the person does a good job, as long as the person is diligent in his work or her work, then that person gets recalled. That's new to this Island. That's something that this government did. We will ensure that tactics like the previous government used in relation to having people come back and beg for their jobs will not happen again and it was our government that did that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

I want to, once again, thank you and your staff members and the members of the opposition as well as my own caucus, and of course, members of the media for convening for this rare but very important summer sitting of the Legislature. We are obviously here to deal with the matter of the province's electoral boundaries and we are here to fulfil our collective responsibilities as set out in the statute.

The *Electoral Boundaries Act* is the statute I refer to. It is a statute of this province developed by the previous government and passed in this House in 1994. This act provides for the 27 electoral districts that now exist in the province and their

individual boundaries. It also provides for the establishment of a commission to review the boundaries following every third general election.

Now the commission, as you know, is required to make a report to the Legislative Assembly setting out the recommendations as to the areas, the boundaries, and the names of the districts, and the McQuaid Commission was established and carried out this requirement.

But, Mr. Speaker, as you know and as reported by Justice Norman Carruthers in his 2003 electoral reform commission report, and I quote: "...the Act does not contain any provision setting forth what the Legislative Assembly must do with the Commission's report. Presumably the Legislative Assembly may decide not to do anything with the report. But this does not present, in my view" - (Indistinct) the quote - "a logical solution. Some direction should be provided whereby it is clear as to what is supposed to happen to the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission after it has been submitted to the Legislative Assembly... there should at least be debate on the report and a clear explanation provided to the electorate of this province as to why the Legislature took the action it did take."

So that's why we're here. Former Chief Justice Carruthers is of the opinion that according to the statute enacted by the former government, this House has the responsibility and duty to debate the work of the commission, and that is what it did earlier in this legislative session.

In fact, Justice Ken MacDonald wrote in his 1996 decision of *Charlottetown vs. PEI* the following, when the applicants suggested that the Legislative Assembly was wrong when it followed its own legislation and debated and confirmed new electoral

boundaries. I quote: "It is to be remembered that the Court should not interfere with the role of the Legislature unless its decision is demonstrably unjustified, palpably wrong or manifestly unreasonable."

Justice MacDonald also confirmed that this House has the right and the responsibility to debate and offer a final decision on these matters. That debate took into consideration the many opinions and representations of individual Islanders, community councils, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

It was clear to us on the government side that Islanders, particularly in rural locales such as west Prince and the eastern part of the province, were concerned that if adopted, the commission's report would ensure that these vibrant communities would lose representation in this Legislative Assembly.

Why? Well, the commission used a 10% variance to draw its map. Obviously, this led to dramatic changes in the electoral landscape. Now let me refer to subsection 17(2) of the *Electoral Boundaries Act* because it provides for a variance of 25%, clearly more evolution than the revolution that the commission proposed.

In fact, every jurisdiction of Canada, including the federal government, save Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan, utilizes a 25% variance. Justice MacDonald observed that the 25% variance range is not "manifestly unreasonable."

I respectfully believe this to be a debatable point. I have heard from our urban colleagues that 25% is high, perhaps abnormally high and unfair to urban areas. Justice Carruthers, you may recall, suggested "a more realistic figure in the vicinity of 15%."

To me and members of my caucus, this fate - the fate of rural Prince Edward Island losing representation in this House - was unacceptable. From my earliest days as a development officer at the community level, I saw the wealth of talent in communities across this province, and the willingness of Islanders to work together for the good of the community.

When our government assumed office, the term community had been virtually wiped out of the vocabulary of the provincial government. We saw this as unacceptable and quickly went to work to foster a new approach.

We engaged a number of community development officers. We have established the community development fund. We established a provincial-wide broadband network. We've implemented the Access PEI program. We've shifted the focus to small business development and have taken the provincial Cabinet out to communities to meet with community leaders and to talk about development opportunities.

I think all of us in this House - government and opposition included - got involved in public service to stand up for all the communities of this province. In 1996, I didn't agree with the direction our province was moving, and that's why I became involved again in provincial politics.

I did not support the government of the day's initiative to centralize health care and to close community hospitals. I believed that small schools provided a quality education and contributed to stability in our communities. I knew there was something wrong when a government was disconnected from those which it served.

But I was not the only one who held these views. I quickly found out that thousands of Islanders from East Point to North Cape

wanted a better future for our children and for our province, whether they be from rural or urban communities.

So our party went to work to establish a new partnership with Islanders so that health care could be improved, education could be protected, communities could be strengthened, and the relationship between the electorate and their government could be based on trust and respect.

We stood up for our community hospitals and put an end to centralizing health services in this province. We did that because we believe that Islanders should have access to the best care possible in their own communities.

We invested in rural hospitals. We expanded the Souris Health Centre. We added beds to Community Hospital in O'Leary and we built a new \$50 million hospital in Summerside. Now there were options. We could have one hospital for all of Prince Edward Island, but that would be the direct opposite of what our government believes is good for Island communities.

I mention all of this to provide some context of the central philosophy of my government, a policy platform that we have proudly held out, and a platform that we are accountable for. These achievements were only possible because of strong rural representation in this House and in the Cabinet, but that representation was right alongside strong urban representation in this House and in the Cabinet.

Balancing urban and rural interests is not a zero-sum game. There does not have to be a loser. Our province is rich because we hold both interests as vitally important, but not competing. They are complementary.

I firmly believe that Prince Edward Island is the best province in Canada because it has

vibrant urban centres complemented by a strong rural economy and a populace that this Legislative Assembly never forgot. We are the most densely-settled rural province in Canada, and the communities are vibrant and strong, but this is not the time to abandon those communities.

I've had numerous conversations. I am in receipt of many pieces of correspondence calling on myself and members of my government to continue to stand up, to fulfill the responsibility given to us in the legislation and to protect all regions of Prince Edward Island from losing representation.

Part of the challenge of governing and representing our constituents as our economy diversifies is managing the shifts in population. This is not more clearly evident that when we consider electoral boundaries.

The McQuaid Commission and Elections PEI have put forward proposals for the consideration of the Legislature. These proposals, unfortunately, take seats away from rural Prince Edward Island, both in the east and in west Prince.

I believe we must work to maintain rural PEI's voice in the Legislature. We need to continue to strike the appropriate balance between rural and urban interests, and I really believe that we can do this.

Urban ridings are represented by another level of government - municipal governments - that often provide a number of services that are otherwise provided by the provincial government. Therefore, the role of the provincial government is shared with municipal councils and mayors.

Urban ridings are represented by another level of government that has a formal and direct relationship and, therefore, influence

over provincial affairs. In effect, voters living in incorporated municipal areas have more than one influence on the democratic process at the provincial level.

About half of our population on Prince Edward Island is in rural areas without municipal government, and I think it's important for Islanders to understand this. Representation by population is important, but it must be balanced with the full spectrum of provincial responsibilities that are not based solely on population distribution.

Issues involving environment, natural resources and transportation, by their nature, are often more prevalent on a per-capita basis in rural areas than urban areas.

Generally, these issues fall under provincial responsibility and therefore help justify marginally greater representation by those most directly affected. This is especially the case given the relative importance to our economy of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and many aspects of tourism.

The McQuaid Commission and Elections PEI do not have the responsibility to consider these factors, but MLAs do. The current boundaries legislation is deficient in that their reports are neither binding, nor are they commissioned with appropriate terms of reference to protect both rural and urban interests, and that's why we're here today.

All members have presumably consulted with constituents and now need to deal with this. This is not about politics or a desire to gerrymander the process, as been suggested by the opposition. If I had to resort to gerrymandering to win an election, I would guarantee you I would have no intention of running in any election.

I could take another hour punching holes in that contention, and I may have that

opportunity yet, but this is about reflecting the views of our constituents, standing up for the principles of the platform our government ran on, fulfilling our duty as set out in legislation, and ensuring appropriate representation in this House for all regions of the province. I am hopeful that a compromise which will strike the right balance can be found and that we can establish the right legislation that will make this exercise easier in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The level of political self interest displayed by this Premier and this Conservative Party during this endless process has been the truest indication of this governments real pre-occupation, and that is themselves.

Every other jurisdiction in Canada relies on an independent commission to draw up its electoral boundaries on a regular basis, and they do so for a good reason. As the Honourable Justice John McQuaid wrote in 2004: We believe it is essential for the integrity of the electoral process that commissions remain independent.

As this commission is the first independent body to review the boundaries of the electoral districts in this province under the provisions of the *Electoral Boundaries Act*, it remains to be seen whether the Legislative Assembly will respect - and I will repeat, Mr. Speaker - will respect this hallmark of independence or choose to depart from the practice in other jurisdictions.

It is clear that this Premier and this party do

not respect this hallmark of independence. They have chosen another route which is solely on political self interest and rejects the test of independence set by the original commission. The Liberal opposition will not fail the test set by Justice McQuaid and his fellow commissioners. We will respect the hallmark of independence requested by the commission and we reject the rampant political interference by this Premier, this Cabinet and that party. In seeking to justify his parties interference in the process, the Premier has used rural Prince Edward Island as an excuse and as a scapegoat. That excuse is easily countered by the evidence.

As Justice McQuaid wrote, Prince Edward Island is essentially a rural based society. Many of those live in the four larger municipalities, have their roots and family connections outside the municipalities. They are keenly aware of the importance of the agriculture, tourism and fishing industries to the total Island economy and the importance of these basic industries to the policy deliberations of the Legislative Assembly.

It is not this Premier who is the defender of rural interests. In fact, it is Islanders who truly speak for rural Prince Edward Island, because every Islander understands the need to maintain a true balance between our rural areas and our urban. Islanders understand that challenge and they recognize a failure to meet that challenge. Based on that understanding, both urban and rural Islanders have been dismayed by a series of policies initiated by this government which damaged the sustainability of our rural areas.

Over the past several years we have watched a government that (Indistinct) shut down fish plants throughout Prince Edward Island and eliminate employment opportunities for hundreds of Islanders in those communities. Every Islander, rural and urban, has seen a government that has given up all pretense of

effort to maintain and improve health care in rural areas. In the east an emergency room is closed; in Tyne Valley another emergency room is drastically cut. Even now the Premier and his minister of health are planning to shut down two hospitals in western Prince Edward Island and centralize services in an undefined facility. Public meetings have been held, communities have given input. Our MLAs from those areas have not been seen or heard from.

How can this Premier paint himself as a defender of rural interest when he closes parks, hospitals and emergency rooms across this province? How can he justify his (Indistinct) when the reality means a reduction of rural ambulance services in an area that has seen its emergency room shut down? How can this Premier pretend that his policies will halt the drain of Islanders into urban areas or, even worse, into Alberta, Ontario and the United States, when he shuts down important institutions like courthouses, community access centres or proposes second-class schools in our large rural communities when they need the services and the tools to make sure that they can compete and stay here on Prince Edward Island so that we are competitive with the rest of the world?

From another perspective, we will soon be witnessed to the spectacle of Conservative politicians who have remained silent through the closures and neglect, but who will vocally take part when their political interests and their incomes are at stake. We heard not a word from these Conservative politicians when the courthouses were shut down, when the ERs were shut down, when parks were shut down, when fish plants were shut down, when second-class schools were proposed, when Access centres were closed. When fishing communities across this province need help from this government, they are nowhere to be found, but yet when they want to give money to

their friends, they are everywhere to be found.

The true test of the Premier's so-called commitment to rural Prince Edward Island rests with the decisions made by too many Islanders who have had to relocate either to an urban area or, worse yet, to another province. So there are two tests failed by this Premier and his party. The first failure is this government's complete inability to protect the traditional balance between rural and urban Prince Edward Island.

The second is the Premier's decision to interfere so completely in the redrawing of an electoral map solely to reflect his party's political interest.

For a moment I want to return to the writing of Justice McQuaid as he correctly pointed out: the Electoral Boundaries Commission must be comprised of individuals who have no personal stake in the outcome of the process. There was a time in our province that individuals with personal stakes did participate in that process. But since that time we have evolved as a mature democracy. For most Islanders, it may seem incredible.

But as the hon. Norman Carruthers pointed out in his 2003 report of electoral reform, the property vote was only fully abolished in 1964. More incredibly still, the average community was only given the right to vote in 1963. Times changed, we have to adapt. Perhaps there was a time when politicians would redraw boundaries in the province, but those times have passed. As we look all across Canada now, or if we look at the Canadian government itself, they have taken that power out of the control of politicians because we have to move towards a higher democracy to ensure that all Islanders, all Canadians, have a voice. We have evolved and we must continue to evolve so that our democracy continually strives for greater

levels of transparency, openness and respect for independent institutions.

In my view, the electoral boundaries under Justice McQuaid was the first attempt to create a new and independent institution, to oversee the future development of one part of our democratic evolution. Not everyone is happy with the report, not everyone is going to be happy. But if we want our democracy to evolve, we have to move in the right direction.

This government has strangled that institution at birth. As a result, this government has blatantly encouraged individuals with personal stakes in the outcome of the process to guide the evolution of the map. In the broadest sense of the term, it is a conflict of interest. In the broadest sense of the term, it is wrong.

I want all members to think of these terms. Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Constitution, independence from self interest, a higher democracy that represents what we believe in. These are terms what I define what I believe is the greatest country in the world, Canada, and our greatest province in our country, Prince Edward Island. I urge all members in this Legislative Assembly, do not throw out what the rest of the world envies of us, a chance to have a higher democracy, a chance to make sure everyone is equal. Do not throw out those terms, do not put Prince Edward Island in a compromising decision/ Stand up for Canada, stand up for Prince Edward Island, do what is right, and remove yourself from the redrawing of any map that is going to take place in the Province of Prince Edward Island. Leave it with an independent commission, leave it where it should be.

This is something that history will judge this Legislature on. I urge each and every member to think of that before they involve

themselves in anything that they will regret for the rest of their lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge the recent passing of an Islander who was a pillar in the road building and construction industries for more than half a century, Mr. Don Barlow.

Donnie Barlow began his work career at the young age of 13, working as a mechanic's helper in the evenings on the Mount Pleasant Airport which was a military training base during the Second World War.

After spending time working as a truck driver, he established a construction company in the late 1950s which became Maritime Construction, which is a going concern to this day in the Breadalbane area.

Maritime Construction is very much a family business, with three generations of the Barlow family involved in running the business. It's also a bit of a family affair for the staff, many of whom have worked for Maritime Construction for more than 25 years.

In 2004, Donnie Barlow was honoured for his career accomplishments by the PEI Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association with a certificate of Honourary Life Membership in the organization.

On behalf of the Department of Transportation and Public Works, I would like to acknowledge the many contributions made by Mr. Donnie Barlow to the road

building industry on Prince Edward Island. I would also like to extend my sympathies, and those of this House, to Mr. Barlow's family, his wife Helen, sons Wayne and Alan, and grandchildren, on their loss.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise to publicly send our condolences to the Barlow family after the passing last week of Donnie. Donnie was a wonderful community-minded person from the Breadalbane area and he will be greatly missed. He took part in many community theatre activities, he was an active member of the Shriners and of the Masonic Lodge, and he did a lot in the surrounding communities as well. I know his wife Helen will miss him dearly, along with his sons and daughters and his extended family. On behalf of the members of the opposition and all members as well, I extend our condolences to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This week ministers, deputy ministers and officials responsible for labour in the Atlantic provinces will be gathering in Charlottetown to discuss and work on ways to combat the challenges facing the labouring industry in our provinces.

This evening I am pleased to be hosting a

working dinner with the delegates, who I know will enjoy a good down home Island meal at New Glasgow Lobster Suppers. Tomorrow will be a full day with a packed agenda.

The Atlantic Ministers of Labour have been meeting on an annual basis for the past ten years, alternating sites throughout the four Atlantic provinces. The conference provides an opportunity for delegates in Atlantic Canada to exchange information on labour issues common to our Atlantic Canadian provinces.

This is a welcome chance for the ministers and other provincial labour officials to come together to discuss how trends are affecting our labour force, and to look at possible legislative initiatives that have been or could be introduced to ensure a viable workplace and workforce.

An event such as this also allows officials from neighbouring provinces to share experiences and prepare for the future. I look forward to joining the officials this evening for our working supper and tomorrow morning for the agenda.

Of course, tomorrow afternoon I will be fulfilling my duties as Minister of the Crown and a member of this assembly and will be attending the House session, if we're still in session. My deputy and other officials from the labour division of the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs will be attending the afternoon session tomorrow and will be leading discussions on many of the topics of interest to all Atlantic provinces.

We are looking forward to a productive and enjoyable conference.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

One of a couple of topics I'd like the minister to bring up at his conference with the other ministers of labour throughout the provinces is that each and every province should encourage and work towards having each and every worker covered by workers compensation. I think this is important and no worker should be left without the coverage of workers compensation. I think it's a vital part of our labour law and our workers compensation law that each and every member shall be covered.

Another thing I'd like the minister and his colleagues to look at is legislation concerning young people working alone at night, and what we can do to help them out. We've seen a number of cases across this country where young people are working alone at night, have been killed or beaten up and robbed. I think it's a shame that young people are put in these situations that they have to work alone. I think it's wrong, there should be some protection there for them. Especially someone under the age of 18. I think the minister should look at that, because after all, these are youth and working alone is a difficult thing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: Hon. members, I have the pleasure to submit for consideration of all members the 4th Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island for the period ending 31st December, 2005. I move that the report be received and

do lie on the Table.

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, pleased be advised that, pursuant to Rule 80 (k) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, the following documents were received by the Office of the Clerk and tabled intersessionally since the House last met on 24th May, 2006: the 2005 Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board, and Report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Prince Edward Island on PEI's Electoral Boundaries as ordered by the House on 4th May, 2006.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the 1st Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Adjourned Debate on the Budgetary Motion.

Speaker: Minister?

The hon. Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside adjourned the debate.

Ms. MacDonald: Yes, I'm finished.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to speak on the budget which we had brought in in the spring. It's an opportunity for me to talk about my riding and about what is taking place in the province.

One of the things that has really happened in this province in the last number of years is the expansion of the economy. I think it all started with the industrial malls a number of years ago and is continuing over the last number of years. The federal government has also contributed to that in Charlottetown and in Summerside.

I must say every time that this House opens that lawn mower seems to be going outside. Is the guy going over and over the lawn or what is he doing out there? If it's under the department of public works, I wish the minister would tell him to take off. Go someplace else. He can cut the grass in the morning, then we can hear one another. But he's been going for the last two hours and I don't know where the lawn is. But anyway.

The federal government has really contributed to the expansion of the economy in Prince Edward Island, in Charlottetown and also in Summerside, and that has taken place over the last number of years.

The fisheries has also contributed to our economy, I think the mussels industry has really brought a lot to our economy. The settling down with the lobster industry is also a very positive effect.

The tourist industry also, it continues to expand, along with the golf courses on PEI. It is not very many years ago that we didn't have the major tourist places that we do have in the province now.

Farming has had some problems and it is also going through a reorganization of farming, I think, throughout the province as it is in other parts of the world, and the budget shows that.

One of the things, though, with fisheries is the new report of the Northumberland Strait which has a concern for everyone. Really, when I read the report I was - and I understand there's another report out now too, I think, or people are reading the same report that was out in the spring. It is very worrisome when they say that the Northumberland Strait is near dead. It's almost impossible to believe that could happen. But I guess it is also contributing to the low fishery, especially the lobster fishery on the south side. The lobster fishery on the south side started off very well, lasted for a couple of weeks, and then it just slowed down dramatically. Now some of the fisherman are going out every second or third day.

My own riding has also expanded, and I always consider it one of the best riding in the province. I thought for a minute there he was going to shut that motor off. It is also a district with farming and fishing, working people of all kinds in the district, and there are many people of course who go into Charlottetown.

It is interesting to note when you are driving into the city in the morning, doesn't matter what time, traffic is very heavy, but also traffic is returning from the city and it is going out into the rural Prince Edward Island to some work.

Now there's some other things I want to cover. Thank the Lord, I think he shut the motor off. It's awful hard to compete with a motor raising in the background. Did the minister of transportation run out and tell him to shut it off? No. Oh, he's starting up again.

Historical plaques have been placed now in our district, in three Orwell Corner village places. The church, which was St. Andrew's Church, originally a Presbyterian church and then it became a United church, and when the United church in our area amalgamated, they tore all the churches down except this one. That one was able to be preserved, and of course, they built a new one in Vernon, which is a major church (Indistinct) D. E. Clark's general store.

One of the things I'm very pleased with is the Orwell school. I went to Orwell school for grades 1 to 9 - I think it was grades 1 to 9 - although I was out for four or five years there when I was sick, and it's nice to see a place where you were involved in.

The hall in Orwell is another, but it is not an antique place because it had burnt down and was replaced. Thank you very much. I appreciate that very much, and you were very quick on the draw. How did you get to him so quick? Also, the Woodville mill is also a demonstrated example of fine architecture, and it's nice that the province is recognizing these outstanding places because if we don't do it, they'll soon disappear.

One of the places that we would like to have recognized is the French cemetery in Belfast, which is one of the original cemeteries in the area, of 1750. I'm not sure. I think it was 1745 to 1760, and then the expulsion of the French took place by England of that time. There are some Scottish settlers buried in the same cemetery, so it's a very historic cemetery, and it's only been replaced about the last six or seven years ago.

We got involved with a number of people. One of the gentlemen who was a real man who worked on it was a MacLeod man who has since passed away. I'm asking him to do something about that to remember him

because at one time, it was simply a forest of trees with a sign saying: French cemetery.

Now it is cleared and it is a real historic site. They have been able to identify a number of burial plots in it, and they've done a lot of work on that cemetery, and also the Belfast Historical Society has moved a church - a Free Church of Scotland - from Belle River, which you might be interested in. The late Dan Compton, who was a running mate of mine as a former Speaker of this Legislature, it was his church that he attended to, and they had moved that to the park in the Lord Selkirk Park.

I'm very pleased to hear that government has stopped any ideas of abandoning any parks because I think they're a very unique and very special part of rural communities in Prince Edward Island. The Lord Selkirk Park, of course, is the area where Lord Selkirk landed in 1803 with his settlers, and they took over - some of the French people had left. They had cleared land and they were able to move in and take that land.

Lord Selkirk arrived in 1803, but when we got our - we are not Lord Selkirk people. We came to the province - my ancestors - in 1772, but we got a deed to our property in 1803, so Lord Selkirk must have sent people ahead for some reason.

The other thing that I'm very pleased with - and this is something that should have happened a long time ago - not a long time ago, but it's the Hazelbrook construction and demolition site. Agreement has been reached between the province and the district of Hazelbrook, and I think it's a real eye-opener for government and for people involved in this type of thing that agreements can be reached before a site is opened, so that everybody's on the same tree and they know what's going on.

So I think from now on I hope that all

governments will - because this site will be filled in not too many years' time, and the community of Hazelbrook had fought it so hard. But through a process of mediation and negotiation, addressing the community's environmental and operation concerns, resolved the legal action related to the site, so it's wonderful to see that settled.

Many of the buildings that are now under the *Heritage Sites Registry Act* include the Honourable J. Angus MacLean building just across the street. The Honourable J. Angus MacLean, of course, is one of the war heroes of the Second World War, a member for a long, long time of Parliament, and a former premier of this province. So it's nice to see that and to see it - actually, I think it's a part of the Legislature now, isn't it, the building across the street? I'm not sure. It's under the control of the Legislature and that's wonderful to see.

Some of the other things that I would like to talk about are how our job situation has improved. Back in the 1980s our total of people employed on PEI was around 50,000 people. We're now up to well over 60,000 and heading towards 70,000, and export growth on PEI leads the country over the first 11 months of 2005, and that's wonderful to see when you think about Alberta.

Housing starts in rural and urban centres were down in 2005, but remain at highs relative to recent norms. Non-residential construction activities continued to expand in 2005, and all you have to do is look around Charlottetown and see the different expansions taking place there. It's quite a bit.

Building permits were up by \$25 million last year. In 2006 the construction sector will be busy with continued work on the new federal building and the Atlantic Veterinary College. I think the Atlantic Veterinary

College has recently just started.

Master Packing Incorporated in Borden-Carleton will spend \$14 million to add 25,000 square feet to a facility and to purchase new equipment, and no wonder the Member from Borden-Kinkora has got a smile on his face, and that's wonderful to see that fact.

I understand that there has been a sale of the Island packing company in Summerside, is that not right? I believe it's probably going there, too. Phase 2 of the Summerside Wellness Centre is now complete with work underway on phase 2. Phase 1 was valued at \$13.5 million, with phase 2 valued at \$15 million.

In December 2005, for the first time ever, the province released its first-ever long-term capital spending plan. The plan projects nearly \$250 million in provincial capital spending over the next five years, and that's interesting.

I come from a large riding, and it's awfully hard for the roads, to keep them all up-to-date, and it is too bad in our province that we can't seem to come up with that right base for the roads. I know that governments over the years have been trying different things, but it's very hard to do.

In 2006 and 2007, \$54 million in capital spending will include funds for various highways and infrastructure projects across the province. The school system will see over \$9 million in upgrades, including \$5.25 million for the West Prince school.

Last night I attended the graduation at the Vernon River school. I was there when the school was opened. There were 400 students. This year we're down to 202, and next year we're projected at 180, and the year after that we may lose as much as 20. So we really have an issue in rural PEI about

schools if the population of children continues to drop. It means for this year they're able to hold their teachers at the same number, but they expect that next year, and the year after, they will lose a number of teachers.

Capital spending has averaged about \$35 million over the last five years, and Transportation and Public Works will spend nearly \$150 million on capital projects. Additional projects over five years include \$20 million for the Queen Elizabeth redesign and \$14 million for a new school in Montague.

One of the real positive aspects of the economy on PEI and our proof is renewable energy. I think this is an area where a lot of things can happen to help the farming community, to help the cost of electricity. Some of those things that are taking place: the federal and provincial government will work with Maritime Electric to upgrade the electric transmission system between PEI and New Brunswick. The cost is estimated at \$60 million and would double the transmission capacity from 200 megawatts to 400 megawatts. The project's completed date is mid-2008.

The *Renewable Energy Act*, passed here in 2004, requires utilities to purchase at least 50% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2010. The province plans to have at least 200 megawatts of power by that time and 250 megawatts by 2015. The 350 megawatts of wind power is equivalent to reducing approximately 1 million tons of greenhouse gas or 150,000 car exhausts' emissions. Now that's more than we have in the province for cars and trucks.

Isn't it interesting to see how hot it's getting and how members are starting to - I know myself, the sweat is just pouring off. I'll have to leave this evening. I won't be able to - anybody stay around me.

Mr. R. Brown: Why, you don't wear deodorant?

Mr. MacDonald: That's right, that helps me too.

The north wind farm is currently producing 110 megawatts of electricity and other renewable general capacity in various stages of development. A new \$55 million wind farm program, 30 million watts, is set to begin operation this fall. Isn't that something? Ventus Energy Incorporated has plans for an 18 million, 9 megawatt facility near Norway, and Maritime Electric and other private sector businesses, including Ventus, are assessing options for future power expansions.

One of the things about renewable energy is great strides have been taken by the United States government, by various Ontario governments, in using of - and I've lost the word. When you take fuel and, like, the energy from fuel, even barley and wheat is called ethanol, thank you. It took the minister - I wondered if he knew about that. There is a lot of ethanol being produced in the world and it's a big help for farmers.

I hope that somewhere between this province and maybe other provinces close by, the Maritime Provinces, that we could get ethanol produced here. United States government has banned the 5 % that was being used in their gas, is a very environmental - I can't remember the name if it, but it was very environmentally unfriendly and ethanol is environmentally friendly.

So they have made that move and United States, there is at the present time, over 100 ethanol plants and they expect to rise to 200 and some. So that's quite a move being taken place. The CTI for last year was 2.1%. Energy growth of 8.7% and the CTI was up by 1.9 nationally. In PEI the employment

expanded by 0.9%, an average of 66,700 Islanders employed monthly, another new all-time high. Employment increased by 600 jobs in 2004 and they continue to do so in 2005. Employment in the service providing sector expanded by 0.4% in 2004, employment in the goods producing sector rose by 1.8%. PEI's employment rate averaged 11.3, still probably a little high. We should be able to get that down to about 9% at least.

It is interesting to note that while the employment rate is continuing to drop, we have lost a large number of people, especially of tradespeople, to Alberta and some even into Saskatchewan. Now you can't blame them for going there because the rate of pay is phenomenal. Although I've known people who have gone to Alberta and couldn't get the right job and had to come back. So you need a trade. There is no sense of just going out there with no trade, you need a trade and you got to be able to work. That's one of the things they demand is work.

The employment gains also are realized in health, education and public administration sector, the private sector and the trade sector. We had 137,864 people in PEI on July 1, 2004 and our population growth was 598 people. Now that's not too many. I don't know whether we can do it with immigration. It seems that so many countries of the world today are looking for immigrants. All over the world immigration is becoming a big thing. Although we have, as I understand it, a number of people from Columbia now and it's a good Columbian group in Prince Edward Island and that may well - have more people coming from there. We all know that the people who came from Holland still continue to meet as people from Holland and their children are still (Indistinct), they have a wonderful church, tremendous attendance here in Charlottetown.

It all helps if you have some background to come to. Like, if we as individuals went to some other country where there was no Canadians and no Islanders, we know what difficulty we would have. So it's a big help to them. They also have an organization called the Newcomers Organization which is doing a tremendous amount of work on Prince Edward Island trying to get people. I think they are, by my understanding, the people who have been able to get these people from Columbia to come here.

Now, we're talking about urban and rural. The urban population in 2001 was 60,675 and the rural population was 74,000, almost 75,000. Now I'm sure that has deteriorated somewhat and there is more in the urban. The Francophone population, these would be people who speak French, was 5,665. But we have a population density of per kilometre of 24 people, which is the highest in Canada, of course. The majority of inter-provincial migration comes from Ontario and Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, and of course, Newfoundland and Labrador.

The life expectancy in PEI of males is now 76.2 years, females, 81.3. I don't know why they are so far ahead of us, but that's not too bad. I think we're catching up. I think it used to be five years in between, but we're catching up all the time. The manufacturing, the value of Island (Indistinct) rose from 1.356 million in 2003 to 1.414 million in 2004, representing an all-time high and an increase of 4.3%. The sector provides employment to 9.3% of Islanders and in 2004 there was 6,200 Islanders working in manufacturing, unchanged from the 2003 level.

I can remember when the industrial mall in Charlottetown was first formed, what a terrible thing people thought it was. Here we are today with 6,200 people working in manufacturing. I think one of the people who did so much for the industrial mall and

was never recognized for it - and I remember telling him so - was the doctor who was the member from Charlottetown, Dr. Mulroney. He took a tremendous amount of criticism, and so did ministers after him, for giving grants and loans to manufacturing. I'll admit, some of them that came in first were as crooked as can be and we got rid of them.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: That's right. We got rid of them and now we're solid, we're solid in that manufacturing, in exporting and in development. And of course the space centre, the air space centre has certainly contributed to that. But you have to start somewhere and you have to be able to - everybody is looking for these manufacturing. When I was minister of industry I used to go to Toronto and I'd see all these little plants around and I'd wonder; Why can't five or six of them come to PEI, or some of them, because there are hundreds around Toronto? As a matter of fact, I used to work in some of them at one time.

Of course, I was the one who worked so hard to get Litton to come here. We first met with Litton in the premier's office and he just came to PEI as a courtesy. We decided that we'd go for it and we did and we changed their mind pretty well completely. One of the people that helped us was the first employee of Litton, a man by the name of - he was from Iona, originally from Iona, and he was the first employee. Let me tell you, every time we went to work with Litton or to meet with them, he was the guy who looked after all the cars and trucks. I can't remember his first name. He was a big help. He was one of them who wanted Litton to come to the province.

One of the other things that we have going for us, although it's a little bit of problem now, is the forestry production which is

valued at \$18.1 million. Right now the forest products are not great, but we still see a lot of trucks on the road going both ways, going to Georgetown, going outside of the province with - depending on what kind of products they have. They are employing a large number of people too. Not as many as there used to be because of the machinery being so used now, although there are still a few people who go into the woods with chainsaws.

Agriculture is one which I'm quite interested in. Total farm cash receipts was \$348.3 million, and that was in 1984, but I think it also increased in 1985. Decline in total receipts was mainly due to the decline in potato revenues, but I think all potato farmers have got a good smile on their face these days. Because 1985 was very good and the prospects - they've done a wonderful job of reducing their acreage of potatoes, and they should be recognized for that. You have to realize that production and consumption are very important. If you're going to produce more than they consume, well, the price won't be there.

Oversupply of potatoes kept the price down in 2003, and actually in 2004, then, the supply and the price increased. Livestock receipts increased by 8.9%. Government support payments to farm operation increased by 72.7% in 2004. I don't know why I'm getting 19 here, but 2004 over 2003. Which is quite an increase.

Of course, our farmers are looking forward to the program now being readjusted, the CAIS program. Especially within the hogs and beef cattle operations. I don't suspect that potatoes would be much change, but we are looking forward to that taking place. I understand that no payments will be made from that program until the fall.

One of the things that has happened on PEI with the hog operations is they've now gone

into very large hog operations, tremendously large. Actually, it'll boggle your mind to walk into some of those large buildings just to see the operation. I had the opportunity of visiting two of them before they opened up. When I started farming in 1957, 1958, it was unheard of to have any more than two or three sows in your farm operation. There was no person left on the Island, I'm sure, with two or three sows. They're in the hundreds and hundreds of things.

It's the same with dairy. If you had six or nine cows you were, you know, in (Indistinct) and you kept the cattle from them, from the dairy. Very few people were into beef cattle themselves. So there has been a tremendous change and that's only in the last 40 years, I suppose, 45 years. That's why the decline in hog prices is so devastating to these hog operations because they are large.

I was talking to a hog operator not very long ago and the price now is a \$1.37. He's being told by those people who know that the price is going to drop to \$1 and it's going to stay there for a while. So that is devastating to these people. They are losing money at \$1.37. The break even point is somewhere between \$1.45 and \$1.50. Maybe some are less than \$1.45. Depends if they got their equipment paid for and the building paid for.

Dairy prices have increased steadily from 1997 to 2004. From last year's statistic review, 646,137,000 acres of land was devoted to farming in PEI, representing 46% of the land mass. So we're only farming 46%. As a matter of fact, this year I had seen a few fields that are not being used. Which is kind of sad. You got to look and see what's going on there.

Wholesaler-retail sectors remain the larger sectors employer in the province at 15.3%. Employment rose from 8,800 persons in

1995 to 10,200 in 2004. This is in the retail trade section. Sales have been valued at \$1.384.7 million, virtually unchanged in 2003. Main growth components were specializing in building materials and garden stores, furniture, new and used motor vehicles, gas service stations, supermarket sales. From 1993 to 2004 retail sales have increased by 57%. That's a tremendous increase.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on for a little longer, but I think I have spoke long enough. I will adjourn the debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I ask the indulgence of the House and yourself to revert to business of the House, to introduction of government bills.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Premier, that the same be now received and read a First Time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act*, Bill No. 49, read a First Time.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. House Leader, that we ask the indulgence of the House to have Bill No. 49, *An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act*, moved to Second Reading.

Speaker: Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent of the House given.

The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole -

Speaker: No, read the bill a second time, hon minister.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a Second Time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act*, Bill No. 49, read a Second Time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said Bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Speaker: Deputy Speaker, chairman of the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. P. Brown: Can we have copies of the bill, please?

Ms. Dover: Could we have the bill distributed, please?

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

Is it the pleasure of the Committee that the Bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

1. Section 1 of the *Electoral Boundaries Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. E-2.1 is amended.

(a) by the deletion of the period following clause (c) and the substitution of a semicolon; and

(b) by the addition of the following after clause (c):

(d) "Register of Electors" means the Register of Electors established and maintained by the Chief Electoral Officer under section 24.1 of the *Election Act*.

Ms. Dover: What is happening here is that in the definition section the last definition, definition (c), was referred to the word district. What we're doing here is adding a definition for register of electors and putting

that in the definition section.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. P. Brown: A question? Hon. minister, the registrar of electors, the reference to enumeration, that's in the *Election Act*, not the *Electoral Boundaries Act*?

Ms. Dover: That's true. What we're doing here by adding the definition of Register of Electors is responding to a suggestion by the commission. It was approved by the special committee. It recognizes the addition of this registrar to the *Election Act* in the recent amendment act, and it will work with the amendment that's in bold, section 6 of the bill.

This will add the idea of data from the Register of Electors to the list of criteria that the commission must consider under the *Electoral Boundaries Act*. So when the commission goes to take a look at the criteria, that will be one of the criteria that they're asked to consider.

Mr. P. Brown: Has there ever been consideration done to maintain a Register of Electors or to perform an enumeration every three and a half years or so? Because as you know, the writ is dropped and the enumeration starts and it's a very difficult situation. Has the province ever given consideration to maintaining a permanent record of electors?

Ms. Dover: To be quite honest with you, I don't know the answer to that. I'm here as the Attorney General and it's my duty to present the bill that is here in front of me. I haven't had a lot of conversation with Elections PEI in this regard because Elections PEI falls under the Legislative Assembly. The answer to your question would probably best be answered by

Elections PEI, but I'm here to just present this bill. As the Attorney General, that's my role today, and those in-depth questions would probably be best applied to Mr. Lowell Croken.

Now it's not customary for Elections PEI officials to appear on the floor, and so that's why I don't have Lowell Croken here with me because that's just not - it hasn't been a custom of this House, and it's not one that I needed to break. So what I'm going to try and do is present this bill. It responds to the recommendations of the committee and it will be my duty to try and work the members through the bill as it's presented here.

Chair: Okay, the hon. Member for Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

Dr. McKenna: Yes. Just looking at that Register of Electors, are you talking about the list that was at the last election without the additions on to it or would all additions be on there for the people that weren't enumerated? Can you just -

Ms. Dover: It's just adding a definition to the definitions sections and it says: "Register of Electors' means the Register of Electors established and maintained by the Chief Electoral Officer under section 24.1 of the *Election Act*." So it just defines what that is, what that means.

Dr. McKenna: Yes, but see, when McQuaid did his first report, he didn't have all the numbers of people that were added on. During election data they weren't on the list, so when he subsequently asked for these numbers months later, the numbers all changed for all the districts. So I wonder - I want to clear it up, just what a list of electors is, because it wasn't clear (Indistinct).

Ms. Dover: All I can tell you is that the

definition means the list that the Chief Electoral Officer has under section 24.1 of the *Election Act*.

Chair: 2. (1) Subsection 2(1) of the Act is amended

(a) by renumbering the subsection as section 2; and

(b) by the deletion of the words "as set out in sections 3, 4 and 5" and the substitution of the words "with the names, district numbers and boundaries as set out in the Schedule".

(2) Subsection 2(2) of the Act is repealed.

Shall it carry?

Ms. Dover: What's happening here is that in the current legislation there is a 2(1) and a 2(2). This section will ask that 2(2) be repealed, so that means there is no reason to have 2(1) because there is only the one section to number two.

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 3. Sections 3 to 5 of the Act are repealed.

Ms. Dover: Okay, what's happening here under sections 3, 4 and 5, there were the names of the districts that belonged to Prince County under section 3, the names of the 13 districts that fell under Queens were in number four, and the names of the five districts that fell under Kings County were in number five. Since the boundaries are going to change and will go from Queens into Kings or from Queens into Prince, that idea, then these definitions are being repealed.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 4. Section 7 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

7. A reference by name to any municipality in the Schedule means that municipality as it exists with the area and boundaries that it has on the date this section comes into force.

Ms. Dover: The enactment of the current legislation occurred in 1994. Some communities have different boundaries and different areas in this year of 2006. So what is happening here is that the municipality will be defined by those that it has on the date that this section comes into force.

Chair: All right. Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 5. Section 8 of the Act is amended

(a) in the portion of the section preceding clause (a), by the addition of the words “broadly representative of the population of the province”, after the words “shall establish an Electoral Boundaries Commission,”; and

(b) by the repeal of clauses (b) and (c) and the substitution of the following:

(b) two persons who are not members of the Legislative Assembly, or of the Parliament of Canada, or employees of the Government of Prince Edward Island, appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on the nomination of the Leader of the Opposition, after consultation with the leaders of any other political party registered under section 24 of the Election Act that is represented in the Legislative Assembly; and

(c) two persons who are not members of the Legislative Assembly, or of the Parliament of Canada, or employees of the Government of Prince Edward Island, appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on the

nomination of the Premier.

Ms. Dover: This section is in response to recommendations by the committee. One of the considerations that future commissions will be asked to consider falls under (a) because one of the conditions will have them take a look at a list that’s broadly representative of the population of the province, so that’s an addition to the criteria.

The (b) section was also recommended by the committee. The committee recommended that instead of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition naming one person each to the committee, that both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition name two people to the committee, and those were recommendations based on the committee’s report.

Mr. Dunn: (Indistinct).

Chair: First, the hon. Member for Alberton-Miminegash.

Mr. Dunn: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have an amendment to this particular section and I have copies of it if people want to pick it up.

Ms. Dover: Okay.

Mr. Dunn: Mostly it consists of (Indistinct) introductory paragraph, and I’ll read it into the record:

Within ninety days following the ordinary polling day of the second general election after this section comes into force and within ninety days following ordinary polling day of each second general election thereafter, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall establish an Electoral Boundaries Commission, broadly representative of the population of the province, consisting of

(a) a chairperson appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, who is a judge or a retired judge of the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island;

(b) two persons who are not members of the Legislative Assembly, or of the Parliament of Canada, or employees of the Government of Prince Edward Island, appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on the nomination of the Leader of the Opposition, after consultation with the leaders of any other political party registered under section 24 of the *Election Act* that is represented in the Legislative Assembly; and

(c) two persons who are not members of the Legislative Assembly, or of the Parliament of Canada, or employees of the Government of Prince Edward Island, appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly on the nomination of the Premier.

Chair: Do you have a seconder, hon. member?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Okay, did you want to speak to this?

Mr. Dunn: I think this just sort of - there's two things it does. One is it just confirms what the minister's bill is regarding the enlargement of the committee for better geographical representation, and I think the second thing is it asks for a review after every second election rather than every third election. So it moves the agenda forward a bit so that there's an electoral review after every second election rather than every third one.

Mr. MacAleer: (Indistinct) a clarification. When does this take effect? Following the next election?

Mr. Currie: Yes, 90 days after.

Mr. MacAleer: Ninety days after the election.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dunn: (Indistinct) the way it is, the election that's coming up and the following election after that, then there's a review immediately after that, so within five or six years there will be a review.

Mr. P. Brown: So in other words, if there was an election, let's say for the sake of understanding, in 2007, and there was another one in 2011, it would be after that election in 2011?

Mr. Dunn: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Right now it's every third election. Isn't that correct?

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

Mr. MacDonald: I think it's a little vague when it says here "... on the nomination of the Leader of the Opposition, after consultation with the leaders of any other political party..." What can you do when you consult with them? Will you take the advice of another party and nominate one from them and one from his own?

Ms. Dover: Are you asking that to me or to the hon. member?

Mr. MacDonald: I think you are both the same.

Ms. Dover: What this would mean is that the Leader of the Opposition consults with

the leaders of any other political party registered under Section 24 of the *Election Act* that is represented in the Legislative Assembly, but it doesn't put the onus on the Leader of the Opposition to necessarily take their recommendation. So he must consult with them, but after consultation with the decision, the names that would go to the Speaker would go from the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Mr. Arsenault: Do you have copies of the -

Chair: I think they should have went around, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I had to leave for a moment. I'm not sure that it was recorded, but I think it should be noted in the Hansard that the Opposition members left the Chamber when the bill was introduced. I think this is unfortunate that they have taken such action and I think that this session will be remembered as a time when the Liberal Party, led by their leader, really turned their backs on rural Prince Edward Island when they had no reason to do so. Because the variance proposed is well within not only constitutional recognition but court challenges, etc., at less than 15%.

It's one thing to disapprove, but to fail to debate in my view is a very weak position. They are entitled to, of course, take the action that they feel is necessary. But I'm disappointed because what is attempted to be achieved here is a balance between urban and rural Prince Edward Island. What has not been achieved to date is that balance that ensures that we continue to have strong rural representation alongside urban representation, and that's why we're here, to do that.

As I pointed out in my remarks earlier, our legislation and statute leave us no choice but to debate this. It's unfortunate that the opposition has turned its back on rural Prince Edward Island and the people of Prince Edward Island for failing to debate this issue.

Chair: Question on the amendment?

All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: This is on the amendment.

All those opposed to the amendment, signify by saying 'nay'.

The amendment is carried.

So Section 5 carried?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 6. Subsection 17(1) of the Act is amended

(a) by the repeal of clause (b) and the substitution of the following:

(b) data from the Register of Electors;

(b) by the repeal of clause (e) and the substitution of the following:

(e) information pertaining to population;

(c) by the deletion of the comma following clause (g) and the substitution of a semicolon; and

(d) by the addition of the following after clause (g);

(h) public input; and

(i) guidelines or criteria proposed for the

consideration of the Commission by resolution of the Legislative Assembly,

Ms. Dover: These are the criteria that the commission is asked to consider when it takes a look at future decisions relative to electoral boundaries. It lists the different things that the committee should consider. This, again, is in response to the committee.

Chair: Shall this section carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 7. The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 18:

18.1 After the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly lays a copy of the report of a Commission before the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Assembly shall, by resolution, approve of the proposals of the Commission, as set out in the Commission's report, and the Government shall, at the same session during which the resolution is made, introduce a Bill to establish new electoral districts in accordance with the resolution and the proposals of the Commission.

Ms. Dover: This is a significant one for future Legislative Assemblies. What is happening here is that in the future, when the Commission lays its report before the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, as you'll note here, shall introduce in the same session a bill to establish the electoral districts in accordance with the resolution and the proposals of the commission.

So what it means is that from now on we won't have the confusion that has surrounded this current electoral suggestions or recommendations. From now on the electoral commission will lay its report before the Legislative Assembly and it shall be accepted as presented.

Chair: The hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

Dr. McKenna: I take it that this means that the report that will be done from now on will be binding, just like the Indemnities and Allowance Committee is binding. We accept the report automatically?

Ms. Dover: In the same way that the Indemnities Report is binding, then future recommendations by future electoral commissions will be binding on the House.

Dr. McKenna: So would there be any debate in the House on it at all?

Ms. Dover: There could be a debate like there is with any motion, but it's binding on the House.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park.

Mr. MacAleer: So I guess the question is, the role of the Legislature with respect to determining future boundaries will be the acceptance of an independent commission's report. What role does the Legislature or, for that matter, the political arm have with respect to establishing the principles on which a committee will operate? Because one of the challenges that I think the current situation has is that maybe we weren't that clear of what principles should be applied. In each case a different approach was taken not out of commission, but omission. So am I - it's just a question I -

Ms. Dover: The current legislation lists a number of criteria under which the electoral commissions act. These have to do with constitutional - the constitutional, your charter of rights, geography, population changes and so on. We've added a few today. One of them is probably representative of the population. The criteria is there. It specified the criteria they have to

look at in relation to the map they draw up. Most of it is not in this act because this is amending and adding to. But there is a criteria in the current legislation, it is added to a little bit by broadly representative of the population.

You'll notice in section 6, date from the registrar of electors, information pertaining to population, public input, guidelines or criteria proposed for the consideration of the committee of the commission by resolution of the Legislative Assembly. So those are added as well as broadly represented of the population. So we have added to the criteria under which the commission would act.

Mr. P. Brown: Okay, that (Indistinct) look at the rationale, the application of those conditions, and it was in all the previous people that dealt with this question. Whether it was Elections PEI, whether it was Justice McQuaid, they had those criteria, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the data from electors, polling divisions from the most recent general (Indistinct), geographical features, information pertaining to population, communities of interest, municipal boundaries, public input, guidelines or criteria proposed by the consideration of the commissions by the resolution of the Legislative Assembly and (j) such other factors as it regards relevant.

The concern comes in is, at that point, the commission is free to choose which of those particular conditions they feel is the most relevant. Is that right? Because that seems to be the basis of the issue here. When you read some of the earlier reports this counted some of these conditions. Basically the community of interest was subjective in the minds of some of the commissioners. The geographical features, the county lines, things like that were basically sidelined in, but there were other things - and if you read by the McQuaid Commission report, there was four, where the Charter of Rights and

Freedoms - Justice McQuaid did refer to them a municipal boundary as being an important framework in which to form districts. But the other parts of this seemed to be less important. So these conditions do become subjective to the commissioners, it appears.

Ms. Dover: You're entitled to your opinion as to whether or not they ignored it or accepted certain criteria. Obviously that's what your opinion is.

Mr. P. Brown: I mean Justice McQuaid refers to it as -

Ms. Dover: It is my understanding that those are the guidelines with which the commission are supposed to draw their boundaries. So all of the criteria the commission would consider. They're not supposed to pick and choose and say, well, we'll do A, B, and C but we won't do D, E and F. The criteria are laid out in the act, the criteria that they are to consider.

Now each of us could have a decision or an opinion as to whether or not they put more emphasis on this one and less emphasis on that one. That's our opinion. But the criteria is there for the commission to make its decision upon.

Mr. P. Brown: Right.

Chair: The hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

Mr. Collins: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to commend the Member from Alberton-Miminegash for his amendment talking about and every second general election for an election boundaries commission to be struck and for things to be reviewed.

I guess I won't be adverse to having it every single general election, but every second general election I think would be sufficient. Let's try that and see what happens, because I think it might address some of the population growth trends that are evident in the capital city. I know for a fact - but I do want to come back to what the hon. Minister of Tourism was just talking about. And that is, if I understand it correctly, section 18.1, if it passed here, is going to give the new electoral boundaries commission essentially carte blanche. I mean, there will be a resolution here in the Legislative Assembly, but nonetheless a bill will be introduced to establish new electoral districts in accordance with the resolution and the proposals of the commission. Commission using criteria outline as we mentioned here above.

But this long arduous exercise that we've been going through, going all the way back to McQuaid, and reports being tabled and rejected and new committees being struck, and more public input solicited and various maps proposed, has all been, I believe, with the good intent of trying to come up with - and I've heard this word a fair bet today, and I think this is our goal - is to find this balance, this balance between the numbers and this balance between parts of Prince Edward Island being properly represented here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

I'm wondering, though, is what we're doing here right now going to - we personally in here may never have to encounter this again, many of us, because we're talking two general elections down the road. But will it answer that question, the question being; Will rural Prince Edward Island continue to have a strong and vibrant voice in the Legislative Assembly? Or are we saddling future legislatures with this same dilemma, and not just saddling with them but almost handcuffing them with 18.1?

I don't know where it's going to lead to, and I've use the word there that I wasn't too happy to use, rural. The other word I'm trying to avoid today is urban. We've heard the Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay tell us about Prince Edward Island being the most densely populated province in Canada. I think the figures is 24 people per square kilometre, 70- thousand odd somewhere in the country and 60,000 or more in the so-called cities.

It's my belief that Prince Edward Island is interconnected from tip to tip socially, economically culturally. I don't see the great divides. I've had the privilege of representing a district on Prince Edward Island for the last almost three years that incorporates several municipalities in unincorporated areas. As far as people thinking that this is placing a member in a compromising position, as one city councilor was wont to say recently, I think that's nonsense. Like every other MLA, you just deal with your constituents one at a time, personally.

Anyway I'll leave it at that, but I do raise this issue and I want to put it to my colleagues here in the House. Does this answer the question? Does this assure that there will be a fair representation for all of the Island on this floor in the years to come?

Ms. Dover: All I can do is tell you what my thought would be. I think it's an interesting question because you're going to have declining populations in the extremities, if the patterns in the future follow the patterns in the past. Now that's not to say that with all the economic activity that my colleague the minister is coming up with that there may not be - there will be a reversal of the trend.

But if the trend were to continue, then the commission is supposed to take into consideration the fact that it's supposed to

represent, broadly, the population of the province. They're to take into consideration public input, they're to take into consideration guidelines proposed by the Legislative Assembly. So there will be criteria there that supposedly guide their decision making. Now the idea, I assume, would be that they would take all of that into consideration and draw the map accordingly. But your comment is a valid one.

Mr. Collins: May I have a quick response? I would make a suggestion here that prior to the striking of the next electoral boundaries commission I would suggest that the leaders of all the major parties sit and confer together, and at least come to some consensus on some of these guidelines that could be presented as a resolution to the members of the legislature. So that there could be some consensus, if you will, going into the exercise of redefining the boundaries down the road.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to share a few thoughts with the House. It's probably going to take about three or four minutes but I think it's really important. The question for me to be answered on any of these electoral maps, including the Croken map, is: What is truly in the best interest for all of Prince Edward Island?

In order to answer the questions I feel one really needs to be guided by principles, and we're talking about some of them as we speak. But for me the number one principle is that all the people in the whole province are our human resources which are our most valuable assets.

Number two, the economic drivers of Prince

Edward Island are agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, forestry and tourism.

Number three, the province's natural resources are our land mass, our watersheds, our rivers, bays, streams, our environment.

Number four is that Prince Edward Island, like other jurisdictions, has moved into the knowledge global competitive economy.

By using these principles one can see the importance of representation politically to be able to provide exceptional government to the people of Prince Edward Island.

Yes, we need to recognize the past, looking also at where we are right now as a province. But more importantly, we have to make sure that the Government of Prince Edward Island includes the number of seats in the Legislature and how these seats are created by electoral map, which allows for truly exceptional government.

Again I ask myself the question: What is in the best interest for PEI in regards to the electoral map and how do the decisions get made for who represents where and why? We have to consider that in order to be a self-sustaining highly educated province, we want to perform very well, not only socially, economically, but also environmentally, while still providing government services for all Islanders, as well as setting the stage for our children, who are our future.

It's important that our children are going to be able to work and continue to live here as well as to be able to afford programs and services for all Islanders. In my mind this requires great attention to how decisions are made in regards to the electoral boundaries maps.

Here on PEI we have an incredible number of valuable institutions and centres from the University of Prince Edward Island, the

Atlantic Vet College, Holland College, PEI Food Technology Centre, to name a few. For many of us, sometimes we forget how many of these jobs are created at many of these institutions, especially those in the areas of research and technology that are really derived from agriculture, fisheries, forestry and aquaculture.

Provincial Treasury's department information for the sector on economy performance indicators for the year 2005. It's unbelievable how much money is generated in jobs that are created directly from agriculture and fisheries, but I think sometimes we forget all the indirect benefits from our primary sectors. For example, how many people work, teach at, the Atlantic Vet College as well as produce exceptional knowledge not only for Islanders but for industry people worldwide to be able to make a living? Taking care of their own significant people in their lives as well as contribute to their communities and our communities here in the province. Whether it's work in the area of our oyster, mussels, finfish or lobster industries, we are very privileged here on Prince Edward Island to have scientists like Dr. Jeff Davidson, Dr. Jerry Johnston, Dr. Larry Hammil and Dr. Rick Hawthorne, whose expertise is recognized worldwide. Having a thriving aquaculture and fishing industry in Prince Edward Island is important not only to the fishers but to all the other people from technicians, finfish pathologists, to veterinary and all the administrative and management support system required to serve the industry.

This bringing the north shore lobster grounds, whether it's fishers in Naufrage, Red Head Harbour or Savage Harbour ports, the fishers had incredible seasons. These fishers will be spending their dollars in the province, the cities and towns, whether it's the purchases of new trucks, boats, or spending dollars on entertainment at the new

Charlottetown Driving Park.

The primary sector of fisheries continues greatly to contribute to the business opportunities Island-wide and especially for our cities and towns.

Wild blueberries have been growing here on Prince Edward Island since the first explorers visited and shared food with our aboriginal First Nation people. In 1908 a blueberry plant operated out of Mount Stewart. Today the province produces between 10 and 12 million wild blueberries per year. One of the main reasons why the wild blueberry is so successful is because of the health attributes of eating wild blueberries, as well as positive farming practices, ongoing research development and great marketing.

Whether it's the scientists working as part of the research team from the University of PEI or the PEI Food Tech Centre in partnerships with other researches and industry, people throughout the world eating wild blueberries - because the high levels of anti-intoxicant creates not only opportunities for value-added product but can also provide answers to the diet of people to enable our people to be healthier, plus reducing rising health care costs, especially strokes and heart disease.

Throughout Prince Edward Island our wild blueberries, yes, they grow in Prince County and parts of Queens and especially Kings County, there's jobs on the farms, but there's also new blueberry equipment that's made and sold here from the blueberry harvest to a (Indistinct) mower.

Jobs in the private sector, whether it's jobs that Cardigan Bearing and Steel or Acadian Machine Works as well as other types of jobs created in the private sector. With companies such as Bruce MacDonald, PEI Island Preserve Company, to the marketing jobs, technicians from scientists working in

the wild blueberry sector in other ways.

Berries made to grow here also leave the province, plus jobs in the transportation sector are created. Again, agriculture is the main economic driver of the province. Recently the price of oil, gas and fuel keeps rising here at home and worldwide. Our province has been looking at opportunities in the area of wind energy, alternative energy created from crops such as canola and barley.

Many of the benefits derived from the wind farms in eastern Kings and western cape, all Islanders will benefit. Again, the creation of these economic opportunities may come from the environment or agriculture but they are a source of creating a great opportunities for all Islanders.

Thinking of our Island rivers, streams, watersheds, these are also valuable assets by Islanders. The land base, as well as our rivers, watershed and environment, require political representation in order to achieve the best government as possible for the province. I believe that PEI is unique. We can't forget that we require rural, urban-rural and urban representation as well as representation for the land and the private sectors and the environment.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

Mr. MacDonald: Just a question following the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty. The newer section there, 6(d)(i), "guidelines or criteria proposed for the consideration of the Commission by resolution of the Legislative Assembly," does that happen every two elections, then, when they - so they can be changed, then?

The guidelines can be changed?

Ms. Dover: The guidelines will be what the Legislative Assembly will give to the commission. After every second election they will provide guidelines. Now the electoral commission doesn't have to accept those, but it says that "guidelines or criteria proposed for the consideration of the Commission by resolution of the Legislative Assembly,"

Mr. MacDonald: But if they didn't accept them -

Ms. Dover: They don't have to accept them, no. The commission is obligated to consider all the criteria that's outlined, but they will present their final report to the House, at which time it will be accepted by the House.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay, and the whole bill that we're talking about now, up until section 9, can be amended or changed by the Legislature at any time? Is that right?

Ms. Dover: Well, anything in any act can be changed or amended or -

Mr. MacDonald: Depending on the makeup of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Dover: But this section - section 18.1, if this bill is passed - says that the report of the electoral commission will be binding.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Ms. Dover: Shall be binding.

Mr. MacDonald: And that will be hard to change?

Ms. Dover: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: (Indistinct) couple of points

on that. So an assembly in the future could deem that the commission would only be constituted every three elections, if that's what the Assembly chose, because that's what's in the present act, and we're reducing that to every two elections. So I guess the challenge around that is all this question of democracy.

We seem to talk a lot about it, but I'm not sure that any of us understand it well. But having said that, it goes back to the whole, I guess, empowerment to the boundaries commission to do what they feel is important in writing their report.

It's one of the extreme difficulties I had with people from my area, whether they be involved in the community council, whether they be involved on the school board, whether they be involved with a political party or any grouping within a district. It was their expectations that a presentation to the commission would carry some weight, and when they did that, they came away with the sense, well, they got a good hearing, but then when the commission wrote its report: it was like it didn't matter what we said, they weren't there to take into account our concerns.

That's very difficult for people that are very caring of their community, and they expressed those things on their time and want to make their views known. But then come away bewildered. In this process we've heard some pretty grandiose statements relative to the Charter and relative to representation by population and relative to the right of the voter and all of that. We've heard all of that, but we haven't heard very much about the need to listen to people. Because we seem to set up some platitudes and go forward and say: Henceforth these are the most important things, and the other things that people are concerned about, we will minimize.

I think that is unfortunate, because on PEI we have the highest voter turnout in the country, bar none. We have the highest voter turnout in the country. Now I would have to conclude by that we must be doing some things right.

Where you reduce the political system to a statistical calculation with no consideration of the voters, of the people that ensure democracy, which is the political parties, Elections Canada in the case of the federal system, Elections PEI in the case of the provincial system, they facilitate the vote, but the ones that ensure that there's two candidates or three candidates on the ballots are not Elections PEI and it's not the Legislative Assembly. It's volunteer organizations known as the political parties.

In all of this debate, their involvement - and I hate to say this, but it's what I would have to say I concluded from listening to the media and other individuals - their involvement in this process has been viewed with contempt. It has seemed to be relegated to self-interest, gerrymandering, and all of these other things.

Now who works the polls on election day? Who puts up the signs? Who holds the nominations? Who ensures that there's choices for the people? Who raises thousands of dollars so that we can have a campaign?

It's not the taxpayers of PEI. It's not Elections PEI. It's volunteer organizations that we know of as political parties, and their input to the political system and to democracy in this province is crucial, but whenever that is mentioned, people look at it and suggest that this is just self-interest.

Well, I know not a member in this Assembly that gets here on their own, whether it be the four people that decided to turn their backs on the people that got them here or whether

it be the rest of us, but there's not one of us that got here on our own.

Every one of us gets here because we have an organization of committed volunteers that ensure we can run an effective campaign, and every one of them have a vested interest in the democratic system and the political system, and that's not a bad thing.

I view it must be a good thing or we wouldn't be getting 80-plus per cent of people out to vote. It has to be a good thing, so therefore, we have interests that want to make this as sterile and as calculable as possible, and I just really think that is very unfortunate.

I think it's very unfortunate that people have looked at it this way. To suggest that members of this Assembly should not be interested in the boundaries is like - in my view, it's appalling that people would suggest that. If we are not interested in the boundaries, we don't deserve to represent the people we represent in this Assembly.

We have to be interested in these boundaries. It's paramount because, after all, we only represent the people. People would say we represent our own interests. The interests of me are not that important, but the interests of the 3,000 people I represent have to be important, and it's essential that we participate in this.

I know many people involved in the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island that just had their members that they worked hard to get into this Assembly turn their backs on them and walk out. Because it is important that people participate in this debate and uphold the rights of members of this Assembly to make the decisions that are important.

Yes, there is a Constitution and there is a Charter of Rights put in place by politicians. If it's so good, how were we unworthy lot

good enough to come up with things like the Charter of Rights and the Constitution?

I think politicians can do a reasonable job of lawmaking, and to participate in its execution is not a stretch in a democracy. We have to be very careful as we go forward how we empower groups outside the Assembly to determine the role of the Assembly.

It's just not good in the interest of democracy that we do that, because even if an assembly makes a mistake - and it is possible, we're human - even if an assembly makes a mistake, we have the opportunity, or a future assembly has the opportunity, to correct it. That's the voice of the people working inside the Assembly.

That's what democracy's about, but what we are trying to conclude and others are trying to impose upon us is that decisions and rules are made outside of the Assembly and they will be binding on all assemblies into the future, so no longer can the will of the people be expressed through its members in the Assembly. No, it will be expressed through rules that were constituted at some other time, and even if it is unpopular for us to maintain the power of this Chamber, we must, at the peril of losing some of our own democracy.

We just can't pass it over to others. We are inadequate to exercise the responsibility given to us? We know that. When you take your oath as a member of the Assembly, you know that you're inadequate to really have the wisdom of Solomon on every issue, but we're placed here for a time by the people to do what is right for the people.

Others will take our place at a future date and that is their right, and it's the right of the people to put others here and remove us if that's their wish. But we cannot constantly relegate the Chamber to the decisions of the

courts or decisions of unelected bodies.

It's a very crucial thing that we do because people on PEI vote in such large numbers because exactly that they think it makes a difference. It matters who I vote for. What do you hear when they talk about voter turnout and they go to the man in the street or the woman in the street and they do the on-the-street interviews? What do you hear from those people that don't vote? It doesn't matter what I do, why should I vote? It doesn't matter. They're all the same. That's what this leads to.

But on PEI we should be very thankful people still believe it matters. I believe it matters. I hope everybody in this Assembly believes it matters. I'm very disturbed that four members of this Assembly that get their mandate from ordinary Islanders have decided to get up and walk out. For them, it mustn't matter to be part of this debate, but how can we have a democracy like that if it doesn't matter? It's critical that the Assembly remains in the hands of the people, and while guidelines are important, they have to reflect the wishes of people, not sterile rules.

Ms. Dover: Are you saying you're against 18.1 then?

Mr. P. Brown: I'm not sure. Did you conclude that out of what I said? No. I'm against how it gets applied. I think it is important when a commission is constituted that the Assembly be empowered through resolution to come to some general framework as fits the current situation of the day in order to instruct the commission in how they go about their work. It says: other factors as the commission may consider relevant. But I think it should be other factors as the Assembly considers relevant.

We don't know what Prince Edward Island is going to look like into the future. We can

make our guesses and we know that there is a move to larger centres, and that's been ongoing. But we don't know what it's going to look like in the future. But what we should leave room for is whoever the members of the Assembly may be in future, they should be able to give guidance to a commission as to what the people of the province are telling them the Legislative Assembly should look like. They shouldn't pass over that power to court decisions. We all know charter court decisions happen outside our boundaries. A great many cases, the court will apply a decision made somewhere else because it was a charter challenge that seemed to have some similarities in case and principle.

So there could be situations where a commission would interpret a case in Alberta, for example, to have relevance and application in PEI. It may not be in the best interest of Islanders or in the best wishes of Islanders, but unless we allow the Assembly by way of resolution to give some guidance to a future commission - my personal view is we have to gain our responsibilities as legislators.

Chair: The hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

Dr. McKenna: I don't know how much time I have, but anyway I want just a little bit more clarification on the guidelines. I think the Legislature is suppose to provide the guidelines for the commission or the definition here, I guess. But now in the McQuaid Report, they came up with some goals and principles, in fact, using these guidelines. I think the problem some of the members, or a lot of the members, had with the McQuaid Report, they didn't agree with the goals, the principles and the facts that they came up with. They had 17 good goals in fact that I liked. I mean, I didn't have any problem with the McQuaid Report. I think they did a very good report.

So if they come up with goals and principles that they like, but we don't like them as MLA's, what happens then? I guess that's the problem I want to find out. I don't know if we can give an independent commission - to tell them what to do, to me it no longer is dependent. If you say you have to follow this, this, this and this, then you're no longer an independent commission. So I have to be comfortable.

We can accept the goals of principles and facts that they will come up with that they like. I mean, they have trouble establishing the proper variance, and I can live with a variance that's not exactly equal across the province, I mean through the rural parts of the province. It doesn't bother me in the least.

But also as an urban MLA, I can still respect the rural vote, I came from the rural part of PEI. I understand the rural part of PEI. Anytime we go to a family dinner we all take about agriculture, we all talk about fisheries. I mean, we're not naive to the problems in rural PEI. I mean, that's the message I seem to get from some members here. I think we can all wear two hats. I don't think that's very difficult to do. But I want to be just comfortable with this change here. Are we telling this commission that you have to do what we tell you to do or can you be truly independent? To me it's not clear in here.

Ms. Dover: I think the key word is guidelines.

Dr. McKenna: Yeah.

Ms. Dover: And that's all. They're not mandates.

Dr. McKenna: But then afterwards if we get the report and we don't like the guidelines they come up with, are we going to -

Ms. Dover: If we approved 18.1 -

Dr. McKenna: Yes.

Ms. Dover: - it said that when the commission makes its report the government shall accept it as signed. That's what 18.1 says.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Chair: Shall this section carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Ms. Dover: Mr. Chairman, I move the Speaker take the Chair, and that the Chairman report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a Bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act*, I beg leave to report the Committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Speaker: I declare a recess until 7:00 p.m. tonight.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House

Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove, that Motion 54 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Speaker: The Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors had adjourned the debate on Motion No. 54.

The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that many of the comments that I was going to make have already been made. I just was able to join the debate late in progress, I do remember. It is one of those motions that I do believe that the whereases are not as accurate as obviously as the government benches would like to see them. For that reason I would not be supporting the motion that it is written here.

I do believe that we do keep an ongoing dialogue with the health associations, with the medical community. There is always the opportunity, of course, that more drugs will be offered to the public formulary. Oftentimes people don't quite understand the differences in the formularies is that what is offered for those individuals through Medicare at home, and through what they can get through the hospital if they are a patient, is different. Sometimes that upon being treated with the medication in hospitals on returning to homeward is not covered, that there is concern by the patients, certainly by the family, that indeed the government is somewhat lax in its responsibilities and obligations in not

covering that.

Presently we have about 2,400 medications on our public formulary. We are constantly looking at opportunities to replenish those, to add to those concerns. We do gain the benefit of expert advice, both from the Canadian and the Atlantic expert pharmaceutical representatives who sit on these. I do not mean the drug manufacturers, I mean those people who are expert in medications from both the national and also the Atlantic area. It is through their recommendation that after making a submission we take the very best advice that is offered to us.

As well, our own physicians and pharmacists on Prince Edward Island do play a role in whether or not we are going to be able to support a particular drug. The direction you will probably know is that in the recent past - and I would refer probably to the past 10 or 15 years - there is a direction to move in endorsing generic drugs wherever possible. Many of the drugs on the market today are not breakthrough drugs, they're not first generation drugs, but rather they are copies of or additions to existing medications that are out there, albeit if they do have some other areas of treatment of disease that might not be available in that particular drug family or drug formulary. That is the reasons why generics will pop up on the opportunity from time to time to embrace those as opposed to going into different directions of (Indistinct) drug.

So from that point of view we try to spend our dollars very wisely here on Prince Edward Island. You've heard me say that many times we are a small province, we do have limited resources. We are spending approximately \$24 million per year on medications. We just recently this year have spent \$670,000 on both diabetes and cancer drugs. There were seven drugs added to the formulary. I do think that, as I say, we here

in the province we are open, we are receptive to (Indistinct) to advocacy groups, to individuals who lobby us, who give us advice as to which medications should be put on the formulary or what should be made available to the public, and we certainly will do our best.

One of the whereases that the government of Prince Edward Island has a responsibility to be open and accountable to Islanders seeking affordable access to the medications that they require is certainly one of those areas that we visit and is one of the tenets that we hold true is that we are working on behalf of Islanders to the very best that we possibly can. I think that to give a Standing Committee on Social Development the task of going about and to asking people what they want would be, again, just redundant. It would be an invitation, it would be a copy of what exactly we do now, and it certainly would not further the enhancement in any way of enabling us to learn something that we don't already know, or that we do not get when we seek advice, which is open all the time to those individuals and to those groups and to the professionals. I'm talking here about the health providers which give us the very best advice.

So for all of those reasons, I will not be able to support this resolution on drugs and medications.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise to support this opposition resolution this evening. Certainly all of us have constituents, perhaps we have family members, that this resolution can

affect. I know myself I get many phone calls from constituents who perhaps are phoning on behalf of a family member or perhaps it's they themselves. Islanders are needing better access to drugs on the provincial drug formulary. With this resolution it's calling on the Social Development Committee to have a dialogue with the differing stake holders involved for the placement of certain drugs, or added drugs onto the formulary.

I think there is a lot of documentation that will support this. We hear it all too often. We have the telephone calls and yes, it would be wonderful if we could assist everyone. But I think it's important that we are at least doing what other provinces are doing in other jurisdictions in Canada, not just the average but if we were looking beyond that.

I have a document here which is the Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada report card that came out this year, but it was on 2005. It just goes through cancer drugs and the accessibility across the country for different drugs. It's interesting to note that PEI is quite behind other provinces in Canada. As we know, cancer drugs are very expensive and families, individuals, that can be assisted by these drugs being placed on the drug formulary would be of great benefit.

If we can have doctors, oncologists, perhaps people that have gone through different medical conditions that could have access to these drugs and knowing which ones are of the primary importance. This is for all health conditions. But the advocacy coalition is looking solely at cancers. I would just like to highlight a few parts of this. It just states here, it goes on to summarize the different provinces, and it talks about PEI with a small population base and only two oncologists: Many drugs are not evaluated until the need arises. Hence, many drugs have not been approved or funded and no

proactive system is in place to get them because the need has not arisen. Most oral cancer drugs are not provided through the public plans but are accessed through a third party insurer, compassionate access, self-pay or pharmaceutical (Indistinct) programs.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's what's key. There are a lot of Islanders out there that don't have that third party assistance. What this resolution is calling on this evening is calling on the Legislature to have people come present before the Social Development Committee and see which drugs would be the necessity right now. I think it would be quite easy if we go through a list like this. I don't even know if I can pronounce them all.

But I'd just like to highlight a few drugs that other provinces are fully funding under their provincial plan. If we look, for example, at Xeloda, which is a treatment of colon cancer, we have British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, those provinces are supporting those drugs under the provincial formulary. As well as Tenodal there is another one for breast cancer here, and the list goes on. Others relative to breast cancer, ovarian cancer, leukemia and the list goes on.

I guess when I see the little check mark in the boxes beside the different provinces that are offering them and they're not just check marks, it's whether they're fully funded by the province, they're not approved or the province is recommending it but has not completely funded it yet. I think we already stated from the quote from the coalitions report, we have to be proactive here on Prince Edward Island. I know we're talking about different health conditions relative to this resolution this evening, but cancer is a major issue on Prince Edward Island. It's a major issue across Canada. We have to be proactive and we have to ensure that Islanders have access to the first class drugs.

I can just speak on personal experience. A family member has been diagnosed and you know there is a new drug and the new drug - the family member has to go to Halifax to be part of this clinical drug, yet our population base here on Prince Edward Island, we don't have that. If it works, great. I guess some of these list of drugs that are here, they are showing proven results. I guess if we see the proven results after these clinical trials and, for example, if it's Bayers Pharmaceuticals or whoever is doing the clinical trials, and we see that there are potential benefits, that sufferers that do have cancer their survival rate is greatly increased by taking these, well then, we as a province should be doing our utmost to be providing these drugs to Islanders.

Because as I already stated, there are many Islanders without an insurance plan. These drugs can run into the hundreds, thousands in a year. They are thousands of dollars a month, some of these drugs, and what will people do if they can't afford them? Their family will try to do as much as they can, but for some it's very daunting and they go without. As a province we have to ensure that we can do our best to give the best chances in life to everyone, from the beginning of life right to the end.

So I feel that Members of the Legislature should support this resolution this evening because it's proactive, I'll use the word proactive. It's proactive because it's calling on people - look at the last paragraph:

"...the Standing Committee on Social Development be asked to meet with health associations, the medical community and interested Islanders to recommend ways to improve the extent of publically-funded drug coverage and the transparency of how drugs are placed on the provincial formulary."

What is negative in that? It's a proactive

approach and perhaps we can, by the committee meeting, the next budget that this Legislature delivers, or maybe before then, we will see new drugs added to the provincial formulary. Because we need to do this, we need to keep in line with other provinces in Canada. We shouldn't hear of the stories where there are people moving from PEI to other provinces in Canada to access drugs because of their condition. We should be able to provide an access to health care here on PEI equal to any other province in Canada. We should show no shame in that, we should have the best health care system here on Prince Edward Island. We have the health care professionals that would like to deliver it.

So by supporting this resolution, I believe that we will be putting our health care system top notch with every other province in Canada, and I will be supporting this resolution.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Would any other speaker like to speak on this motion?

If not, to close out debate, the mover, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

First of all, I'd like to congratulate the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove on her insight into such an important issue.

I'm going to talk a little bit tonight about a few different areas here, but first of all, I hope that each and every member in this Legislature will be supporting this motion.

I believe it's an important motion for Islanders and it's a pleasure for me to rise as

the mover and now the closer of this important motion this evening. This is a motion that I want to start off by saying it's a non-partisan motion, as you can see.

t's a motion where we believe that we can try and make improvements here to the province. We can bring more accountability and more transparency. We can bring a lot of different organizations into here, what they have to say with regards to publicly funded drug coverage in our province in terms of what we can do to improve the process and in terms of how the process works. Because there are a lot of Islanders out there now that really don't know how the process works.

I know I get telephoned on a regular basis, and I'm sure other members do probably on a daily basis, where they don't understand why they can't get a drug here on Prince Edward Island, but in Nova Scotia it is available. So some of the issues that I want to address or some of the spending here in Prince Edward Island where I believe we are lagging behind the rest of the country.

In terms of household spending on prescriptions - this is a survey on household spending on Statistics Canada in 2003. It says here Canadian households spent, on average, \$268,000 out-of-pocket on prescription drugs in 2003. Among the provinces, the average amount spent varied from \$200 in Ontario to \$427 in Prince Edward Island.

We need to narrow that gap. We need to make sure that we're not gouging our population here in the province. We need to make sure that we're offering the same prescription drugs here that are offered across this country.

One of the statistics that I find most interesting is the amount of new drugs that have been improved. Access to innovative

products has been improved. When we look at 173 products launched between May 2003 and May 2005, if we look at all the provinces across Canada, Prince Edward Island has not approved any. It did not approve any of these new drugs.

I believe that it's very important for us to be able to provide Islanders with the care that is needed, with the medications that Islanders need. It's something that we have to do to make sure that Islanders have the same access to health care as other Canadians do.

Now I know that there was a lot of other speakers that got up on this motion before. I know one of them was the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty, who happens also - could I get a cranberry juice with lots of ice? I know one of them was the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty, currently the chair of the Social Development Committee. He actually had some interesting points. Unfortunately, the whole premise of his remarks was to point out what Prince Edward Island is doing, and I'll admit, like the Premier does, Prince Edward Island does spend a little over \$1 million a day on health care in the province of Prince Edward Island.

We do. As a portion of our budget, health care is the largest expenditure that we have, but in terms of comparing us to the rest of the country, we are lagging behind in terms of the amount of health care dollars we spend in terms of our budget and the amount of out-of-pocket expenses that come from Islanders when it comes to buying prescription drugs in this province. I believe that what this motion is doing is really finding out what is going on with the approval process, perhaps why things aren't being improved.

We're not saying legislators are going to go out and say: Here's what should be on the formulary and here's what shouldn't be. We

just want to allow Islanders the opportunity to have their say, and I think any legislator, if they want to do their job, has to allow that to happen.

I know the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty held great committee hearings - I sat on them - when it came to tobacco products in this province. Good legislation came out of that. I think we can only work on improving that now if we help study what happens with prescription drugs and what the whole process is.

I know other people who have gotten up, so I was disappointed, of course, with the hon. member's comments. He said that he was not supporting this motion. I was a little taken aback. I was a little surprised, but obviously by the speaker that got up after him, we know why the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty felt that. Because the next one to get up was the Premier, and of course, the Premier had trouble understanding the topic, as usual.

He talked off on random thoughts, whether or not it was about the lobbyist movement at the time, whether or not it was about - I think he was talking about Armand Hammer again. He loves delivering that story, instead of sticking with what we know best and what we can improve on. I just want to quote a little bit here from the Premier. He says: Now I do believe that the resolution brought forward is well-meaning.

Well, congratulations to the Premier for starting to realize that, but then he goes on to say: But I think there are some dangers in the resolution itself. I guess the one underlying danger that would concern me is that we should somehow try to determine the drugs that might be publicly covered by the legislative process as opposed to a process that is governed by the professionals who are aware of the implications of certain drugs.

Right there, a clear example that the Premier, again, probably didn't even read the resolution, didn't understand what he was talking about. He decided to get up and say that the Legislative Assembly was going to hold hearings in deciding what drugs should be going on the formulary.

We all know that's not what the resolution says. The resolution says we want to be able to inform Islanders on how drugs do get approved, who goes through the process. But it's interesting that I've got that quote there from the Premier, because I've really got another quote that just demonstrates the Premier's hypocrisy on the whole issue.

Mr. R. Brown: Boy, you do your work.

Leader of the Opposition: I just want to quote here again: But I think there are some dangers in the resolution itself. I guess the one underlying danger that would concern me is that we should somehow try to determine the drugs that might be publicly covered by the legislative process as opposed to a process that is governed by professionals.

At the conclusion of his remarks the Premier says: Now I do suggest that if some individual or a group or an organization has an issue with drugs that are not on our formulary, that they should let us know.

In one sentence the Premier is talking about how we shouldn't be involved in the process, which he's right in terms of deciding which drugs are on the formulary. In another breath, the Premier stands up and says: But if anybody has an issue with a drug that's not on the formulary, give him a call.

So I don't know exactly what the Premier was thinking that evening. Perhaps it was another hot evening in the House and he was starting to wander off, talking about Armand

Hammer and how the world is flat or something like that, but obviously the Premier didn't understand the resolution or the motion.

I hope he has an opportunity to really take a good read of it because what this important motion does is it allows organizations - for example, there's a lot of people out there that are looking for cancer drugs. Who do they contact since we eliminated the cancer control strategy in government again, had them laid off from that position with an early retirement package or eliminated? They have to go to either the Canadian Cancer Society or one of our volunteer organizations here in the province, and a lot of them - whether or not it's the Heart and Stroke Foundation or any other - they have trouble understanding what the formulary is.

But the Premier talked a lot about, well, it's not the Legislature that makes the decisions, and he's absolutely right on that. We actually have a national body. We actually have the department of health that reviews all the drugs, and then there's another independent body besides that, but even when you get down to the regional levels - and this is where I think some cooperation is valid.

I hope the minister of health is listening here. I know that I think it's deputy ministers of health meet on a regular basis from the four Atlantic provinces to go over drugs that have been improved by Health Canada and decide which ones should go on the provincial formulary.

Unfortunately, that committee makes recommendations, but then the provinces can decide afterwards if they're going to respect those recommendations or not, so there seems to be too much bureaucracy in the process and I think perhaps if the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty did hold hearings, he'd be able to hear a lot of

these concerns from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Alzheimer's Society, all of these important organizations that want to make sure that people out there that need prescription drugs have access to prescription drugs. I'm sure the committee before - I've seen it work. I think it's the same committee that does the Human Rights Commission business. I'll admit when there's compliments to be paid. That committee does the best work of any committee I sit on besides your own, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, yours is the best.

Leader of the Opposition: Besides your own, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: No, his is the best.

Leader of the Opposition: That committee does the best when we sit down and we hammer out positions for the Human Rights Commission. I'll compliment each and every member, whether or not they're Liberal or Conservative, who sits on that committee.

I'll compliment the committee and the chairmanship of the member from North River-Rice Point when it comes to the tobacco legislature.

I think if we had the opportunity to hear from a lot of these organizations, whether or not it's the Heart and Stroke, the Alzheimer's, the Canadian Cancer Society, the list just goes on and on. The pharmaceuticals association.

I think you could have the opportunity - and we won't be deciding which drugs. The Premier failed to understand what was going on. It won't be a committee that would decide which drugs would go on. It would be the committee that perhaps might make a

recommendation on how best to ensure that Islanders are getting the prescription drugs that they get.

I know the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty would want to be involved in such a process like that. I know other members of the committee would want to be involved in a process like that. So I would hope that all members of this Legislative Assembly - and perhaps the Premier takes a read through the motion again and does decide that he does understand what the motion is and might change his mind as well.

I know the minister of health doesn't like anyone telling him what to do, but this is just advice. These are recommendations that a Standing Committee would be making. We'll even deliver the report after it's done here in the House of course, to vote the minister of health (Indistinct). I think (Indistinct). Almost like the minister of agriculture. Because I'll give compliments where compliments are due. Deliver a report to the member's home from North River-Rice Point when it came to the fisheries.

Sometimes we do work well together and we do get some things accomplished. I think this motion here is one of those motions where we can get something done together, where we can make a difference, where we can give organizations and individuals the opportunity to have their voice heard. I think that is important when it comes to such an important issue like drug coverage.

Now I want to talk a little bit about - the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty talked about Romano, talked about funding for health care, talked about (Indistinct) drug program. I'll be the first person to admit I don't have a problem with it, unlike our Premier now who basically says yes to Stephen Harper.

I'll agree the former Liberal government

dropped the ball on us. They should have come up with a program. We need a program here in our country, and I just hope now that Stephen Harper and the new federal government will deliver on that. Because we do need a drug program in this country. It's interesting for anybody actually who did some research on this, because a lot of people probably don't know what the catastrophic profit drug program is.

I will explain - thank you from the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty. It's depends on really what your income is. If you perhaps makes \$20,000, a catastrophic drug is much different to you than a person perhaps making 100 to \$200,000 a year. A catastrophic drug is something that government can help cover, to not really drain the total finances of the family, not put a family in bankruptcy, to make sure that a family is still able to put food on the table. I think that is something we can do and it would be great, it would be incredible - after having some hearings and listening to some of the organizations that want to appear - if we did make recommendations from the Standing Committee on Social Development here.

Put forward a strong worded motion calling for a catastrophic drug program here in Canada. You know, this is something I realize that the province would have trouble funding. I know we need money from the federal government for that. I'm not blind to that issue. I know that the previous federal government talked about it a lot and never got it done. Let's hope that the current government will get it done. But I think it's very important for us to make sure that we get the proper drugs here in Canada.

Now I know the Premier went on another rant. I don't know why he does this. He hired a consultant or a lobbying company in Ottawa once, but he went on about the powerful drug company lobbying these

drugs that costs so much money. I'll be the first one to admit, drug companies, they make a lot of money. But they also take a lot of risks. I'll explain it like this, and I know the Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove could probably explain it a lot better, more than I do. But to even bring a drug to market is not something that happens overnight. To even to do the research to come up with the drug, how many drugs do you think fail before they come up with the drug that ends up getting approved? All this costs hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. That's why it's important that it does cost the consumer and governments so much money in the long run.

A lot of people ask me the question all the time, and I relate it almost to the offshore business in Nova Scotia. People say: Why can't we take all that natural gas and keep it here in Canada? It's because to drill a hole off the shore of Nova Scotia costs about \$100 million, it might even be a little bit more now.

So those oil companies, what they have to do is try and sell their natural gas beforehand. To sell it beforehand you need someone who's a large quantity buyer, and it ends up being the States. So they ended up paying the oil companies a whole lot of money to go out and drill, and that's how they do it.

If the federal government did step in, I think this could be an area where the federal government could step in and help regions such as ourselves who do not have our own natural gas or oil resources. There could be a fund there to help us access a lot of that oil and gas. I'm kind of relaying this - there are some similarities there. But I think, just to help the Premier understand the issue a little bit more, I thought I'd explain it out a little bit more on why there is such a drug lobby. The Premier mentioned there are other lobbies, there's the agricultural lobby,

there's numerous lobbies.

In fact in this House recently the Premier and his government and myself - I voted for it, I'll admit that - brought in an agricultural bill that made it mandatory for farmers to pay into a lobby. So the Premier should be careful when he criticizes the lobby movement too much. If you're a good legislator you take all advice from all different angles and you don't let anybody influence you in making your decisions.

So I believe that this motion is extremely important. I know that the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty perhaps is taking orders from the 5th floor and the Premier on this, but I hope that he really considers his vote on this before he votes on it. Because whether or not we disagree on issues, I think he can do a great job as chairman of that committee. I think he can deliver a great report here to the Legislative Assembly. I think he can help make a difference in Islanders' lives and that's what we're here to do. I'm especially looking forward to his support on this important motion.

Just let me go through the motion one last time. It says:

"Whereas timely and affordable access to appropriate medications should be a cornerstone of our provincial health system."

No one can disagree with that. If they do, obviously they're under a very much even more of a right-winged mantra than they're already under.

"And whereas health groups have expressed concern with the lack of transparency around the process that determines which drugs get approval to be on the provincial formulary."

That's been brought up to me, whether or

not it's the Canadian Cancer Society, whether or not it's the Heart and Stroke Foundation. These organizations have said to me: Why are drugs being approved on the Atlantic basis but they are not being approved here in Prince Edward Island? Why are they being approved on the national scale, but they're not being approved here?

I think this is something that even if we brought someone in from the department of health before the committee to explain what the process is, we'd even allow the minister to come. We might have trouble getting to the bottom line and hearing what the real answer is, but at least we'd hear from the minister and after an hour and a half we might actually get an answer out of him.

"And whereas Islanders currently lack publically-funded access to many drugs available to other Canadians."

No one can argue that. The minister of health even said, I heard him say that we can't offer all the drugs. We just don't have the funds for it.

And whereas Prince Edward Island has among the lowest share of publically-funded drug expenditures as a percent of total drug expenditures in Canada.

These are stats from CIHI, from Stats Canada. Nobody can argue with that.

So here we are one, two, three, four, we're half way done and I haven't found one area that anybody can disagree with, yet.

"And whereas the Government of Prince Edward Island has a responsibility to be open and accountable to Islanders seeking affordable access to the medications they require."

Is there a member in this House that could

be opposed to that? If they are shame on them.

“Therefore be it resolved that the Government of Prince Edward Island promote greater transparency in the decision-making process around which drugs are placed on the provincial formulary.”

Is there anybody against transparencies? I would hope not.

“Therefore be it further resolved that the Standing Committee on Social Development” - and I’m just inserting this, chaired by the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty - “be asked to meet with health associations” - I think they deserve to have their say - “the medical community” - of course we should hear from them - “and interested Islanders to recommend ways to improve the extent of publically-funded drug coverage and the transparency of how drugs are placed on the provincial formulary.”

We’re not asking them to say: Put these drugs on the formulary. We’re asking them to help us find ways to improve the transparency and accountability of the process.

I think that this is more than fair. I think that this motion is totally reasonable. There’s no reason whatsoever for any member in this Legislature to vote this down, and with that, I’m going to conclude.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Leader of the Opposition: A standing vote.

Speaker: A standing vote has been requested.

Ring the bells, Sergeant-at-Arms.

[The bells were rung]

Speaker: The Government Whip.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Is the Government Whip gone? Missing?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dunn: (Indistinct) trying to cool down.

All accounted for.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Dunn: All here and accounted for.

Speaker: Opposition Whip, is your caucus (Indistinct)?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All ready for the question?

Those in favour of the motion, please stand.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Clerk: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point and the hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Speaker: Those against the motion, please stand.

Some Hon. Members: Shame! (Indistinct).

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology, the hon. Premier, the hon.

Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, the hon. Minister of Tourism, the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member for Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park, the hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay, the hon. Member for Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove and the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Speaker: Motion defeated.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point, that Motion No. 50 be now read.

Speaker: Motion No. 50 had been in debate and the hon. Minister of Development and Technology had adjourned the motion debate.

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Probably I'll just continue on where I left off with talking about how our government has certainly rebuilt the harness racing industry on PEI after 10 years of devastation under the Liberal government. Certainly something had to be done, and under the leadership of our minister of finance, people like Mike O'Brien, people like Ken Oaks, they have taken this industry from the basement back up to the level it should be, as PEI is now considered the Kentucky of

Canada once again under the leadership of Premier Binns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Currie: Certainly I think that a lot has to be said about what has happened to the harness racing industry. You can see a lot of development out through the country. There are new tracks being built. There are new barns being built. I guess there's a lot of motivation within the industry because of the investment that we have made, along with Atlantic Lottery Corporation, in the new Charlottetown Driving Park.

Also, we're making improvements to the Summerside racing surface and we're also looking at doing some more improvements there, so certainly this revitalization has been very upbeat for the industry.

There's a lot more people that are buying quality mares all across North America, and they're bringing them home to breed because that's certainly a long-term investment, and there's new stallions coming into the Maritimes, especially PEI.

The purses are better, and certainly by the size of the crowds, I'm told that the Charlottetown Driving Park has certainly been very entertaining.

I also, in relationship to this motion - I don't have any problem in supporting the first whereas. "...the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector are significant elements of our agricultural heritage and an important part of the Island way of life."

That is true, and when you go outside of the harness racing and you get into the draft and the recreational side of it, there are a lot of horse owners on PEI, and the draft horses are used not only for Irish moss.

They're used doing the farming, and they're

also used as show animals and breeding, and I think we just saw the other day where some of the Clydesdales are being sold down into the States for their pedigree. It says something for the quality of animal that's being bred and raised on Prince Edward Island, and certainly I support that part of it.

We've also been very helpful in the harness racing and in the draft side of the recreational. As I mentioned before, we have invested money in Crapaud, Strathgartney, Pinette and Dundas (Indistinct) to help them put up barns and stables to accommodate animals that come in from all over PEI and off PEI, and I certainly think that our government has been very helpful in this side of the agricultural community.

Certainly I have to agree with the second whereas, that the "...harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector are also a key proponent of our tourism product." I would have to say that the Gold Cup and Saucer is the biggest week for the tourism industry on PEI, and it draws people from all over Atlantic Canada, Ontario and the United States.

There's a lot of people who book their hockey school for their kids from other provinces to come here, and that's their week of recreation. They go there in the morning to hockey school, they go to the racetrack in the afternoon and in the evening, and they make it a holiday.

To see the quality of horses and the amount of people that come down and the good publicity that we get from the Gold Cup and Saucer, certainly it reflects on the tourism side of it, and our province benefits from it, and so that whereas, I do support it.

"And whereas the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector generate

substantial direct and indirect employment, as well as many spinoffs in related purchases of goods and services."

Of course, it does. The harness racing industry buys a lot of feed. They buy harnesses. They buy bikes. They employ a lot of people right across PEI to train, to service the harness racing industry, and I think when the Premier was successful in bringing the Atlantic Veterinary College to PEI - one of the many large projects that he brought to the province in a previous life. Certainly that's been very beneficial to PEI because we were recognized as an agricultural province, and certainly some of the expertise that comes out of there is very beneficial.

Just last winter, with the department of agriculture and development, we supported bringing in a veterinarian from the United States. His name was Dr. Newman, and he is recognized in North America as probably one of the better vets for looking after horses, especially draft, and he went around PEI to a lot of the farms. He visited them and he gave two or three lectures at Charlottetown, at the AVC facility, and he also gave a demonstration on two-, three- and four-team harness hookups, and I think that was very beneficial to the farming community.

The next whereas: "...the harness racing industry, in particular, is facing the need for new stalls and related infrastructure in order for ongoing renewal and revitalization."

I think revitalization has already taken place. I think that the commercial lenders are in a position now where they see there's good purses, there's quality racing, and the industry is more than probably paying for itself. Certainly any new venture is always welcomed, and we've been, as a province, supportive, especially in our communities, to support some of the new infrastructure

barns and stalls that are built, and I already mentioned them earlier.

I would like to talk about the last one, in that therefore be it resolved. It's that I would like to amend that to:

Therefore be it resolved that the Government of Prince Edward Island continue to support the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector through the many government programs currently available.

I think that already qualifies the harness and recreational sector to fall within any of the programs that we have, and certainly they have never been set aside. They've always been considered as an important part of our economy, and certainly if they qualify for any programs, we'd be only too pleased to support them, as we have for the last 10 years certainly stepped in behind this industry and supported it. I think you'll see that especially this summer with the quality of horses and harness racing and the shows that we put on, that our government, our Premier, supports the harness racing and recreational horse industry.

Speaker: The amendment, moved and seconded by the Minister of Tourism.

Do you want to read that amendment again, hon. minister?

Mr. Currie: Therefore be it resolved that the Government of Prince Edward Island continue to support the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector through the many government programs currently available.

I'll conclude my remarks.

Speaker: The seconder of the amendment.

We're talking on the amendment.

Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Yes, I support the amendment.

Speaker: Anyone speaking on the amendment?

Question on the amendment.

All those in favour of the amendment, say 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary say 'nay.'

An Hon. Member: Nay!

Speaker: Amendment carried.

Speaking on the amended motion, the hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

I'm very pleased to rise in support of this resolution as amended because it does speak to the importance of the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector in the Province of Prince Edward Island. This government, as pointed out by the Minister of Development and Technology, has been extremely supportive of this sector of our Island economy. As Minister of Tourism I realize the great value that the harness racing industry provides to our visitors to the province. It's a very unique product here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

For a long time PEI has been known as the Kentucky of Canada, and that's a very noteworthy credential, if you will, that people have recognized the contribution that harness racing industry makes. You don't

call it Dominion Day anymore, but the Dominion Day races in Summerside have been a part of tradition in our community for years and years and now we have the Canada Day races. That is just part of the great contribution that harness racing makes. The lobster carnival races are another of a great part of our Island history, featuring the Governor's Plate that is run on Saturday evening at the Summerside raceway. These are events that really separate us from other areas, that are unique to our agriculture background, that are part of the development of the Island, in a sense, as the horse, as (Indistinct) burden has contributed greatly over the historical development of Island society.

It was the method of power by choice to most Islanders when the horse and the sale would be the method of transportation in the development of the colony in Isle St. John, as it was known at first, and then as Prince Edward Island. So we have a deep and rich history of harness racing.

I can't talk about harness racing without mentioning the famous Milligan Morrison Track in Northam where the first races in North America, they were held at night time, were held in Northam. The first under the lights races in North America. That's a great part of our history, the family of horse breeders that built their own track and had people coming from all over the Island to that area.

In recent times there has been a real resurgence of the harness racing industry and a lot of the credit goes to our government. Our government supporting communities, our government supporting agriculture, our government supporting the industry sector members, the people that are racing the horses that were becoming discouraged with changes in the way gaming took place in the province, were starting to feel undervalued, were starting to

feel that their contribution was no longer important, that this whole area of expertise and our history was being discarded and it really wasn't very meaningful, and it really wasn't very meaningful.

But we believe that it is meaningful. It complements the agriculture community. The oats and the hay that are raised on our Island fields provides the feed for the harness racing industry. The look or view of horses in a field in one of our pastures provides tremendous view scapes to Islanders and visitors to our province alike. There is something very attractive about driving along in the countryside and seeing a mare and a spring colt out running in a pasture -

Mr. Currie: Or a filly.

Mr. P. Brown: - or filly, that's right - running in a pasture in Prince Edward Island or any place. Horses have always been an animal that has a special association, I think, with human beings. If you look in whether it be the Royal Family, their horses are very important to them. If you look at years back and you look at great movies that were made, Arabian Nights and Ben-Hur, and all of these great movies of the past centred around horses and competition. It seems to be a connection with the horse, in some ways the magnificence of the animal.

Even if you go down to the CDP at any given time or Summerside Raceway or, as mentioned, any of our community tracks and you see the horses running and you hear the hoofs and you watch the competition, you get into the spirit of it. Most people, they may not understand the wagering, they may not understand what track time means or a race record or any of that. But what they do find an affection with is the horse itself and there is a tremendous attraction to that. Therefore it is important that we support it. It's important that we continue to support it

and I'm very proud of the efforts of our government in doing that.

So now that the resolution is amended and it speaks to those things, I will be pleased to support it. I just would like to also make mention of a resolution that is on the order paper and introduced by the - tabled by the Provincial Treasurer, where he speaks about the government support to the harness racing industry. We know that the Provincial Treasurer has been a real advocate for our harness racing on PEI. He points out a few key elements of the industry.

The harness racing industry contributes approximately \$25 million to our provincial economy annually and over 600 Islanders are employed directly or indirectly by the harness racing industry. Prince Edward Island has successfully produced world-class athletes in the harness racing, including, from Alberton, Hall of Fame member, Joe O'Brien, and we're also very proud of the new Canadian champion, Mr. Mark MacDonald, who did us all so proud last year on the racing circuit in Canada and continues to do that again this year.

Prince Edward Island has a long and proud tradition in harness racing and is on the leading edge of innovation such as night racing, development of a photo finish system and the introduction of the starting gate. Since the opening of the Charlottetown Driving Park Entertainment Centre there has been higher attendance, higher wages, additional race dates, increased Standardbred Canada memberships and a Maritime record at the 2005 Yearling Sale. These are all recognizing the support of our government. Total purses raced for in 2005 on Prince Edward Island was an all-time high of \$2.571 million. The purse pool for overnight horses went from \$742,000 in 2004 to \$1,404,000 in 2005. The Charlottetown Driving Park Entertainment Centre hosted a record crowd during Old

Home Week and anyone who was there last August witnessed to the excitement of that event. The new North American record mile was equalled in the Gold Cup and Saucer final.

Since the opening of the new Charlottetown facility, live wagers on harness racing has been increased by 19.2%. Prince Edward Island is an ideal place for horse production, with ample forages and grains available and a qualified labour force.

Horse Beats magazine, the largest standardbred magazine in the world, has called the Gold Cup and Saucer the greatest show in harness racing. Just recognition of others of the tremendous show we put on here on Prince Edward Island.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to support this amended resolution and look forward to its adoption.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park.

Mr. MacAleer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I present this presentation. I don't know how long they want me to speak. This historical venue of harness racing on Prince Edward Island. I've never owned a horse, unlike the minister of health who loves horses.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) all your money.

Mr. MacAleer: But my mother did work at the food concession at the track in the early 1950s and I did walk horses owned by a well known horseman, Colonel Dan MacKinnon. When I became a member of the Charlottetown Guardian and the Patriot as publisher we supported the Gold Cup and Saucer Race. Of course, I've been in

attendance at many Gold Cup and Saucer races. But it gives me some pleasure to give you some idea of the extent of horses on Prince Edward Island down through the years.

I think it's interesting that horses have played a leading role in the development of our civilization, not only of Canada, but also Prince Edward Island. Of course, Islanders love their horses. Census done in the 1880s attest that there are more horses relative to the size of the population of Prince Edward Island than any other province or territory in the Dominion of Canada. Now that was in the 1880s.

The use of horses was necessary in farming, but they were also an important part of the province's agricultural exhibitions. But horses were not just farm animals, they were also used in everyday transportation and, from the early period on the Island, for racing. Now indeed newspaper archives speak of Islanders racing their stock over the lands of their Island roads long before there were even race tracks, and these often spontaneous contests were one of the diversions readily available for people across the province.

Now the growth of interest in the sport and growth in traffic on the roads created some danger. Of course, that forced harness racing into specially created constructed tracks. By the 1880s the Island could host more than two dozen racetracks.

Now for yourself and for the hon. member to my right here, the Summerside Raceway is believed to be one of the oldest continuously racing tracks in Canada. Opening day, July 1st, 1886, was an exciting day in Summerside. That featured a race held by the Green Brothers and it was a match between "Hernando" and "Black Pilot." I want you to remember that as you remember facts about your community. The

race, according to the *Island Farmer* on August 30th, 1888, featured 5,000 fans, even though the grandstand could only hold 500. So you can appreciate even then Islanders were taking some risks.

Now "Black Pilot" took the last three heats after losing the first one. The driver of "Black Pilot," his name was Charlie Earl, and the owner was Mr. Dockendorff, "Hernando" was driven by a man by the name of P.C. Brown and the owners were J.D. Gourlie and R.C. McLeod. Each horse took a quarter of the total gate with the owners of the track taking half. And the *Island Farmer* said that the Green Brothers paid for the cost of the track with their huge crowd. So I'm sure that's a great interest to those in the racing business.

Now let's talk about the Charlottetown Driving Park. It's perhaps not surprising when 55 leading citizens, merchants, businessmen and farmers formed to join a joint venture with plans to build a race track in the province's capital. The group called themselves the Hillsborough Trotting Club and received their charter from the provincial government.

Charles C. Gardiner was the first president while the attorney who had handled the subscription of the funds, A.W. Warburton, became Secretary-Treasurer. Now the first meet of the new driving park was held in October 1889. Two classes of race were held. The first class, the horse clocked in at three minutes for the mile, the second one actually got there a little faster, he was I think 2.97.

Anyway, the following year things picked up. That was in 1890. The livestock buildings had been erected and two tiered grandstand capable of seating 2,500 people was built, one of the first in the Maritimes. Indeed, by 1890 the Charlottetown Driving Association and exhibition had combined

two Island traditions and had begun to hold harness racing at the present (Indistinct) as a feature of the annual autumn agricultural exhibition. That agricultural exhibition became known as Old Home Week.

Now, the first Old Home Week the organizers went all out, with music productions, games, sports, stage productions, special church services, a regatta, and a civic address. The first Old Home Week also included an afternoon of horse racing.

By 1914 a carnival midday was added, and the festivities were shifted from October to August beginning in 1928. The Old Home Week races continued throughout the war years, although the exhibition itself was cancelled for the duration.

Today the Charlottetown Driving Park and provincial exhibition feature the fastest horses, top stake colts, plus the best trainers and drivers in eastern Canada, as well as many other parts of the country and the United States.

Now the hon. Minister of Tourism mentioned *Hoof Beats*. I'm not going to read all the quotations that I've taken from *Hoof Beats*, except to say that this magazine got the largest distribution in terms of standardbred horses throughout the country. They've called the Gold Cup and Saucer race the greatest show in harness racing, and they go on to explain how people show up and eat food and sit in chairs and enjoy the night, and for those folks it's the biggest event of the year, bar none.

Now Prince Edward Island has successfully produced world-class athletes in the harness racing industry, including Hall of Fame member Joe O'Brien and new Canadian champion Mark MacDonald.

Now Lt. Col. Daniel MacKinnon is also a

legendary figure in the annals of PEI harness racing. A WWI war hero, Col. Dan, as he was known to generations of Islanders, was a prominent businessman, owning PEI's daily newspaper *The Guardian*, a silver fox farm and the Charlottetown Driving Park. He was well off. Mr. MacKinnon was also an accomplished horseman, winning Maritime championships as well as holding both the world and the Canadian record for trotters on ice.

A member of Canada's horse Hall of Fame, his leadership played an early role in building Old Home Week racing to its status as a focal point in the provincial exhibition. Some would even say that it was Colonel Dan's vision and leadership that ushered PEI into the modern era of harness racing and set the stage for what was to come.

Now the Gold Cup and Saucer race is an interesting race. There are two individuals who are really responsible for putting this race together. It all started about 1960, and the first person I'll mention is Frank "Duck" Acorn, who was an interesting fellow. Got up every morning and played golf at 5 o'clock, never missed a game.

He teamed up with a newspaper man called Bill Hancock and they established a race destined to become the province's famous world horse racing, the Gold Cup and Saucer. It was interesting how the Gold Cup became a symbol, because on the night of the first race somebody had taken the trophy or forgotten about the trophy and Duck raced home to his wife's cupboard and returned with a cup that had a gold rim around it and handed that to the winner. Ever since it became the gold cup race.

So that race has been running in Old Home Week since 1960, and the first race that was sponsored by *The Evening Patriot*, the purse was \$10,000. At the time that would be a considerable purse in Maritime Canada.

Now it's interesting that the first race was won by a horse called "Dee's Boy." As you can remember, it ran in 2.06 and that (Indistinct) at that time. It was owned by D.R. MacKenzie of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, and was driven by the name of Lloyd MacAulay. During the first event the Lieutenant Governor at the time was Walter Hyndman and he presented the trophy to the winning connection. Actually, he presented this cup but he also presented the cooler. Because people were rather embarrassed with the fact that all we had was just this little cup.

Anyway, the following year eight young women were recruited to be Gold Cup and Saucer girls and that became rather controversial, particularly the things they wore. Since that time these young women are now called the Gold Cup and Saucer Ambassadors and each represents a horse in the race.

The morning of the big race, dressed in racing silks and there's regimental band, and now we have the Gold Cup and Saucer Parade which is one of the major parades in eastern Canada. In that parade we have about 50,000 spectators and they line the streets with hundreds of entries including marching units, bands, giant balloons, antique cars, horses, clowns, and of course, the Gold Cup and Saucer Ambassadors.

Now the current record holder for the race at the park - I think this is also true - is the record is 1.51.02 and it was established last year and the driver - the horse was driven by Wally Hennessey.

Now the most famous driver in current time of course is this young - excuse me. Before I get to that I'll say that another Charlottetown native, Wallace Hennessey, drove the world champion mare "Moni Maker" and is one of only 27 drivers in the world to win over 6,000 races. His career

earns is over \$41 million. So we got some pretty accomplished drivers on Prince Edward Island.

My next example is Mark MacDonald who is a young driver, is the leading harness racing driver in the country, currently. He's following in the footsteps as a new and successful Islander including Joe O'Brien, Mike MacDonald, Wally Hennessey, Paul MacKenzie and others.

Mark MacDonald began his driving career on the grassroots of harness racing in PEI matinee tracks, winning his first five races at St. Peter's and Pinette. Now based in Ontario, he continues to support Island harness racing by returning each year for the Gold Cup and Saucer race, and he of course has been a winner. At just 27 years of age - this year actually he's 28 - he's one of the youngest in the harness racing industry to accomplish so much. He also leads the money winnings. Last year he won \$8 million.

The harness racing industry in Prince Edward Island is an essential event in terms of our tourism product. I hope we continue to have that event and foster it, and therefore I support this resolution and I thank you for listening to some of these interesting facts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to speak on this motion as well, and I'd like to offer my support to the amended version as amended by the development minister. I'm one of the lucky one. I've actually had the pleasure and the opportunity of working as a special projects person in agriculture with other provincial government people and federal government

people, as well as community and the private sector, to ensure that the harness racing sector and recreational horse sector in the province has an opportunity to be in a position to expand and thrive.

Some of the people that I've had the pleasure to work with include people like Mike O'Brien, Kent Oakes, Wayne Pike from the PEI Harness Racing Association, Linda MacSwain, Scott MacPhail from Pinette and many other people from the community matinee tracks, David Anderson from Resources West, to mention a few, and of course our Provincial Treasurer who is the minister responsible for harness racing.

The first, "whereas the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector are significant elements of our agricultural heritage and an important part of the Island way of life." Other speakers have already mentioned that the roots of harness racing are very deep in the history of Prince Edward Island and go well back to the 1800s. For years harness racing has been an extreme participant in the agriculture and tourism industries. Also, I want to point out, for a long time many of our young people left here on PEI to go other places to make a living in the harness racing sector, places like Ontario, Alberta and of course, Florida. They also helped to contribute to make the harness racing industry and those communities very successful.

The second, "and whereas the harness racing industry and recreational horse sector are also a key component of our tourism product." You know, our government has been supporting the harness racing sector for the past two years through the new infrastructure at the Charlottetown Driving Park and are presently involved in the construction and expansion at the Summerside Driving Park. A lot of jobs are created in the harness racing sector, both directly and indirectly, which provides all

kinds of other economic benefits to the province.

The third, "and whereas the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector generates substantial direct and indirect employment as well as many spin-offs in related purchases of goods and services." For about a period of nine months, some of the people I mentioned previously have been involved in what is known as the Matinee Track Project. These tracks (Indistinct) speaking to include Pinette, Tyne Valley, O'Leary, Alberton, Kensington and St. Peter's Bay. If people have noticed in this week's edition of the *Guardian*, there was actually an advertisement from Pinette to advertise summer camps for kids at the track. Some of these tracks are also thinking of other ideas of how they can use the community infrastructure to attract more direct jobs and indirect jobs through tourism, such as trying to get the tracks used for fly ball for dogs and part of that circuit.

The next, "and whereas the harness racing industry, in particular, is facing the need for new stalls and related infrastructure in order for ongoing renewal and revitalization." I'd like to say that we need to also expand to allow the industries to actually take advantage of some of the other opportunities. I thought I'd give you a couple of examples of how that's happening right now.

Presently, there is an entrepreneur in west Prince and this particular guy has a welding business. He's actually completing a business plan for the construction of the truck boxes to build them that actually pulls the horses, both standardbred and recreational horses.

There is also another farmer I know that's into the square hay bale business. It used to be one time it was really hard to sell your square hay bales because they were a thing

of the past. However, now many of these bales are used in the local horse market, but also include Ontario. This particular man had a business in the eastern US and I can remember how he is trying to expand his opportunity to get into the export market. He was trying to get into the areas of Japan and the United Arab Emirates.

There is another young couple in actually my own district who presently have two barns going and the barns are filled. I believe they have 39 horses in one barn alone and they're actually involved in training and breeding operation. I can't get into too many details because they have a business plan from the development minister right now for support. It is a very thriving business.

So the last point I wanted to make to the last part of the amendment there: "therefore be it resolved that the Government of Prince Edward Island consider providing financial support" in actually allowing this sector to make sure that they are able to apply for any programs and services that we offer in government. I think there is a tremendous opportunity. I will be another member that will be supporting this amended version of the motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Very briefly, I would like to direct some thoughts to the recreational horse sector. I know that there are many speakers here who could very well enlighten us about information and antidotes as we have already heard from some sector about the harness horse, but the recreational horse

sector has been and continues to be a very viable and economically viable sector for Prince Edward Islanders, especially for youth.

Again, I'm referring to the pony club members and the 4-H. I know the members are very aware of these two horse programs which takes youngsters at a very early age and exposes them not only to the riding aspect of the animal but also the care and the maintenance. Many youngsters would approach the horse first because they're either big or they're warm. They all look pretty. After a very short time, however, the youngster soon realizes that there is more to the beauty of the animal and they come to accept that particular animal, and they usually are attracted to one that they like to ride and take care of more so than others. That animal becomes more than just pretty, but actually it has an individual personality, and there is much more fun in taking care of the after riding and the pre-riding than just going around in small circles. It's the care and the maintenance of the horse and all of its aspects which definitely stays with the young individual.

I must add that I do have a horse, as I think a lot of members realize, and the barn where I keep him, they do offer riding lessons. More young girls than young boys are interested in horses at that early age. They really form a tremendous close bond with the animal and it certainly is very nice to see. It takes time to form this association with the animals. The type of animals that I ride, the Arabians, it takes about three years to condition and be aware of them. I do have a couple of anecdotes that I will share with the members, but before I do, let me just mention a number but not exhaustive of all, of the recreational breeds that we find here in this province.

The quarter horse is probably the most ubiquitous animal and breed and has many

crosses. It crosses very well. It has a very easy to live with disposition, the quarter horse. (Indistinct) are becoming more and more popular now in the quarter horse and in the whole area of recreational western horses. Canadian breed, somewhat between, I suppose, and the western is a breed and then you get into the thoroughbreds, the Hanoverians, the warm bloods which, of course, are the English horses of choice here on Prince Edward Island.

I did mention the Arabian animal, that's the one that I have. I also did have thoroughbred and quarter horses in my past, but I have of late years come to the Arabian. Again, many of the members are aware of the evolution of the horse itself, away back in (Indistinct) when the horse was not much bigger than the rabbit. Then of course through the evolutionary eons of time it did grow in size until it came to approximately the size of the horses and the appearance that we recognize as a horse today. It was the Arabian breed that survived those generations of evolution, which gave the standard bloodlines to harness horse as well as to the English breeds as well. So the Arabian is a very, very old breed.

I mentioned that it takes approximately three years to get to condition and to get to know the animal. That's true in many breeds but particularly in the Arabian. I'm just saying something about it very quickly, the conditioning program, is that it's a (Indistinct) very much so that the athlete, the runner preparing for a marathon, that has to be very low slow form of jogging and then quicker, and then hill work and sand work and all of that. They also have to build up the bone density in animals, in harness horses and in other performing horses. The bone density difference between a non-competitive and a competitive animal is tremendously different.

Our horses and endurance have to adapt to

eat and to drink while exercising. A lot of the old myths that you would never give a working animal a drink of water, of course, is that, it's a myth. Many of the races that I ride in are of 24-hour duration and of course the horse has to eat and drink during that period of time, the same as a marathon runner. So again, you have to adapt the animal to that, also to develop the awareness of exactly how the animal is functioning, use of electrolytes as they perspire. They are getting rid of, along with the sweat, a lot of the electrolytes that are necessary, so those have to be replaced. Then, of course, there is the whole host race care.

In the endurance line, the area that I prefer to ride, the endurance mileage starts at 50 miles, goes up to 100, and actually to 150 miles. You're given periods of time to complete those races. The 100 mile rides which I prefer are raced over a 24-hour period, and you don't have very much sleep time or downtime, but then of course, neither does the horse who is doing most of the work.

I suppose that those of us who like horses - and that goes for the spectator as well as the owner and the professional person - there are lifelong associations formed with horses. The speaker from Charlottetown-Spring Park said it best when he said there are more horses per capita than any other province in Canada here on Prince Edward Island. That was true in the 1800s, it's true in the 1900s, and now of course into the 2000s. We are very happy and proud with that.

Let me finish off by stating off that I think Winston Churchill, of course, that great British prime minister, summed it up best when he said that there is something about the outside of the horse that is good for the inside of a person. It's very true, whether you are involved in harness horses or the recreational sector, but we Prince Edward Islanders really do enjoy, in fact love, our

horse in all aspects.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be very glad to support this motion as presented.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other member like to speak on this motion?

If not, we'll have the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point, close out debate.

Mr. MacKinley: Thank you very much. It's great. I noticed they made an amendment. You'll have to excuse me for a minute, but my glasses aren't used to all this heat in here. They're fogging up.

An Hon. Member: Just like the hay barn.

Mr. MacKinley: What?

An Hon. Member: Just like the hay barn.

Mr. MacKinley: When I was in the hay barn I didn't need glasses. I could see. I said to somebody out there, a couple of the people later or earlier today, (Indistinct) remind me I used to have to stow square bales up in the loft in the heat.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, the resolution that the minister of industry - or no, the minister of finance put through - and I give him credit. He did a lot for the harness industry in the province of PEI when he was minister of agriculture. He was instrumental in getting the track going and everything, but what he forgot was his resolution is a (Indistinct) statement, and I believe if you read - I can't think of the guy's name now, but he writes issues on harness racing, Hennessey, I believe it is. Isn't it?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: Yes, Hennessey. He writes for the *Eastern Graphic* and he basically said it was a good (Indistinct) statement, and that's what it is. I noticed you people have toned it down somewhat: "Therefore be it resolved that the Government of Prince Edward Island consider providing financial support to both the harness racing industry and the recreational horse sector in the form of seven-year, interest-free loans for the construction of new stalls and facilities."

So there's some meat in that. There's something that's going to be done there, but you guys just want to (Indistinct) talk about it. The Minister of Tourism was up there going on, as usual, with some prepared notes from the fifth floor. I don't even think that it was Peter McQuaid or Pat Dorsey who wrote those notes for you. They would have done a much better job.

Motion 34 says:

"And whereas the harness racing industry contributes approximately \$25 million to our provincial economy annually;

"And whereas 600 Islanders are employed directly or indirectly" for harness racing, and this isn't even getting into the pleasure horse or the draft horse industry we have here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

And when he was making his talk - and whereas the overnight purses went from \$742,000 in 2004 to \$1.4 million in 2005. I'm the first one to applaud for those going up, but if you take the amount of horses that we have and the 600 people that are employed in the industry, and split it into \$1.4 million, it's not very much money.

All you've got to do is go and talk to the horsemen. I talked to some horsemen at my farm last night, and my son's farm, and he talked about the (Indistinct) is clearing

money, but their live racing, by the time they turn on the lights and everything, it's still not a paying proposition.

Number one was your white elephant out there hasn't started to pay yet. You've lost money, so where do you take that out of? The harness industry of the province of PEI. I hope your casino works. I hope that - and I'm waiting to see it in the fall and give it a chance when the tourists are here because a lot of this is a numbers game, and we've only got 137,000 or 138,000 people in the province of PEI. But in the province of PEI in the summer months, and through the winter, summer, I believe our total tourism industry is over 1 million.

So there's so many of those people are going to use the facilities. The harness racing has got a lovely place to go. The track's an awful improvement, they tell me. I haven't eaten in the restaurant, but they tell me it's very good food, and I enjoy going in there.

I remember being there when I was a young fellow and we used to show cattle there, and those were the times that you jumped over the fence to get in to see the harness racing. At that time it used to be maybe \$1 to get into the grounds and another \$1 to get into the races, and if you weren't around with Mike MacDonald or somebody, I believe at that time he had a pass or something when I went to Charlottetown Rural High School with him and many of those drivers that are out there, and it went on to do well out of the province of PEI.

But wouldn't it be great if those people would come home, like the Wally Hennesseys, who are cousins of my wife?

Leader of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKinley: I remember being down in Pompano, Florida, and he was doing well

down there, and that's quite a few years ago.

An Hon. Member: Is he still there?

Mr. MacKinley: Yes, he's still there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKinley: But what would it be like if we could get a (Indistinct) to attract those good drivers back to the Province of Prince Edward Island. Because people like the horses and it takes - it's like anything else, and the better the crowds, the more the horses will go.

The horse thing is moving ahead, but what's really got me concerned about this is when I looked at nearly \$1 million that the minister of agriculture, the farmers out there in the cattle situation, the hog situation, were having it rough.

So what did the minister of agriculture do? He sent \$942,000 back to Ottawa. I see Mr. Coles up there, I don't think, would approve of Wayne Easter getting that money to spend somewhere else in some other province. Why didn't you use some creative thinking and keep that money here in the province and put it into our harness racing here in the Province of Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKinley: That's where you show leadership.

Leader of the Opposition: Creative thinking.

Mr. MacKinley: That's what you've got to do, but no. They'd rather send it back, badmouth Ottawa: We've got no money. But nobody was applying for it because the farming community was having it so bad, they couldn't afford the other 30% or 40%

they had to put up with it.

Leader of the Opposition: That's right.

Mr. MacKinley: But the harness industry is starting to come ahead, and they could have, and they need the buildings, they need the facilities, and that's why I brought it into pleasure horses. If you go out to Strathgartney - and I'll give your government credit for that, for helping fix up that. Strathgartney, I think it's a good spot.

If you look at all those young people that are out there today or if you look at the seniors that are out there - even some of our ministers are probably out there riding horseback, and that's good. I think that's good here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. It's a good, family-oriented sport, whether it's harness racing, whether it's draft horses or whether it's pleasure horses.

I think we have tremendous opportunity to grow in this industry, but this government is more interested in trying to get the gaming room going. You'd almost wonder if they didn't use the horsemen as a way to piggyback the gaming facilities here in the province.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: And now the gaming facilities didn't turn out. They were out \$5 million or \$6 million last year.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: I wish they had been up \$5 million or \$6 million because then they might have put more back into the harness industry in the Province of Prince Edward Island. But going by this amendment, basically what it does is continue the support through many programs.

I just dug up some of those programs. I just looked up some of these programs. In the year 2001-2002 the government put roughly \$327,000 into the horse industry of the Province of Prince Edward Island. If you look at 2003-2004, the government put \$524,000 into the harness industry and the horse industry of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

That's what they put in, but this is a \$25 million industry in the Province of Prince Edward Island. This government should be ashamed of what they're doing to not help the harness industry.

You went so far. You got your buildings up. You've got a beautiful track. You've got the great horses here. Now it's time to take that other step forward and really help the people that are in the harness industry, the average working person in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

They go and they say: We put so much into this or that. But think of the tourists it draws in the summer. I even added up the exhibitions that you give, and that's good, but look at the money the government makes on the people attending the exhibitions.

You've got to get your priorities straight if the harness industry is going to survive. You've already closed most of rural Prince Edward Island. Our Leader of the Opposition has mentioned that.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: Listen to that. You're in power. Before you got in power, all you did was complain. Your biggest claim to fame - the minister of transportation over there - was to be able to sell a \$3.5 million business for \$45,000.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: That's her claim to fame.

Leader of the Opposition: Shame.

Mr. MacKinley: Shame on you. That wouldn't even cover the pavement that your government laid to pave down in front of it across from her place, wouldn't even look at it, so you've got to - no, it wasn't hers. It was across the road, but all I'm saying is - and I'm not against that pavement going there, either - all I'm saying is a lot of your rural areas, under this government, have been shut down.

All you've got to do is go up west and look at Bloomfield Industrial Park. The building up there, I don't know what it's for. Nobody's in it. They've picked up the cheque and then they left. There's this big building sitting up there.

I would say there's more vacant space that this government has in rural Prince Edward Island than ever in the history of the province. This government, it's no wonder our population is dropping in rural Prince Edward Island and it's centralizing in the Charlottetown and Summerside areas.

It's no wonder because this government, nine years of neglect to rural Prince Edward Island. That's what you've done, nine years. You start to do something good, and as I said, I give the minister of finance - the minister of agriculture at the time - great praise for helping the harness industry out and getting the facilities and everything, but why stop there? You're almost to the point - and as I said, it really breaks my heart to see \$924,000 being sent back to Ottawa that you guys didn't have any creative thinking to use. Nothing at all. So with that, I want to wrap this up.

I thought I put a resolution in here that had some meat in it. They have watered it down. I'm not going to argue with that. They have

the majority in the House. They can do that, but they've always got to water it down and then they've got to go on with their PR spin. I could pull it apart here all night and I can go, and you can talk to the horse people, but when you hear horse people - there's a record broken in Charlottetown.

You'd almost think that the ministers that were talking about it got that record. He broke the record. That was because of dedicated horse people here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

So with that, I thank you for my time to speak.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Leader of the Opposition: A standing vote.

Speaker: A standing vote has been requested.

Sergeant-at-Arms, ring the bells.

[The bells were rung]

Speaker: Government is ready? Opposition Whip?

Are you ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Development and Technology, the hon. Premier, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, the hon. Minister of Tourism, the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry, the hon. Minister of Education and Attorney General, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon.

Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Member from St. Eleanors-Summerside, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park, the hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member from Morell-Fortune Bay, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty and the hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Speaker: Motion passed.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I move Motion No. 49 be read again.

Speaker: Motion No.49 has been read and adjourned by the Opposition House Leader.

He's not on.

Move on to the next speaker who would like to speak on that motion.

The hon. Member from North River-Rice Point.

Mr. MacKinley: Could I have the podium, please?

This is a very good motion.

“And whereas the ability of the Government of Prince Edward Island to secure anticipated revenues from the sale of Polar assets has a direct impact on the total overall

financial exposure of the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.”

Basically what we got here, we got another failed government idea. We just sent \$974,000 back to agricultural budget to the federal government because they said they didn't have any idea what to use it for. But yet when it came to trying to create a fish industry, processing industry they failed and they failed badly.

“Therefore be it resolved that the Auditor General be asked to review the process of asset sales of Polar Foods in order to determine the exact amount that has been recovered since the collapse of Polar Foods.”

It goes on to say:

“Therefore be it further resolved that the Auditor General use the results of this review to provide an update of the loss in Public Accounts further to his report of December 2004.”

This file has been going on and on and on and the reason the file has been going on too long is because of the Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee, the members on the committee refused to bring in and do a proper examination of motions that have been put through. The government has the majority, the government members have the majority of the committee.

Look what we spent on the auditor to bring in KMPG or whatever it was, the financial audit on it. We could have done that ourselves in there by bringing in people other than ministers. Because it was the ministers that got us into trouble in the first place. They are the ones that approved everything. When we wanted to bring in the bureaucrats: No, no, no. That's what we were faced with.

Some people were telling me, especially in rural Prince Edward Island, is the MLAs, there should be a new act put through that the MLAs refused to do their duties, they should have to pay for the money that was lost. It's called a liability. That's what (Indistinct). We could have gotten to the bottom of this if we had had the - we could have gotten to the bottom of this.

But no, they refused. They bring in the ministers with the same scripts that were brought forward. The former minister of fisheries agreed to come forward but the committee voted it down. Yes, the committee voted it down, it's all in the transcripts. The committee decided that they didn't want a former minister. Do you know why? Because the former minister was no longer a minister of the Crown (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Mr. MacKinley: But no, they voted it down. Where's the government's priorities, and the members? For instance, there was a confidential document from the Speaker's office that was leaked by either somebody in government or opposition because our - probably the Queen's printer. I don't know where it came from, but it was leaked.

It was what you would call a breach of privilege or contempt of the House, no more than something like if you used the wrong words in here or whatever. That's basically what it was, but yet one of your public accounts committee members said: Call in the RCMP. Let's bring in the RCMP on this one. Let's spend thousands of dollars.

He forgot to check out if there was anything criminally wrong with it. Now I don't agree with it being leaked. I think when the Speaker gives you something in confidence and good enough to give you something in

confidence, if it came from any of the members - and I don't know. All you've got are hunches. All you've got to do - I think you should keep it in confidence.

That's my own personal opinion. I could live with somebody leaking something out of a committee. I could speak to somebody without leaking almost anything, but when you're given something in confidence by the Speaker, who has no way to micromanage the MLAs or to watch everything or every move they do - and I'm not saying it was an MLA. I don't know. I really don't know, but there's two scenarios on it, and I'm not going to get into them because I'm on - no, I'm not.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: Polar assets. We're talking about the resolution, and I just want to use an example of that, how your government will be ironic enough to call in the RCMP for a piece of paper that got leaked, but yet when you get into Polar Foods, everything's shoved under the map.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, of course. That's because they did everything wrong.

Mr. MacKinley: They won't even let the bureaucrats come in.

Leader of the Opposition: Well, they broke the law.

Mr. MacKinley: For instance, if public - I'll explain how it would work. If the legislative committee that would do the interviewing or went to the legislative committee on that leaked document on Polar Foods, any time it got close to government, they shut it down. The majority of the committee is always on the government side, and they shut it down.

How they would work on the other

investigation, just so you'd know, if it looked like it was coming from the opposition office, that leak, they'd keep it going, but if it looked like it came from the fifth floor, they shut it down. They'd shut it down again.

Leader of the Opposition: Exactly.

Mr. MacKinley: So where's the justice there? It's like the map that they brought on today, the gerrymandering map, the same thing.

Leader of the Opposition: The Conservative Party of PEI map.

Mr. MacKinley: This is a good resolution. Thirty-one million dollars was lost, and where have they recouped that money? From the back pockets of Islanders in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

We were talking about these horsemen the other night and they talked about the casino. People don't have the \$20 or \$40 to blow on the weekend anymore because the government has taken it out of their pockets before they even get it, and they don't get it on their pay cheque. They get it from the taxes at the pumps. If they don't get the taxes at the pumps, they get it in registration fees.

Leader of the Opposition: They've got hands in their pockets.

Mr. MacKinley: It's hands in their pockets. It's close to being highway robbery, only they do it through legislation that makes them legally to do it. A building that was worth \$1.9 million when the government bought it sold for \$45,000 - the Anglo plant in Tignish - and that's only one prime example.

There are other plants that haven't even been sold. They're just closing down. Shut

them down. They're wondering why they're having a problem in rural Prince Edward Island with not enough people there. It's because people can't live there because they can't afford to live there unless they have a very high-paying job.

They're getting 11.5 cents tax on gasoline and then 10% on top of that - 22 or 23 cents a litre. You doubled the car registration. You've moved the (Indistinct) rate. You've doubled it since the last election and you doubled it before that. You increased their licenses. You used to be able to register a car for \$25 or \$32. Today, it's \$78?

Leader of the Opposition: No, it's (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: Just ridiculous, and they just keep adding it up. It's funny how people will like to put a spin on things.

Mr. Dunn: The master spinner.

Mr. MacKinley: I'm not. It's all there. It's all out in facts.

Leader of the Opposition: Facts, facts.

Mr. MacKinley: It's all out in facts. Fact number one is this. You've got some members in here with some (Indistinct) ideas. You've got a former CBC reporter. His idea, if somebody leaks out a story, go right to the fifth floor with it - because that's what he was suggesting - or call in the RCMP.

It's no wonder the government had so many years of blanket coverage. That had to come from the Minister of Tourism. This is why your Polar situation grew to be such a mess it is, with all the cover-ups and all the mismanagement and the spins that are being put on things. It's as simple as that. You can go to Morell. There used to be a fish processing plant there. Is there still one

going there now for lobsters? Is there still one open in Morell now? No. Is there still one open there now?

Of course, the Premier was trained by Brian Mulroney, and he learned a lot when he was up there those years. I will give him credit. And the Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay here, who came under Joe Clark. He learned a lot, too, so when you look at the bad deals, the province's debt has gone from less than \$1 billion to \$1.3 billion - nearly \$1.4 billion - and that's what we can undercover. Just think about how much other - and we've only got 137,000 to 138,000 people in the province.

Leader of the Opposition: It's unreal.

Mr. MacKinley: This province is heading into a turmoil of no return under this government. This government is not a Conservative government. This government is the closest thing to an NDP government, very much like Bob Rae was in Ontario, and you know what happened there.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: This is what happened.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: No, I'm using it as a figure.

Leader of the Opposition: He's running Ignatieff's campaign.

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Mr. MacKinley: Everybody's got their ideas. I know what happened in Ontario. It's quite simple. I know it. I read the papers.

We do get the *Globe and Mail* down here. We know a little bit, eh. We don't have to listen to the fifth floor to put a spin on it like you MLAs do. We do get out around. We were even in Newfoundland last week. We even got over there and we found out while we were there about the mess of the government over there. Holy whistling, I just -

Speaker: All right, hon. member. On the motion, please.

Mr. MacKinley: Yes, we'll stick to that motion. We won't get into Newfoundland. It is one mess.

So anyway, this resolution should carry: "Therefore be it further resolved that the Auditor General use the results of this review to provide an update of the loss in Public Accounts..." in his report.

For the people that are watching this on the Internet and that tonight, this government blew \$34 million - and it's still climbing - of your hard-earned taxpayers' money in the Province of Prince Edward Island, yet the Premier goes away and he says: I want more money from Ottawa for equalization.

What they're looking at, they give it to you, Mr. Premier, but are you just going to spend on these wild goose chases of yours to look after your friends? I could go into Dunderave Golf Course - millions of dollars - over \$100 million since this Premier got in that has just gone out the window. A hundred million dollars.

Leader of the Opposition: To pay for (Indistinct) his caucus.

Mr. MacKinley: And when you add all that up - well, that's a minor thing.

Mr. P. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKinley: That's a minor thing. This government has lost more money than all the other Conservative governments, I think, ever in the history of the Province of Prince Edward Island. Those other governments worked hard, but this government wasted.

They banned smoking in public places. Somebody's wondering if they're going around lighting up \$1,000 bills just to burn them. This is what this government's up to, and that's why they shut down the inquiries into Polar Foods. Every time we, on public accounts, want to get into the nuts and bolts of it and find out what went on, they put another spin on it. They're not worrying about what it costs to the taxpayers.

If we in public accounts could do our job, we could get to the bottom of this. That's as simple as that, but no, they like to put their spins on it, shut it down, and what did they do with the former vice-chairman of public accounts for his rewards for shutting it down? Moved him into Cabinet. He moves him into Cabinet. That's his reward.

That's his award because I would say that gentleman would have to have a conscience and he would feel bad about leading the charge. He would feel bad about running out getting orders from the fifth floor of what to do.

So with that, it would be nice to get a vote in this tonight. We're getting almost to the hour of wrapping up, and I hope that the Legislative Assembly will support this resolution here tonight.

Leader of the Opposition: Well said.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other member who would like to speak on this motion?

Mr. P. Brown: (Indistinct).

Speaker: If not, the mover of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, will close out debate on this motion.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, and the number is?

Speaker: Forty-nine.

Leader of the Opposition: Forty-nine. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: I know this off the top of my head, Mr. Speaker.

I won't even turn to the page. What we want to do - and how we got to this point here was - so everybody knows - there was a fish plant in Anglo that, I believe, the government valued for around \$4.5 million. That included equipment. When we get down to just the building alone, the asset value, according to the Auditor General of our province here, the asset value for the real estate and the building alone - without including equipment - was \$1.9 million.

This was a deal that was done back in 1997 or 1998. It was a deal where taxpayers in our province lost about \$31 million, at least. The Auditor General was called in to do a review on what happened.

The Auditor General basically came up with three main findings - the government of the day failed to protect the rules of the Province of Prince Edward Island in loaning out money, failed to protect the regulations, and allowed laws to be broken by allowing the company to pay out dividends while the company was still losing money, which everybody knows is against the law, but this government gave them permission to undertake that.

The company went bankrupt shortly after

the 2003 election. We found out after that election that this government allowed a \$14 million secret loan to be given to the company before just to keep it afloat until after the election, to withhold that information.

Through the bankruptcy process, the assets began to be sold. We found out one day that the asset in Anglo, which was a former fish plant - and now we're just talking about the building and the real estate. This is waterfront property acres in western Prince Edward Island. They sold it for \$45,000, the same building that back in 1997, building and real estate alone was valued at \$1.9 million.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Just to put things in perspective, our net debt is around \$1.3 billion. Our total debt is around \$2 billion, and here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, we have around 135,000 to 140,000 people. We rely on \$400,000 (Indistinct).

Mr. Dunn: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Adjourning the debate.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Dunn: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, that this House stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

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

