

HANSARD



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: Hon. Greg Deighan

Published by Order of the Legislature

Fourth Session of the Sixty-Second General Assembly

22 NOVEMBER 2006

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

It is another great fall day on Prince Edward Island. Lovely day outside and it also good to be back in here.

I want to take this opportunity to welcome our visitors to the public gallery today. I see a number of young people here, hopefully enjoying the session. I also see Mr. Mark Gallant, a good friend of mine from the Conservative party, from the Rustico area. It's a pleasure to welcome him and all of our visitors this afternoon.

I would like to take just a moment to compliment and recognize all the people involved in the research community at the University of Prince Edward Island. This morning the semi-annual research breakfast was held at the Charlottetown Hotel and two excellent presentations were made, one by Dr. Spencer Greenwood, assistant professor of pathology and microbiology, and also Dr. James Moran of the department of history. One presentation was on the lobster industry and public perception and the other was on madness, from madness to mental health, shifting perspectives.

We have a large research community at the university, teaching professors. The work they're doing is really quite magnificent, it's adding a lot to our provincial economy and building a capability here on Prince Edward Island, which is extensive, and I want to compliment those people.

I had the opportunity earlier this afternoon

to meet with the new Premier of New Brunswick, Mr. Shawn Graham. I understand he may be in the House this afternoon. I invited him to stop over. Of course he's married. In case I don't get a chance to recognize him later, he's married to former Roxanne Reeves of Freetown. Of course the Reeves family are great people, and it's a pleasure to have Mr. Graham here. We discussed many areas of regional cooperation. He's going to be visiting the vet college later today.

We discussed energy cooperation, we talked about highways, we talked about just Maritime cooperation in general. The fact that he'll be hosting the next meeting of Canadian Premiers in New Brunswick. It's a pleasure to welcome him here to the province and hope he enjoys his time. I understand he'll be attending a small dinner this evening with his friends in the opposition. I hope they have a good time.

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 to the gallery today. It's especially nice to see the students from Holland College here. I believe they're in the journalism program there. I welcome them to the House today.

I had the opportunity last Friday evening to attend a great fundraiser out at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I believe it was the Queen Elizabeth Equipment Drive. It was a great fundraiser, raised over \$100,000 on one evening, and I know that a lot of organizers make that evening possible, and I want to thank all the organizers for their great contributions.

I know Kitty Mundle and Paulette Hooley do a lot of work in organizing that event and I want to take this opportunity to thank them.

As the Premier said, the Premier of New Brunswick is in the province and I'm sure the Premier had a great meeting with him. I know that over the last number of years I've had the opportunity to go to many conferences with him and had many great talks with him. I know that they're now - there's a charter for change on in New Brunswick, and that change is obviously a move in the right direction.

I know that we've got a little dinner on tonight, as the Premier mentioned, the most tickets we've ever sold, and most likely its probably because of the Premier of New Brunswick coming in to talk about that charter for change.

Thank you very much, 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 and welcome everyone to the public gallery today. I also would like to give a special welcome to Junior Gallant who's in the gallery today. Junior is a great guy and Junior studied at UPEI, political studies, and I don't think there's any issue he doesn't - he's well versed on all the Island issues and political issues here on Prince Edward Island, and he never forgets anyone's name too. He's a great guy.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Hunter River resident Mark Gallant to the public gallery as well today.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to welcome everyone to the public gallery today. I'd also like to extend happy birthday wishes out to Helen LeClair, who is my very best friend. It's her birthday today and she works as an LPN in the western end of the province. She and probably 13 or 14 other ladies completed the LPN course which was offered in Tignish over the last year and half and I believe most of those people are now employed in the health care field. It was a great success.

So happy birthday to you, Helen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I'd like to welcome Premier Shawn Graham and his wife Roxanne Reeves to the Speaker's Gallery. I know that the Premier had welcomed you earlier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I hope you have a great visit to Prince Edward Island, premier.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I too attended the breakfast meeting with the Premier this morning and I want to commend UPEI for giving these efforts.

Also, we should mention that these breakfasts are semi-annual and they are open to the public. I understand that

anyway, and I encourage anyone that wants to look into the university and the research that they are doing - which is excellent - but they should participate in them, because I learnt quite a bit this morning at that presentation. I must say, excellent research is going on at the University of Prince Edward Island and the Atlantic Vet College.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just rise today because I'd like to bring greetings to my mother-in-law, who hasn't been feeling all the best, down in Victoria, Anne Craig. She watches every day and she never misses one of our afternoons here.

I'd also like to welcome Premier Graham and his wife Roxanne. I had the honour of sitting with them a few weeks ago at the Breeder's Crown Supper in Cornwall. Also, I'm a good friend with Roxanne's uncle, Huestis Reeves. I've known Huestis for years and I'm a good friend of Huestis. Once again, welcome to the gallery and it's nice seeing you again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

Recipients of Order of Prince Edward Island

Ms. MacKenzie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to say hello to Mark Gallant.

This year the Advisory Council for the 2006 Order of Prince Edward Island had to choose three honourees from a list of 30 individuals who serve as an inspiration to us all. I'm sure it was a difficult task.

First conferred in 1996, the Order of Prince Edward Island recognizes Islanders who show excellence or outstanding leadership in their community and in their chosen profession.

Dr. Sheldon R. Cameron is a distinguished Island physician and was recognized for his outstanding work in the field of geriatrics and, more importantly, for a life dedicated to providing care for Islanders trapped in a world of addictions.

Frank J. Ledwell has been honoured for his contribution to education and to the Island's culture. As a teacher and author, a poet, and a mentor to generations of Islanders, Frank Ledwell was also recognized for his tremendous efforts on behalf of his community in the area of sports, 4-H, and his church.

Dorothy Lewis was honoured for her extensive volunteer work through her community, church, and such organizations as the Alpha York Women's Institute of which she has been a member for more than 50 years. She is also a well-known entrepreneur operating several successful tourism ventures with her husband Frank, including the Stanhope Ice House and as a partner of Vacationland Travel Park.

For their spirit, energy and caring for their community, I congratulate these individuals. They are extraordinary Islanders and models of service for all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Point-Bloomfield.

O'Leary cenotaph

Ms. Rodgeron: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Sunday, October 29th, under a beautiful rainbow, veterans, families and friends gathered for the re-dedication of the O'Leary cenotaph.

It took more than a year of planning and hard work by the committee and for everyone in the community of O'Leary and surrounding area, it was well worth the time and effort.

The original memorial was a huge granite rock hauled from a local field in the winter of 1919. This stood in the centre of the town and served as the cenotaph for over 85 years. After World War II the brass plaque on it was replaced with a granite plaque listing the names of those who died in both wars. The granite plaque is now incorporated into the new monument.

Our government is pleased to have been one of the major contributors to the project along with Veteran Affairs Canada. In addition, there were many corporate and private sponsors who donated and made this project worthwhile.

I congratulate the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch No. 2 of O'Leary on the rededication of the cenotaph and of the establishing of the surrounding Veterans Memorial Park. It is a wonderful tribute to honour those from our district who have given so much that we may enjoy the freedoms we hold so dear today.

A sincere thank-you is also extended to Grant Gay and his committee for their efforts on behalf of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch No. 2.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Personal remarks

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel compelled today to rise on a matter of a personal nature, which I'm not raising as a point of privilege.

Last evening the Liberal opposition presented a motion to this House calling on government to consider tax breaks for children's sporting equipment. This motion was defeated by the government, but during the debate a government member made some remarks that I found very disappointing and, as well, feel she misled the public.

I entered public life wanting to hopefully make a difference and support the lives of Islanders. Yes, indeed, people say that you need thick skin in this job, but last night's comments seemed to cross the line of acceptable in my personal view. Comments were directed involving my employment, wage, home and, to some extent, family. I find this unacceptable.

I may in debate charge government or ministers in a professional capacity related to their portfolios but never have I personally attacked. I want to share to all members of this House that this is politics at its worst. Not only attacking a member personally, but making incorrect statements is disheartening. What was said by this member is now in the public record. I do not ask for an apology but I do ask that members in the present and future think about what happened last night, what messages are we sending to the people using

this style of debate, and why offer such misleading and offensive claims.

I will for the correction of the public record table documents later in the proceedings today to clarify false information given last night.

Therefore in closing, I stand today dismayed but hopeful that we can learn from this and move on to our real purpose in this Legislature: working for Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Employee positions of 1997

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

My first question today is for the Premier. Many questions still remain unanswered about this government's discriminatory purge that took place back in 1997. As leader of the Tory party, this Premier told Islanders he wouldn't engage in discrimination. He said only people in high policy positions would be affected. Will the Premier please tell the House how many of the 754 casual and seasonal workers were in policy positions that he let go?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of debate about this issue.

The Leader of the Opposition has covered most of it quite well. We've answered those questions numerous times. I don't have that kind of detail here, but as I indicated yesterday there were a number of complaints dealt with. I'd have to look back in my notes to see exactly how many there were.

I would remind the hon. members that they suggested a couple of days ago that in the 1986-1987 period there was only one complaint. In fact, there were 61 complaints settled at that time, not one as they had suggested. So they're trying to portray themselves as never having been there, that they don't believe in any kind of situation that would involve patronage, and yet we know full well that that's not the way that they have acted in the past. It doesn't appear to be the way they have acted behind closed doors.

Reading today's paper, I'm reminded again that the Leader of the Opposition for several days seemed to be very unsure of his position when talking to his newly nominated candidate in this regard, but anyway, we'll leave that as it may be.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, the Premier fails to answer the question. I'm wondering, back in 1997, when this Premier committed one of the largest purges in the history of this province, 754 casual and seasonal workers lost their jobs. I'm wondering: Can the Premier please inform this House how many of those positions were in high policy positions?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, the hon.

member knows the answer to that question.

He knows that these positions, these were seasonal jobs in which people re-applied every year. People in higher policy positions do not re-apply for their jobs every year as those people did. The unfortunate thing about this was that the former government had left these people vulnerable, had left them in positions where they had to re-apply, go on bended knee, and ask their MLA if they could have their job back. They forced them into doing that over and over and over and over.

You know what? If they didn't follow the good advice of the government of the day, they didn't get their job back the next year. That's simply what happened, and so they always kept them in this kind of suspended animation. You know: Am I going to get my job back? So they followed the political line, I suppose.

We changed that. The first government in the history of the province that had the courage to change that system. You know what? Since we have put in recall legislation nobody has to come back and ask our government: Can I have my job back? If they're doing a good job, Mr. Speaker, they're recalled automatically.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The facts speak for themselves. This Premier was responsible for the largest discriminatory purge in the history of this province. This Premier disobeyed courts, the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island that ruled against his legislation in relation to the *Human Rights Act*, disobeyed again the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island, and then even tried to appeal it all the way to the

Supreme Court of Canada before, finally, it was thrown out. Now this Premier has to recognize that his actions were not acceptable.

The purge that took place in 1997 was one of the most disgraceful periods in the history of this province. The discrimination was rampant and Islander taxpayers continue to pay for those excesses to this day. It has never been clear to me. How did the Premier decide on 754 Islanders who he felt deserved discrimination? How did the Premier come up with those names?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the hon. member's preamble, as usual, is way off base, and I would remind him that the decision of the Court of Appeal only dealt with the constitutionality of the amendments and not with discrimination, as he suggests.

The factual question of whether the complainants were actually discriminated against was never determined by the Court of Appeal and it was not properly in front of the trial judge to make that determination in any event, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Premier has already admitted guilt by settling with 750 Islanders based on discrimination. He already admitted that he discriminated against, so there's no point trying to argue that, Mr. Premier.

Another question for the Premier. Did the Premier and his people decide who was to be fired in his own office? Did he sit down with personal files and create a blacklist

himself?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

We had thousands of applications when we came in to government, many of whom had worked for government in years previous, many who were fired from their jobs in 1986-1987, even though they worked perhaps seven or eight years or whatever the term was prior to that. They were all fired. They were all removed. They didn't have a chance to apply again. If they did apply, their applications were simply set aside. We said we'd look at all the applications that came forward, and we took people that were qualified to do the work and certainly did not sit down with any list, as he suggests.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Unfortunately, when the Premier settled on 750 discriminatory cases, he acknowledged the fact that he discriminated against these Islanders for political belief. Then when there were 11 more he tried to cap the human rights payouts that could be made based on that, and yet he thought that that was wrong. He took it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Even in this Legislative Assembly here in the Province of Prince Edward Island claimed that it was of national importance and that other provinces would want to come on board. We all know that that never happened. We all know that the Supreme Court of Canada never heard that decision.

My question now is perhaps it was the Premier's Cabinet who decided who to discriminate against. Was that how it

worked? Did individual Cabinet ministers come up with a list of names of people to discriminate against?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: You know, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member was anywhere near in being correct in his assertion, it would be one thing.

But the reality is that for the first time - I mean, we took major steps to ensure that people who had been working for us on a year-round basis for the Province of Prince Edward Island - who in my view were being discriminated against by his party when they were in office because they would never classify those people, they just left them in positions year after year after year even though sometimes they had fairly senior jobs. We changed that. We classified hundreds of jobs in the public service so that those people no longer had to feel that they owed anything to a political master. Yes, to their employer, to the Government of Prince Edward Island, yes, they owed the responsibility of doing a good job but they didn't owe anything politically to any party. As long as the former government was in office, that was the situation.

Well, guess what? We not only retained those people, we gave them the opportunity to have classified jobs in the public service because we believed that that was the right thing to do. Now I can't be responsible for everything's that happened in the past, but I can tell you we've had some of the most progressive legislation this province has ever seen and taken that kind of discriminatory practice out of the operations of government. I'm confident that based on the steps we've taken so far that this province has made great steps and we'll continue in that direction in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

But again, the facts speak for themselves. This Premier is responsible for over 750 discriminatory practices here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. That can't be debated. We've even had Supreme Court justices in this province compare this government to tyrants in the way that they treated individuals here in this province.

My supplementary question to the Premier is this: Did individual Cabinet ministers participate in phone calls to Islanders who were going to be fired? Did members of this Premier's Cabinet participate in phone calls to Islanders telling them that they were out of work, Mr. Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Not to this Premier's knowledge. But again, it still is a fact that this Premier participated in the discrimination against 750 Islanders. Around the same time that the Premier was participating in this massive discrimination, he was also arranging a big payoff for a select few around the Premier himself. To this day, it's hard to tell just how many millions of dollars the Premier's friends made from the deal at Dundarave. Will the Premier please tell the House his motivation in hurting and discriminating against more than 750 Islanders while he was arranging for big payoffs to his friends?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, this is astonishing, really, but (Indistinct) - no, it's not, really, because we expect that from the Leader of the Opposition.

But I remind him again, when he charges discrimination, discrimination was not the issue that was before the Court of Appeal. It was not the issue that was before the Supreme Court. The only issue before those courts was the question of whether the amendment which dealt with putting a cap on the amount of money that was paid was constitutional. That was the only question that was being considered.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Cost of Dundarave

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

I just want to ask this question again. You know, here he is firing 750 Islanders, discriminating against them. At the same time he's working out deals for Dundarave that we're paying off millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. Will the Premier please tell the House his motivation in hurting and discriminating against more than 750 Islanders while he was arranging payoffs to his friends? The Premier can't stand here and say he didn't discriminate. Yes, you did.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely nonsense.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition can make all the charges he likes in that regard. The reality is that we were following up, as he should remember, on an RFP, that's a Request for Proposals, for expansion of the

Brudenell golf course complex and it was his government that initiated that process. Yes, we did complete it. We had another 18 holes built, so we now have one of the finest golf complexes anywhere east of probably Toronto, and probably sometimes rated higher than any in eastern Canada, including Ontario.

But his assertion is absolutely ridiculous. He knows full well it's not the case but it suits his political flight well, but I tell you, the flight will crash.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I knew the Premier was going to stand up here and make ridiculous accusations so I just thought I'd bring a little proof here. It's from the Auditor General when he did an audit of the Dunderave deal. He says here that the golf academy was valued at between \$1.7 and \$2.1 million, yet this Premier paid out \$3.55 million for something that was valued only around the \$2 million range. Mr. Premier, why the discrepancy? This is what the Auditor General says: \$2 million value. But you paid out \$3.5 million. Why did you throw away \$1.5 million, taxpayers' dollars?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: I didn't, Mr. Speaker, and I've answered that question I think every year now since 2003, at least while he's been here, and if he wants to check the Hansard, he'll find the answer.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That's because we've never had an answer to that question. Because the Premier does not have an answer on why he threw away \$1.5 million of taxpayers' dollars. But obviously this Premier shows no remorse for his discriminatory practice, kind of like he shows no remorse for the way he handled the Polar Foods file by what we read in the *Guardian* last week. So I'm going to move on here to a new question for the Premier.

Sanding contracts

I'm wondering how many sanding contracts have been handed out by this government over the past several months.

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe we have around 60 private sanders.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think we should go back to the Premier for these questions. I'm just wondering: Can the Premier please inform this House and Islanders whether or not those contracts were tendered out?

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, they haven't been tendered out. They haven't been tendered out in recent memory for at least the last 25 years.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Here we are, contracts not tendered out. I'm wondering: Can the Premier please confirm whether or not those are five-year contracts?

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you. Yes, they are five-year contracts.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Here we are with five-year contracts, value of about \$6 million, and untendered. Does the Premier believe that that's fair to Island taxpayers?

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not aware but Transportation and Public Works does tender most things when it makes sense to tender things. TPW maintenance is exempt from the *Public Purchasing Act* so in this case, with sanding contracts, we're getting very good service from our sanders. Over the past number of years there's been such a fluctuation in fuel prices that the department has come up with a fuel clause for the sanders and also with a base for the Consumer Price Index to adjust contracts, which allowed us to go to a five-year contract.

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

Employee positions of 1997 (further)

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

My question goes to the Premier of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Premier, when you fired those 750 people and you said you cleaned up patronage on Prince Edward Island and discrimination, were those people allowed to re-apply for those jobs when they came available?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I didn't fire those people.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, another question to the Premier.

I'll ask the Premier again in very simple terms. When the Premier came into office in 1996, he didn't re-hire over 1,000 people in the civil service. Then he went on and changed the legislation. Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Premier, but were these people exempted or not allowed to re-apply for those jobs in the civil service?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if I understand the question. Is he speaking about jobs that were within the public service within the classified service or are you talking about seasonal employment here?

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

Mr. R. Brown: I'm talking about seasonal and casual, Mr. Speaker.

This government changed legislation. First

of all, they fired over 1,000 people or discriminated over 1,000 people, then re-hired a bunch of people of their own. Ministers got involved in the hiring process and that and the firing process. Then they changed legislation that wouldn't allow these people to re-apply for their jobs. Wouldn't you think, Mr. Premier, that that is a very discriminatory practice, that you wouldn't allow these people to re-apply for the jobs?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, again, as I've indicated earlier, the practice of the former government had been that people would have to re-apply every year.

They'd put in a new application for their jobs. They had to go back and check with the MLA. You could see the lineup starting after Christmas. Every Monday morning, or whenever it was, at the MLA office hours, people would be lined up out the door waiting to go in to see the MLA. Can I get my job back? Here's my application. A lot of people were denied any opportunity to be hired by the former government, people that had worked for the government. In fact, many had worked for the government in the period from 1979 to 1986, I think it was. These were good people. They were people that drove snowplows, were sanders, worked in forestry, worked in various government service, agriculture, fisheries on a seasonal basis. They didn't seem to have any chance of getting jobs so they were let go by the government and they could re-apply all they want. They never had a chance to get a job back.

That was unfortunate. We realized that that system had to change and, as a result, we made changes. We brought in a recall system so that there's no lineup at the MLAs' door any more. People don't have to pledge their political support or anything

else to an MLA to work in the seasonal industries in our province. We're proud of that system because it works well and it has removed discrimination from the system.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Prince Edward Island is trying to leave an impression there that his MLAs weren't involved in the process there.

In court documents filed in the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island - and these are documents that have been accepted by their lawyers. The factums have been accepted, and I want to read one of the quotes from one of the affidavits:

"In or about March of 1997" - this is one of their plaintiffs - "I spoke with my local MLA" - the now Attorney General - "and was told that I could not expect assistance in maintaining my hours with the PEILCC. After being told in April 1997 that I would not receive my summer job, I met with Pat Mella in her office and was told I should be happy" with what I got. I should be happy with what I got.

Here's another one, Mr. Speaker, and he tries to let Islanders believe that -

Speaker: Hon. member, would you get to the question please?

Mr. R. Brown: Pretty tough. I know it's pretty tough. Okay, Mr. Premier, so are you saying your MLAs weren't involved in the process when affidavits accepted by your government prove this point?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I've always maintained that people could have access to the MLAs.

What I've said consistently is that we've changed the system. Nobody has to go and beg the government MLA to keep their job these days. We have changed that. We've moved on. We're not sure whether the opposition has moved on or not. In fact, if you just read today's paper, it's pretty clear that they're split right down the middle. They haven't decided what side they're on. We know what side we're on.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to inform this House, and I want to make it quite clear to the public of Prince Edward Island, I, the MLA from District 12, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, will never go into a civil servant's office or a public servant's office and fire them like you did, Mr. Premier.

That is a commitment from me to Islanders. I will never fire anybody. I was there in 1996, Mr. Premier, when Eugene Rossiter was coming to our offices and the lists would come out each and every morning. I was there seeing it. It was horrible what was happening, just horrible!

Speaker: Question, hon. member.

Mr. R. Brown: Here's another quote, Mr. Speaker.

He says his MLAs weren't involved: "I was never asked my personal" affiliation until the member from Montague "asked me for this information."

The gall of the Premier to stand up here today, saying (Indistinct). Mr. Premier, you were involved in discrimination. Why won't you admit it?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I've already answered these questions over and over.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Do you think it's acceptable that your MLAs did this in 1996, telling people they can't get things, or what is your political affiliation?

Leader of the Opposition: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I don't think we even took office till something like the 27th of November in 1996. That was them in 1996. That was their practice.

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

Province's credit rating

Dr. McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a couple of questions for the Provincial Treasurer. My first question is, last week I believe Moody's upgraded their rating for Prince Edward Island. Would the minister please indicate to the House what this rating increase is and what it means for the province?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: I want to thank the hon. member for the question, Mr. Speaker.

He is correct. Last week we did receive another upgrade from Moody's Investment Services. We had been upgraded in August of 2006 to A1. We received another upgrade last week to AA2. To answer the second part of his question, it simply means that the interest cost on the debentures we issue or the money we borrow will be less, so it will

- a better credit rating is a cost savings to the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Income splitting for seniors

Dr. McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question. Last month the finance minister, Jim Flaherty, announced that retired couples who are seniors will be allowed to split their incomes for taxation purposes. Can the minister explain what this means to the House and what plans the minister is going to do for seniors and for our taxes as well?

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct.

I believe at the end of October the federal minister of finance had announced that he was going to allow income splitting of pension incomes. I think that was effective for the taxation year 2007. Because many Island pensioners are seniors living on fixed incomes, this will, of course, benefit those individuals. It is a loss of some tax revenue from the province, to the province, but given that those tax savings are going to be passed on to pensioners, many of those pensioners seniors with fixed incomes, we welcome and support the move. We estimate that the tax measures foregone - that is, the relief from the federal tax and the provincial income tax - for those people taking advantage of the splitting of pension incomes will save Islanders about \$6.4 million in tax payments.

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

Political affiliation

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

I want to go back to the Premier. Mr. Premier, in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island, accepted by your government lawyers - which means you accept it as a government: "I was never asked my personal party allegiances until May of 1997 when" the current minister of agriculture - I can't say his name - "asked me for this information."

Mr. Premier, do you think this is acceptable for your MLAs asking political affiliations of people?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I don't know the context of that. I was not party at that discussion. We have something that was stated by one person. I can't reasonably comment on that.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, these are affidavits that have been filed in the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island, accepted by the government lawyers, accepted by this government as facts.

Now I'm going to go back to the Premier. You can waiver on it whatever way you want, but if this was actually said, which you accepted, is this acceptable?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, as you know, government, in order to settle these cases, made an offer to these claimants and a settlement was made.

I think that speaks for itself. Cases were closed. I know the hon. member would like to bring each case up again and go through them all and so on. The reality is we've dealt with those. I don't have the files in front of me here that he's got nor do I intend to bring them. I've never dealt with them. I've never been involved with these cases. We consider that the matter has been dealt with and is complete.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier a direct question.

Do you think that this is acceptable for politicians to be asking people their political affiliation, basically breaking the *Election Act* law? Because politicians aren't allowed to ask people how they voted. Do you believe that politicians should be allowed to ask people, that this sworn affidavit - do you believe your MLAs should be asking people those questions?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I think our actions speak for themselves.

Our actions are two things, primarily. (Indistinct) when we classified people, we didn't ask them if they worked for the government for 20 years or 10 years or five years or 30 years, what their political affiliation is, was. We said: This is a job function that goes year-round, it's important to government, and if you've been doing a good job, we're going to classify those positions. We did that without regard to political affiliation. The people were not asked what their politics was.

I happen to know that many of those people supported the Liberal Party, were often at Liberal Party meetings, never attended a

meeting of my party, but that was okay because they were doing a good job, and I knew they'd continue to do a good job. I respected that.

So we changed the law. We also changed the law in regard to recall. That's where we stand. So seasonal employees are not asked what their affiliation is from election to election. Some people change. We don't care. If they're doing a good job, then they keep their job, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Yes or no, Mr. Premier. Do you think that it's right for MLAs, Cabinet ministers, to be asking people their political affiliation?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member doesn't seem to understand. I keep telling him. We have made those changes so that that is not asked for. We don't care about that.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'll try it just one more time. I know he'll go around in circles, but yes or no, Mr. Premier: Do you believe that MLAs and Cabinet ministers should be asking people's political affiliations?

An Hon. Member: New question, new question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: I've already answered that question, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from

Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes or no, Mr. Premier. You haven't answered. Just a simple yes or no.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) new question, Mr. Speaker, new question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, that's again why I changed the system because we didn't think the system was right. We wanted a system that was fair and removed that kind of discriminatory question.

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

Hiring casual employees

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Premier goes on about changing the system.

Let's put it in perspective here. You fired over 1,000 people. You changed the law that people couldn't re-apply for their jobs, okay? Then in 2002 to 2005 you came up with a new scheme, and I'm going to tell the people of Prince Edward Island what it was. Casual people will be brought into the government. These are people that were brought in without going through the Civil Service Commission. Then after a few months or a few years they would have what you call a casual conversion program and only those casual people that were in the system at the time, hired by the MLAs and by the government members, were allowed to re-apply for those jobs. Do you think those casual conversion processes you went through were legal?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I'd remind the hon. member that some of those people had

been there 18, 20 years, perhaps 30 years in some cases, and others were shorter.

But the reality is that we converted those positions to eliminate discrimination. That, I think, has worked well. It does happen on occasion, where someone is needed in an emergency or because a job has to be done and there isn't time to go to competition, that people will be called in to a position and sometimes, yes, they do get valuable experience. It gives them an opportunity to work. I won't suggest that that never happens because it does happen on occasion. But I can also tell him that it hasn't happened very much in recent years. He will in fact recall that we substantially reduced the size of the public service. We gave people a chance to retire with a severance package and they made their decisions in that regard, and so there really has not been very much hiring done by government in recent years.

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

Mr. R. Brown: I can't believe this guy, Mr. Speaker, how he can get up and say this stuff.

Go to your public service commission report for 2000. You inflated the civil service by more than 700 people. Go to your 2000 report just before the election. You hired over 700 people. Now I'm going to go back to you. How were those 700 people in the casual divisions hired, Mr. Premier?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, again, when we changed the system, we set up a seasonal hiring centre where people would apply. Not controlled by the MLAs, a separate division of government that would handle this hiring.

Speaker: The hon. Member from

Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, is the Premier telling this House that no one was brought into government that didn't go through the seasonal hiring centre?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: I'm not sure if I heard that question 100%, Mr. Speaker, but I again want to restate that casual conversion was a program that we brought in to make improvements to the system.

In fact, it was endorsed and supported by the Union of Public Sector Employees. It wasn't, as he would suggest, some kind of a scheme. It was a planned program supported by the union that would recognize the good contributions people were making.

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

Settlement cost

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Premier, upon a question by me the previous day, indicated to this House, and I will quote it in the Hansard: In 1997-1998 there was 749 complaints and the settlement cost was \$1.6 million. Do you stand by that number?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear that question.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat the question.

Yesterday in the House, the Premier upon answering questions that I asked him the day

before, his answer was: In 1997-1998 there was 749 complaints that settled at a cost of \$1.6 million. Do you stand by that number?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Yes I do, Mr. Speaker, and I also reported that there were 61 claims in the 1987 period. Not one, as he reported to the House. The settling of those cost about \$600,000.

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

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

I will be tabling later in this House the public accounts report from 1997-1998, page 63, for all of you so you can go and read it. Human Rights Settlement: \$2,750,000. So who is right? I'm asking you, Mr. Speaker. Who is right, the public accounts of Prince Edward Island or the people who gave you that information?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, there's a chance that he's only telling part of the story here.

He was asking about amount paid out to these individuals. That's what I was talking about at least. I assume he was talking about the same thing. I expect that if there's a difference it probably has to do with legal fees that may have been paid to counsel relative to these transactions.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, here is a Premier that criticized legal fees of the previous government. So are you telling this House that legal fees were \$400,000 for

those settlement costs of \$1.6 million? Twenty-five percent of the cost was legal fees?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: I'd have to verify the numbers, Mr. Speaker, but I can try to break that down for him if he likes.

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

Payout of settlements

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, another question to the Premier.

So were these human rights settlement cases right here on page 63 - now these are directly out of the public accounts - were there other settlements of discrimination out of other accounts, i.e., the insurance account?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, if he wants to put these questions in writing, we'll try and answer them.

Obviously, I don't have that kind of information at my fingertips. I don't have the public accounts in front of me. He's going back a lot of years now. All I can tell him, once again, is that the difference between this government and their government is that they did nothing to correct the problem. We fixed the problem. We have put a system in place that's second to none. They can go back and review all these cases. They can do that from now to eternity. It's not going to change anything.

What changed something was a government that had the fortitude and the vision and the commitment to make sure that these kinds of practices would not continue in the future.

So we have made major changes to the provincial system which I believe are far beyond what had been done in the past and certainly what they would be prepared to do now. They still don't know what side of patronage they're on, two reports in every newspaper coming out from their party.

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

Mr. R. Brown: I'll repeat it again. This politician will never ever go into a civil service office and fire them like you did, Mr. Premier, or your other ministers, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Premier, I can believe you in saying you changed the system and made it better for people, but really the system was changed in 1989 with amendments to the *Human Rights Act* brought in by the Liberal government. Now I could agree and believe you if you can deny, like, you knew the Charter of Rights or anything. But in his testimony at the Human Rights Commission in 1992, this is what you said, Mr. Premier: There has been a growing awareness of human rights, that people have rights, especially in employment, and so you just don't remove people today as perhaps was the case in the past.

You said that in 1992 under oath at a Human Rights Commission, Mr. Premier. You try to claim you're taking the high road here, but you knew in 1992 that the *Human Rights Act* was changed and that political discrimination was out of the play now. Why did you still continue to practise it when you got elected?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear that when I had the opportunity to make some changes to the system once we became the government, we did change the

legislation.

We brought in recall legislation. We classified public servants. I don't have all that information in front of me. A lot of times the opposition reads information which is only half there and they leave an impression about a person's position. This happened yesterday. The Leader of the Opposition was asking me about my position on Sunday shopping and he left most of my position out from a quote with CBC radio on January 16th of 2002.

For the record, let me tell you what I said, and this is a quote from the newspaper at that time. What I stated was, and I quote: We are prepared to hear what the business community has to say. I know the chamber members are surveying their members. We're hearing from the tourist operators in the province and municipalities considering this and, you know, it might be advisable to make some changes, but we want to hear what people have to say before moving on that.

The reality is that I suggested that I was open to change at that time, yet the hon. Leader of the Opposition tried to leave a much different impression yesterday, tell half the story, not allow the full story to come out in context.

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

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

The Premier likes to leave varying impressions, but we've proved today that the facts that he's bringing back to this House are incorrect. Maybe you should send some of your people that work in your office on to other jobs, maybe at ACOA or some place like that.

Trawling of ocean floor

My question is for the minister of fisheries. Yesterday was World Fishery Day. One of the things that is being debated in the United Nations right now is the banning of trawling the ocean floors. What is your government's position on that resolution?

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

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, that's a really good question and it's a debate that's going on at the present time, Mr. Speaker.

We're actually supportive of Minister Hearn in his stand on that issue because it's a bigger issue than just dealing with scallops or dragging here. But it's dealing with the shrimp industry, and it's a major issue. The stand that Minister Hearn is taking on that is the proper stand.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to inform the House and Islanders that this month the Canadian Register of Historic Places has chosen to feature the Elmira Railway Station on their national heritage web site. The Elmira Railway Station is one of the buildings designated under our provincial *Heritage Places Protection Act* and is one of seven museum sites across our province.

The former railway station in Elmira houses the Elmira Railway Museum which draws on the historic character of the 1912 building and of the community. This building has a long association with our

province's transportation heritage and is an excellent example of how heritage buildings themselves can tell an important story, while also serving as museums and filling an educational role

The Elmira Railway Museum is operated as part of the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation, and shows the effectiveness of the decentralized museum system which takes cultural tourists to all parts of the province. Drawing on the past while serving today's needs and today's interests can be a winning combination for Prince Edward Island.

I would like to congratulate everyone associated with the Elmira Museum for being selected as a nationally recognized example of Canadian railway heritage. You can find the full story of the Elmira Station on the web site at www.historicplaces.ca.

I certainly encourage all members of this House and all Islanders to visit our museums in person and discover more about our Island heritage.

Thank you very much, 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 recognize the Elmira Railway Station for this national award of distinction. The seven sites that comprise our PEI Museum Heritage Foundation is very valuable. As the minister stated, they're decentralized sites, all telling a different story, whether it's a fisheries museum, the Acadian culture, and the railway here. It is providing an example and others, shipbuilding.

What is important for us to do is look toward a provincial museum where in fact we see it as a tree, the trunk with its branches, where in fact we have - the first step is a provincial museum and then people want to hear the full story and not an unfragmented story. Then they will go and visit those other centres and learn more about the Acadian culture, more about the fisheries -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Okay, hon. members.

Ms. Bertram: - and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important that this recognition was received but I hope that the minister and his department work towards and fully implement a provincial museum system here on Prince Edward Island which will be in partnership with the seven other sites.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Prince Edward Island is the first Canadian province to add a medication called Menactra vaccine to its immunization schedule to protect against meningococcal disease which can cause meningitis and other serious illnesses. The vaccine will be offered to all grade 9 students across the province this school year.

There are several different groups of meningococcal bacteria and the new Menactra vaccine provides protection against four of these groups, including groups A, C, Y and W-135. Menactra will replace the current vaccine given to grade 9

students which provided protection for Group C disease only.

Although illnesses due to Group C is still the most common in Canada, we have seen an increase in the other groups.

Since 1990, there have been 17 cases of serious meningococcal illnesses in PEI. Between 1990 to 1992, a Group C bacteria outbreak resulted in 11 cases of illness including three deaths.

We are very pleased to offer this new vaccine to Island youth because it provides longer lasting immunity and improved protection against meningitis and other serious illnesses.

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.

It's great to hear a new vaccine being added here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. But there are still far too many prescription drugs that are not available to Islanders. It's still quite unfortunate that the Liberals brought in a motion last year that was brought to our attention by the Canadian Cancer Society asking for hearings into the way that prescription drugs get approved in this province, asking for hearings to explain how the system works, to explain how a medication does get approved, and to explain the nuances on how to get one approved.

But unfortunately the current government is too concerned with keeping that information to themselves. The Premier again at the time said that politicians should not be involved

in deciding which drugs get approved and which drugs don't, so therefore we shouldn't have those committee hearings. But at the same time the Premier said: If anyone had a question on prescription drugs, please give an MLA a call.

So I wish that this government would pay more attention to what organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society are saying and would start to approve more of our motions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

As the Minister of Tourism, I'd like to rise today to pay tribute to Mr. David Rodd. Our province suffered a major loss with the passing of Mr. Rodd on October 27th of this year at age 66. He will be sadly missed by the tourism industry on Prince Edward Island, throughout the Maritimes, and across Canada. As an industry, we knew and admired David for his unassuming, gentle and professional manner.

David Rodd was a pioneer in the tourism industry and had a huge impact on it. As an owner of Rodd Hotel and Resorts, David grew the business from a single motel in Charlottetown to eleven properties throughout the Maritime region. He was the first to conclude the concept of packaging which included golf, theatre tickets, dinners and tip-to-tip visits across PEI at any of the Rodd properties.

David always provided leadership to other industry operators, government officials, and all those involved in developing tourism. He employed thousands of Islanders and Maritimers at his properties, and to those who were lucky enough to have

had the opportunity to work directly with David, he became a mentor and a friend.

Over the years, David's accomplishments were many and included president of the Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island, recipient of the Lieutenant-Governor's Award in Tourism, the Premier's Award in tourism; he was an inaugural member of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Hall of Fame; and many more.

In addition, David was very active in the community with his volunteer services benefitting many worthy community-based organizations and charities, including but not limited to, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and the ALS Foundation of Canada.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my most heartfelt condolences to David's wife Linda, his children, and his extended family at Rodd Hotels and Resorts.

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 offer my condolences to the Rodd family. I've known David Rodd practically my whole life, I was good friends with his children growing up. I can say David Rodd was more than an entrepreneur, he was more than a business leader, he was a great family man, a great community man. His legacy will be forever remembered here on Prince Edward Island and it was a great loss for Islanders and for the tourism industry when we lost Mr. Rodd.

My condolences go out to Linda, Mark, Christina, Kris and Summer, and the entire extended Rodd family.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, which is seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I would like to clear the public record by tabling my T-4s for the public record.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, I'm tabling Fiscal Reference Tables, September 2006, presented by the Government of Canada, which indicate the deficits for the province here in the Province of Prince Edward Island and indicates the largest deficit ever in the history of the province.

Speaker: Seconded by the Opposition House Leader?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Speaker: Carried.

Hon. members, pursuant to subsection 3(1) of the *Conflict of Interest Act*, I wish to advise that I have received the Sixth Annual Report of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

By Command of Her Honour, I move that the report of the Commissioner be received and do lie on the Table.

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that 4th Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 4, *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act*, Bill No. 3, ordered for Second Reading.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said Bill be now read a Second Time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act*, Bill No. 3, read a Second Time.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, 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: The hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, Chairperson of Committee of the Whole.

Chair (McKenna): 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 Renewable Energy Act*.

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

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Chair: Would you like an overview first?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Ballem: Sure. This is a simple amendment. It looks a little more complicated than it is.

Under the current act, if anybody is using a small capacity renewable generator and wants to have net metering, the end date is October 31st. So that's their year-end, if you will. This amendment just allows them to have a flexible year-end so that it's between the generator and the utility. If it's right for an individual or for a business to have their year-end July 31st, they can have that December 31st. It just allows for that

flexibility.

Chair: No other questions?

1. Section 11 of the *Renewable Energy Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. R-12.1 is amended by the addition of the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) For the purposes of subsection 13(7), a small capacity renewable energy generator may set out in the copies of the net-metering system agreement that the small capacity renewable energy generator submits to a public utility under subsection (2) the date on which any amount of electric energy, measured in kilowatt hours, that is credited during the term of the agreement to the account of the small capacity renewable energy generator, in respect of a bill reading period of the public utility in a calendar year, expires in the following calendar year.

(2.2) The date specified under subsection (2.1) by a small capacity renewable energy generator in a net-metering system agreement must be the last day of a calendar month other than October.

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Dunn: Question.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash.

Mr. Dunn: If you do select a month - say it's May - and three years down the road you want to change it. Can you change it?

An Hon. Member: That's a good question.

Mr. Dunn: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Ballem: It is, with an agreement between the utility. It's just changing the

contract (Indistinct).

Mr. Dunn: Okay. It may even lose three months in order to change it.

Mr. Ballem: Yes.

Mr. Dunn: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: No wonder John Eldon Green sent you up west.

Chair: That was carried?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 2. Subsection 13(7) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

(7) Where an amount of electric energy, measured in kilowatt hours, is credited to the account of a small capacity renewable energy generator in respect of a bill reading period of a public utility in a calendar year, the amount of the credit expires

(a) on October 31 in the following calendar year if

(i) the amount of the credit cannot, before that date, be applied in accordance with subsection (6), and

(ii) the net-metering system agreement between the small capacity renewable energy generator and the public utility is silent as to the expiry date of such a credit or specifies an expiry date that does not meet the requirements of subsection 11(2.2); and

(b) on the date, other than October 31, in the following calendar year that is specified in the net-metering system agreement between the small capacity renewable energy generator and the public utility as the date such a credit expires, if

(i) the amount of the credit cannot, before

that date, be applied in accordance with subsection (6), and

(ii) that expiry date meets the requirements of subsection 11(2.2).

Shall it carry?

Question from hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

Mr. Collins: Yes, I'd be very interested to have the minister talk a little bit about why there's this flexibility built in for the net meter user. I would take it that some people, because of their operations, if they have a farming operation, hog operation, other people may be just strictly residential, that different months of the year might serve their purposes a little better?

Mr. Ballem: That's exactly the reason. On a farming operation, for example, if it was a potato operation, they don't use a lot of electricity over the summer months and there's not as much wind generated. They may want to have a date that is July 31st or May 31st when their warehouse is empty. They say: Now I want to start building up for the peak season in the fall.

A dairy farm may have a different date because of the amount of energy used. A personal household may say December 31st is fine. It may be 12 months from the month they put it in. It allows people some flexibility.

Mr. Collins: Mr. Minister, currently, are there many Islanders who have contracted with the utility to become a net meter user? What's the potential there in the near future?

Mr. Ballem: I don't know if there's anyone yet who's in the net metering situation. There's a lot of enquiries, both to our department and to the utilities, but I don't think anybody has gone there yet.

I think the big part is looking at technology. The focus primarily would be wind in terms of net metering and generation. The big companies have a tendency to focus on the big turbines like we're putting in eastern Kings.

The market seems to be growing worldwide for the smaller scale and there's more companies coming up. I think you'll find people will do that as days go on.

Mr. Collins: In the future, do you foresee groups like community economic development groups and things like that nature, or different segments of the community, that might be responsible for the power at the local arena, things of that nature, that might like to get involved? Would they be able to fall under the banner of a net meter user, small capacity user?

Mr. Ballem: Yes, in all indications they would, depending on the size, obviously, of the facility or the number of units involved. We've had some enquiries and have done some work for people running community rinks or looking to build new rinks. Saying, as part of my capital if I put in the turbine, then over the summer months when they're not using any electricity they build up some credits, which would be a benefit for them.

It's going to take awhile. I think once the first couple get in place then you'll see more happen.

Mr. Collins: All right. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. R. Brown: The net metering is a 12 month cycle, correct?

Mr. Ballem: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: You're changing the expiry date in order to fit, but wouldn't any 12 month cycle be just as good? If it's December to December, if it's May to May, you're still going to get your energy. It's the same amount of energy from one year to the other.

Mr. Ballem: Yes, in theory, but what happens is that at the end of your 12 month cycle the credits expire. When you've got people that are saying - if they have - a farmer, for example, who uses a lot of their electricity in winter months and not in the summer, if their end date was August 31st, they're not using any electricity but they're building it up over the summer months, even a small amount. That's going to be wasted.

What they want to do is have their expiry date at the end of their heavy use period so that in the months when they're not using energy, like the summer months, and I'm using the farmers specifically, they're building up credits. In their high use months they're using what they're currently generating plus some of their credits. They don't want to be building up credits when they're not using them and have an expiry date August 31st.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, but that's my point. If they expire at any given time - they don't expire at each month end, they expire at year end. So, what's the difference between cutting off in July and cutting off in a high peak period?

Mr. Ballem: Because in the months -

Mr. R. Brown: He's still going to build up his 12 months -

Mr. Ballem: And I'll use the Member from Souris-Elmira on his farm. There is no activity or very little activity going on in his

warehouses in the summer months.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, right.

Mr. Ballem: But he is still generating electricity so he will in all likelihood be generating more energy than he is using. So at the end of August he may have a credit of 5,000 kilowatt hours. When it hits that expiry date, they're gone, they're lost.

It may only have an impact on the first year, but still it is significant and they want to be in a position to say: At the end of my high usage period is when I'm using everything I possibly can use up in my credits. I don't want to be generating credits and know my expiry is going to happen during that period.

Mr. R. Brown: Any carbon credits that are applied from these self generators, like the Member from Souris-Elmira, who gets those credits?

Mr. Ballem: They belong to the province.

Mr. R. Brown: The Province of Prince Edward Island. And you'll sell them?

Mr. Ballem: Yes. We will try to.

Mr. R. Brown: Why the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty indicating - has anybody joined on yet in the net metering? So there's one out in Brackley Point Road that I know of, going to Brackley, and there's one at Superior Sanitation.

Mr. Ballem: You're right. My apologizes I think the Superior Sanitation is net metering.

Mr. R. Brown: Not that I know their business. But is the one on Brackley Point Road?

Mr. Ballem: I don't know, it was there before net metering came in. I would expect it would be, but yeah, the one I do know,

Superior Sanitation's.

Mr. R. Brown: Why do we expire them at the end of the year? Somebody had a generator and they got 40 kilowatt hours at the end of the year. Why do we allow utility not to give them credit for that? They put it into the system.

Mr. Ballem: It's compromise.

Mr. R. Brown: What's the compromise?

Mr. Ballem: The compromise with the utility was to have it that it didn't go on in perpetuity. It expired on an annual basis.

Mr. R. Brown: Why'd you make that compromise?

Mr. Ballem: Maybe it's not a compromise, it was a suggestion that they made. Right now the net metering doesn't force you, but it encourages an individual or an individual business to size their turbine to their annual demand. They're not a generator as such. They're suppose to be supplying their own needs. But if they continue to build up credits and build up credits year after year after year -

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Ballem: - then there'd be an incentive for me to put in a 10-kilowatt turbine when I only need a four.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, okay, I agree to that. Good.

Chair: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: A couple of questions on the period of time. I think I understand that. Do you have enough data or has enough time gone by in the energy corporation collecting data that we can say with some certainty that if you have a one megawatt turbine, a half

megawatt turbine, two megawatt turbine, that during the month of November, given our knowledge of the wind regime, we could reasonably expect this here? Do we have enough history on the wind regime in the province to fairly accurately make some of those predictions?

Mr. Ballem: I think we have a significant amount of information in specific locations. Western end of the province, eastern end of the province, we do have a lot of data. But what we've been able to garner in the last couple of years is taking 10 (Indistinct) 50 metre net towers and putting them at different locations. Not just the high wind areas. We've put them in areas that aren't expected to be as good a wind and we measure that against North Cape and East Point.

So I think that we've got to know, within reason, we got a pretty accurate description or prediction of what wind speeds will be. Having said that, some months this summer exceeded historical levels. Some of the (Indistinct) in eastern Kings. I don't think we've ever experienced as much wind as we had trying to get those turbines up.

Mr. Murphy: I guess we probably haven't been in it long enough to - like, climate changes says that we know, for example, the last five out of the eight years have been some of the warmest on record. Do we know if our wind resource is increasing over time, decreasing, or -

Mr. Ballem: If you measured the wind on an annual basis we're probably having a slight increase, but it seems to be more intense. So we got a wider variation between - instead of being a constant speed where we're at higher wind speeds and then we have calm. We may have the same at the end of the year, but it's wider variation.

Mr. Murphy: I was copied in on a letter the

other day, I think it was addressed to yourself or perhaps to the Premier, but it was from Rotary and the efforts, the sustainable house that was built. Some of the things in the letter were quite impressive. I guess, just an observation, alternative energy is good, I think there's no question. Your efforts have put us in very good shape in terms of leading the country and being proactive on some of this stuff.

Just on the conservation side, I'm not so sure that all people in the province have an understanding of the gains to be made by conservation and some of the practical things you can do in terms of - if we look at that renewable home that the Rotary had built, you can read - sometimes you read stuff. I was reading the other night about some office buildings in Japan having photoable tag cells in them. The office buildings themselves actually generate enough electricity to run the building.

So I'm just wondering as we move down this path, what's your thinking on conservation? Or perhaps we've done a lot of wind. We're looking at renewable fuels. Branching out into some of those other areas.

Mr. Ballem: I think history has shown and experience has shown around the world that the cheapest energy we can produce is the energy we don't use. BC Hydro a couple of years ago, they went through -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Ballem: You'll get that in about half an hour.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Ballem: Anyway, I'll continue Mr. Chair.

Chair: Go ahead, you got the floor.

Mr. Ballem: When BC Hydro did their energy conservation and their demand side management program two years ago, they figured out what it would cost them. They gave out light bulbs and they did a number of things with energy efficiencies. The cost per kilowatt hour was about two cents for them to do that. That's based on the energy that they saved in demand.

If they had to produce that energy, if they had to put in the generating capacity for that energy that they saved, it would have cost them between six and seven cents. So it obviously shows that if you reduce the amount then that ends up having a better impact for people.

The challenge that we have under our current pricing system is that there's no incentive in terms of price per kilowatt hour or time of day to reduce your use. If we had time of day rates that they have in other jurisdictions where in peak periods, like the middle of the day, you pay a higher rate than you do at night, people might change their habits.

If our current billing program - right now I think it's for the first 1,200 kilowatt hours you pay a certain rate, or 800 kilowatt hours you pay certain rate. After that it drops. It's actually an incentive to use more because of your average rate. But those are the things I think you'll see changing in the future to make it an incentive for people to reduce their consumption.

Chair: Question from the hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: You certainly make a good point there because there's a lot of innovative ways literally across the world on this subject, as you point out. The efficiencies - whether it be appliance or so many things that are being created - really has made a big difference. Too often we

think of, as you said, the energy we don't use, we think of a reduction in consumption as going to take something away from our quality of life. That doesn't have to be the case to utilize the power better.

I know other places they've gone heavily into this time of day usage where people have their household appliances on timers so that you dry the clothes in the middle of the night because that's when it's most effective.

But on that, where do we fit with the other jurisdictions on the whole issue of net metering? The other night there was a good article on the news about the production of electricity by the use of solar power in California. Because that is their option of choice. They have a lot of sun for long periods of time. One particular businessperson there had use fields of glass, you might as well say, collecting sun. It was very important that he had net metering in order to offset his - he was a farmer who had high costs for irrigation. Now he was harnessing the sun and net metering was very important there. They were progressing in California. His complaint was rather slowly on this particular issue.

Where do we have net metering in other jurisdictions? Are other Canadian provinces moving very fast in this regard?

Mr. Ballem: Not very many. There's a couple of - I think Ontario, one of the things that they're doing is going to - putting in as a pilot project a number of smart meters. That's based on time of day, so that they'll set up two different rates. Ontario has also put in a very significant incentive for people producing energy from solar. So I mean, I think they're getting 25 cents a kilowatt hour or something like that for their solar power which is what it costs to produce.

So when you got a 25,000 megawatt system,

having 100 or 200 megawatts from solar power you can afford to do that. But that would be - it just wouldn't be practical for us here. I think the issue has got to go back to shaving the peak, if you will.

In our province, we go from a low in mid-summer night at 90 megawatts to a peak demand in December in the middle of the day to 210, 220 megawatts. So it causes a significant amount of challenges for the utilities to go out and purchase power in any kind of a long-term contract when we go from that fluctuation. If we could get people to drop that peak and do some things through the night to level it, then it makes it a lot easier and you buy at a the better price if you buy 24 hours a day.

Mr. P. Brown: Certainly some of the challenges around this whole energy consumption in Canada is our geography. I mean, as you say, in December, it's not only the coldest, it's the darkest time of year. So just to have the lights on and to heat, we have significant energy requirements which we can't get away from.

But I think to the point of net metering and to the point of - somebody asked about the (Indistinct) credits and those other things. Up until now, the public really only were concerned about energy from a supply scenario and a price scenario. Its impact on the environment, its impact on the social dynamic, and all of those things were largely unconsidered. As long as it was - when I turned on the switch it was there, and it wasn't costing me an arm and a leg.

So the utilities' public responsibility was only in delivering the power, it wasn't its impact on the broader society and the long ranging. So you had discussion around nuclear energy and what are you going to do with the waste after it. Those weren't part of the public debate, but now indeed they are. So as a policy maker, we seem to be

engaged more in this energy file, more so than - in the past we were simply a regulator to accept that there was some fairness. Because by and large public utilities, regardless of where they exist, they exist as a monopoly within their domain. But now they are only part of the discussion, and so where do we find ourselves?

Mr. Ballem: I think there is more from awareness from the public to say that it's not just good enough to be satisfied that my energy is here, whether it's electricity or it's gas or heating fuel. There's more of: Where's it going, am I creating challenges for the environment? Cost is becoming a huge factor for people. Are there opportunities for us in our province to produce our own energy here, keep those dollars within the province?

I think the fact that the price of energy took such a significant jump in the last couple of years really allowed a lot of renewable technologies to catch up and people are taking advantage of it. I think we've shown it here in this province that the potential for us to produce a lot of our own energy is very real, and that's significant economic dollars to the province.

Mr. P. Brown: I'll conclude my (Indistinct) this comment, Mr. Chair.

Islanders have actually engaged themselves from the point of view of investing even before there was much talk about carbon credits and Kyoto and all that. Islanders invested in the original wind farm in North Cape, the first six turbines that went up. Islanders paid an additional amount to the supplier at that time.

Mr. Ballem: Green premium.

Mr. P. Brown: Green premium.

Mr. Ballem: They'd over-subscribed, yeah.

Mr. P. Brown: Yeah. And so they've showed certainly an interest and a commitment to put their money where their mouth is in terms of this. It was a real practice.

Recently you've introduced the idea of bonds where we can, as Islanders, invest in the eastern Kings wind site. Are those bonds ready for public issue yet?

Mr. Ballem: They'll be early December.

Mr. P. Brown: And then you'll be bringing them forward?

Mr. Ballem: Thank you for allowing me to announce today.

Mr. P. Brown: It's a very good initiative and I think that, you know -

Mr. Ballem: No, you're right.

Mr. P. Brown: I commend your department for bringing it forward because we've already demonstrated that Islanders are interested.

Mr. Ballem: Yeah.

Chair: We have a question here from the Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) first of all, I want to congratulate you (Indistinct) effort to bring wind energy to the province. I think that's really amazing. Who would think five years ago we'd have all these windmills going? The other thing is, I know to compete with the oil is very difficult, isn't it?. It's kind of sad in a way. But I also note that you have all the windmills on the north side. A couple of years ago I asked you to put up one of those wind test machines, I haven't seen it yet. I live just very close to the second highest (Indistinct) of land on PEI. That's in Newtown. I am wondering

when and if you're going to get some of these wind test things to the eastern end of the province?

Mr. Ballem: Actually we've had a met tower in Wood Islands and we do have the data from Wood Islands.

Mr. MacDonald: I didn't know you had - but Wood Islands ain't as high. It's -

Mr. Ballem: No, but what we found, because in different parts of the province where we've put them inland, the significant difference - when you got a tower 50 meters in the air, the met towers, it's not being obstructed by trees. But what happens is the wind speeds do change. Even in North Cape, when you're only going in a couple of hundred metres, the performance from the towers that are closest to the shore from the ones that are further inland, there is a noticeable difference.

Mr. MacDonald: There is.

Mr. Ballem: We did the testing at Wood Islands and if the wind regime there, if that was in Ontario or in most parts of Europe, they would think it was terrific. But it's consistently a couple of metres a second below the north side.

So when you've got two options of where I'm going to put a turbine - it's the exact same cost to put it in, the capital cost is the same, the operating costs - you're going to put it where you're going to get the most return. I'm not saying that it's not - it's a bad wind speeds in the southern part of the province, but not as good as the north shore and the western shore on PEI.

Mr. MacDonald: My second question then is, as you know, I've been an advocate of water -

Mr. Ballem: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: - as a means of producing electricity. I understand that there is quite a bit of research going on. Could you fill us in on just where that is, and is there any potential for - we do have a number of rivers, quite a few rivers throughout the province. They are not doing anything in a sense.

Leader of the Opposition: We have a motion.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, you have.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Perhaps I should wait till then.

Mr. R. Brown: No, we want to hear (Indistinct).

Mr. Ballem: We did some work. We had an engineer come in and go to Scales Pond and do an assessment of the capability. Because as you're aware, Scales Pond, Scales Electric Company, was one of the first places to generate energy in this province, or electricity. The capital cost to go in there and the amount of energy produced, at best marginal. But you know, like, as the technology gets better and if we have better water conditions and we have more rain so there's more flow.

In terms of tidal power or wave action, any number of companies have been in contact with us asking us if we're doing anything. We're not as a jurisdiction, as a province. The reason we're doing that is because our department is small. The energy corporation has I think, well, one employee now, but there are five people that essentially work in the energy corporation. We have to pick, we can't do everything, so we said we're going to focus more in those areas. But having said that, there is some work and a significant amount of research being done in the Bay of

Fundy to look at tidal power.

We've got a couple of companies that are interested in coming here. When I met with them I asked the question - because I don't know, I'm not an engineer. I said yes, the tides in the Bay of Fundy are very strong tides, some of the strongest in the world, but they're quick. It's bang, it's in, then the water sits there. Then it's out in a hurry.

But if you put some of these units under the Hillsborough Bridge - the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square swam there a lot so he knows - I mean that tide is moving one way or the other almost all of the time and it's got a strong current and it's deep water. There is no commercial fishery, there is no commercial traffic going through there. So we've got some people that are at least looking at it. Whether they do it - it's a kilometre away from Maritime Electric. When they get here and they're doing testing, then we'll say that they're here. But at least they're looking at it.

Mr. MacDonald: That's encouraging to see that they're moving in some direction there. Maybe with more research it will become very (Indistinct). It's right with the (Indistinct).

Mr. Ballem: I mean, when I was reading the motion from the opposition that they have, it's encouraging - the referrals that you'd get from people. I had a guy from Ontario who is doing his research project and he's got a patent pending on water flow on the water turbine. When I called him he said: The leader of your Green Party suggested that I call you and talk about your - this is not political, somebody says here's an idea and the opposition is talking about tidal power. You're absolutely right, we should be cooperating with the other provinces, we should be trying to take a regional approach, we should be investigating.

There's a limit to what we can do here, but we're trying to encourage local companies or regional companies to say: Let's go in here. I think that's one of the beauties of doing what we're doing, is that people have an interest in it and it's something that they can relate to and say: Hey, I've read this, I heard about that, I talked to this person. We try to check out as many as we can.

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not familiar with Scales Pond. How much of a river would that be compared to -

Mr. Ballem: Sorry. What?

Mr. MacDonald: How big is Scales Pond? Is it a river?

Mr. Ballem: No, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora is not here. It's part of the Dunk River. You've been there.

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Would that be as big as - let me see, what other river would we have? The Vernon River?

Mr. Ballem: More flow.

Mr. Murphy: Started back up in Breadalbane, flows out down handy to Bedeque.

Chair: Another question from the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square. One more question.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you very much.

Just a comment, first. Our resolution was a result of Darren Riggs. I think Darren came in and briefed our caucus and gave a tremendous presentation on the tidal power. He's been involved in this quite a bit and I recommend that you call him up, he knows a substantial amount about this. I was

extremely impressed by his presentation on tidal power and I'm really impressed by the amount of work and energy he's put into it.

But my question is, of the wind test sites, the one that was built out in your area in the field out by the mink farm or out around there last year -

Mr. Ballem: Woods Farm, Lower Marshfield, yes.

Mr. R. Brown: - has the test data come in from that?

Mr. Ballem: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: And how's that?

Mr. Ballem: It was almost two metres a second below North Cape.

Mr. R. Brown: Is that viable?

Mr. Ballem: Yes. The reason why we put it in that field is that the farm couple that operate the farm were looking at different opportunities and we wanted to do a test away from the shore, inland a little bit. So we asked them if they would let us put the tower up. We made the data accessible to them. It's just marginal for them on their farming operation, but as the price of turbines drops - and it is dropping for the smaller technology - it may become viable for them.

Mr. R. Brown: Thanks.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to bring up - and I don't know if it is relevant to this, if it is going to support this individual - but in the Hunter River area there's a gentleman who is family

that is turning the old mill in Hunter River over to a new facility. Hopefully this week he is installing the new water wheel there.

I talked to him part of last week. He was under the impression that there could be legislation coming down, and I don't know. Is this going to assist him in the development of -

Mr. Ballem: He could benefit from it because of net metering, but I think some of the issues that he has to deal with now is that because it's a federal government responsibility, DFO -

Ms. Bertram: Yes.

Mr. Ballem: - it's costly to put in a fish ladder. I think that's one of the challenges that he has now is to put a fish ladder in so that (Indistinct).

Ms. Bertram: But just dealing with today, with this legislation here. This will not go against him in that operation.

Mr. Ballem: No. He will be able to - net metering is not just for wind. Net metering is for all renewable energy.

Ms. Bertram: That's fine, that's my question.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Ballem: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Renewable Energy Act.*

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Ballem: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Ballem: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the Chair and that the Chairman report the Bill agreed to without amendment.

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 Renewable Energy Act*, I beg leave to report that the Committee has gone through the said Bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I would seek permission of the House to revert back to Government Motions.

Speaker: Agreed by the members of the House?

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, that Motion No. 2 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, the following motion:

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island has the second highest number of seniors in Canada at just over 14 percent of the population, or 20,000 residents aged 65 plus;

AND WHEREAS an estimated three million retired older adults spend five billion hours of their time each year on productive activities, which contributes nearly \$60 billion to Canada's economy;

AND WHEREAS Statistics Canada research demonstrates that older Canadians are redefining the concept of retirement, with many working choosing to work longer hours and opting out of an early retirement;

AND WHEREAS the average age of retirement in Canada is 62.5, up from 61 in 2000;

AND WHEREAS nearly eight percent of Canadians aged 65 and older are currently in the workforce;

AND WHEREAS many seniors are choosing to remain in the labour force not only to earn income, but also to remain mentally active and maintain regular social contact;

AND WHEREAS with an aging population and limited labour force growth, labour shortage has become a long-term issue;

AND WHEREAS small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone to the economy of Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS smaller firms are bearing the brunt of a nationwide shortage of qualified labour;

AND WHEREAS many sectors of the economy are struggling to fill employment vacancies, from construction and agriculture, to retail and tourism;

AND WHEREAS employment opportunities in western Canada are also affecting the labour shortage in the Atlantic region;

AND WHEREAS the Prince Edward Island tourism industry has identified untapped potential in workers of mature years;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the members of this Legislative Assembly encourage the Island's business community and Government to work together to focus on building a stronger workforce, particularly focusing on removing roadblocks for seniors through providing flexibility in labour market and pension programs;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Members of the Assembly promote healthy living initiatives and positive public attitudes regarding the role of seniors as active contributors to society.

Speaker: To open debate on this motion, the mover, the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors.

Mr. Gillan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In rising to speak to this, I am motivated from a number of positions. Obviously as the minister responsible for seniors for this province I would be expected and I do accept the privilege of being able to make comments. But also, as you well know, as you travel in your capacity as Speaker

throughout the country, the members of other governments are also embracing the whole concept, the changing concept, of workforce and the role of the upcoming and the present seniors.

Having attended several of these ministers responsible for seniors, the forums, it has been an item of not so much concern from a negative point of view, but an issue and a challenge and a possibility. The other ministers are echoing those thoughts in their provinces. That the upcoming number of new seniors coming in, along with the ones that are presently there, are going to change the workforce face, and that's what I want to talk about.

But before I launch into the Prince Edward Island seniors, it is amazing that this has spread of course worldwide, the new baby boomers, and we keep referring to them. I think that is getting a little bit rhetorical now and it's an overworked, hackneyed expression, these baby boomers. Actually, I think the United Nations is summing it up a little bit better. They're calling it that there is going to be a demographic change and they call it an age quake. We're all interested in where earthquakes originate. Well, we're going to have an age quake here in our province and indeed there will be one of course right across the country.

The idea of seniors participating in the workforce is not a new one, because for many years seniors have been doing exactly that. But in talking either new cohort of seniors coming along, an age quake or whatever words we want to apply to it, in Prince Edward Island we have 14% of the population or approximately 20,000 people are in the seniors classification. That is destined to grow upward as more seniors come to Prince Edward Island, and of course those of us on Prince Edward Island age into that category.

The whole phenomena is one of embracing change in a positive way, I mentioned that originally. It is figured and it is thought and I'm sure that it will be substantiated that these individuals look upon themselves as still being highly productive members of society. They want to continue to make the contribution, and indeed they are going to.

We as the ministers responsible for seniors had a meeting here recently in the fall, in Brudenell. The ministers came from the other respective jurisdictions across the country and we had a number of speakers engaged to give us some challenge and some food for thought.

One of those speakers was a Dr. Tom Hall from Summerside. I know that you know this gentleman quite well, a former educator. He is a senior himself, but you would never know, of course, from looking at him physically and by listening to his thoughts. They certainly are very youthful and very challenging and very progressive.

One of the texts that he referenced during a speech was called *Successful Aging*, authored by John Rowe and a Robert Kahn. I do have here a fairly lengthy quote that he gave us, and I think that I would like to read it in its entirety and to share with my House colleagues here, because there are gems of wisdom in that quote that is going to lead up or can lead us down a different road, a different mental road, into a new embracing of the seniors in the workforce.

So I quote:

“Largely on the basis of age our customs, our laws and the other institutions tell people what they can and can't do.” For instance, “There is an age at which children must go to school, there is an age when young people may legally drink alcohol, and an age at which they can vote.

“In some cases there is an age where retirement becomes mandatory, and there is an age at which people become eligible for Old Age Security and Canada Pension. But as Rowe and Kahn point out, age-grading ends at this point - the years of retirement and blank and, in this context, as Ernest Burgess notes, old age is perceived as a role-less role, a time of life when nothing is expected of you.

“However, in present day Canadian Society, this way of thinking is obsolete - the idea that over 65 is over the hill. When Bismark startled nineteenth century Germany with the proposal that workers over sixty-five years of age should receive a pension from the Government, 65 was indeed over the hill. Most people did not live to that age, and most of those who did had little time left. Our situation today is much different - but in many ways our thinking about life after sixty-five has yet to recognize those differences.

“The Japanese population profile is such” - and this is very interesting - “that Japan has encountered the challenges of the population shift earlier than has Canada. In Japan, there are well-defined successive jobs in a gradual march to complete retirement. This approach is reflected in three development: first, the concept of post-retirement careers; secondly, direct governmental subsidies to private employers” - obviously to hire these aging individuals who are on the path; and number three; “the creation of Silver Manpower Centres, which are agencies that attempt to match older people to productive activities, either paid or voluntary.”

Here I do end the rather lengthy quote.

But you can see that Dr. Hall was challenging the ministers this fall to look differently at the baby boomers coming up, and to even look differently at the seniors that are existing here today and the seniors,

of course, that are presently in our workforce. It is going to change, we're going to change, or we should be changing our perspective as well.

So what do we do? The public attitude obviously towards aging must shift. If we're going to be able to embrace and accept the seniors as active contributors in our society - and in fact back in the 1990s the MacArthur Foundation of the United States funded a comprehensive study of age in America. As part of their research they found, of course, that there was a lot of stereotype or myths that were abounding. I know that you are familiar with some of these. One such myth that has existed for a long time was you can't teach an old dog new tricks. The MacArthur Foundation found indeed that you can. Whether it is an animal or whether of course it is a myth that is passed on to humans as well.

The research has showed, of course, that older people can and do learn new things and that they learn them very well. But there are three features that they found which predict better mental function in old age. We use these quite a lot in health and social services and of course working with seniors. The first is that people should continue and have regular physical activity. You hear that all the time, but that's what they found back in the early 1990s. Second was a strong social support system, lots of friends, extended family. Third, belief in one's ability to handle what life has to offer. Be progressive, be optimistic. Those three qualifications that they found then, 15 years hence down the road, they're still very important. That is what we must do to be able to change the attitudes of society, the 'I' society in which we live.

How are we getting along on Prince Edward Island? Are we making any of those changes or indeed have we just gone along with the status quo of the last generation or 15 or 20

years ago to say: No, everything is okay and there is not a baby boomer coming?

I think in Prince Edward Island we have been able to embrace what is going to happen in a very optimistic state, because there are a number of examples that I want to just bring up to the members, colleagues here, because these are examples of things that have been happening which we are all familiar.

For instance, we find ever increasing numbers enrolled in the seniors college program at UPEI. Very popular course now being offered and very well attended, to the point that most of the course offerings run out of seats. There is a waiting period. There are also adult education classes being offered by UPEI, also Holland College. Our community school activities, of which we were one of the early provinces along with Alberta to start community schools across the country, that is proof that Prince Edward Island, the seniors themselves, and we who look at seniors, see that things are happening in a very progressive way.

Our workplaces in Prince Edward Island have also taken steps to recruit and retain mature workers. It is interesting that just recently last year one of these, by the name of the Home Depot, for example, just recently become a recipient of a national best employer award for employing people 50-plus. This particular company here in Charlottetown, and across the province as well, has strategically recruited mature workers. The reason for that is probably somewhat selfish on their part - good business - because they recognize that these people, these seniors, have knowledge, they have experience, they have passion that they are able to bring to their work. It was also found that the flexible and the shorter work weeks are offered to these individuals, they don't mind working evenings, they don't mind working weekends, and the younger

employees prefer at that time to be at home with their families, because they tend to give time to their fellow workers in that respect.

So there is proof that this is only one industry here in Prince Edward Island that has made the change. I'm sure that others are going to be able to take example. I would make one other note of one of the industries, and that is that there has been a campaign in the tourism industry. That association has gone out of its way to promote and to make public the showcasing of the talent and value of seniors as long-time employees. These people are out (Indistinct) industry, they're out helping the tourism industry by providing bed and breakfasts. Any number of different examples where seniors work within the tourism industry.

I suppose as a final point that I will make before I relinquish the floor to my colleagues here in the Legislature to continue the debate on this motion is to say that from our point of view, that is, those people who are going to becoming seniors in the next few years, is that with fewer children being born into our society - and this is also true here on Prince Edward Island - there's going to be very soon fewer taxpayers available to support the pensions of those who are going to be on retirement.

So why not, as a senior, stay in and use the Japanese model of very progressive, successive jobs to full retirement. It makes a lot of sense.

So I think what we would do now in summation is we should take a look at other ways that we can begin to change the face of our workplace. One of those is to retain the experience and the passion and the drive of seniors.

So in the moving of this motion, I am very happy to make the resolution that the

members of our Legislative Assembly encourage the Island's business community, along with the government, to focus on removing road blocks for seniors so that they will be able to stay in the workforce longer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

Dr. McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to second this motion on the value of Seniors in the Workforce. As I was thinking about this motion, I was reminded of a book I read about 10 years ago, I think it was actually 1996, I guess. That's the year our party came into power. The book was called *Boom, Bust & Echo*, written by David Foot. That book, it gave a (Indistinct) of national phenomena, I think over 300,000 copies were printed and sold in just three short years. It shows the demographic of the country past, present and future. I believe David Foot is basically (Indistinct) future. Certainly what he said in that book is basically what is taking place today. As the baby boomers have gone through the cycle here, we're seeing more and more seniors in our society. Certainly the challenges that may be ahead for health care, but also the benefits we have with the seniors that are out there as well.

So I really thought that book was very (Indistinct) at the time. I still have it at home some place. I think we are looking at unprecedented times. As the previous speaker indicated, the new term I guess is the age quake, and I think pretty well all the countries in the world are going through this at the same time.

I think I'd like to start my comments possibly on a few stats regarding seniors, and I believe you'll find these stats pretty interesting. The life expectancy now for someone born today is 77 years for Canadian men and approximately 82 years for Canadian women. I think it's great to see with the advancing of new prescription drugs and certainly medical technology that the life expectancy is probably going to continue to increase. I guess (Indistinct) certainly in that type of health care investments is certainly paying off for our population that way.

But right now, probably the greatest increase in age is probably among those over 85 and in fact, there is many more people living to be 100 years of age and older. I think this trend is going to continue into the future. I know in my own practice I see many people come in the office that are 90 years of age, 95 years of age, that are pretty smart. You would never know that they are that age the way they walk into the office.

Our own government I think saw the need with the seniors population out there too to create the new Department of Seniors and Social Services. I think we're certainly starting to start to listen to the seniors a lot more. I mean, I'm not quite there yet, but I know some of us in the House probably have reached the stage where we are probably considered seniors. I think it's an issue that we have to take more seriously, and I would certainly look at the last throne speech at the amount of emphasis that we put on seniors is certainly - I think they're getting their due course finally.

Today over 4 million seniors over age 65 represent about 12% of our Canadian population. This is certainly - by the year 2031 one-quarter of Canadians will be age 65. So that's over double that in a very short period of time. I think that we'll see - I think Prince Edward Island has the second highest

number of seniors in Canada, just over 14%, which if you look at our population is about 20,000 residents that are over age 65.

The national advisory council on aging estimates that 3 million retired adults spend 5 million hours of their time each year on very productive activities, which I think contributes to up to 60 billion to the Canadian (Indistinct) economy. Many of these seniors spend independent lives in many of their own personal care. These people are probably our greatest resource. Therefore, a very healthy active population is essential to continue the success of our province.

With good health, it's a solid foundation for all of the society. I know the last number of years our government certainly forged ahead with a number of partnerships with the PEI Active Living Alliance, the PEI Healthy Living Alliance, the PEI Tobacco Reduction Alliance, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the PEI Cancer Society and many others, to promote best practices for a healthy lifestyle and to help create an environment where Islanders and our seniors can be at their best.

Now as far as other stats, the average age of a skilled worker in Canada is more than 50 years, and more than 40% of the workforce is expected to retire in the next ten years. So by 2030 there will be 40 retirees for every 100 working adults, up from 21 retirees for 100 working adults in 2003. We may have to be patient in the nursing homes and other places when we don't have the staff out there to do that.

So as our population retires (Indistinct) very unusually high, fast rate compared to what it was in the last number of years. On the other side of that, the nation's birthrate is about 40% below the level required to avoid long-term population loss. If I look at my own generation, I have three children, my mother

had ten. I mean, even amongst my own friends three is a big family. Most of them have one, a little over one, maybe two, or none. So it's certainly something we have to look at very seriously.

Between 1996 and 2005 the Canadian population experienced the lowest growth rate ever recorded. So it certainly brings some significant problems to our government. So this basically means the number of seniors will continue to grow more rapidly and also will live a lot longer. So we're going to see very significant labour market consequences out there. So, since 2000, immigration represented more than 60% of the (Indistinct) population increase in Canada. The next ten years, Canada will continue to compete with more and more countries with these immigrants. I know we're starting to see a few more immigrants coming here, but we will need a large number of immigrants to fill all the jobs that are going to be out there, especially as our baby boomers continue to go through the bubble that they're going through very rapidly.

Now the average age of retirement in this country is roughly about age 62, 63, so older Canadians are starting to work later into life, and I think also they're putting in longer days at the office. Because basically the need is there. There is no one there to fill their places. I think that Stats Canada (Indistinct) found that both men and women over 55 spent approximately one hour a day more in paid work in 2005 than they did in 1998. So more and more Canadians will not be opting for early retirement and I think the days of mandatory retirement will certainly - if it is still in place, some places will gradually die out.

Another statistic among men aged 55 to 64, more than two-thirds of them had jobs in 2005, which is about 68%, which back in 1998 there was only 59% had jobs. So this is

certainly a very large increase in a very short period of time as well. I think 53% of all Canadians expect to work part-time, while 60% plan on working full-time on other jobs when they retire. So this is something that we're going to continue to see in the near future.

Now if you look at PEI as far as the business is concerned, roughly 97% of our businesses on PEI are small businesses. We're going to see that the province certainly has seen a large increase in its labour force from 62,800 people in 2000 to over 68,000 people today. So this has been a great emphasis on job creation and I think that's very good. But it's probably getting to a point where we'll find that we'll have the jobs but not the people for the jobs. That's going to be the reality very soon.

The labour force of PEI, as I said it's the largest that its ever has been, and our unemployment rate is probably at the lowest level in 26 years. Although this is great news, I think it's exceptionally great news, I think that this unemployment rate is going to continue to drop as we continue to increase the job creation in this province here.

Another interesting statistic is that more and more of our Islanders are getting post-secondary education, whether it's at UPEI, Holland College. They're getting better education as well. There's no shortage of skilled labour in the province anymore. There's lots of skilled labour out there. There's no shortage of skilled people out there. The labourer's probably harder to find.

I looked at some of other statistics and I noticed that the areas in PEI that were going to see significant shortages are probably in the trades. You see the number of people who are moving out west and to other parts of the country for jobs.

Also, people in the transportation sector. I understand the trucking industry, I remember just a few short years ago there were more truckers who couldn't find jobs. Now there is a very difficult job to find truckers to do the work. I think the lifestyle of a trucker, especially if they're travelling out of the province, they're away at nights, so the job's probably not quite as popular as it would have been in the past. It's quite a long day to drive a truck.

I'm reminded I was talking to a farmer this fall, a potato farmer, and he was telling me that it was getting very difficult to find truckers to work, especially in harvest time of the year. He was very appreciative when he was able to find some seniors who've been retired for a number of years. They were able to help out. They were very pleased to come in for three, four or five weeks with the harvest. Seniors were happy to get the pay. Happy to be able to have something to do, but it really made the job much easier for the farmer. They probably couldn't find anybody to do that job. There's a very short window out there. It does help for the seasonal economies that these people, like seniors, are out there to help us out there.

This is also going to be common in the tourism industry where it's getting more and more difficult to compete for the workers. If you look at the tourism industry, in most cases there's a lot of students employed in the summertime, but our tourism season is shifting towards the fall more and more every year. By that time our students have gone back to school, gone back to university or what have you. We're going to have to see more and more seniors that will be taking over these jobs, especially in the fall part of the year.

It's great that they will do that. I think they don't want full-time work, but if they get a couple of months here and there they're very

appreciative of that.

Basically, looking at the statistics, the population is increasing. But there is an available workforce we could use. Whether it's a temporary basis or a full-time basis. As these seniors are living longer, they're healthier, they're busier than ever. They're great for those of us who may have kids who want to have a little bit of babysitting from time to time they can come in handy. I think they give a lot of value to all our communities across the province.

If you look at the volunteer side of the community, whether it's churches, whether it's soup kitchens, or whether it's the Meals on Wheels, most of the seniors that are very active are quite willing to avail themselves of these duties. I think it's great that we have the number out there willing to do that. It says a lot for our province.

In my opinion they are a very important part of the social fabric of the province. They have earned their pensions by making economic contributions over the last number of years. They will continue to keep paying the taxes throughout retirement as they continue to work through retirement.

When we look at where else they're gainfully employed, they spend time in our classrooms. Project Love is one of the projects that's involved in one of our schools over in Glen Stewart. A lot of our seniors come in to be involved the classroom. They read to the children. It's great for the children to have someone to read to them. I know the teachers can't do everything in the class. They're all very busy. It's a great time for the involvement with seniors in that group. I know it's a very good - in our area, Stratford, that's going on over there.

The seniors also have very much of a say in our seniors' policies. I remember going to a

meeting just recently where we were discussing seniors' issues. A great number of seniors in the Charlottetown area came together to discuss some of the seniors' issues out there. They were very good to give their point of view, to discuss where things are needed, and help shape public policy for our seniors in the province. Their voices have been heard. We will be working on these issues as time goes on, as indicated in the last throne speech.

Just in closing, I want to say, when we look at these seniors they have a vast number of resources. They are able to keep us busy. I think we have to do anything we can to keep the seniors busy in our communities and keep them involved in our communities. I'd like to say, looking at this resolution, that our attitudes to seniors have to change and are changing. I think we've got to realize there should be no more roadblocks put up toward seniors. Just because you reach 65 doesn't mean you have to sit home in the kitchen all day long. They're going to find they will continue to be contributing to our society, will give lots of good advice. They'll help us out on our labour shortage, which is certainly a big factor in the next little while. Anything we can do to make their contribution better, I welcome that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I too would like to rise and support seniors in the workforce. I should tell my colleague, not only did he steal all my notes, but he also referred to a book that I too had read called *Boom, Bust and Echo*. I've been teaching him a lot since I've been elected about the contents of that book.

Anyway, if you ever have a chance to read that I suggest you should. It talks quite a bit about demographics, population and opportunity. When I think about seniors in the province, what I see is tremendous opportunity not only in terms of the area of labour, but also in the area of actually starting businesses.

When you think about the Canadian economy I think often a lot of attention is on provinces such as British Columbia because of the Winter Olympics project that will finish around 2010. It's also on Alberta because of the tremendous boom in the area of oil and natural gas. What people sometimes forget is that provinces such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba are soon going to outperform Alberta and British Columbia.

Also, what people sometimes forget is here in the Maritimes our own province, the Province of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador, their economies are booming and moving into the area of alternative energy projects and other mega-projects including construction such as even our Atlantic Veterinary College.

What does all this mean? When you think about it, our economy never has had such tremendous confidence, not only here in Canada, but here in PEI. That not only means we continue to build new homes or to renovate our homes, it also means that there's tremendous opportunity for people to buy our goods and services.

When you start to think about this, then you have to start thinking about how many people are around to be able to provide labour to our business community or actually start businesses. My colleague previous to me talked about demographics. I think sometimes we forget - and it is true - every province in Canada, our birth populations haven't grown in quite a long

time. Because of that, we have now reached a point in our economy that we have all this great working going on, but who's around to actually provide the services?

When you think about older people, or people that have had 20 years, 30 years and sometimes 40 years of experience, what I see is a tremendous amount of knowledge and skills that these people can actually provide and help train our younger people. Not only in the area of the service industry, but when I think of our community. Some of our people that have been around farming for a number of years, the kinds of skills transfer that they're able to share are valuable as we're trying to make the economy grow even further.

The other area in terms of older workers in the workforce, when you actually get a chance to go in and buy something and get to talk to someone that has a lot of experience, whether it's buying a car or a couple of weeks ago I was over in a bookstore. I ran into a friend of mine who's been retired now for about three or four years. He was the salesperson. He too has a love for history and politics. It was great to get service from this particular gentleman because of his experience and knowledge. You can relate to people.

The other part that we sometimes forget about too is seniors giving us ideas of what other kinds of businesses we can actually have in place. I think that sometimes people forget that Colonel Saunders was 68 years of age when he started a new business. Look how successful that has become.

The previous speaker spoke about shortages of labour, especially in tourism. When you think about our province as we head into the next number of years we know that our tourism product is going to change and continue to grow. We need well trained skilled labour. This gives a chance when

older people are there or people with more experience to be able to provide transferable skills to our young people.

The only other thing I would like to conclude with is some of the comments my previous colleague had mentioned in the area of skills. How often lately have you had to call and either get a plumber or an electrician and you find out that you have to wait for months on end? With some retired people in the community it may give them a chance to do some work that they like on a custom basis or on a fee for service basis.

When I think about older people in the workplace I see tremendous opportunity. I also see a lot of value for the work, the skill sets, and the experiences that they're able to bring to us. I also see them as a great asset as PEI's economy continues to grow and bloom. That's all I would like to say at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's a pleasure to stand up, especially as a senior, to join in this debate today. I know a lot of people who are a lot older than I am who are contributing to our society by working in various positions, either for themselves or sometimes for their family or someone else. Many grandparents, for example, are now looking after children through the day and that certainly is a worthwhile thing to do. They continue to help the economy in this way by continuing to work in the labour force.

I think seniors are different now than they

were when I was young and I think there are reasons for that. First of all, the labour force is not as hard to do as it was years ago. There is more money in the hands of seniors, there is more activity. I can remember my mother saying if they had an egg for Easter it would be a very good thing in rural PEI. For example, the hens just didn't lay back then, for example, and you didn't have the proper food. They had no fresh fruit like we have today. So I think the seniors, they are more active, there is more money and there is more food, making them in better shape than they were years ago.

It seemed to me that years ago many seniors were completely played out from the workforce that they were involved in and they had to retire. In a sense, they didn't retire. I can remember going to a house of an older man in the community back in the 1950s and he would talk about what it was like before the war and before the 1930s and 1920s, where the property, there would be two and three families living in the same house. The seniors has very little to say, especially the mother. The grandmother or whatever, she would sit at the end of the table, (Indistinct) end of the stove and do the knitting and the sewing. Had very little conversation with the rest of the family.

Now there has been two elections just lately that I want to just talk about. In the United States there was a man who was 94 years of age was elected, and I thought that was pretty good. In Mississauga, the famous mayor of Mississauga, I think she's a lady, she is 88 and she was just recently elected. She's a very famous mayor. I can't remember her name right now.

There is no doubt about it, people are living a lot longer, more independent, more able to look after themselves and so on. That is the aim of people. Just recently my neighbour who really is only about 83, 84, took some kind of a turn and had to go into a nursing

home. She was really disappointed because she felt that as long as she could look after herself - but in this case she couldn't. But everybody to have that independence and live in their own home as long as they can, that's quite a thing for seniors to do. Because, as you recall in rural PEI, it was not uncommon for the older couple to live at home with the younger. But today they all want to live independently.

I always appreciate the work of the Senate, they do a tremendous amount of work in research work and so on. Recently they had a committee going: The committee argues that the rigid line between work and retirement should be blurred through new incentives and pension flexibility to allow older workers to stay on the job. They continue to say: In our view, choice is something that should be available to all citizens. Since exclusively from the labour force may lead to social exclusion and then inability to ensure adequate earnings and adequate retirement income. Everyone's full labour force effort must be a success if Canada is to prosper.

So in other words, I think what they're saying is that some seniors when they have to retire at age 65 have not got enough retirement money set aside to retire on.

The committee also suggested that improvements were needed in a number of areas, some of which included incentives for individuals to engage in labour market activity are needed and institutional and financial disincentives to work must be removed. Incentives for a business to invest in productivity enhancing tools must be enhanced. In other words, we must continue to improve our means by which people work, like in tooling, in equipment and so on. The integration of immigrants into Canadian society must be facilitated.

At what point in time does it become

immoral for this country or for another country to take people from its labour force? There are many countries of the world today who are like Canada and there are more seniors growing up and very few people in the labour force. So we do a disservice if we continue to bring people from these countries and lead them in want. Incentives to save must be improved. I think there has been a tremendous change in seniors and will continue to be because of the amount of money that people are working and being able to set aside. Productivity growth must be enhanced.

Now, the factors influencing seniors decisions to retire. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, older workers in Canada continue to face significant employment barriers. Some factors influencing seniors' decision to retire include retirement of the senior spouse. That is, when one spouse retires, it's quite an incentive that the other one retire so that they can enjoy their retirement age together. Reduction in old age security or guaranteed income, supplement payments when income is earned, a lack of retired skills, illness and/or disability, strong retirement incentives and private (Indistinct) plan, unsuitable work environment.

That is one of the things - if seniors are going to continue to work, some of them have to move into other workforce jobs and there must be suitable work environments. Lack of flexibility and work arrangements, age discrimination - and I suppose that is one of the reasons why seniors like to retire, because of age discrimination. Lack of training programs for older workers. I think that is unheard of, training programs for older workers. Mandatory retirement provisions. That mandatory retirement seems to be starting to fade more and more all the time. Higher and effective tax rates when receiving pension income and early

retirement incentives in the Canadian Pension Plan. But the Canadian Pension Plan also has incentives for people who don't take their retirement pension plan at 65. I think it's 5% added each year as they go along.

So if the senior citizen has got a good income outside of his pension plan, he's better off by holding back his retirement incentive and let it build up all the time. That's probably not as well known as it should be.

But I guess the big thing that we're facing in our country is the lack of people to work. While a lot of our young people have gone to Alberta and so on, I understand that in Alberta a lot of seniors are back in the workforce out of necessity, that they have to do that to keep the economy going. So I think we're moving into a new stage in our country and many countries of the world where retirement, many years ago, everybody looked forward to the retirement age of 70, then they dropped it down to 65. So maybe now we have to raise it back up one or two years at a time, back up until it gets to 70 like we did have, so that the workforce will have more people in it and that our country will be able to continue with its expansion, with its economic future, and it needs the seniors to do that. It just doesn't seem to be there otherwise. Unless we're very fortunate to get immigration that will really increase, but I can't see that happening with so many countries in the world in the problems that we have.

I understand that the United States and Great Britain are even coming to Canada trying to get people to go there. So if Canadians, like Ireland (Indistinct) many people returned to Ireland. So it could happen if incentives are good that we would lose a number of Canadians to other countries.

So it's a pleasure to join in this motion and I

think the motion is a good one. Make it clear to everyone that the country needs our seniors to work longer, to have to get the incentives to do that, and maybe as we go along there will be change in ideas and in opinions of seniors.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, it's a pleasure for myself to rise today and support this motion. I believe that seniors are more than an integral part of our society. They are the ones that have created the environment that we all get to enjoy today. I believe with every new generation that comes forth life seems to be a little bit easier, and that's because of our forefathers before. The seniors that created the environment that we are in today have made it so that each generation can have it a little bit easier.

Looking at some of the whereases in this motion, I believe that our seniors not only can play an active role in helping our economy, they play an enormous role in terms of volunteer activities in our society. I look now, and many seniors that I know, they go back to contribute after they choose to retire. Whether or not that is by perhaps helping children read in schools, whether or not it's helping with the school programs or the breakfast programs or any of those things, seniors really do play a large part in our society.

It seems different to me - and this is only my personal observation - but I think 20 years or 40 years ago a 70 year old might not be what a 70 year old is today. We see lots of

70 year olds today that go out, they are strong, they're vibrant, they're active. Why has that come about? My guess it has to do with numerous aspects, but most likely developments in our health technologies, developments in our pharmaceuticals, more information on the bad habits of smoking, excessive drinking. Those things have people now trying to make sure that they can do the things that will allow them to live that much longer. I think you can see it all the time.

I know a gentleman who I had the opportunity to attend I believe it was his 90th birthday, and I met him again at the ceremony for Remembrance Day, Whisperwood Villa, Mr. Gray is his name. He plays golf five days a week, at 90 years old. Just a phenomenal accomplishment. It's great to see our seniors out being active like that, and they do have so much to contribute. A 65 year old today, a lot of people ask: How old do you think that individual is? A lot of us might say 50 or 55. It just seems to be the changing of the times.

So I believe that our seniors have an incredible role to play yet again in our economy. By no means am I encouraging us to say that our seniors should be doing more. I believe that if our seniors want to enjoy retirement, want to spend more time with their family and do those things, I'm all for it. Because I believe that they've worked hard over the years and given us the environment and the economy and the way of life that we now get to enjoy.

So if any of those seniors want to take a break, spend more time with their families, work on their hobbies a little bit more, perhaps do some travelling around the world, we should be encouraging that. Because they deserve it. Probably more so than anyone.

But if there are those seniors out there that

still do want to play a part in our economy and get out and contribute in terms of working, in terms of our service industry or hospitality industry, I think there's no better example. With age comes experience. A lot of these individuals I believe have a lot to offer to the new workforce. We could look at mentor programs, there's numerous that we can look at.

But I believe that it's important for us to encourage, and if there are things that we can do to help eliminate roadblocks for seniors through flexibility in the labour market or pension programs, we should be going down that road.

So it's my pleasure to stand here and recognize the great contribution that our seniors have played in our society. It's great that they are so active and anything that we can do to help them, I'm 100% for that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacAleer: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to add to the comments that have been delivered so far.

We all know that we expect to live longer and more healthier lives, and I can tell you from my own experience that the current crop of seniors certainly like to sing and enjoy society. The fact that we can expect to live as males to 77 and as females a little bit longer to 80 I think fills a great deal of optimism. I'm really pleased to know that 65 is not particularly old and that we probably have another 10, 20 years to participate in society, and that fills me with a lot of hope.

I know that all of you have given examples

of seniors that are shining examples of individuals in the community. I think of one in particular, my own mother at 87.

Leader of the Opposition: Great Liberal.

Mr. MacAleer: I can think of another gentleman who lives on the North River Road, his name is Doug George. He shows up every morning at Victoria Park during the summer to play tennis. He gets very angry when he misses the ball and the man is 93 years young. There's a lot of hope for the rest of us.

I just like to comment on a couple of points here. The reason why I'm optimistic is this age group that is now entering what we call their older period in life is probably the best educated and most skilled workforce that this country has known. Given the fact that it's going to have knowledge and skill at its disposal lends a lot of hope with respect to our economy.

It's been noted that tourism and trucking would benefit from the older workers as well as the food service business. We're entering into a period in which the service economy is employing more people. While older workers may have some difficulty in terms of performing physical tasks, they may be very well equipped to help us in this society in which we call the information age.

I would hope that while we focus on seniors delivering productive activities in terms of getting paid, there's a whole host of tasks that seniors can perform which we would call the volunteer sector. I can think of one particularly that's been very effective, and that is the Love Program in the schools in which seniors assist youths in terms of reading. I can think of other programs that - well, just the minor hockey association benefits greatly from the coaching that's received from seniors.

So I think there's a number of roles that can be played right across the spectrum in terms of older members of our society. I would hope that we can adjust the pension plans of the country. I hope we can adjust our societal values in terms of getting older workers and older participants in society to produce productive roles. I do know that we've had excellent examples of leadership being performed by older workers. For example, Winston Churchill I think was in his 70s before he assumed the role as prime minister of Great Britain and lead that country and the free world through a war.

So there's some excellent examples of leadership, and of participation by older workers, and I would hope that we would somehow find a solution to the fact that whereas older workers can participate in information transfer in terms of skill transfer, that the use of technology will allow us to continue to transfer physical tasks into those areas that will not require people to participate in those areas.

So rather than look on this as a problem, I think we should look at it as an opportunity to improve the quality of life. You just have to look on t.v. now. Where are the ads? The ads are on physical exercise, buying equipment, Freedom 55 means getting fit at 55. We've an endless number of people now that have gone through the period - they've lived for three decades eating the wrong kind of food. Now we realize that we can eat more fruits and vegetables and we got lots of living examples of people who have regrouped their lives to live more healthy activities.

We now look at the fact that if you want to really be with it, you just have to take advantage of some of the technology, whether it's cosmetic technology or whatever, and you can live a more satisfying period in your life. I think that the best is yet to come.

So I look forward to 65, and many of those who - the majority of those people are now going to join these ranks. They're going to be, certainly, a group of people to be reckoned with.

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 speak to this resolution. I think it's certainly wonderful to support our seniors here on Prince Edward Island. They do wonderful work. Many of the members have already alluded to the different organization programs that they are supporting within the communities. They are a wonderful component in our society here on Prince Edward Island and they should be fully valued.

Islanders are staying in the workforce longer. As the motion states, the average age of retirement in Canada is 62.5 years up from 61 in 2000, so it's increasing. Our seniors are active and they're doing, as I said, lots of activities.

I would like to bring to the attention with this resolution - I received a letter from a constituent and this constituent actually works at the university. I would like to share her letter because I think it supports - it's part of this resolution and it speaks to it, and a concern that someone like her has in regards of her age and her ability to continue working or the blocks, the brick wall, that she is finding herself now in. This was addressed to the Premier:

I am being fired from the university because of my age. I did petition PEI Human Rights, but I want you to understand the situation of

many gray haired gals on PEI. The Canadian Charter of Rights claims that I cannot be discriminated against because of age. PEI legislation says that there is no discrimination because of age. What I have read with both these laws, there are no ifs, ands, or buts, or depending upon, it just says no discrimination.

She goes on to say:

How can this university act contrary to this legislation? They have unlimited funds to do that. This university is funded partially with the taxpayers' dollars. I am very unhappy that my tax dollars are being used in this way. Our CUPE agreement does not have a mandatory retirement clause in it. Also, the pension plan states that we can pay into it until we are 69. If I am fired at 65 how can I pay into a pension plan?

Now I would love to retire with dignity. But it's impossible with my pension, due to the fact that I did not tend to my knitting during child-rearing years. I will be one of the statistics. I am only one amongst many poor women facing retirement, but I have a commitment to the community and also need the funds to continue my work with horses and especially children.

I am performing my duties very efficiently and wish to continue to do so, and yet this university is intent upon firing me.

Her final paragraph. She states:

I think it is time to make legislation stronger. Right now it appears that the university has the services of better lawyers than the province. In terms of their discrimination against me, it is very sad when I cannot depend upon the law of the land to stand by me and protect me.

That was written by a lady from our constituency.

I've had that for a few months. She called me the other night. I think this resolution today, I was going to bring it up at another point in our proceedings, but I think seniors in the workforce, I think this letter brings a face to some of our seniors. This is a female senior, how she wishes to continue to work, yet she is facing mandatory retirement.

I feel the nature of this resolution is positive. I will be supporting this resolution. But I think government needs to examine the laws of the land to ensure that our seniors are protected and that they can continue working and that they have that ability to share what they have. Because let's face it, they (Indistinct) and they share a lot of the value system here on PEI. They are hard workers and they must feel supported, and they must feel that they are an integral part of the workforce here on Prince Edward Island and of society here on Prince Edward Island.

I will wrap up my comments, but I will support this. But I did share that letter for the purpose of bringing a face to that concern.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from West Point-Bloomfield.

Ms. Rodgeron: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It also gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today and support this resolution. As the previous speaker, as you get older you sometimes think it's not all that old. You know, when I think of yourself, Mr. Speaker, and see you when you ice a hockey team that you know you can outdo a lot of them on the ice, Mr. Speaker, so I certainly feel that our seniors have a lot to offer.

What I notice is the knowledge that I don't think we can ever record in any book that is gained from all over the years of people, whether they be in their workplace or in the community. When I look in our system today and look whether it be a young teacher, a young nurse, a person of any young profession, and see the seniors and the mentors that they are to these people. I know they work hard, they go and get their education, but the hands-on unique situations that they come across, like I say, I think with more seniors in our workforce it would certainly be a great support to the younger people that are coming out into the workforce.

When we look at many times over the last number of years, sometimes now people start retiring at 55. When you look at a lot of seniors that I know, when they're out there and maybe they've been so busy in their lifetime that they haven't had the opportunity to take up any kind of a hobby. You see the ones that when they're not active, quite often their health does deteriorate quite rapidly.

I know I was reading a study this past spring. Again, as I mentioned earlier, right across this country there was this whole philosophy that the older worker has a lot to add to the workforce because of all the knowledge and the experience they've gained over the years. As well, with the aging population and not as many young people, when I think myself, as the previous speaker had said, in my family of 15 -

An Hon. Member: Fifteen.

Ms. Rodgeron: Fifteen children in my family. I know, like my own family, we had four children. So when you look at just the comparisons of the family we're looking at today, I think the average they're saying is increasing a little bit, the average family today is around three. It used to be one and a

half. So I really feel that there needs to be a lot of emphasis put on this.

When I look at the challenges that businesses are having out there, and I know the minister of development came to West Prince about a week ago to talk to the local businesses and just asked them what it was that they need to support the businesses in our area. When I look at a lot of the businesses in my area, which a lot of them are small businesses, and again, see the advantage of having these workers in the workplace, the one that really I'm looking at is tourism. It seems like the older person again, because of the knowledge and the wisdom that they've gained over the years, when people do come to the area they can get really excited about what we do have to offer.

I know when I was younger I took a lot of things for granted. I just thought that everybody else had what we have here on Prince Edward Island. But as I get older, I seem to look further and further and look at all the beautiful things that we have around us. So I think in the tourism sector there is a lot to offer by having the older worker in the system.

Again today, I know a lot of the things that I was going to mention have pretty well been said. But I even look at the community school systems across the province and see again what the older worker or the senior has to offer.

So again, I'll not speak too long on this. But I'm just pleased to stand in the House today and support this resolution.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Collins: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief in

my remarks this afternoon because I know we're running close to time

It gives me great delight to stand here and to celebrate with a great deal of joy the tremendous contribution that the 20,000-plus seniors over the age of 65 have made, are continuing to make, and will continue to make to Island life.

I know several examples have been mentioned of people that we're all familiar with in our districts who are outstanding in the way they conduct their lives and the way they contribute to life on Prince Edward Island.

Last evening when I went home and turned on the television I watched the second half of a program called Tony Bennett, An American Classic. Tony Bennett is 80 years old today. He was singing with other world's greats. He's a shining example of hanging in there and still being tremendous all the way.

I'll just be brief to say this, to encourage the Island's business community and government to work together to focus on building a stronger workforce, particularly on focusing on removing roadblocks for seniors through providing flexibility in labour market and pension programs. That's just not a feel-good kind of statement.

Today on Prince Edward Island the forward thinking employer, like Home Depot, knows that in order to continue to do good business, whether it's here on PEI or in Toronto or anyplace else, they've got to look towards the senior workforce. They will, as the times are changing, become more and more an important factor there. They're going to have to go out of their way to accommodate senior workers down the road.

Government should do the same. They

should do the same through the Labour Force Innovation Centre. I'm glad to see that in that one of its ideas is to have transitional programming tailored to meet the needs of those preparing to enter or reenter the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, with that I look forward to both business and government continuing to work together and make sure seniors remain an important part of our workforce.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other members that would like to speak on this motion?

The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

I want to add my voice to the many who've already spoken in relation to the contribution that seniors can make to the workforce. As we know, over the period of time the definition of senior has become redefined. People fit into that category that never thought that they would. Therefore, at a younger and younger age people are fitting into the category of seniors. Certainly, many want to continue to make a contribution to Island society.

At one time, retirement, I suppose, meant that you were going to spend more time in your slippers and on the couch and very little time being active in your community. That's certainly no longer the case. Many seniors, through volunteer efforts, through their efforts on municipal and community councils, through recreation groups, are making a major contribution.

They're also making a major contribution in the workplace, in the workforce, contributing a lot to the gross domestic product of the province. We find in the tourism industry the valuable service that

they bring to the visitors' experience. Seniors have a sense of the community and have a sense of this special place that we all live in, Prince Edward Island. They have a sense of the importance of telling that story, of making visitors aware of this place, Prince Edward Island. They have a confidence and ability to articulate in such a way that it engages the visitors. As we look at the profile of so many of the people that are visiting this province, it fits that seniors do a very good job of telling this story.

We are all very aware of the change in the overall demographic of society and the amount of people that are over 50 versus the amount of people that are younger than 50. It is important that we make the changes that are required to enable people to contribute.

I'm not sure if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but in some ways we're often looked upon as our contribution being the work that we do. Sometimes people feel that their employment is their value. By way of example, mostly if you ask some person what do they do, or who they are, within a sentence or two they will bring in their profession or their employment in the description of who they are and what they do. We certainly are a lot more than what we do. We're certainly a lot more as a person -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hour's been called.

Adjourn the debate.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Dunn: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Point-Bloomfield, that this House adjourn and stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

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

