

HANSARD



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Speaker: Hon. Greg Deighan

Published by Order of the Legislature

Fourth Session of the Sixty-Second General Assembly

23 NOVEMBER 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS	196
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	197
BORDEN-KINKORA (Inductee to Atlantic Agriculture Hall of Fame)	197
ST. ELEANORS-SUMMERSIDE (Summerside Christmas Parade)	198
CHARLOTTETOWN-KINGS SQUARE (National Drug and Addiction Awareness Week)	198
ORAL QUESTIONS	199
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Speech Language Pathologists)	200
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Recruitment of Radiologists)	203
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Open House at Wind Farm)	207
EVANGELINE-MISCOUCHE (Initiatives for Organic Farming)	207
CRAPAUD-HAZEL GROVE (Cleaning Supply Purchases for Nursing Homes)	208
CRAPAUD-HAZEL GROVE (Visitor Tax Rebate)	210
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS	213
PREMIER (Quebecois as a Nation)	213
PREMIER (Health Announcement)	214
COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (Emergency Preparedness Advertising)	215
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	216
REPORTS BY COMMITTEES	216
MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT	223
BILL 101 (An Act to Amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act)	223
BILL 100 (Payday Loans Act)	223

MOTION 11 (Protecting the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer)	224
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION	224
CHARLOTTETOWN-KINGS SQUARE	228
ALBERTON-MIMINEGASH	234
MORELL-FORTUNE BAY	234
BELFAST-POWNAL BAY	235
WEST POINT-BLOOMFIELD	236
WINSLOE-WEST ROYALTY	237
CRAPAUD-HAZEL GROVE	238
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION	240
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS	245
MOTION 2 (Seniors in the Workforce-further)	245
TOURISM	245
BORDEN-KINKORA	246
PREMIER	246
HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND SENIORS	250
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT)	252
SECOND READING AND COMMITTEE	252
BILL 7 (An Act to Amend the Real Property Transfer Tax Act)	252
BILL 2 (An Act to Amend the Civil Service Act)	263
RESPONSE TO THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE	266
BELFAST-POWNAL BAY	266
WEST POINT-BLOOMFIELD	271
ADJOURNED	276

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.

Nice to see a good number of people in the gallery this afternoon. Beautiful day here on Prince Edward Island and I might take a moment to welcome those people. I see two people side by side. I doubt they're travelling together. One is Paul MacNeill, from *Eastern Graphic* - welcome, Paul - as well as Ralph Villard, the best barber on Prince Edward Island. But he's not cutting as much hair as he used to. So I don't have that opportunity quite so much anymore. I want to welcome all visitors to the gallery.

I believe all Islanders were saddened to learn of the passing of distinguished Atlantic musician John Allan Cameron. He certainly performed often on Prince Edward Island. There wouldn't be too many people in my generation who perhaps hadn't sung the *Four Marys* or some of those great old tunes that belong to John Allan Cameron. He was indeed a person who brought traditional music to the masses and to recognize - not only on Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia or Cape Breton, and of course throughout North America and into Europe especially. So we do want to recognize his passing and extend our sympathies to his families from Prince Edward Island.

Earlier today just briefly I had the opportunity of meeting with representatives of the CN Pensioners Club, Mr. Robert Trainer, the president, and so on. I wanted to mention this because we're celebrating this year 50 years of the pensioners under the railway on Prince Edward Island. I think the

club was formed in 1956, I believe, so it's 50 years that they have been in existence. They have 360 members, and they're looking to the future, and establishing a virtual cenotaph to help remember the stories, the stones, the stages, the link that the Prince Edward Island railway, and railways generally, made in the province. I think it's a tremendous idea, a great vision from our pensioners, and I appreciate their good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I too would like to welcome everyone to the gallery today. As the Premier said, I think he's behind me, but I guess Paul MacNeill's here from the *Eastern Graphic and Western Graphic*, as well as Ralph Villard. There must be a Liquor Control Commission meeting today. Some haircuts going on for the Conservative caucus today.

I'd also like to say hello to Michelle Johnston who as everyone knows was a great candidate for us last time in the provincial election. She's a great Liberal supporter here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. Along with Cory Thomas, one of the newest councilors in the town of Summerside. I'd like to congratulate Cory on his success.

I'd also like to extend our thank you to Premier Shawn Graham who was the guest speaker at our annual fundraising dinner last night. Did a great job, and we welcomed Shawn here to Prince Edward Island and hope that he comes back many times. Of course, he has many ties to Prince Edward

Island with his wife being from the Freetown area, and even his brother married a girl from the Charlottetown area. So there's obviously a lot of connections between the Grahams and Prince Edward Island.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, *je voudrais dire félicitations à monsieur Sonny Gallant qui a gagné une nomination pour le parti libéral dans notre région d'Évangéline-Miscouche et puis je sais que monsieur Gallant est vraiment respecté dans cette région et puis j'espère qu'un jour il va être un membre extrêmement important du caucus libéral ici à la chambre et puis j'espère que les gens de cette région vont lui donner une chance un jour.*

Alors merci beaucoup, monsieur le président.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Sonny Gallant for winning a nomination for the Liberal Party in our Evangeline-Miscouche area and I know that Mr. Gallant is very respected in this area and I hope that one day he'll become an extremely important member of the Liberal caucus here in the House and I hope that one day the people from this area will give him a chance.

So 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 also would like to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery, and especially Paul MacNeill who's the editor of the *Eastern Graphic*. Paul is a neighbour of mine, just lives a stone's throw away from my house. His two daughters play with my granddaughter all the time, Katie and Erin.

They've always been really good friends all the way through. So it's good to see you here this afternoon, Paul, and I hope you enjoy the proceedings.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Inductee to Atlantic Agriculture Hall of Fame

Mr. McCardle: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to offer congratulations on behalf of the agricultural community of Prince Edward Island to the family of the late A. Colbourne Clow on his recent induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

A most deserving gentleman, Mr. Clow began his career on the fifth generation family farm in Freetown. It was there that he established Cassialane Farms, an award winning, nationally known dairy farm now run by his son, Derwin.

Colbourne Clow was dedicated to farm life and worked tirelessly on behalf of the farming community. Over the years, he was awarded numerous championships and breeder awards provincially, regionally, and nationally, not only for his Holstein cattle but also for his purebred poultry.

Mr. Clow was recognized as a leader in our provincial agricultural community and was a founding president of the Central PEI Holstein Club, president and director of the PEI Holstein Association, and served on the Natural Products Appeals Tribunal for Agriculture and Forestry.

Always interested in community, Colbourne received the Hedge Row Award from the

Bedeque Bay Environmental Management Association and the Farm Section Award from the Rural Beautification Society in 2003.

Nominated by the PEI Federation of Agriculture for outstanding achievement in the agricultural industry, there is no doubt the late Colbourne Clow was a most worthy candidate for induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Once again, on behalf of the Island agricultural community and all Islanders, I offer sincere congratulations to the family of the late Colbourne Clow on this most deserving recognition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Summerside Christmas Parade

Ms. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, once again this year the members of the Downtown Business Association of Summerside are organizing the annual Christmas Parade.

This year's parade will be held Monday, November 27th, starting at 6:30 p.m. and will have bands, floats, and lots of Christmas characters frolicking along the parade route from the old Holland College parking lot and winding its way through the city streets to the Waterfront Shopping Centre.

Special thanks go to the Downtown Business Association and sponsors, the Waterfront Shopping Centre, and the County Fair Mall.

After the parade, everyone is invited into the mall to have some cookies and hot chocolate, and Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus

will make themselves available to any of the youngsters who wish to visit with them.

I extend an invitation to my hon. colleagues and to all Islanders to spend some time next Monday evening in Summerside and enjoy the hospitality of the wonderful folks who live there.

My congratulations and thanks to everyone who has assisted to make this parade the great success it always is.

Once again, come and join us for a fun-filled evening in Summerside.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

National Drug and Addiction Awareness Week

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

I rise today to recognize National Drug and Addiction Awareness Week, November 19th to the 25th. This week began as a grassroots initiative in the early 1980s when it was officially recognized by the federal minister of health in 1987.

Our caucus has taken the view that the issue of drug and alcohol addiction is particularly serious as it relates to our young population. While addictions and substance abuse at any age is a serious social concern, it is simply heartbreaking to see our young people who should be looking towards a future, a good future, but are looking towards a future struggle with addictions and drugs and alcohol.

To this end, we advocated before the

opening of the House a drug and addiction strategy that would address the unique needs of our youth. Our call for this strategy was based upon consultation with parents, parents' groups, mothers and fathers battling to rescue their children from the grasp of this difficult social challenge.

Let me be clear: drugs and alcohol are a problem among our youth on Prince Edward Island. We might be a gentle Island but this is not a gentle social problem. It is here and we must face it head on. As parents, as legislators, as families and friends, we all have a role to play in combatting the problem of drug and alcohol addictions among our youth.

In promoting Drug Awareness Week, the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse offered a detailed overview of various activities. Page after page, they identified various provinces and what they were doing towards this problem. For PEI the offer was one line, one line for Prince Edward Island, and I want to read you this line, what our province is doing for youth drug addictions: PEI does not have a drug awareness coordinator and activities at the regional level are limited.

As legislators, this is unacceptable. As parents, it is unacceptable. As a province, we must commit ourselves to do more. We must change the attitude and we must act now.

We met with a group from Summerside just a few weeks ago. Parents are suffering. They want help for their children. My heart goes out to them. We have to do something in this. I thought the government would announce something in the throne speech. I was extremely disappointed they didn't. But this side of the House will continue to fight for this problem and get something done in this area. Because it's the youth of Prince Edward Island we should be looking out for.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Questions by Members starting with Responses to Questions Taken as Notice.

The hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed.

Ms. MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, when do you raise a point of privilege with regards to a newspaper article?

Speaker: You can raise it now, hon. member.

Ms. MacKenzie: Yes.

In *The Guardian* this morning it referred to my second job. Yesterday when I was interviewed by reporters I explained it was necessary for me to seek employment outside of the Legislature to maintain my professional body license and that was left out, and that's why I do seek employment. I require x number of hours every year in a five-year span to maintain my nursing license, and that was neglected from the story.

Every summer I seek work. I'm lucky enough now to have a contract for a year so that will make it much easier, because every summer I've had to go out and try and find work for the required number of hours that I needed, so I would just like to add that.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, member.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Speech language pathologists

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

My first question today is for the minister of health. As the minister knows, PEI faces an acute shortage of speech language pathologists here in the province. In PEI it is estimated that there is one speech language pathologist for every 4,050 students. On a per capita basis, PEI has among the poorest access in the country to speech language pathologists. Why, Mr. Minister, is your government failing so badly in recruiting these key health care professionals?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

Mr. Gillan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an area that you may recall from the last sitting of the House that we explored from time to time. There hasn't been a lot of change in that area. We still are at the - well, we've actually added one more individual. A person has come back from leave, and I think that makes 20. There are 16.6 full-time equivalents, which makes 20 individuals.

We have been actively recruiting in this area, and as the Leader of the Opposition has correctly indicated, there is an area there that certainly does need addressing and it is an area that we in the government have been attempting to do more in recruiting. It is not the fact that we do not have the budget available. It's just the opposite. It is that we cannot get the qualified individuals to fill that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very

much, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that a full-time speech language pathologist working in O'Leary recently left, which is truly unfortunate. Representatives from the provincial association have told us that vacancies and positions in the west have been extremely hard to fill. One point five position took as long as two years to fill. Has the minister spoken to this individual who has chosen to leave? Has he spoken to her professional association to assess what could have been done to retain that individual?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it's very difficult with professionals.

They come into the province and, unfortunately, they make decisions sometimes to leave the province based on family and/or professional reasons. While I have not myself personally spoken to this individual, I understood that it was for personal reasons why they did leave that particular area. It's no different than with other professionals, i.e., nurses, doctors. It's difficult recruiting to rural areas. We are presently taking a look in other areas, particularly that of physicians and nurses, to see whether or not we can come up with some different and new interventions that will attract and also to keep these professionals. So it's not the fact that we would insist that people stay forever. You cannot. These are professionals and they, obviously, make up their own minds.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's actually kind of nice to hear that after 10

years that the minister is finally starting to believe that they have to look a little outside the box in terms of attracting health care professionals to our rural communities here on Prince Edward Island.

But I've got a new question for the minister of health. I understand that HRA was awarded a contract to study whether or not we indeed do have a shortage of speech language pathologists. Could the minister confirm if this is the case?

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

Mr. Gillan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, they were awarded the contract.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The fact that the minister needed to hire a consulting firm to tell him what educators, parents, learning disability specialists have been telling his government for the last three years is really quite remarkable. I'm wondering: Could the minister please table the results of that study in the House?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, on one hand the Leader of the Opposition says: Finally, you're going to be able to do something, you're going to start to think outside the box.

When he hears of a group that we had asked to give us the type of thoughts that what can we do differently, what are these individuals looking for, then he drops all over the top of

us and says: You're going the wrong direction, you should have been able to identify that for some other reasons.

Again, he can't flip-flop. You can't have it both ways. These are, as I have indicated many times, in many cases, young professionals. They come into the province, obviously many of them fresh from school, they want to get their CV built up over time, and then they're many times anxious to move to other centres for other reasons.

We contracted with HR to see whether there were some other things that we can possibly do. I will investigate to see whether or not we can in fact share that study. As far as I know, it is a public study.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd ask the minister to please pay more attention to my questions as I was asking questions directly before on whether or not HRA was doing a report into seeing whether or not we have a shortage of speech language pathologists here in the province, to which he indicated yes. But that's okay. I hope he can get back to this House as soon as possible with that information so that we can see exactly what the government's paying for when we already knew what the problem was.

But I've got a new question now for the minister. Nowhere is this government's abject failure in recruiting and retaining speech language pathologists more evident than in our school system. Is the minister aware that shortages of speech language pathologists are so bad that parents are being told that if they can afford to pay for private service, that they should do so?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, as we have been examining the issue it is a known fact that there is increasing need for these professionals.

There is a two-pronged approach. The Department of Health works with the pre-school age children in conducting assessments and evaluations and then it is up to the Department of Education, through that ministry, to be able to apply programs. They have added in this past year a number of specialists in that area but it is true that the private sector also has, I think it is, six individuals that are available for private consultation. As with any other opportunity, the private sector in this instance did see fit that there would be an opportunity to offer services to the public here. If parents wish to avail themselves of those professionals, the service is there.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Where I have a fundamental problem with that answer is that it leads to two-tier education. It leads to two-tier children, really, where if a parent can afford to go out and pay for a child to get the help that they need with their speech problems, then that parent is able to do it. But for a family that's not able to do it, they're still stuck and waiting to get the necessary care that they need so that they can continue on with the education system, the same as any other child can. I really find that quite unfortunate.

I'm wondering: Does the minister support the move that schools are having parents - that parents are going out now and paying privately to have speech language

pathologists take care of their children? Does he support that?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, again, it is with any enterprise that is in the private sector, parents, consumers have every right and they will make the decision as to whether or not they want to access the service.

I have certainly agreed that there is an ever-growing need within the school population, within the population of pre-schoolers. We do not have sufficient numbers to satisfy this. I'm sure that you are aware that only in the recent past - and I'm referring to the last five to seven years - that science has been able to, because of the advantages and advances in technology, identify at an earlier age these children which do need the services of these specialists. So it is a relatively new science, relatively new behaviours, and evaluations have to be offered. I'm sure that it is an area of need and concern and it's going to be addressed.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I find it quite unfortunate that there is this somewhat of a two-tier system taking place now and I really wish that the minister would put more resources -

Mr. R. Brown: Private clinics.

Leader of the Opposition: - in it to ensure that we can have more speech language pathologists.

But I believe if anyone is qualified to comment on the extent of the shortage of speech language pathologists on PEI, it

would be the parents who have had to turn to privately paid services. I'm wondering: Were any of the parents who were told that they should pay for speech language pathologists' services interviewed or consulted as part of your government study?

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that they were.

I do not have firsthand knowledge. I was not given an opportunity to have a briefing and/or at any time to be part of that study. I am sure that all areas and avenues would be thoroughly investigated. It is a very reputable company and they certainly are very exhaustive in their pursuit of information and details, and that's why they make good recommendations to government and to anybody else who makes use of them. So I would certainly go out on a limb and indicate that I'm sure that contact would have been made.

We have in the past had contact through the Learning Disabilities Association. There is a group there that represents the public. We have met with them on a number of occasions and that is the reason why we are kept abreast of the needs, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm wondering: Could the minister inform this House how many parents have had to secure privately paid services for their children because of this government's failure to attract the number of speech language pathologists that we have? Is it 10

parents, 50 parents, 100 parents? Could the minister please give us that information and if he doesn't have it, I'd ask him to bring it back, hopefully when he tables the documents here in the House with regards to the HRA study.

Mr. R. Brown: Good question.

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I do not have an exact number so I'm certainly not going to guess at it.

I do know that the number is higher in Queens County than it is in Kings and in Prince County. Obviously - and I shouldn't necessarily say "obviously" - I believe part of that is a reflection of the higher population base that would be available in Queens County, but I do not have the number of individuals or parents. There is no reason why I would necessarily know that number. I mean, it would not be necessary for parents to check with us before as to whether they should or should not go and also as a followup if there is no need. So there would be no direct contact with my department.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'll move on to a new line of questioning now for the minister but I really hope that he gets back to this House with the information that we're looking for as soon as possible.

Recruitment of radiologists

Mr. Minister, the delays experienced by Island women requiring mammograms is nothing short of negligence on the part of

the provincial government. The fact that our radiologists on PEI have had to go out and plead with their colleagues from other provinces to come and temporarily help, I believe, is a sad story. Clearly, this is an indication of the Conservatives' complete failure in recruiting these health care professionals. Mr. Minister, why has your government been so unsuccessful in filling the two vacancies that exist in radiology? What happened to your dramatically expanded doctor recruitment budget and that list of prospects you kept waving about?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, as in the previous line of questioning regarding SLPs or the speech language pathologists, in all areas of professionals - and I've indicated this many times before - we are very fortunate in this province to be securing many of these young professionals right out of their training schools.

We've also been able to reach out and bring in individuals with a number of years' experience. Not all of those for any number of reasons, both personal and professional, choose to remain with us forever. That has been the case with the radiologists. It was only last year, 2005, that we lost two radiologists, a husband and a wife team. This has happened to us before, and I think that the Leader of the Opposition probably knows of a number of husband and wife teams that have left the province. They did so for professional reasons and you cannot stop that.

So in the interim between the time that they have left - and, yes, our recruiting efforts were certainly on - the radiologists that were left were able to keep going for awhile but, again, there were a number of events which unfortunately occurred which created a backlog. But it was not for a reason that we

were not actively recruiting. We have been.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I know the minister likes to talk all the time about all the great recruiting that they're doing but, unfortunately, there still seems to be vacancies left all the time. This government has now been in power for the last 10 years and have had an opportunity to come up with new strategies and have failed every step of the way. And you know now, with the mammograms, in some instances Island women with a history of breast cancer in their families are being forced to wait months for an exam. I'm wondering: Will the minister please tell the House as to how specifically he and his officials have gone out to try and fill the two radiology positions on a full-time basis?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated on our website, we actively recruit and make known to specialists and family physicians of the openings and the possibilities of working here in the province.

We also, not only with the website, attend job fairs, but also it is the contact that professionals, i.e., the doctors, the radiologists in this case, an influence that they could have on their colleagues, their classmates, their former classmates, that we have found over the last number of years that is very rewarding. Indeed, those are where good contacts have been made.

So we make abundant use of all methods of advertising to get the word out. And in this case, it did come to fruition that at a recent conference when we did have a couple of

radiologists from the Island in Montreal, it was a national conference, and they put out the word that, indeed, they could use the assistance of some. A number of locums have appeared from that. So we have made use of all of the normal advertising channels as well as word of mouth.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

That's a very interesting answer. Because the Canadian Medical Association offers a national advertising service for hospitals and provinces trying to recruit doctors. We've done some research into what other jurisdictions are doing to recruit radiologists. The CMA advertises openings for radiologists. This is an organization that over 80% of all Canadian doctors belong to. On that site we find radiologists. Vancouver Island is advertising for radiologists, Vancouver, Sudbury, Winnipeg, Vancouver Island again, Alberta, but nothing from Prince Edward Island, not one advertisement, not one nickel of that so-called new doctor recruitment spent on actually telling radiologists that we want them to work here.

Why, Mr. Minister? Why the lack of action on recruiting new full-time radiologists on Prince Edward Island?

Mr. R. Brown: They don't want them (Indistinct).

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I've indicated in the previous answer that we make use of any and all advertising opportunities.

We do use the Internet. We do use the

journals. We do use word of mouth. I have been told that not every month is it good advice to keep putting the same advertisement in the same area. We have, for instance in the past, skipped a month in some of the journals about putting in our advertisement for Prince Edward Island. Apparently, that is a bit of marketing opportunity, that if you skip a period of time and then go back, they look at it as a fresh opportunity. I'm sure that the opposition may not have heard of that or would certainly not agree with it. I'm not sure whether in the case of the CMA that that indeed is the possibility, but we have made use, extensive use, of all of the advertising forms.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Another interesting answer from this minister. So let me try and direct my next question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you, sir, have spent thousands upon thousands of taxpayers' dollars advertising and promoting your own government for your own vanity ads. We see ads all the time of you of the minister of development out showing how you're spending taxpayers' dollars. You advertise in the newspapers. You put on nice blue print just like the Conservative Party in Prince Edward Island. July 26th, September 13th, September 14th, October 8th, September 22nd - all this for advertising the Premier's own vanity ads.

Mr. R. Brown: Shame, shame!

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Premier, don't you think that Island women requiring life-saving mammograms would be better served by a government that put money into advertising for new radiologists rather than half-page self-promotion ads that do nothing

but pad your own ego?

Mr. R. Brown: Shame!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that government advertises in a number of areas.

We certainly promote job creation on PEI. We want to promote the fact that good things are happening across Prince Edward Island. It's important for young people to know that there are opportunities today in bioscience, that there are opportunities in IT and communications, that there are opportunities in aerospace, that there are opportunities in alternative energy, those sorts of things. Really, it's because of the initiatives we've taken in letting people know that those opportunities are here that we're getting a tremendous enrollment in programs at Holland College, in the university, in these fields, that employment continues to grow in Prince Edward Island.

We're not doing that at the neglect of funding for health care or advertising for health care. In fact, we advertise heavily in the health care field as well. We're spending a lot of money on recruitment on an ongoing basis. That recruitment has been successful. Do we have areas that need continued attention? Absolutely. But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we have more doctors on Prince Edward Island today than we ever had in the history of Prince Edward Island. We have more nurses working in Prince Edward Island today than we ever had in the history of Prince Edward Island. That's because we have had strong recruitment efforts, including advertising where necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, but I think the Premier should really get in touch with the people waiting at the emergency rooms at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, should really get in touch with the people who can't go to an emergency room in Souris, should really get in touch with the thousands of Islanders that still don't have a family doctor.

But, unfortunately, this Premier still believes that he should be putting out ads telling Islanders how he's spending their own taxpayers' dollars when that's in fact his job anyway. There's no reason to go out and promote yourself like that when we have shortages in our health care fields.

I'm wondering: Does the minister of health, would he rather have those dollars that this Premier is wasting on these ads and rather spend them in recruiting doctors, or does he agree with this Premier?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, he agrees with the Premier (Indistinct).

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated in replying to the question, a big part of our budget is advertising.

We do have a very viable recruitment effort we've had for many years now. Since the beginning of 2000 we have attracted over 90 physicians through our recruitment efforts here to Prince Edward Island. Obviously, not all of the 90 have remained but over half of them certainly have. Since 1996 over 100 people have been recruited. So the word is getting out. However, it is filling specific specialties that it is often very difficult. I know that we have worked with the Ontario radiologists in advertising in their newsletter

for this, and *The Medical Post*. I've indicated a number of these different magazines and we will continue to recruit through those areas.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Open house at wind farm

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In our district, not unlike the fixed link, there's just a real marvel of technology taking place with the wind farm. I've had a few calls from constituents that because of security reasons they're not allowed in to actually see the cranes work and do some of the heavy lifting. They're wondering about the possibility of having somewhat of an open house. So my question is to the minister of energy and environment if that's a possibility.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. R. Brown: Cake and cookies and everything.

Mr. Ballem: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There'll be no cake and cookies. But the member raises a good question and a good point. Because of the heavy equipment - it's a construction site - it's not possible for the public to have access to it on a regular basis. But that's a good suggestion, and I think we'll be able to accommodate the residents from eastern Kings and the public in general to allow that to happen.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, this is one of the largest

cranes that's ever worked on Prince Edward Island. A lot of the seniors in my area would really love to see this up close before it's taken apart so I guess I'd like to pinpoint this Sunday afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Mr. Mooney: The reason, Mr. Speaker, is because I believe this is a tremendous project. It's going to be finishing fairly soon, and I'd kind of like to have constituents able to see this work in progress before the completion. Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Ballem: It's hard to say no now, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, on Sunday afternoon we will make buses available for people to come to the site. We do need to have people stay away from the site, though, with their cars, and at the Eastern Kings Community Centre, we'll ask them to go there.

As the member did point out, the crane operating there is the largest ever to operate in Prince Edward Island. I know some people in this Assembly have operated cranes in the past and they're more than welcome to come and look at the big machines too, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Initiatives for organic farming

Mr. Arsenault: *Merci, monsieur président.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture. In the spring 2006 Budget our government announced an additional \$500,000 to be devoted to organic market development, training, risk management and business planning. I understood that this additional funding would be the first year in a five-year development program and government will be allocating \$1 million in each of the successive years. My question is this: Could the minister inform the House as to where the dollars have been spent?

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

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, our department has put a program together. It's an organic industry development program to work with the organic people. It was finished. The program was put together and it was open to applications beginning the first of July, and to date we have approved a number of projects. We've approved four really large projects: one being a dairy project, another one is a potato packaging facility, another has been a greenhouse operation, and another one has been for grains and oil seeds. So these are four major projects that will help for the development of the organic industry on the province of the Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Arsenault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a supplementary question. Could the minister perhaps give us more detail on how the industry has benefitted from these initiatives?

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

Mr. Bagnall: Mr. Speaker, the province recognized that the organic industry was an industry that we had to promote here on Prince Edward Island.

It's been increasing approximately 20% a year for the last years and into the foreseeable future that we see organic products moving ahead and forward. I guess one of the real success stories of our promotion would be the natural and organic group and PEI Pork Plus that have come together and taken over the Garden Province Meat facility. They say that part of the reason that they are here is because of our heavy commitment to organic on Prince Edward Island and they wanted to be in the ground floor and move forward in this industry. So we've seen the new owners of the Garden Province Meat based on our organic commitment and I'm sure we'll see many developments in the future based on our commitment to organic.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Cleaning supply purchases for nursing homes

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions today for the minister of health. A question in regards to the cleaning and chemical supplies that are being purchased for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Prince County, Colville Manor, Beach Grove. From whom are these being purchased, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the name of the companies.

I do know that I spoke to an individual here a short while ago and he was concerned. He was the Maritime distributor. We have made a collective decision and we are now going to be looking at buying our supplies for the hospitals from an area, a much wider area, and I believe it is now going to the Atlantic area through Merx or the procurement services. Which means that the company and the individual that is presently providing many of those supplies and services will not be doing so in the future.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From what I'm told, and I've been contacted by small business owners that have participated in the contract for these supplies in the past, am I under the understanding, Mr. Minister, from your comment, that this is now part of the Maritime agreement? It wasn't before. It now is part of this new three-year contract? Yes or no.

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

Mr. Gillan: I understand that that is correct, Mr. Speaker, that this call for supplies has gone out. It was an open tendering process, and prior to this time it was, as I said, a decision that we were making on Prince Edward Island, but now it is open for bids on an Atlantic-wide basis.

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

Ms. Bertram: I guess the question is why, Mr. Speaker.

There were various small businesses on Prince Edward Island benefitting from this government contract and it's a sure contract that they have. Why would government -

why, Mr. Minister, would your department decide, or transportation decide, to tender this out under the Maritime agreement where in the past it wasn't?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, the response for that is fairly obvious.

We are expected, as government, to get the very best possible services at the very best possible rates. This is the reason why we have gone on a wider area. This is the reason why we have Atlantic procurement agreements. So while it is advantageous and it is nice and it is comfortable to be able to offer whatever services we can for suppliers at home, we also have to be able to get the very best possible price on this. It is open for everyone including Islanders, obviously, to tender, but we are expecting and going to be able to get the very best price.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the record, what is the value of this contract, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that figure committed to memory. I know that it is substantial.

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, one of the small business owners that contacted me, I believe it was \$50,000 to \$75,000 that was a benefit to their small business here on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Minister, are you able or will you table the tender, those that did tender for this, and the prices for this, and the contract that was signed between this company and your government, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Gillan: Mr. Speaker, that is available, I'm sure.

I imagine it would be on the Internet, but if not, I would certainly make it possible. But I understand that we were also able, however, to give out still an existing piece of business to this particular individual and his company. He is a Maritime-wide representative so there is a portion of it that he can be competitive in. There's also another part of that is that if we're speaking about the same individual, he also provides a very good program of repair, and I understand that we would still be looking to him for that service.

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, I'm not speaking of just one company in particular.

There are various Island companies. We need to support Island businesses here on Prince Edward Island. Now if the minister is prepared to say it went to the tendering process, it was fair, and it went through the Maritime agreement, many of the provinces have a 10% variance, the threshold in the tendering process for in-province tenders related to that province.

Did your department or did transportation and public works use that 10% variance or do we have that 10% variance where in fact that will support Island businesses and the tendering process for Island businesses here on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Minister?

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

Mr. Gillan: No. Mr. Speaker, I indicated at the outset of the line of questioning I wasn't absolutely sure of the figures. I can only assume that that 10% variance principle was followed. Once again, I will be making the figures available to the opposition and they will be able to take a look at them.

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

Visitor tax rebate

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'll go on to another line of questioning.

Questions for the Minister of Tourism. In September of this year there were federal announcements made where the federal government was proposing amendments to the federal *Excise Tax Act*. I'm going to ask the minister and this is related to the visitor tax rebate and there's various implications. Do you agree, Mr. Minister, that this was a marketing tool that was valuable and with its elimination is going to create challenges to the tourism industry this coming season?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

When there were changes announced to the visitor rebate program I did contact the minister of industry, and other people within the federal government, to make them aware of the challenges that this would present to the tourism industry. Also attended the Tourism Industry Association of Canada annual summit where this was discussed in great detail. This will be an item that we are going to discuss coming on December 3rd and 4th when the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers meet.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, do you believe that the federal government is making the wrong decision by eliminating this visitor tax rebate?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Mr. Speaker, this is certainly a complex issue, and with 3% of visitors, international visitors, that are coming to the country exercising their option to participate in the visitor rebate program, we do have to see if the energy and effort spent on this particular initiative is where we should be directing our efforts.

Certainly a 3% participation rate would speak to it not being as effective as other measures. The tourism industry feels that there is opportunity for the federal government to support the Canada grant through marketing initiatives of the Canadian tourism commission. This may be an option to take. I did speak, as I mentioned, with Minister Bernier on Tuesday night on this issue and we'll be discussing it in Ottawa when the ministers meet.

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, the minister's tune has changed.

Perhaps now it's because he has counterparts in Ottawa that he would like to side in with, but in fact the minister went back into September and he stated that this was a bad cut for tourism here on Prince Edward Island. Now he's saying that, well, perhaps there's other measures.

Countries in the OECD have this. We are

part of the OECD. It's a reciprocal thing. If we travel to other countries in the world, we receive this rebate as well when we travel. So how can a Canadian government support such a decision? How can a Minister of Tourism here on Prince Edward Island support such a decision federally?

My question is this: Did you go to the committee hearings? Did you present your case for the tourism industry here on Prince Edward Island as minister responsible at the parliamentary proceedings in Ottawa and fight for this case and fight for the tourism industry here on PEI?

An Hon. Member: Right. Did you do that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

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

No, I wasn't part of the presentation. That was an industry presentation of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. I would like to inform the member that I was the only minister of any Canadian province or the federal government that attended the tourism industry association annual summit. I participated with Randy Williams, president, CEO, of the organization on this debate and that was to be an industry presentation. I was well informed of it. That is why I spoke to Minister Bernier and why I'm taking up the issue at the meeting of the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, this is an \$80

million worth decision. If the federal Government of Canada makes this decision, it's going to be \$80 million-plus affecting the tourism industry here in Canada. This is a significant blow, a very significant blow to such an important industry that needs to be supported in this day and age with all the struggles it's been going through.

Now it's interesting to note that the minister states that he did not present his case in front of the parliamentary committee looking into this because, in fact, we had a union representative, we had other members of the community here on Prince Edward Island, go up and make a case to the parliamentary committee. Why, as a minister or someone from your department, did not represent PEI at these parliamentary proceedings to fight for PEI, to fight for the industry here on Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Mr. P. Brown: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I was not going to take part in the grandstanding of the MP from Egmont in pretending that he was all of a sudden in favour of this particular program.

But as I did indicate, I brought this issue to the attention of the ministers responsible. I'm going to ensure that it's on the agenda at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting. But I do want to say the hon. Jim Bradley, the Liberal Minister of Tourism for the Province of Ontario, which has the most cross-border travel of any province in Canada, said that this was secondary in his concerns at the upcoming ministers' meeting to the western hemisphere travel initiative.

Less than 10% of our visitors here are international visitors and so it doesn't affect us to the same level, but we think it's a serious issue. That's why I'm bringing it up,

and we're going to work with the Government of Canada to enhance tourism in our country.

Speaker: Final question.

The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: Mr. Speaker, the tune is changing.

Here is a quote from the minister: It was a marketing tool that was valuable and with its elimination, it's going to create challenges to the tourism industry. Stated by the minister in a press release to *Guardian*. Mr. Speaker, this is an important component. It's important for the convention industry here on Prince Edward Island. There are many components. Exhibitors to these conventions. It's very important and I am very disappointed that the minister here is not (Indistinct). He represented us at the parliamentary proceedings.

My question is this: How are you going to lobby your federal counterparts in Ottawa and fight for this for PEI, fight for industry here on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

There must be trouble with hearing on the other side of the House. I did tell the hon. member that I lobbied at the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, the highest industry association in the country. I was the only provincial minister there. The closing comments made note of that. I did lobby the minister responsible for tourism in Canada. I did ensure that this will be part of the agenda of the federal, provincial, and

territorial ministers' meeting.

Now I do want to say that it is fair to analyse a program that is only accessed by 3% of the people that have availability to that particular program. So it is in fairness - if I had a program in my department that was only utilized by 3% of those to which it was available, I would have to question at some point whether or not that was a valuable program. Now we have to do that. I will certainly lobby the federal government in regards to this program.

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Merci, monsieur le présidente.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to express my government's support for Prime Minister Stephen Harper's motion yesterday in the House of Commons to recognize the *Québécois* as a nation within a united Canada. I join my colleague, the hon. Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec, in applauding the federal government's historic announcement.

This is an important and courageous step, not only for the people of Quebec, but for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and for Canada's national unity. I believe this is a defining moment for our country. Ultimately, it is a nation building effort. It recognizes the place of Quebec in a united Canada, in a Canada that embraces diversity.

A multicultural composition of Canada is the envy of the world. As Canadians we recognize our commonality and we celebrate

our differences. As a result, we are enriched as a nation.

We should not be concerned that this recognition means that other provinces are somehow diminished within Canada. I do not see this as the case.

Prime Minister Harper's initiative recognizes the historic, linguistic and cultural identity of the people of Quebec. By promoting a strong and united federation, all provinces benefit and Canada is stronger as a nation.

The impact for the Province of Prince Edward Island cannot be underestimated. A strong Canada, one which was conceived in this very building that we are standing in today, benefits all provinces and all Canadians. As Canada's smallest province, we understand the importance of being part of a strong federation.

In the fall of 1995, on the brink of the referendum, many Islanders travelled to Quebec with a message that their Canada included Quebec. Yesterday's announcement contains the same message. This is a measure that transcends partisan differences. And it's a measure that confirms national character and spirit - a Canada that is strong, united and free

I congratulate Prime Minister Harper for outlining a vision for Quebec in Canada. I ask that this House join the prime minister, along with the federal Conservatives, the federal Liberals, and New Democrats in expressing its support for recognizing that the *Québécois* form a nation within a united Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: *Merci beaucoup monsieur le président.*

Et puis c'est un plaisir pour moi de me lever aujourd'hui pour discuter du sujet de la motion hier au parlement du Canada. Et puis je sais que c'est vraiment important ici au Canada pour nous d'être un pays avec un visage. Et dans tout notre pays et dans toutes les provinces, on est unique. L'Île-du-Prince-Édouard est unique et puis on sait que le Québec est unique. Et puis on a essayé quelques fois avec le Meech Lake et puis le Charlottetown Accord ici au Canada à faire une distinction avec le Québec dans nos délibérations et j'espère qu'un jour ça va arriver encore. Pour maintenant on sait qu'il y a des politiques que les gens jouent au Québec. On sait que maintenant le Bloc québécois essaie de diviser les gens du Canada pour avoir leur vision d'un Québec qui est séparé du reste du Canada. Mais ce n'est pas ma vision; ce n'est pas la vision de la Chambre ici à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard et puis je sais que ce n'est pas la vision de la majorité des Canadiens et Canadiennes au Canada, monsieur le président. Alors c'est vraiment important pour moi que le Québec est une nation et puis il est unique comme les autres provinces, monsieur le président. Puis c'est un honneur pour moi d'être ici aujourd'hui pour donner un discours sur ce sujet.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And it is a pleasure for me to stand today and discuss the motion presented yesterday in the Canadian Parliament. And I know that it is very important here for us in Canada to be one country with one face. And throughout our country, in all provinces, we are all unique. Prince Edward Island is unique and we know that Quebec is unique. And we tried a few times with Meech Lake

and the Charlottetown Accord here in Canada to make a distinction for Quebec during the deliberations and I hope that one day, it can happen again. For now, we know that people are playing politics in Quebec. We know that the Bloc québécois is trying to divide the people of Canada and have their vision of a Quebec separated from the rest of Canada. But that is not my vision; it is not the vision of the House here in Prince Edward Island and I know that it is not the vision of the majority of Canadians in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, it is very important to me that Quebec is a nation and it is unique as are the other provinces, Mr. Speaker. Also, it is an honor for me to be here today to speak on this subject.

En anglais, in English, I think it's very important that here in Canada we recognize uniqueness. Quebec is a unique province. Whatever we can do to make sure that Canada stays a united country away from the separatists in Quebec, I will always stand up for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors and I will shortly be leaving the Assembly to travel to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital where we will be joining Dr. Chris Lantz, the Chief of Staff for the Emergency Department, and other health care professionals, to make a very important staffing announcement. It will contribute to the government's continued strategy of improving access to healthcare and reducing wait times for Islanders. That announcement will be at 3:45 p.m.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

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

Again, it's quite unfortunate that this government while they're in the Legislature would bypass the Legislature to make announcements outside of the House. I find it unfortunate that this government would play politics like that, but that's something that we've become accustomed to over the last 10 years.

I know the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been struggling with recruitment, especially in the emergency area. We've been pushing this government now for many years to beef up their recruitment efforts by coming up with incentives that are unique where we compete with the rest of the Canada, by talking about a residency program, by helping pay for the education of our young people, by buying more seats in our medical schools. Unfortunately, this government has chosen not to listen.

I hope that they make announcements today. Any announcement that has been made, my understanding, is if it has to do with more doctors arriving at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital emergency room has to do with the incredible work of Dr. Chris Lantz and the team out at that hospital that has gone through hard times. At one point in the summer almost had to close down the emergency room because they were too busy working double shifts all the time.

I congratulate all the doctors out at the hospital, Dr. Chris Lantz, on their fine work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last spring, during Emergency Preparedness Week, I advised Islanders that it is important to be prepared in the event of an emergency or disaster.

This month a national advertising campaign, supported by the Government of Canada, is reinforcing the message that everyone should be ready to cope on his or her own for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency; and that by acting now to assemble or buy an emergency preparedness kit, you will take a responsible and necessary step to protect yourself and your families.

As I advised the House in the spring, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, in collaboration with all provincial and territorial emergency management organizations including Prince Edward Island's Emergency Management Organization, the Canadian Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, the Salvation Army and organizations representing Canadian chiefs of police and fire services, has produced a brochure entitled: *72 Hours-Is Your Family Prepared?* This brochure offers specific planning tips for assembling a household emergency kit and is a valuable reference booklet.

Preparedness is a responsibility we all share. I encourage all Islanders to take the practical steps suggested to prepare for emergencies. I encourage every family to pick up a copy of the booklet, and assemble an emergency kit for their own home.

The 72 Hour booklet is available at Access PEI Sites and is printed back to back English and French. Information is also available on the website www.getprepared.ca or on the French language website www.preparez-vous.ca.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the 2005-2006 Annual Report for the Risk Management and Insurance Section for the period ending March 31st, 2006 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

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

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to table several documents. The first is based on a committee that was reviewing the GST in Ottawa. The second - can I put these all in block?

Speaker: Put them all together, hon. member.

Ms. Bertram: Thanks a lot.

The GST rebate that the union represented, the parliamentary talks, the union was disgusted in it. Continues: TIAPEI's letter to Minister Flaherty and their opposition - this is provincial TIAPEI. Canadian Alliance of Business Travel, their letter in opposition to it. Deloitte Canada, their concerns. The *Guardian* article from September 27th where the minister's statement that I quoted is in there. Tourism Canada's quotes in opposition to the elimination of the GST

rebate. There's another one here in regards to the rebate cut. I would like to table as well just the application for the Visitor Tax Refund, along with Meeting Professionals Canada and the business case for maintaining this program. Finally, a list of the OECD countries where in fact they have this and we are thinking of taking it away.

All seconded by the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Proud to do it too.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Reports by Committees

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

Mr. MacAleer: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries, Intergovernmental Affairs and Transportation, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said Committee and move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Rochford Square, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. MacAleer: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Rochford Square, that the report of the Committee on the subject of proposed amendments to the *Off-Highway Vehicle Act* regulations be adopted.

Mr. Speaker, the deliberations of the Standing Committee of Fisheries, Intergovernmental Affairs and Transportation on the topic was extensive.

The committee met a total of 12 times in six different locations across Prince Edward Island, and we heard from over 73 individuals who spoke for themselves or for organizations and various other groups.

As a result of the consultations and deliberations, your committee is making the following 14 recommendations to the members of this Legislative Assembly.

(1) An ATV, which is an all-terrain vehicle, may not be operated by a person under the age of 14 years.

(2) An all-terrain vehicle or an ATV may be operated by a person between the ages of 14 and 16 years of age if;

(i) the person holds an ATV driver's license which requires the person to have successfully completed a certified training course;

(ii) the person is wearing personal safety equipment or protective equipment;

(iii) the person is under the direct supervision of an adult; and

(iv) the vehicle does not have an engine size in excess of that recommended by the manufacturer for an operator of the age and weight of the person between the ages of 14 and 16 years of age.

Our third recommendation:

An ATV may be operated by a person between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age if:

(i) the person holds an ATV driver's license which requires the person to have successfully completed a certified safety training program; and

(ii) the person is wearing personal protective

equipment.

Our fourth recommendation:

An ATV may be operated by a person 18 years and older if the person is wearing personal protective equipment and possesses a valid driver's license.

Our fifth recommendation:

A dirt bike may be operated by a person under the age of 14 years only for competition or in preparation for competition and if:

(i) the person is under the direct supervision of an adult;

(ii) the person is wearing personal protective safety equipment;

(iii) the person has successfully completed a certified safety training course appropriate for the person's age; and

(iv) the vehicle does not have an engine size in excess of that recommended by the manufacturer for an operator of the age and weight of the person under the age of 14 years.

Our sixth recommendation:

A dirt bike may be operated by a person between the ages of 14 and 16 years if:

(i) the person is wearing personal protective equipment;

(ii) the person has successfully completed a certified training course; and

(iii) the vehicle does not have an engine size in excess of that recommended by the manufacturer for an operator of the age and weight of the person between the ages of 14 and 16 years of age.

Our seventh recommendation:

A dirt bike may be operated by a person 16 years of age and older if:

- (i) the person is wearing personal protective equipment; and
- (ii) the person has successfully completed a certified safety course.

In addition to the recommendations, your committee further recommends that the following apply to the operation of dirt bikes in all motocross racing events:

- (1) A trained official must be present;
- (2) A trained first-responder must be present;
- (3) Course rules are enforced; and
- (4) The vehicle is operated in a class based upon the person's age, size and ability.

Our ninth recommendation:

Your committee recommends that a person who owns or operates or is a passenger on a off-highway vehicle on land with or without permission of the owner or occupier of the land, is deemed to have willingly assumed all risks related to the ownership or operation of or carriage on the off-highway vehicle except a danger created by the owner or occupier of the land with the deliberate intent of doing harm or damage to the person or property of the owner, operator or passenger.

Our tenth recommendation:

Your committee heard from many interveners that there is a need for a dedicated trail for off-highway vehicles. Therefore your committee recommends the Minister of Transportation and Public

Works, in cooperation with the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs and the Minister of Tourism, assist off-highway vehicle user groups to develop alternative trails or routes outside the Confederation Trail. Further, your committee recommends that the Minister of Transportation and Public Works also assist off-highway vehicle user groups in developing a management framework for the off-highway vehicle trail network which would include, but not be limited to, acquisition, designation, maintenance, insurance and liability, environmental protection and usage.

Our eleventh recommendation:

Your committee recommends that the legislation and associated regulations respecting off-highway vehicles be enforced to a greater degree. Compliance in the areas of registration, use of appropriate personal protective equipment, allowable areas for operation, and all other regulations associated with off-highway vehicles must be increased. Your committee recommends that law enforcement agencies be provided with the tools to effectively deal with the problems created by off-highway vehicle use. To this end, your committee recommends that training sessions for officers be conducted and that information concerning regulations and penalties be readily available to officers working in the field. Your committee also recommends that penalties be increased, including the possibility of vehicle seizure, with the aim of providing genuine deterrent value.

Our twelfth recommendation:

Current regulations state that off-highway vehicles must be registered and display a license plate issued by the Registrar. Your committee recommends an appropriate increase in the registration fees for off-highway vehicles.

Our thirteenth recommendation:

It is recommended that there be an increased emphasis on registering all off-highway vehicles. To this end, your committee recommends the involvement of dealers of off-highway vehicles and the registration of off-highway vehicles similar to the role of automobile dealers and vehicle registration.

Our fourteenth recommendation, and the last one:

Finally, your committee recommends that the Minister of Transportation and Public Works, within three years of the adoption of this report, review the effectiveness of the *Off-highway Vehicle Act* and associated regulations, particularly with respect to accident rates and injuries, for the various classes of off-highway vehicles and his or her findings.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding this, I want to thank all those who participated in this particular committee. We had substitute members which were particularly active, we thank them. But above all, I want to thank the Clerk Assistant for her participation, her patience and her penmanship in making this possible.

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

Mr. MacAleer: Without her assistance, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't have been quite as successful as we were.

Thank you.

Speaker: The member is speaking on this report?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I want to thank the Clerk Assistant for the job well done. But I also want to thank the presenters. There was a number of presenters across Prince Edward Island that made a presentation. I want to thank especially the medical society, and especially the doctors from the IWK that came over.

This is a major problem. Listening to the doctors of the problems that come in through the emergency rooms and what they see on a day to day basis, it is an important issue, and something had to be done about this.

I hope - we had a commitment from the minister of transportation and from the Government of Prince Edward Island that this session this bill will be made in the legislation and the legislation will be brought back to this floor. I know that the promoter of the report said a recommendation in three years. The interpretation of that means the bill, the new legislation. It doesn't mean the current legislation, the minister of transportation has three years to do legislation. The minister of transportation committed to the people at one of the meetings that there would be legislation reflective of this report and reflective of what was said.

I hope that the minister of transportation takes this report immediately, gets Legislative Counsel to do up the legislation right away, and be back in this Legislature within a week so we can debate this and have a discussion on this before.

I hope that this government does not delay this very -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. member, he's speaking on the report. Would you give him a chance? If you want to speak, I'll let you speak after

the Member from Souris-Elmira.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This member has been interrupting this House constantly.

Speaker: All right, hon. member, don't add to it, please.

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

The minister made a commitment, and I'm going to hold her to that commitment, that legislation will be presented in this House this session, as soon as possible.

I just hope she reads the medical society's report. I hope that she takes their consideration in when she's drafting the bill, because I commend the medical society. I look towards the medical society for their advice. I have brought in a lot of resolutions on the medical society. This government likes to take credit on the removal of VLTs from corner stores. It was the medical society's recommendation, a good recommendation. The City of Charlottetown passed a resolution towards it. We had a plebiscite and an 85% turn out voted to get rid of VLTs. That was the result.

Speaker: Hon. member, we're sticking to the committee report, please.

Mr. R. Brown: One of the presenters there, Mr. Speaker, was the medical society. So I ask the minister to look at the medical society's information, and especially the doctor from the IWK, who has to administer a lot of this things. Look at their advice and make sure that her new legislation and the government's legislation is reflective of what the medical society has been saying.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Mooney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also just wanted to rise to my feet today to support this committee report and the work of the committee, and especially the Clerk Assistant that put in long hours writing report after report for this, and for the many presenters that came out.

In my own community, as most know, we've lost two young members of our community in the last year to ATV accidents. But still there are people on both sides of the debate. But the bottom line is this is done for safety for our youth, and our youth are our future. So I just want to thank the House for the support for this report, and the sooner the rule changes can be implemented, the very better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm not a permanent member of the committee that studied this issue, but I did have the opportunity and the privilege of serving at a number of the committee hearings as a substitute member.

First of all, I would like to commend both sides of the House for the interest and the sincere intent that they brought to their deliberations in terms of listening to the public and then, of course, in deliberation on the 14 recommendations that were so ably presented by the committee chairman here this afternoon.

This report, the recommendations may not suit everybody. I know there's going to be

some upset about this in various parts of the recreational community. But I think you'll find that this committee report is really a unanimously endorsement of trying to work harder to protect our children's health and trying to give adults, again, some guidance through these 14 recommendations on ways to make that happen.

A final point, and it's related to the blow and bluster we just heard from the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, regarding his words of admonition to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works, I want to say that there's no one in this Chamber who cares as much about the safety of Prince Edward Islanders on and off the road than does the current Minister of Transportation and Public Works.

I have full confidence that she and her department will be introducing effective legislation to this Chamber in this session that will certainly respond well to this issue.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Collins: Yes, in this session.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Shea: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just before I have to leave to start working on that legislation, I just want to commit to the House that we will be bringing legislation for it after studying this report. I can assure the hon. members that it will be ready for this session and it will be debated in the House.

I want to thank the committee for the work. I know they wrestled with this issue for

quite awhile, and so have I, because I know people personally on both sides of the issue. Last weekend there was actually another fatality, another ATV fatal, this time in New Brunswick, but the little girl who lost her life in New Brunswick had some roots in my community, so the safety of ATVs certainly hit home again.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we can't make decisions with emotion or passion and we have to make them with responsibility. So we will be bringing forward legislation this fall.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I just want to echo the sentiments that were already made by numerous speakers here. There was a lot of different members who attended these meetings, and these were meetings actually that took place all over Prince Edward Island, if we remember. We actually went out on the road. We were in Alberton, we were down in other areas of the province, down close to Elmira. I believe we were at the Fortune Community Centre, we were down in the Murray River area, Kensington Legion. We were in Tyne Valley Legion as well, I believe. Ellerslie Legion, that's right.

So we were all over Prince Edward Island and there were a lot of different views, and I will admit that. But this is something there where sometimes, you're right, you have to stand up and we have to look out for the betterment of an entire society.

It's not too often that I'll say something like this in the House, but I'll say it now. If the Minister of Transportation and Public

Works happens to show up with legislation tomorrow -

Mr. R. Brown: We don't mind.

Leader of the Opposition: - we don't mind. But I believe I read her comments already in the paper and we knew that there was legislation on the way, even before this report was done. But I think that it was the responsible thing to be doing in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, as you probably realize, there was - and all members of the committee realized - there was actually numerous drafts done on this. I know the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park already recognized the Clerk Assistant, but I want to recognize the Clerk Assistant again, because there was a lot of back and forth, there was a lot of emails, and there was a lot of extra meetings to get this report done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

I'll just add my voice as a member of the committee, certainly in praise of the Clerk Assistant. But also I want to praise the Island community. Regardless of which side they were on in this particular issue, and they are very passionate about their position, they presented themselves in a very professional manner and contributed greatly to the discussion.

The people involved with the motocross association on Prince Edward Island really demonstrated what a lot of work they have done to develop motocross as a serious sport here on Prince Edward Island, and the volunteer effort that is required to do that,

and the investment they've made both in time and training, to develop motocross sport as a recreational opportunity.

What we found is that in a great many cases, the motocross especially - but also recreational use of ATVs - is really a family sport and many people participated in it, from the oldest to the youngest members of the family. So it is a good activity. But as legislators we do have a responsibility to ensure the safety of citizens and we took that responsibility very seriously and we listened carefully to each presenter. I think the recommendations reflect the concern which we as members of the committee had for the issue. We look forward to the Minister of Transportation and Public Works bringing forward the necessary changes that are required to implement the recommendations of the committee.

It was really interesting, I think it was last week, when I noted in the media that Paul Tracy, who is next to the Villeneuve family of Gil and Jacques, Paul Tracy is Canada's most famous motosport racer, is out for the rest of the season because of an injury. He broke his collarbone in a ATV accident in the United States. It just demonstrated that a person as highly skilled at the operation of motor vehicle as a person who won the Indianapolis 500 still received an injury on one of these machines. That just indicates the challenge to the operators in the operation of the machine.

As legislators I think we acted very responsibly and we look forward to the legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Shall this report carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the same be now received and read a First Time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: More bills coming from over here. Doing more work than the government.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*, Bill No. 101, read a First Time.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, currently under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, any executive council information that is more than 20 years old is open to the public.

I've spent the last year and a half trying to get some information out of it under this term. I've been railroaded all the way. But this bill will, in essence, allow telling the government after 20 years: Any information that is under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* shall be put in the public archives and people shouldn't have to pay to get that information.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Do you have another bill, hon. member?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a Bill to be intituled *Payday Loans Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the same be now received and read a First Time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *Payday Loans Act*, Bill No. 100, read a First Time.

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

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

I introduce this bill. The federal government has reneged on its constitutional work. Under the constitution the federal government has chosen to back away from this very important issue -

Speaker: Hon. member, just a breakdown on what the bill is, please.

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

This bill will regulate payday loans on Prince Edward Island. I've sent the bill to the other provinces and hopefully we can work together on this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other Motions Other Than Government?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that Motion 11 now be read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 11.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square the following motion:

WHEREAS the Chief Electoral Officer is the chief officer responsible for the fair and transparent conduct of elections;

AND WHEREAS the exercise of these duties in a fair and transparent manner is essential to the integrity of our democratic process;

AND WHEREAS the practice in Prince Edward Island has been to have the Chief Electoral Officer serve at the pleasure of the Premier;

AND WHEREAS many other jurisdictions have recognized that the integrity and independence of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is better protected by having the individual appointed by an all-party committee of their respective legislatures to serve a fixed term;

AND WHEREAS the unprecedented manipulation of the electoral boundaries by the Conservative Party demonstrates how far

the Conservative Government is willing to go to seek partisan advantage in the electoral process;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that section 2(1) of the *Election Act* be amended such that it is the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island that appoints the Chief Electoral Officer to a ten-year term;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the terms and conditions of his/her employment are subject to the same protections as those enjoyed by the Auditor General.

Speaker: To open debate on this motion, the mover, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Again, since I've been in the House over the last number of years, we've been working on a theme of accountability. I believe accountability and responsibility is something that is very important in a democratic system. It's why we tried to introduce a bill on the floor here last year that was rejected with regards to fixed election dates. Unfortunately, it was turned down. As you remember, we wanted to bring in fixed election dates because we believe it's important for accountability, responsibility, transparency. We wanted to have audited financial statements three months prior to an election so that a government of any political stripe, regardless of political stripe, can't come in and say that there could be a deficit in the 8 million range and then somehow magically, after an election, it jumps to 125 million, the largest deficit ever in the history of the province.

So this motion is further to that theme and vision of accountability and responsibility. I believe it's vitally important, as I'm sure you do, Mr. Speaker, that we make sure, in our province especially, that our elections are run with the utmost competence - they have been in the past, I will say that - and with the utmost towards our democracy. Canada and Prince Edward Island are viewed around the world as an ideal example on how to run democracy. But sometimes that democracy has to evolve. Of course we tried to do that with fixed election dates. Unfortunately, it would not be to the advantage of the present government so they chose not to go down this route.

This motion will not be an advantage to anyone. The only thing it will do, I believe in the long run, will help to promote more accountability and more responsibility and will provide more independence for the position of the chief electoral officer in our province. That's why I brought forward this motion now. I believe, especially after the embarrassing situation and the blemish that happened here in the Province of Prince Edward Island in June of last year over a government that chose to throw out an independent commission a report from the chief electoral officer and bring in their own part legislation, that this motion will go towards hopefully helping to restore - will never restore the damage that was done by those actions that took place then - but what this will do will go to hopefully help show that we are willing to still adapt. I believe that making sure the chief electoral officer is in a position of total independence from the Executive Council of government is something that we should work towards.

Right now it's my understanding - and I'm going to go through a few details here, and I could be wrong and the Clerk will probably nod or shake his head if I make a mistake, because he's quite the expert on this - but right now the chief electoral officer reports

through the Legislative Assembly. We decide a committee, legislative management decides on the budgets on dealing with the chief electoral officer and with Elections PEI. But unfortunately, the decision on who the chief electoral officer is still comes from the executive branch of government. That's the part that we're looking to change. We believe that by going down that route it will make things more accountable in the long run.

I'll just go through the whereases here. "Whereas the Chief Electoral Officer is the chief officer responsible for the fair and transparent conduct of elections." That means the chief electoral officer oversees all elections on Prince Edward Island. Whether or not we're talking about our provincial elections, whether or not we're talking about by-elections, municipal elections, I believe school board elections, that is the role of the chief electoral officer.

"And whereas the exercise of these duties in a fair and transparent manner is essential to the integrity of our democratic process." Again, like I said, Prince Edward Island and Canada is viewed as a model of democracy around the world and I think this is just one step further that will go down in those lines.

"And whereas the practice in Prince Edward Island has been to have the Chief Electoral Officer serve at the pleasure of the Premier." We know that Executive Council decides on who the chief electoral officer is, someone who reports to the Legislative Assembly, and it's been like this now for many years. So whether or not it was a Conservative government in power, a Liberal government in power, an NDP government maybe in power in another province, it's something that I believe is now time to correct.

"And whereas many other jurisdictions have recognized that the integrity and independence of the office of the Chief

Electoral Officer is better protected by having the individual appointed by an all-party committee of their respective legislatures to serve a fixed term.” That is really what we’re trying to do. I’ve done some research on this and I can inform you that for the Government of Canada the chief electoral officer must be appointed by resolution of the House of Commons to hold office during good behaviour. So it’s the House of Commons that makes the appointment on the federal scale. I can tell you in Newfoundland and Labrador the chief electoral officer is appointed by the resolution of the House of Assembly. In Prince Edward Island we’re not, obviously. In Quebec, the chief electoral officer is appointed by the National Assembly on a motion of the premier of Quebec by a resolution approved by two-thirds of its members. The chief electoral officer must be chosen from among the electors.

So you can see in a lot of these other provinces they’ve taken the step to advance their democracy. In Ontario the chief electoral officer is appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the address of the Legislative Assembly. In Saskatchewan the chief electoral officer must be appointed by a resolution of the Legislative Assembly. In Alberta the chief electoral officer is appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. In British Columbia the chief electoral officer is appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. The chief electoral officer must have been unanimously recommended for an appointment by a special committee of the Legislative Assembly.

So as we can see, many other jurisdictions across Canada, they’ve taken that next step to move towards making the position of the chief electoral officer even more

independent.

“And whereas the unprecedented manipulation of the electoral boundaries by the Conservative Party demonstrates how far the Conservative Government is willing to go to seek partisan advantage in the electoral process.” This is really what brought us to really bring this motion forward. In no other jurisdiction in Canada right now can a political party decide how the boundaries are drawn up in the province, except for here in Prince Edward Island. In no other province does the legislative assembly draw up the electoral boundaries.

In every other province it’s drawn up by an independent commission. It’s now the norm across Canada, they all recognize how it’s a conflict of interest for members to be involved in the process. To even give the current government a touch of credit, they even realized it after the fact by saying the next time values have to be drawn in this province it has to be done and accepted by an independent commission.

But the only thing is, they were more concerned, I believe - this is my theory - with protecting themselves. Unfortunately what they did was they jeopardized the integrity. We were an embarrassment across Canada. I’m sure you had the opportunity to witness editorials, *Globe and Mail* cartoons, and it was really a bad blemish on Prince Edward Island. I apologize in this House to the independent commission. I believe it was John Mitchell, Roberta Hubley and Justice John MacQuaid. I apologize to those members for the hard work that they did.

But unfortunately it shows the manipulation that the government is willing to go through. If they’re willing to go through that much manipulation where they’re willing to put Prince Edward Island in a position of national embarrassment, put themselves up for potential conflict of interest, open up a

whole wide range of court cases, then of course if the Lieutenant-Governor in Council still has power over the appointment of the chief electoral officer, what's to stop that position from doing the same thing again?

That's really how we got to where we are. So we're looking at protecting the chief electoral officer from any Executive Council, whether or not it's Liberal, Conservative or NDP. Because we've seen abuses of power. We've seen one recently. I'm sure - I wish we'd never see one again, hopefully under any government that I'll ever have the opportunity - we won't see one. But hopefully we will never see one again. But we cannot control what other people do, that is our problem.

It's vitally important that we offer that independence. I have, as I'm sure every member I would hope of this Legislative Assembly has, the utmost confidence in the current chief electoral officer. He has served Elections PEI, my understanding, for a lot of his career, if not the majority. I think he's doing a fantastic job. But I want to do is take the position to the next level and take it out of any potential dangerous positions where Executive Council again, or perhaps the Premier's office or the Premier's powers in this office, would want to try and influence anything that the chief electoral officer does.

So what we're really trying to do is offer independence back to the chief electoral officer and put the chief electoral officer on the same, really, page as the Auditor General. I just want to quote a little bit here from the *Election Act*:

The Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a person as the chief electoral officer. The chief electoral officer shall have a seal of a (Indistinct) approved by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. The staff of the chief electoral officer shall consist of

such employees as may be required to preform the duties of the office. The Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a person as deputy chief electoral officer who shall assist the chief electoral officer in the duties of that office and who shall have the same responsibilities and authorities as the chief electoral officer in the event of absence or inability to carry out those duties.

The consistent part there is the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, which is basically the Premier, the Premier's office, the Executive Council. From what we've seen in the past, we really can't - just over that one main issue with the electoral boundaries, but it's going to be there to protect all future governments, all future premiers, all future Executive Councils.

I just want to take a look at the *Audit Act*. Now this is kind of what I'm hoping for. If we pass this motion here we'd be more than happy to allow the government to bring in the legislation. If they want to get their picture in the paper trying to make them look more responsible and more accountable, we're all for that. We'll support the legislation when it (Indistinct) forward.

But under the *Audit Act* it says there shall be an auditor general who is an officer of the Legislative Assembly. And really, essentially now, I believe that the chief electoral officer is an officer of the Legislative Assembly, but they're appointed by Executive Council. I think it's important that we pick that up so the appointment comes from the Legislative Assembly. It says here:

The auditor general shall be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council following a resolution of the Legislative Assembly supported by at least two-thirds of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

I think that would be a great idea.

A resolution referred to in Subsection 1(1) shall be made by the Legislative Assembly on the recommendation of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, following consultation by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council with the Legislative Audit Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

So essentially what the *Audit Act* is saying is that the Legislative Assembly is the one responsible for the Auditor General. I think that would be a good way for us to approach our chief electoral officer. Kind of like how I read off all those other provinces are now doing.

The other thing that I think's important is to put a time frame on the position. If you say you (Indistinct) be renewed in two years or something like that and the chief electoral officer is perhaps doing something that a political party is not happy with, I believe a ten-year appointment like the Auditor General has would be a good way to go. So that's another idea that we have on that.

"Therefore be it resolved that section 2(1) of the *Election Act* be amended such that it is the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island that appoints the Chief Electoral Officer to a ten-year term."

Again, this is about accountability and responsibility and I believe making the right steps to improve our democracy.

"Therefore be it further resolved that the terms and conditions of his/her employment are subject to the same protections as those enjoyed by the Auditor General."

That's why I read out the acts from the *Audit Act* and the *Election Act*. I think that this would be a motion that would add to our democracy here on Prince Edward Island. I think that it would be something that would

be beneficial in the long-run to the people of Prince Edward Island. I think that it's something that probably the current government was going to introduce anyway, but I thought it would be important to put it into a motion.

So I hope all members of this Legislative Assembly will support this important motion. I hope they all recognize how other provinces are doing this and how we should move forward in offering the same independence to our chief electoral officer that is happening in other provinces.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker (Mooney): The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

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

I must say you look pretty good in the Chair too. You fill it out quite well.

I'm going to talk about the resolution. I believe also, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, that the chief electoral officer of Prince Edward Island must be an independent person, must have the protection of this House and must be seen as a public advocate here.

During elections it is a very trying time for all candidates and the parties involved and the chief electoral officer, that is the one person that should be above that. He or she should be not influenced by anyone in that position, and I can honestly say that the current chief electoral officer plus the past chief electoral officer has not been.

But I think these are important changes that we should do in order to fix up this problem of the new chief electoral officer. We're not

talking about the current chief electoral officer reapply and all that. That current chief electoral officer is in the position, duly appointed by the Executive Council and unanimously supported. I didn't hear anyone against the appointment, so I assume that person and the assistant has been unanimously supported by this House.

But it gives me great pain over the *Electoral Boundaries Act* how changes were made in it. We had a couple of independent commissions doing this and the independent commissions came back with their report. I know we're going to have a lot of debate afterwards about us not attending the House when this was done.

But let's make no mistake about it. If this goes to court - and it is going to court - this legislation in my interpretation will be found to be against the Charter of Rights, as was the legislation that the government introduced in 1998 to deny over 1,000 people access to the justice system. We told the government at that time that their legislation of that time, denying people their rights under Section 15 of the Charter of Rights, would fail. This government barrelled ahead anyway and introduced legislation, passed the legislation, and they knew they were doing the wrong thing. I know that this government knows they're doing the wrong thing now, but for expedience they went on and did illegal legislation.

I call it illegal legislation because I'm convinced that the Supreme Court of Canada - and I know they will fight it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada - will find it illegal. If they really believe that that legislation that was introduced was good legislation, they would have done the right thing and referenced it to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island and avoided this costly - of the cost over the next time.

Because what it has to do with this resolution is that the committee asked the chief electoral officer of the day to do up a report. They didn't like the independent commission's report so they asked the chief electoral officer to do up a report. That chief electoral officer went out and did up a report and he worked very hard on it. When they rejected that report, that in our opinion was a vote of non-confidence in the chief electoral office.

If the chief electoral officer is going to be independent, going to not report to the Executive Council only and report to the people of Prince Edward Island, they would have accepted his report as fact, but no, this Legislature rejected his report. Basically what they've done is voted a non-confidence in that position and that's why we were asking - matter of fact, the procedures that were going on there. They didn't even appoint the chief electoral officer, they let him stay in limbo until we in the opposition said to the government: You are not doing things right. The act says the Government of Prince Edward Island must have a chief electoral officer. That's what the act says.

For a number of months prior to that we did not have a chief electoral officer. We had an acting chief electoral officer, we did not have a chief electoral officer. So basically the government was breaking the law at that time.

But this is a government that has broken a number of laws, as we've seen the Supreme Court Justices say time and time again. That's why we brought this resolution forward, to make sure that position is given the due recognition and the due respect of it., the due respect of that position.

We think the government of the day did not respect that position when it rejected the report that the chief electoral officer done, and that is a blemish on this Legislature.

This is an independent person, or supposed to be an independent person. I must commend the current chief electoral officer. I could imagine what kind of pressure he was under when it was: Throw the justice's report out and you go do up another one. If you do up a good report that we like, we may appoint you as chief electoral officer.

Anyway, when we brought that breaking the law he was appointed very quickly. Lucky the Province of Prince Edward Island has such a good opposition as it does have to find out these things and to research them. I commend our researchers in the office who brought that to our attention.

This is why we're bringing it here today. We should allow the chief electoral officer who should be nonpartisan - and this one is and others have been - but he or she runs the elections, he or she will sit how things are to be run on Prince Edward Island, fair for both parties. What we have seen over the last few months is the gross unfairness that has been perpetrated in this House.

The way that the government and the Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island went about drawing a map to do up its own boundaries and threw the chief electoral's report. What does that tell Islanders? We have an independent chief electoral officer who reports to the people of Prince Edward Island who should be, and hopefully after this resolution will be, appointed by the Legislative Assembly. His or her opinion counts. But when they saw the map of the chief electoral officer and said: Oh, we still have some of our candidates running against each other, we're going to throw that out.

That's when this member decided not to sit in this Legislature. No way was I going to participate in breaking the law. No way was I going to sit in this Legislature and see the constitution of this country broken as it has been on the passing of the Progressive

Conservative boundaries act. No way will I, this member, sit and vote and participate in breaking the constitution of country.

I know a lot of members will be getting up after this and saying we're breaking no laws, we made a constitutional law. Yet have they shown legal opinions from their legal advisers that any legal advice in the government, especially the legal counsel for government, yet have they tabled any opinion from the legal departments on this legislation. They did not table anything, any letters from their legal lawyers saying this is constitutional viable because they know it's not.

Other provinces and the Government of Canada requires legal opinions on legislation and for the constitutional (Indistinct) . This government chose to override that.

Mr. Bagnall: No law has been broken.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, the law has been broken, it will be proven to be broken. I got to laugh, Mr. Speaker, because they sat here. The highest law in this country, it's called the Charter of Rights and Freedom. That is the law that is above us. We may think we're above the law, we may think we're kings and queens above the law, but we're not. We're not above the law.

As you can see, three supreme court decisions, stating how this government broke the fundamental freedoms of principles in this country, and that's why this member would not sit in this House. Because I was ashamed in 1997 when the act was put in allowing the government to fire 1,000 people. I was ashamed to sit in that House. I thought at that time in the opposition that we could convince government of the wrong they're doing. We sat up til Christmas eve, right up to 12:00 that day. I commend the former members

that sat in this House and fought that legislation right up to Christmas eve that day. But we knew we were having a losing battle, that day. We knew that the government was going to listen to us one iota. That's why this member chose not to sit in the House while the constitution of this country was being broken this time around.

I knew from experience that once this government has its mind set there is no changing it. Once this government has its mind set on doing what's right for themselves, there's no stopping them. I know that when it's in their interest and not in the interest of Prince Edward Island I have no voice in this Legislature. I have no voice in this Legislature, my voice means nothing when that comes. I've learnt from experience that when it comes about, when these guys want to do something and they know its breaking the law, there's nothing that I can say or the opposition can say that will change their minds.

That's why I (Indistinct), I'm not going to participate, I am not going to get in the getaway car with them because I'm not going to break the constitution of this country. If the government truly believed that the legislation that they passed and rejected from the chief electoral officer is good, they would have made a reference to the supreme court.

Now I'm going to explain what a reference is to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island. That's where under the *Executive Council Act* and under the *Supreme Court Act* the province or the Executive Council can refer a question to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island.

In 1989 the government of the day referred a question to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island. The Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island did their work extremely fast in that area, came back and

said to the government: No, the *Human Rights Act* is wrong, you have to change it. The government of the day came in with legislation and they changed it right away that put political rights in the human rights commission's act. In 1989 that was done. Clarified it. That was supposed to be the end of firing on Prince Edward Island, that was supposed to be the end of it.

If this government truly believed that their legislation was truly constitutional they would have referred it to the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island where we could of had a decision on it in very short order. But what they will do, there are citizens right now fighting that law.

Mr. Collins: What resolution are we on?

Mr. R. Brown: We're on the resolution for the protection of the chief electoral officer who made up a new map of Prince Edward Island which was rejected by the Conservative Party, and went out and did up their own map. That's what we're debating today, Mr. Speaker, the independence of this person.

If they truly believed in it they would make a reference to the Supreme Court on this very important issue. But you know why they're not going to make a reference? Because they know it's wrong. They know they broke the Constitution. They only have their mind on one thing. Themselves. Islanders mean very little to them. Because all they're interested in is their own political career. It's a shame the way that it's going on.

In this House today we have ministers one day saying we're for the tourism association, and when Stephen Harper gives them a call or their group gives them a call, they have no opinion. Shameful, not standing up for the tourism industry of Prince Edward Island. I'm ashamed of the ministers that do

that.

Mr. Collins: What resolution are we on?

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I don't know why these guys need to know.

Anyway, gentlemen, the peanut gallery, I'll say to the peanut gallery, Mr. Speaker - is that illegal (Indistinct)? They said it in the House of Commons (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. member, just stay to the topic.

Mr. R. Brown: You ask for all the retractions you want.

Anyway, I was extremely ashamed when the Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island rejected the chief electoral officer's report. The chief electoral officer was commissioned by someone to do up a report when they didn't like the independent commission's report. The chief electoral officer went off, did a very good report, but in the opinion of the PC Party of Prince Edward Island it was not a good report.

In the opinion of the PC Party of Prince Edward Island they said: We may not be able to win some elections here. We have some seats here that we're going to have to run against each other. We don't want that. What we'll do, we'll get our own map done that we know that is breaking the basic principles of the people of Prince Edward Island and Canada, breaking the Constitution of the country.

When asked to send it to the Supreme Court they said no. They said no to it, which really is a shame. A lot of references have been made to the Supreme Court, but they rejected the chief electoral's report. They rejected the independent commission's

report. They made up their own report.

Some citizens said: We don't think they're doing right, but they did what they did to the 11 people that took this government to court in 1996. They did what they said they'd never do. Fight us.

We have all the resources. We have a billion dollar budget. We don't care how much we spend on it.

Speaker: Hon. Member, you want to stay on the topic.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, I am on the chief electoral boundary's report presented to this House.

The vote of non-confidence was basically done when they rejected the chief electoral's report, which was an independent report and they chose to do up an unconstitutional bill and present it to the House.

If they truly believed it wasn't broken, the Constitution, they would refer it to Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island, but they will not refer anything to the Supreme Court. We even saw with the opening of the House judges will not even come to this Chamber now. First time in the history of Prince Edward Island where we didn't have the full slate of judges. They're embarrassed of us. They're embarrassed of this House.

The government of the day think they control everything. They want all the control. All this House means to them is the cameras and the daily press releases they try to put out through the House. Now, we even see today where they don't even respect the House anymore. They just say we're going to make announcements outside.

This resolution is trying to bring the integrity of government back to the people of Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That's what this resolution is all about, bringing the integrity of government back to the people of Prince Edward Island. The integrity of this House has been compromised far too many times. Far too many times has the integrity of your position, my position, the Clerk's position, and the officers of this House has been jeopardized. The confidence in this Legislature has been compromised by some of the shenanigans that have gone on here in the last few years.

People are no longer trusting this Legislature to represent them. People are saying: If the PC Party of Prince Edward Island can just go out and draw its own map and come in and have it passed in the Legislature, why do we even have an election anymore? That concerns me when people start thinking like that. That concerns me when we start losing the confidence of the people of Prince Edward Island. Concerns me when the officers of this House are put in jeopardy, when the offices of this Legislature are impugned. That concerns me. It should concern every member of this Legislature, but I guess when you're on a \$5,000 bonus plan your principles can be compromised.

This member's principles can't be compromised. I stand by the Constitution of this country. That is the only thing that protects the citizens from the government.

Speaker (Deighan): Hon. member, will we stick a little closer to the motion, please?

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

Again, on the chief electoral officer, we should pass this resolution. Show support in the independence of this office. Show the support of this Legislature of the independence of this place. This place is not

government. This is the Legislature. I think a lot of members are forgetting about that.

There are three levels of government in this country: the Supreme Court, the executive, and this Legislature. We have seen in the past - and I know from the peanut gallery they're talking to me about abandoning rural PEI. It's a shame.

Speaker: Hon. Member, I don't like to interfere with your speech on this, but I'm not going to mention again to stick to the motion, please.

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

I'm just responding to questions.

Speaker: Hon. member.

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

Anyway, I will be supporting the motion because I believe in the integrity of all officers of this House. I believe in the integrity of the chief electoral officer, and this member will stand behind the chief electoral officer. This member will stand behind the independence of the chief electoral officer. This member will not allow these officers' positions of this House to be compromised in any way by the government of the day.

We have to have respect these offices because we represent the people of Prince Edward Island. We all must remember through the officers of this House that is where truly things are done.

I will be supporting this resolution because we have to have some independence. One person cannot run it all. One party cannot run it all. This is a democracy. At least, it's supposed to be a democracy. The Constitution of this country is supposed to be above us. Lately, it hasn't been, but

hopefully this resolution will put us a little bit closer towards it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other member who would like to speak on this motion?

The hon. Member from Alberton-Miminegash.

Mr. Dunn: I guess there was a big hesitation (Indistinct) address this motion. I feel very strongly that this motion is just nothing but small-p politics.

The opposition is trying to use the office of the chief electoral officer to try to gain brownie points with the general public for a group who wouldn't participate in the legislative process in drawing up a map that deals with all aspects of Prince Edward Island. They forsake the rural parts of Prince Edward Island so they thought they could gain some points on it.

I'm disturbed about this whole motion. I can't support it. The first two whereases sow seeds of doubt and question the integrity of the chief electoral officer. It almost comes out and says he's not doing his job. We got to protect him so he can do his job. I think the chief electoral officers in this province for many years have done yeoman service that should be a credit to this province. Everyone that served in that position has done a wonderful job in serving this Legislature and the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dunn: I've also some difficulty where he says many jurisdictions. When he read them off, from my information the legislative assembly appoints the chief

electoral officer in Canada. He is right. In Newfoundland and Labrador and Manitoba all the rest are appointed. The final appointments are made by executive council. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island. I have to challenge him on his information. My statistics are different from his. Seven of the 10 are all appointed by executive council.

Also, he brings in the Conservative Party demonstrates its willingness to see partisan advantage. We firmly believe in Prince Edward Island. We firmly believe in all Islanders. We firmly believe in rural Prince Edward Island. We firmly believe that we stayed within the boundaries, within the guidelines set out for the electoral map. We didn't go beyond 15% in any areas. The City of Charlottetown has a variance of 10%.

This map serves all Islanders and especially serves rural Prince Edward Island. I have much difficulty supporting this motion. I think it's just an opportunity for the opposition to try to play small politics with innuendos. I really take exception to criticizing the office of the chief electoral officers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to speak to this motion, but I too will be very brief. I guess I should start off by saying my biggest issue is with the content of the resolution. Although I think there may be some merit in the objective to the motion.

Personally for myself, I spent a number of years as a civil servant in the province, first

as a supervisor, then a manager, then a director in the health system. While I was there at one point in time I actually supervised or was responsible for in excess of 60 people as well as a budget of around \$30 million. I personally realized that issues around staff, salary, conditions of employment. Whether positions actually excluded, classified or a member of any of our great unions. Whether UPSE, CUPE, Nurses Union or IOE.

HR issues are very complex, whether a position needs to be ten years or not. I think people have to have time to review and take a look at the expectations around work performance: what to do when there may be some complex personal issues that sometimes arise, whether we want them to or not.

For example if a person was unfortunately in a car accident and they were in a term for ten years, what happens if there's an election on? Does the House have to come back? Sometimes what happens to people who are healthy one minute and the next minute they may be exhibiting early stages of Alzheimer's. What happens then?

HR issues are extremely complex and I think the big thing is although there may be some merit any time there's major changes like that, you need time to actually view it. The other part in terms of the motion. I just would like to remind people that to my knowledge there's no conservative party on Prince Edward Island, we're actually the Progressive Conservative Party.

Many times when issues in the House get raised, especially the rural or urban, for me personally I think sometimes you have to show leadership. When I think back to the experience in the spring, it's really important that all Islanders have an opportunity to be represented. Especially our agriculture community, our fishing

community, as well as representation for our rivers, streams, water systems and bay. Unfortunately the first two maps were not able to do that for Islanders. It was actually in the third map that we got to retain sets in Kings County, Queens County and Prince County. Therefore I must tell you I'm going to have to vote against this resolution.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Shame!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to be very brief too. I'm really disappointed in this motion. It's a very important thing that we're talking about, but to turn it into political thing is wrong.

To me the two first whereases would be enough, instead of trying to make a political part out of a very important aspect of democracy. There is a lot of people and legislatures who seems to be taking some authority back from government and this is one of the things that can happen and will probably happen sometime, maybe before the next appointment.

But I must say that over my years as an MLA I had great respect for all of the chief electoral officers. I found them independent, worked with them - we have to work with them if we're going to be candidates because we have to have election booths, election offices established. Sometimes they need some advice. We have to have officers in the poll committee. Both parties have that now, and that was a good move ahead. Where you have to appoint returning officers or clerks. So we've had that

opportunity of working with them. Regardless of who they are or who appoints them, I think they're very independent and they recognize their job as being an independent job. They work for all political parties, all aspects of the democratic system.

Therefore I'm going to vote against the motion. Because the motion has turned into a political motion and that's wrong in my view, when we're talking about a very important thing such as the chief electoral officer, or in this case we also in a sense brought in the Auditor General.

If we're going to move forward in democracy and make changes we have to do them independent. If we want an election officer to be independent, then the motion must be independent.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Rodgeron: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to stand and make a few comments about the motion. I agree with the last three speakers on the comments they made, so I won't add to that. But a comment was made by the first speaker today which said: more concerned about protecting themselves.

I take exception to that. Because in the McQuaid report, if it was about me and me feeling comfortable with the district that I now represent, I would have supported that report because it (Indistinct) district untouched.

But I didn't support that report because I am here to represent all Islanders. When I looked at the way the map was drawn in

three reports, I could not believe - I kept thinking: Why is somebody blocking us in here, why are they saying that this line can't move? My understanding of this map is that it was supposed to be able to move and adjust across all of Prince Edward Island. I carried those maps with me for days, but I don't have them with me today, but I could tell you, if you laid those three maps on the table, the three maps, they were turned down, they drew a line at Day's Corner and they said: You people and the western part of this province cannot move your boundary past that line.

My understanding of this whole process is that it was supposed to be a provincial alignment, not leaving the people of West Prince blocked in behind a fictitious line that shouldn't be there. I'm really surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would support that kind of a map. When it was talked about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, when I came to this Legislature, again, it was to represent all people in Prince Edward Island. To think that the people out in the western part of this province were going to be left, blocked in behind a fictitious line, and say: No, you fellows are not part of the province, you're part of this little block in West Prince and you can't move your boundaries.

So on the principle of fairness in this whole process and looking at the variance that was used, right across this country a plus or minus 25 variance has been used. I think if anybody looked today that's still in place. On the first map - and I remember when I think of people like the Women's Institute who did much work for the people in this province and I worked with the Women's Institute and helped research material for them when they did a presentation. When the president of the Liberal association of District 25 did a presentation at the local Lion's Club, I helped them gather information for the presentation.

So I can say that this was not about myself, this is about fairness, a report that reflected the rights of all Islanders. If I'm to believe in the Charter of Human Rights, I think the worst thing you can do is cut off one section of this province and say: No, you guys really aren't a part of Prince Edward Island because you fellows have to stay in behind that little line that's drawn on the road at Day's Corner.

So I will not be supporting this motion, because I'm here to - when I leave this House I want to leave with - one member talked about principles. When we talk about Charter of Rights and Freedoms - and in my community, it was just alluded to here as I was trying to speak, about a meeting or about West Prince and a meeting that wasn't held not too long ago. I sat in on the meetings with the Leader of the Opposition, participated in a meeting where people weren't allowed to speak.

So I would say that's when the Charter of Rights and Freedom - I hope that I would never sit in a meeting where people are not allowed to speak or have an opinion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Collins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to make one thing perfectly clear, if nothing else in my time on my feet here speaking to this resolution, and that is this. That what Prince Edward Islanders are witnessing this afternoon, that we are being subjected to this afternoon, is an opposition charade, it's a ruse, it's a canard. It is just the opposition's way of trying to justify their absence from this Chamber, from doing their duty last June, when they should have

been here to debate all the issues surrounding electoral boundaries, as did my colleagues in the government caucus.

It was a good debate. If anyone paid attention to it, there was a lot of diverse opinion expressed at that time. As a matter of fact, the final vote is a clear indication that there was - and I'll say this quite frankly - some deep divisions within the government caucus when it came to how we should proceed on this matter.

I think not only has this been an opposition charade this afternoon, but it's also been, I think, a disservice to the people who have served as chief electoral officers of this province over the years and have done an outstanding job. I concur with my colleague from Member from Alberton-Miminegash in applauding the efforts of these honest, good, fair-minded people over the years.

There's one whereas that hardly deserves comment, (Indistinct) talk about "unprecedented manipulation of the electoral boundaries by the" I would say non-existent "Conservative Party" on Prince Edward Island. As rightly pointed out, we are the Progressive Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island and proud of that.

But they make these accusations out of thin air with no substance to those accusations. It just sounds good, it sounds scurrilous, scandalous. No basis at all. Statement from start to finish is patently false.

So I think that if the opposition had really wanted to engage in this issue of electoral boundaries they would have done their duty. To simply state, or as I conclude from everything I've heard from the opposition members on this issue when they were here to talk about it, is that the electorate of Prince Edward Island, divided by 27, that's fair, let's go home.

That's too simplistic, and that's not fair to Prince Edward Islanders. That ignores so much of who we are as a people and what we are as a province. Never hear words about communities of interest. Never hear words about certain major geographical barriers that do exist in parts of Prince Edward Island.

So I think it was incumbent upon all members of this Legislature to really answer the question in their heart of hearts: Is this fair? The electorate divided by 27, which is basically what we had. And it wasn't.

The second map was not. The third map met with division here on the floor. We weren't all in favour of that either. But there was consensus, it was achieved, and I think - and I'll stand by this - in the long run a fair balance was achieved.

Let's be certain about this. We as members of this Legislature were doing our duty as laid down in the law. We heard so much about the law from the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square, that we'd broken the constitution. I ask: What section of the constitution, what is he talking about? But no, it just sounded good to say: Government has broken the constitution. Well, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, and tell all Islanders that we followed the law, the law that was put in place in this Chamber by a Liberal government. The law that outlined how we go about appointing electoral boundary commission, the laws upon what happens when those commissions report to the Legislature, the duties incumbent on the members of the Legislature to study what's there, to accept or reject, modify, ask for a second opinion. The options lie with the Legislature. Always have.

Now obviously we ran into some difficulties with this. There's no question about that. I think the reason why there was difficulties is that this Legislature perhaps should have

given more clear direction starting out to the commission on electoral boundaries.

I think we did that in correcting the legislation. We corrected the legislation. This House did that. Because we saw some deficiencies there. I think the next time it comes around for a review of the electoral boundaries in this province - which by the way will take place after every second election, not every third election as was the case under the previous legislation. We changed that this time, we recognized the changing demographics and geographic growth patterns of Prince Edward Island. That's why we moved it to two elections instead of three. So that there won't become this tremendous weight of imbalance that was there in the election of 2003.

But the point is we did our duty and I think the next time round when the time comes it will be there, it's in the record, it's in the legislation, that we will want the next electoral boundaries commission - this Legislature, whoever is serving in here - will reach a consensus and forward to that commission clear directives on how to proceed in terms of within these parameters we'd like to see you report back within these parameters. When they do that, it will be accepted.

All that is the new law, the new law that was put in place by this government, sadly, in the absence of the opposition, because they did not want to come and engage us in debate for the enlightenment of all Prince Edward Island. To that, Mr. Speaker, I say shame, shame, shame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other speaker who would like to speak on this motion?

The hon. Member from Crapaud-Hazel Grove.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to defend this resolution today brought forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the hon. member. We did not attend. We were here in this Legislature, we left for the vote and for the discussion in June when it was brought forward in this Legislature during the third electoral map that was brought forward to this Legislature. We felt as opposition members that we should not be involved in that process deciding our own political boundaries. I am supportive of that and I'm glad our leader made that decision, and as a caucus we did that.

I think if anyone spoke to Islanders over the summer they would recognize that they appreciated that as well. Members this afternoon have spoken: Shameful opposition, shameful. Are they out of touch with Islanders? Have they not talked with Islanders, spoken to and heard what they have said? The *Guardian*, radio stations, there have been call-ins, and I think it's been very clear what the people of PEI felt about this June decision by this government to bring in a third electoral map paid for by the Conservative party of this province.

Today this resolution is not about the boundaries, this is about the chief electoral officer.

Mr. Dunn: Why is that whereas in there then?

Ms. Bertram: Now they're talking about taking a partisan approach to this. Why bring politics into this? We are not bringing politics into this at all, we are making it a more open process. It doesn't matter what political party is in power. This appointment is for ten years and it's taking the politics out of this appointment and it's making it very fair. We are not underestimating the chief electoral officers that have been

coming to us in the past, in the present or into the future. They have served this province very well. We are bringing this resolution forth today to bring clarity to this issue, to bring fairness. It is appalling to hear comments from members of the government who are bringing such partisan remarks to this. Because we had an independent commission struck.

In the report by the commission it even goes on to elaborate on the different commissions across our great country, how they are comprised. It was disappointing to note that we did not accept this independent arm's-length commission's report who did consult with Islanders, who went out and did a preliminary report that went back out and formed its final report. Why are we taking away the usefulness of an independent commission? Why do we have an independent commission?

The resolution today states: "...Section 2(1) of the *Election Act* be amended such that it is the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island that appoints the Chief Electoral Officer to a ten-year term." That's what this resolution is calling for. The members of government have passed this third map, it is now passed in this Legislature. Now, we in opposition did not participate in that process for good reason and for good principle. It also states furthermore: "..., be it further resolved that the terms and conditions of his/her employment are subject to the same protections as those enjoyed by the Auditor General."

So what is wrong with bringing forth such a resolution as today? It's fairness. The second whereas paragraph talks about the transparent manner of this resolution. We are not bringing politics into this. This is a good resolution and it's disheartening to hear members of the Legislature share such negative remarks in terms of their support or

non-support of this resolution.

They talked about geographical and communities. If you look at the third map, why is it that a rural community is now grouped in with an urban riding? I take for example the Greenvale area. They had a hard time understanding why Greenvale, which is just outside of the Hunter River area, is now grouped in with the Charlottetown riding. Nothing against the urban ridings, but if the purpose of having a third map and having this government formulate a third map, if their premise was to protect rural Prince Edward Island, I dismiss that case.

The independent commission took into consideration many different geographical, cultural, school zoning, many issues that were of great importance to communities rural and urban on Prince Edward Island. Yet this government decided to implement a third and bring it forth in the June sitting and pass the electoral boundaries.

Today I stand here in support of this opposition resolution, not just because I'm a member of this side of the House that brought forward this resolution, but because I believe in this. I believe it's a transparent resolution, it's bringing transparency to this position. By far, it brings fairness. I think it's very clear that no members in this Legislature on the government side will be supporting this. I think it was very clear from the statements made previous. Maybe there will be some surprises. We were here in June in the Chamber, yeah, we were outside, we were here for Question Period, we just left and went outside the Chamber. We listened to the statements by members that got up and spoke to the third map. It's interesting to hear some of your statements today, very interesting.

So I guess, I appreciate the member bringing this resolution forward. I will support it and

I truly feel that if we were really listening to Islanders, we would know what they feel, and that this is a transparent measure, and it is an issue of fairness. I'm sure they would be supportive of this resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Any other member like to speak on this motion?

If not, the mover of the motion to close out debate.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I've really been quite astonished sitting here for the last while listening to the members of the Progressive Conservative government reject independence, reject accountability and reject responsibility. I think it's quite unfortunate to even listen to the many contradictions that took place. There was so many contradictions that it was actually half difficult for me to keep track of. I'm going to just start off with one very easy contradiction, and it's really quite unfortunate.

The reason why we're bringing in this motion is we believe in the independence of the office of the chief electoral officer. We've seen a government that has shown disrespect for our democratic process recently. We want to enshrine the independence into the chief electoral officer. They all talked about how we all respect the chief electoral officer, and I even said that. I'm sure each and every member of this Legislature respects the chief electoral officer. We all respect the former chief electoral officer. I'm sure we'll all respect the future ones.

But for them to criticize ourselves as not respecting the chief electoral officer is really quite astonishing. I just look at one thing. It was the Conservative Party, the government in power, that went on a committee which we boycotted, yes, because we believed it was a conflict of interest for us to participate in. But it was their party who asked the chief electoral officer to draw up a map. They gave guidelines on how they wanted that map drawn up, variances, communities of interests and other indications. They gave guidelines. When that chief electoral officer took those guidelines from that legislative committee that consisted of the Conservative members, what did they do? They rejected the map that the chief electoral officer drew up. If that is not disrespect, I don't know what is. You ask someone to do something, you give them the rules and regulations to follow, and yet when it's done, they don't like it.

There is only one reason. I know there are people watching this probably now on television, but there is only one reason to do something like that: because it's not in your own personal interest. There is no other reason behind it.

There was a lot of other arguments made here tonight that were false in their argument. You've heard of different things of one member from Morell talking about: What happens with HR issues? She was just looking for an excuse not to support this motion. But when it comes HR issues, of course there are provisions if something happens to the chief electoral officer. That's why we said: Why don't we follow the same guidelines as the Auditor General?

So if the member's arguments from Morell-Fortune are in fact correct, then if something should happen to the Auditor General, I guess then we might as well forget about audited financial statements in this province, we might as well forget about an Auditor

General's report, we might as well forget about the Auditor General's office. Because that's what the member was pointing out, that none of that would matter. There'd be HR issues. Of course there are going to be provisions. It was a very weak excuse.

The excuse that really frustrates me the most - and they get it from their leader, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island - who uses the weak argument: It's about protecting rural Prince Edward Island. I can tell you, protecting rural Prince Edward Island is about having good members of the Legislative Assembly representing those areas, protecting rural hospitals, protecting rural jobs in fish plants, protecting rural courthouses. That's what a good member of the Legislature will do.

Mr. R. Brown: Not protect their own boundaries.

Leader of the Opposition: Not protect their own boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, one prime example I want to give - and just to show how asinine their argument is and the Premier's argument is on this - is the fact that you would think that to have less clout in terms of a member of the Legislature, you would have more people living in your district. In other words, if you represent a district with only 3,000 members - and I represent a district with 4,000 members - then they would say you would have more clout because obviously you represent less people. Okay? So those voices count more than the four thousand voices that I represent.

I know under the Conservative Party now that one of the largest districts in the province is a riding called Kensington-Malpeque, which is a very rural riding. When the hon. members stand up and talk about fisheries and agriculture and tourism and all these rural areas, that is one of the

most rural areas of the province.

I've had the opportunity to tour through it. There's a lot of fishing on the north side. There's a lot of large farms in that area. There's a lot of tourism operators in that area. Under the Conservative map that riding has the second most electors in the province. It even has over the 15% variance that this government said they were abiding by.

If they want to make arguments for rural Prince Edward Island they better come up with better arguments. Quite frankly, their arguments hold no water.

The member from O'Leary tried to defend herself and say that she was not here for personal benefits. She was supporting independence. She was supporting fairness. I have to ask her, then, if she supports all that fairness, why does she sit with a party that fired 759 Islanders and rejected their rights? Why would she do that if she supports independence?

They talk about a 25% variance. Other provinces are going with a 25% variance. Why then would a committee of your Legislative Assembly made up of your Conservative members ask for only a 15% variance if you want a 25% variance?

Another Member, the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty, tried to say that the reason why this motion was brought forward to bring more independence to the chief electoral officer was to justify our absence from the Legislature. No justification is necessary. We stand on our principles. We believe that there was a conflict of interest that took place. We believe that every other jurisdiction across this country does not have legislators deciding what boundaries look like.

We have Supreme Court Justice John

McQuaid chair the commission and indicate that all other provinces in this country accept independent commissions. It would be up to this Legislative Assembly to decide whether or not they chose to respect this hallmark of independence. I'm proud of our caucus for saying that we chose to respect the hallmark of independence.

I will never take any guff from the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty for standing by our principles, for standing by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for not putting ourselves into a conflict of interest situation, and for respecting the laws of this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: The hon. member also brought up the point about saying it's just like throwing a map of Prince Edward Island and saying: Give us 27 districts. Section 17 of the *Electoral Boundaries Act* lists the factors which are to guide the commission in its review.

It reads as follows:

Subject to subsection (2), in determining the area to be included in, and in fixing the boundaries of a district the commission shall take into consideration

- (a) the Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- (b) enumeration data from the most recent general election;
- (c) polling divisions from the most recent general election;
- (d) geographical features;
- (e) population patterns;
- (g) community of interest;
- (h) municipal boundaries...

What the Member from Winsloe-West Royalty said was that Justice John McQuaid, Roberta Hubely, and John Mitchell obviously did not follow those rules and regulations. They just threw a map down on the ground and threw down some lines. I believe that is insulting. On behalf of my caucus and any other member of the Legislative Assembly that wants to join me, I apologize profusely to that commission for rejecting and insulting them like that.

These are the words of the independent commission, right in front of me. I just read off what the *Electoral Boundaries Act* said.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: Now, I'll just read this:

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

We chose to respect this hallmark of independence, Mr. Speaker, and I make no apologies for respecting that hallmark of independence.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, our motion here is a good motion.

Other members in here talked about: This is small-p politics, why are we bringing politics into this? Guess what? I'm not a judge. I'm not royalty. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. I'm a politician. That is what I

am. We're here in the Legislative Assembly. Anything we do can be considered political. That's what we're doing. We're trying to improve our political democracy here in the Province of Prince Edward Island by making sure that the chief electoral officer has the independence of his position. To make sure that he can do his job without fear of Executive Council interference.

Mr. R. Brown: Because we've seen it before. They fire people (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: We've seen this now in many other provinces. I've done the research here. The hon. member questioned my research, and I read it out. I'll just read out some of them again.

It says here:

In Saskatchewan the chief electoral officer must be appointed by resolution of the Legislative Assembly. That means that the Legislative Assembly makes the appointment. In all these.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: In British Columbia, the chief electoral officer is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor which is Executive Council on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. The chief electoral officer must have been unanimously recommended for the appointment by special committee of the Legislative Assembly. Again, appointed by the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Speaker, I make no apologies for our motion. Some thought that our first two whereases were insulting. I want to read them out again:

“Whereas the Chief Electoral Officer is the chief officer responsible for the fair and transparent conduct of elections.”

How can anyone argue with that? That is what our chief electoral officer does. We’re stating a fact. If it’s wrong to state facts, I don’t know what we’re supposed to state.

Secondly:

“And where the exercise of these duties in a fair and transparent manner is essential to the integrity of our democratic process.”

Well, of course it is. We’re saying each and every chief electoral officer who has held that position has done that, has respected those. What we’re saying is that if we want to move forward, if we want to evolve our democracy, we have to make sure that we have accountability, responsibility and transparency. I make no apologies for that.

They talk a lot about the reasons why this motion cannot be supported, but unfortunately none of the arguments that were made are good. If members in this Legislature want to improve our democracy, want to improve the *Election Act* in Prince Edward Island, want to support our chief electoral officer, I would suggest that you support this motion.

I believe I’ve outlined our arguments. I believe I’ve shown how each and every argument that the Conservative Party members have made here is invalid.

Just one last point. They say that they are Progressive Conservative Party of PEI. Yes, they are the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI. If you are also a member of the Stephen Harper government federally and you vote in a leadership or you take place in anything, you’re also a member of the Conservative Party of Canada. When I say Conservative, that’s what we are pointing

out.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: All right, hon. members.

Leader of the Opposition: I would hope that each and every member in this Legislative Assembly will support this motion if they believe in the independence. If they stop for second and want to do something that’s right for a change, where they can be proud of something they do, where they can go and knock and doors and say: Look we’ve done something to strengthen our democracy instead of weakening it, they will support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Standing vote.

Speaker: A standing vote has been called.

Ring the bells, Sergeant-at-Arms.

[The bells were rung]

Speaker: Is your caucus here, Opposition House Leader?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, Mr. Speaker, (Indistinct).

Speaker: Government House Leader?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: A standing vote has been called

Those opposed to the motion, please stand.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Aquaculture, the hon. Premier, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, the hon. Member from Park Corner-Oyster Bed, the hon. Minister of Tourism, the hon. Minister of Energy, Environment and Forestry, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Public Works, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Member from West Point-Bloomfield, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park, the hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, and the hon. Member from Winsloe-West Royalty.

Speaker: Those in favour of the motion, please stand.

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

Speaker: Motion failed.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

I declare a recess till 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that Motion No. 2 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Speaker: Motion No. 2 has been read and adjourned by the hon. Minister of Tourism.

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

I'd like to continue on on the debate to support the seniors who are in the workplace. As I was saying, for many of us, what we do contributes to who we are. I guess it's a function of the economy that we often think of our work or our profession as having a great deal of contribution to our self-worth.

But the goodness of work, if you will, the benefit of feeling useful, is as important as the description or the title that we carry as a particular worker. So for seniors, this is important that they feel that they still have a contribution to make. Many seniors want to make that contribution, and their interest in the monetary reward of it does not play the same part in the whole aspect of work as it does when you're in the midst of your earning activity, I guess we'd say, your trying to care for your family and your dependents.

So quite often, even though financial security is not the main objective for employment because of maybe pension income or other contributing factors, seniors still want to feel very much a part of making a contribution to society. As we all live longer - and indeed the population is living longer, life expectancy has increased significantly since the turn of the last century - we feel that we want to stay part of things longer, and that is only normal.

So as a society, we want to be able to welcome this contribution, we want to take down the barriers that may exist to this contribution. It is important. I know at a recent seminar that I attended we talked

about this particular issue because people's physical ability does change, and indeed it does. As they progress in life, the workplace will have to change to adapt to that. Just because people are not as physically able to do all the tasks that they may have once participated in, by the same token, the employer has to adapt to the new reality of his employee or her employee. This is going to be important as we move forward. As I said the other day on this particular topic, we all know that the demographic is changing. Our population in general is aging and the average age is moving upwards. So therefore we want to make it as easy as possible for people to participate in the workforce longer.

I know certainly from a tourism perspective seniors can contribute for many years to come, and they do, as I said yesterday speaking to this matter, they do want to contribute.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I'll be supporting this resolution. Anything we can do as a government to aid seniors, we should be at it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. McCardle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a few comments as a farmer. I want to make it clear that it's my group of people who are the biggest group of people working after 65. We just simply don't know when to quit. Many of the big farms on PEI are as the result of a single man working a long industrious life. Earl Duffy, a patriarch of the Duffy farm in Kinkora, worked a full day's work well past 85 years old. Birt McCardle, another individual who (Indistinct) over 1,000 acres of land before

there were land limits, worked well past - he drove a tractor for 14 hours a day well past 85 years of age. To these men, the concept of retiring just never entered their mind. I'm still signing 30-year mortgages, so I hope I have the wherewithal to deliver on the last payment.

Anyway, a tribute to the hardworking farmers of the province. I have a constituent Bill Cairns who is a (Indistinct) in the dairy industry in Freetown. Bill told me he went 11 years without missing a milking, if you can imagine. He said that was nothing. He had a neighbour Stafford guy that went 16 years without missing a milking. If you can imagine what that is.

Just one note on a neighbour of mine who passed away this morning, a farmer, he was 80 years old, Elmer Smith from Freetown. He worked all summer - we have a farm beside his farm - and he baled straw and he milked cows like he was 25. But my sincere regrets to his wife and family. He'll be seriously lost. I know Elmer Smith worked on a dairy farm all his life. He had some of the finest dairy cattle in the world. As I was saying, he had a farm over there. There would be people there from Brazil or Sweden or South Africa to see this man's Holsteins. If you saw them out in the pasture you'd know what I'm saying.

Anyway, just to comment from the people that I come from and work for (Indistinct) hardworking farming people of the province. In a large part, retirement is something that never crosses their mind. I think it keeps people young and it's the only way to go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

The resolution is important and it recognizes the great contribution that our seniors do make to Prince Edward Island on an ongoing basis, many who continue to be involved in the workforce. The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora is absolutely right, that in the agricultural community - and I think I can say the same for the fishing community in my area - many people continue to work well beyond the normal retirement age, simply because that's the way they grew up. Work is their life. It's a labour of love to a certain extent and maybe a labour of necessity as well. But retiring is not the first thing on their mind, it's: How do I do a better job of keeping the farm going or keeping the fishing enterprise afloat, kind of thing. How can I contribute to my community?

Certainly seniors play a very valuable role. There's no question the demographics on PEI are as such that we do have an older workforce than most other provinces, and we're among the highest in Canada - second highest according to the resolution - in terms of seniors, with 14% of the population, 20,000 residents age 65-plus. That does present interesting situations for us. On one hand it continues to provide us with a great pool of people, many of whom are able to continue contributing to the workforce and continue (Indistinct) going. Others who obviously cannot for various reasons. Either they have chosen to retire or perhaps for health reasons have retired.

But nevertheless, this is an extremely important part of our community on Prince Edward Island, and I want to pay tribute to as many men and women I mentioned earlier today. I had the opportunity of meeting with the CN Pensioners Club and it's great to see that these people, some 360 who are retired from railway work on Prince

Edward Island, have now turned their attention to the future, looking at ways of preserving the memories, the stages, the stones, the foundation of our railway system on Prince Edward Island.

I noticed today that Elmira has received special recognition for the railway museum there and the contribution that makes to that community, the contribution the railway made to the community.

Elmira station is connected to our Rails to Trails system on PEI. We've seen a number of railway stations upgraded (Indistinct) Wood Islands, for example, the old railway station has been refurbished, in fact it was hauled - I'd ask the hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay to help me out here. Perhaps it was moved from Melville to Wood Island and has been restored. We're seeing stations like the old Montague station now used as part of the waterfront development project. Murray Harbour has recently done some things with its railway. Certainly communities like Breadalbane and Kensington, right across the province, have utilized those services.

I guess my point is that these people, many who are now seniors in our community, have continued to make a great contribution and they're looking for ways to enhance that contribution in their later years and leave us with memories of importance.

The project LOVE is a great initiative, I think it stands for Letting Older Volunteers Educate. Older people have come together with young people to help them out in the school system and that has been a great initiative. We have community literacy volunteers who are seniors who continue to make a contribution to the community. We see a lot of our festivals and events right across PEI organized by people who are seniors, whether working or retired, continue to be very active in our

community. Of course we always like to claim we have the most volunteers per capita anywhere probably in North America right here on PEI.

It is our seniors who have inspired us in this regard. They have inspired us to respect our neighbours and other individuals on PEI to contribute to those who are in need from time to time. We really do care about each other on PEI, and so if anyone is struck by health issue, personal tragic situation, Islanders are quick to help out. Certainly seniors are to be thanked for that.

The demographics in the country today are really worthy of everyone's study. They're changing fast, very rapidly in fact. Schools on Prince Edward Island that were built for 1,200 students 25 years ago might have 600 in them today, and those numbers continue to go down. I'm not talking just about rural school, I'm talking about urban schools as well. The reality is that our population is continuing to age and the fact that there are fewer younger people coming into the system is really remarkable.

I saw statistics just recently where the average age of a woman's first pregnancy 10 years ago was 23. Today the average age of a woman's first pregnancy is 31. To add to that in terms of the impact on the population, 10 years ago - 20 years ago for sure - most women didn't stop with that first pregnancy. They probably had two, three, four kids, six, seven. Go back a few years beyond that they had six, seven, eight, 10, 12, 13, 14 kids. Seventeen, one of the hon. members said. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe you come from a fairly large family yourself.

Speaker: Seventeen.

Premier Binns: Seventeen, look at that. I would doubt that there's a family on Prince Edward Island of (Indistinct) this generation

with more than ten kids. You would have to go pretty far. Not my generation, I'm speaking now of the younger people who are getting - who would be old enough to have - let's say married at 20 who are now 37-40, under 40. I would doubt that there are very many with more than ten kids.

In fact, as I pointed out, what's happening is that not only are they getting married later in life, having fewer children, if they have any children at all they have one or two. Sometimes married couples chose not to have children at all because they are commitment to a career or a different kind of lifestyle.

The impact in our school system has been dramatic. The numbers have gone down very dramatically. Our population on PEI is increasing, but it's not because of new births, it's because of immigration, it is because of people who maybe are staying in PEI more then they did in the past. That kind of trend - and I only mentioned this because there's no question in my mind that the change in the demographics is going to mean that in the future the seniors are going to continue to be called on that much more, to contributing after their normal retirement age to the economic stability of our province.

This is not surprising. In many of the growth regions in North America today you will find that it's seniors who are performing a lot of the services that you would ordinarily expect young people to be providing.

I know that I've had the opportunity, for example, of visiting my parents who spend some time wintering in Arizona. I was amazed the first time I was down there in that all the retail outlets - whether it's a fast-food restaurant or a clothing store or what have you - the service personnel, the workers, are all seniors. You go into a grocery store, you don't see young people

carrying out groceries or manning the tills or doing the services. MacDonald's restaurant, for example, it's not young people. They're all retirees who have perhaps a part-time job. They might be doing it to keep busy or they might be doing it because they need the income.

I thought that was peculiar to the United States a few years ago. But I believe that that trend is continuing to come our way, if you like, and I believe it's going to continue to come our way because there is such a demand in the Canadian labour force today that there clearly are not going to be enough young people to take up all of the needs that are out there.

Now that is great in some ways for these young people because there is more opportunity for them than there ever was before and there are fewer people to take up the jobs. I'm part of the baby boomer generation and it's been recently pointed out to me that the next generation, I'm not sure if they're Gen X or Gen XX or exactly who they are, but if you take the same number of years that us baby boomers belong to and compare that to the next generation in Canada, the numbers are dramatic. There are only half as many people born in the same next number of years for this next generation as there were baby boomers.

So what's happening is us boomers are moving through and will be replaced by a population that is only half as big. Since there are more of us, we are going to require more services and there is going to be more demand by those young people. So it's really not surprising that in Canada the unemployment rate continues to go down and the demand for workers continues to go up. Everyone is crying across the country for skilled workers. The Province of Alberta stands out because of the tremendous demand today, but they're not alone. The cities of Canada have been experiencing

similar sorts of situations and not enough workers.

We are experiencing that today on Prince Edward Island as well. We do not have enough tradespeople. Try and find a carpenter to come to your place tomorrow. I don't think you could. If your plumbing has a problem overnight, yes, you can probably get somebody in an emergency. But try to get somebody to come and put a new bathroom in tomorrow in your house, I don't think you could overnight. Because there is a demand, and the workforce is stretched on Prince Edward Island. Our unemployment rate has fallen to the lowest in about 20 or 30 years. Our unemployment rate 10 years ago was always 17, 18,000 people. Today it's at 10,11% and will continue to fall. We have been able to attract new companies to Prince Edward Island. In recent weeks we've had some great announcements. We've got AIM Trimark coming to PEI with 300 planned jobs. CGI hired 100 people in 100 days. They will easily have 150 people. I would expect more than that when they're all done.

There is great opportunity in biosciences. We have something like 80 biosciences companies, maybe more, on PEI today. I should know - correct myself, about 20 in bioscience, we probably have 80 in IT and communications. They continue to grow and require workers.

So where is that workforce going to come from? We hope a lot of it will come from our young people. We will be able to retain our graduates on Prince Edward Island. But there is no question we're going to need people in our workforce and I think to a certain extent that people who would have normally retired at age 65 may well be part of that workforce on an ongoing basis in the future. I'm not sure there are many of us who will be retiring, as our parents did, at age 65 or 60 or 55 or whatever it was. I

don't think that that situation will continue into the future.

So it's important that we look at how our programs fit the emerging situations. It's important that we remove roadblocks for seniors; we provide flexibility in the labour markets, so that they can, if they so choose, have opportunities for retraining; that the pension programs fit their needs and the society's needs. I think that we have responsibility to continue to look at that. If we hope to have seniors in our workforce, then it's going to be important that they are healthy and that we continue to have healthy living initiatives which encourage fitness and healthy eating activities from our seniors. That we have public attitudes that encourage seniors to be active contributors to our society.

Now we've recently had announcements from the federal government which I think are helpful and important. We certainly as a province have supported income splitting announced by the new federal government in Ottawa. I think that came out October 31st. That will save qualifying seniors on Prince Edward Island about \$6.5 million in taxes. Very significant, this change in tax policy. The Harper government is to be congratulated for that fine initiative. We've also seen the federal government increase the personal exemptions for seniors by \$1,000. Another important initiative.

Governments all have continuing responsibilities. We have in this latest throne speech announced our intentions to provide better support for seniors in long-term care in our nursing homes. In fact, we will move away from taking into account a senior's assets as a contribution to their care to looking at their income as opposed to their assets. So it will make seniors in long-term care, their situation much more affordable. We've also reduced from 30% to 25% - I think that will be effective the first

of the year - the amount that people who are in seniors' homes contribute here in the province.

But I will close by saying that I think it's imperative that we continue to recognize the needs that our seniors have, that we continue to afford them opportunity to continue to be involved in the labour force, that we make sure that the pension programs that they have fit the situation as well as possible.

I'm pleased to support this resolution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other members who'd like to speak on this motion?

If not, the mover of the motion, the hon. Minister of Health, Social Services and Seniors, will close the debate.

Mr. Gillan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate the support that this motion has received, the members speaking to it. It would be impossible to summarize or paraphrase all of the areas that have been covered and the attributes that the members have give to this motion. But let me just attempt to categorize a number of the remarks. I would begin with one of the qualifying clauses in about the middle of the enumerating page: "And whereas the average age of retirement in Canada is 62.5, up from 61 in 2000."

That qualifying clause by itself indicates that people want to work longer and/or people need to work longer. Whatever the reason behind that statement, obviously there are a number of people lined up behind an ever-increasing number of seniors in the workforce. That leads us into, than, the other many remarks of support. One of them was

that the attitudes towards seniors' ability to do work are changing. Better health, better medication, people looking after themselves better than they have in the past. So the attitudes certainly have changed for the positive.

It was also mentioned that seniors would not only be available for working in the labour force, with the labour used as a noun, but also that they would be entrepreneurs in their rightful sense of starting businesses. Seniors are also youthful or young in mind as well as in body. So it's not only the body and the physical ability, but it is also the mental ability and the perimeters that they could bring to this. It was mentioned by a number of speakers that the opportunities, particularly in the trades, are going to be abounding for obvious reasons and well enumerated reasons which I will not go over here again. The opportunities exist in the trades for seniors to become an active and a willing part.

One of the reasons of course that they can work in the trades and the sectors is that the work environment today can provide very flexible hours, and this would provide for seniors an opportunity to use their experience and their inter-personal skills which they have developed over a lifetime. So there are many different areas that they can continue to work in. The Premier just a few moments ago referenced, as other speakers did, to volunteers working through the program called LOVE, literacy programs. Some speakers spoke to the opportunity that grandparents provide for sport supporters, not only as drivers and in some instances as coaches and some instances only as fans, but the whole area of sport and leisure abounds and is well looked after by the experience and the support from seniors.

But there were also some admonitions that came forth and we've heard of some of the

other side of, not necessarily negative, but good warnings: don't force seniors, all of the seniors, to stay in the workforce. Not everyone would want to be part of the workforce. It is a good warning.

Also, one of the speakers indicated and had a letter to support the idea that seniors should be protected and permitted to work - who would like to work in their workplace longer and who do not have the ability. There were a couple of institutions in our province and that is the case. There is a mandatory retirement age and we should look into that to allow the individuals in those areas to permit to work if they so desire.

It was also mentioned this evening that there were a couple of sectors - and that is specifically the farmers and the fishers - the biggest work sectors on the Island of independent workers who want to work, have worked and will continue to work beyond any type of age of 65 or 60 or maybe even 70. There were some fairly outstanding age examples of people being able to work to their mental and physical capability well into their 80s. So those two sectors for a long time have been able to provide opportunities for working seniors which we can take as very good examples.

So what this points out is that there is an entire very broad spectrum over which we can recognize and respect the ability of age-experienced workers. It's an area that we not only must, but we want to embrace. So with all of the collective efforts from members here in the Legislature, it gives me great pleasure to be able to come to the final resolution that the "Members of the Assembly promote healthy living initiatives and positive public attitudes regarding the role of seniors as active contributors to society."

I, along with all the members here, look

forward to that day when they become accepted, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. members, are you ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: All those in favour, 'yea.'

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Those against, 'nay.'

Was that a unanimous consent of the resolution?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Speaker: Right. Thank you.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the 6th Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 6, *An Act to Amend the Real Property Transfer Tax Act*, Bill No. 7, ordered for Second Reading.

Speaker: The hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. 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 Real Property Transfer Tax Act*, Bill No. 7, read a Second Time.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, 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 Evangeline-Miscouche, Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole.

Ms. MacKenzie: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker (Indistinct) Committee of the Whole House.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche celebrated a significant day yesterday that none of us were aware of. He had a birthday yesterday. So I'd like to wish him happy birthday. I hope he had a good day yesterday. Don't let it go by.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Chair, just before we begin, I wonder if I could have permission of the Assembly to bring on Mr. Robert Kenny from my Department to help us with this Bill.

Leader of the Opposition: Can I just have a point of privilege first, please?

Mr. Murphy: Certainly.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

It's my pleasure to welcome Mr. Kenny to the Legislature this evening. He happens to be one of my constituents and a former neighbour of mine. Under the new boundaries he's a constituent of mine as well. So it's great to have him in the Legislature. I'm glad to see that you'll be getting some good advice, and there'll be two people from the great District 13 this evening providing advice to the Government of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair (Arsenault): Therefore can we take it as consent that this gentleman can come on the floor?

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 Real Property Transfer Tax Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

An Hon. Member: We'll have an explanation first and then (Indistinct).

Chair: We'll start with the explanation.

Minister.

Mr. Murphy: Three main parts to the Bill. It's mainly, when we looked at adding some exemptions, first of all, it has to do with extending the exemptions for a member of the family. Some more definitions under that. It also deals with the situation where people may be shareholders in a company or corporation. It also amends the provision providing for a tax exemption for a first time home buyer to determine entitlement on the basis of whether the consideration paid for

the transfer of the home or the assessed value of the home exceeds the maximum dollar amount prescribed. It adds -

Leader of the Opposition: Can you explain that one a little further for me?

Mr. Murphy: Yes. When we get to section 3, that's what section 3 is all about.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

I'll proceed with the reading of the Bill:

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

1. Subsection 1(1) of the *Real Property Transfer Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. R-5-1 is amended

(a) in clause (d), by the addition of the words "brother-in-law, sister-in-law," after the words "mother-in-law,"; and

(b) in subclause (g)(ii), by the deletion of the words "situated thereon and attached thereto," and the substitution of the words "situated thereon,".

Questions?

Mr. Murphy: It's adding brother-in-law and sister-in-law after words mother-in-law to the exempt category or to the definition of a member of a family. So, if it was transferred within a member of a family they would qualify.

The second one is just better language, cleaning up language as recommended by Legislative Counsel.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Questions?

The hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove.

Dr. McKenna: What's the wording? How many family members do we have in there now? Like, father, son, grandchildren?

Mr. Murphy: The whole section would read as follows:

A member of the family means, in relation to a person, the father, mother, spouse, common-law spouse, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandson, granddaughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law, mother-in-law, step-father, step-mother, step-son, step-daughter, step-brother, or step-sister of the person.

We have added to that, if this amendment goes through, brother-in-law and sister-in-law.

Dr. McKenna: I think you got them all.

The grandmother's cat.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 2. (1) Subsection 4(1) of the Act is amended by the addition of the following after clause (k):

(k.1) a deed by which real property is transferred from a corporation to an individual who wholly owns the corporation making the transfer;

(k.2) a deed by which real property is transferred from a corporation to another corporation if both corporations are wholly owned by the same person, either directly or through another wholly-owned corporation;

(2) Subsection 4(2) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "Subject to subsection (3), no tax is payable" and the substitution of the words "No tax is payable".

(3) Subsection 4(3) of the Act is repealed.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Belfast-Pownal Bay.

Mr. MacDonald: I'd like to hear it explained. What's happening? If you transfer from one corporation to another, or if you have a corporation to an individual?

Mr. Murphy: What this section does is - and I'll give you a practical example. If you're a farming enterprise you may be part of a corporation. That corporation may decide to transfer land into your name as an individual, but because you're also a shareholder of the corporation, you're in essence the same person. You're transferring that land from the corporation to a shareholder of the corporation. Therefore, you'd be exempt of the tax.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

Mr. Murphy: The second part of that is a deed by which real property is transferred from a corporation to another corporation if both corporations are wholly owned. You might have MacDonald Holdings. Maybe over here you have Pauline and Wilbur Holdings. You own both. If you're transferring it from one corporation to another corporation and you own both the corporations either directly or indirectly, then you'd be exempt from the tax.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

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

Dr. McKenna: You're still talking about the \$200,000 exemption, right, in this case?

Mr. Murphy: No.

Dr. McKenna: No. It's the whole amount?

Mr. Murphy: There is no limit.

Dr. McKenna: There's no limit on this one. Okay.

Leader of the Opposition: Two hundred thousand dollars (Indistinct). This is if you're selling it to yourself.

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

Leader of the Opposition: It's like if you own a house or something and it's in a company name and you're moving it over to a different company.

Mr. Murphy: Exactly.

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

Mr. MacAleer: Is the exemption granted to shareholders of corporations similar to the exemption that's provided to people that are related by blood? If the transfer is taking place between two corporations, they may not be related (Indistinct).

Mr. Murphy: In the definition it says it's a wholly owned corporation. That's what triggers the exemption. If one wholly-owned corporation is transferring it to another wholly-owned corporation that's the same person, then the transfer qualifies.

If you meet the family definition under Section 1, then, of course, the exemption qualifies.

Mr. MacAleer: Okay. Person in this case refers to the legal person, that of the

corporation.

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

Mr. MacAleer: Okay.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Carried.

3. Subclause 5(2)(b)(ii) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted:

(ii) the greater of

(A) the consideration for the transfer, and

(B) the assessed value of the real property,

does not exceed the maximum dollar amount prescribed by the regulations.

Questions.

Leader of the Opposition: So you're moving that out of regulations, are you?

Mr. Murphy: This section does two things. When the act first came in there was a section that read as follows: No taxes payable under registration of a deed if the deed is registered within 120 days after the date this act comes into force.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Mr. Murphy: An agreement of purchase of sales. So that has become redundant because that time period has passed and the act was in.

The other request we had is to move it to regulation, and this is from an administrative point of view. We get housing data on a monthly basis in the department so we would get the reports and we try and track the housing sales. So if we wanted to make changes during the course of the year, we

could make those changes or - now I'm not stuck on this, we could leave it in the bill as well, but we would have to wait until the Legislature opened before we could make those changes. I don't want to make changes in that case, make it retroactive, because it becomes an administrative difficulty.

Leader of the Opposition: What are you proposing the regulations are going to be set at?

Mr. Murphy: We set the regulations at \$200,000 because it is set by the Legislature.

Leader of the Opposition: That's the amendment we pushed for and gave in a little bit.

Mr. Murphy: That's the amount that's in the bill now.

Leader of the Opposition: You gave in a little bit. So is it \$200,000, let me get this straight, for the first \$200,000 of the purchase price or only if the home costs under \$200,000?

Mr. Murphy: It's the total cost of the house.

Leader of the Opposition: So if you were a first time home buyer and you're going out and you're looking to buy a home close to a school and the home happens to cost \$201,000, and your neighbour who is buying a house for the first time, their house costs \$199,900, you have to pay the tax on the \$201,000.

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

Leader of the Opposition: Instead of just charging them on the \$100,000.

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

Leader of the Opposition: Through

regulations, could you change it so that the first \$200,000 will be exempt?

Mr. Murphy: No, I think the act only gives us the authority to set the amount.

Leader of the Opposition: So you couldn't change it?

Mr. Murphy: No, we would have to come to the Legislature to do that.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Can we do that? Do you want to do that?

Mr. Murphy: No.

Leader of the Opposition: Why not?

Mr. Murphy: Whatever number you pick. The example that you used, if it was 250,000, it would be 249,000, 250,000 -

Leader of the Opposition: No, no, but the first \$200,000 I'm calling for.

Mr. Murphy: In that circumstance as well.

Leader of the Opposition: No, if it was just the first \$200,000 then you're being fair to everybody. So somebody pays \$199,000 or somebody pays \$201,000, they're still getting the same tax exemption on the \$200,000.

Mr. Murphy: Yes, but it could be \$300,000. That's the difficulty with numbers.

Leader of the Opposition: They're still getting a tax exemption on the \$200,000.

Mr. Murphy: No.

Leader of the Opposition: And you'll still get your tax money on the \$100,000.

Mr. Murphy: Depends on what you're

selling price of the home was.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, exactly. If your selling it for \$300,000 and the first \$200,000 you won't have to pay that 1% tax, but for everything over the \$200,000 you would have to pay the 1% tax.

Mr. Murphy: We've had this discussion -

Leader of the Opposition: I know we have.

Mr. Murphy: - last time.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm just trying to work on you. Now I'm wondering if I start asking you questions in the House about going the way I want you to with this. You're not going to be able to change it. You're only going to be able to move the number for the total tax exemption, correct?

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you.

Reading this I can not support it 100%. What you're saying is not to exceed the maximum dollar value as prescribed by regulation.

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

Mr. R. Brown: This Legislature sets the rate at \$200,000.

Mr. Murphy: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: Next, once this act is passed, the first Thursday or whenever Cabinet meets, you could put it down to \$100,000.

Mr. Murphy: Theoretically, yes.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, I'm not going to support this legislation. I don't think anyone should support this legislation because this is allowing the executive to go into the Cabinet room at any time on any Thursday and set this rate.

We in the Legislature debated this a number of times and we set the rate at \$200,000. We meet two times a year in this House, we can make the changes to this act at any time. The minister thinks he can put one over on us by coming into the House at 8:00 on a Thursday night and saying: I'm going to do this through regulation and don't worry about it, I'm going to keep it at the \$200,000 value.

Let's remember here, regulations are done every Tuesday or every Thursday, whenever Cabinet wants to meet, and Cabinet can set this rate. It says "does not exceed the maximum dollar amount prescribed by the regulations." So they will set the rate on every Tuesday.

The minister indicated to us here in the House tonight that it's set at \$200,000 now. We could go up or we could - when housing prices go up. Let's make no mistake about it, Mr. Minister, you can set it at \$100,000 next Thursday under this law. Couldn't you?

Mr. Murphy: Or I can set it at \$300,000.

Mr. R. Brown: That's right. But -

Mr. Murphy: Same as I can come back to the House and put it on the floor and try -

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Or we in this Legislature can amend the act at any time to up the rate or down the rate. Would you agree to an amendment to set it at the current \$200,000 rate and CPI? You're trying to be (Indistinct) tonight by saying it's \$200,000

today, housing prices are going up. So I want to be a nice guy and I want to set it on a weekly basis. Because CPI at the end of the month is 1%, so I want to put it at \$200,000 -

Mr. Murphy: We'd never do that from an administrative point of view.

Mr. R. Brown: So do you agree - "does not exceed the maximum dollar amount" - or we can change it to, say, \$200,000 plus CPI.

Mr. Murphy: No, I have no problem (Indistinct) to say \$200,000. But you can't say CPI because this is tied to the housing market and there is a calculation done on the value of homes that we do that. So if the economy for whatever reason is not performing and the price of housing has fallen, that's an issue. I've no problem putting in here - do you want the first regulation to say \$200,000? That's fine. That's the intention, all right. I really have no problem if we don't want to do this in regulation. This is an administrative thing. If we want to leave it in the act that's fine by me.

Mr. R. Brown: I want to leave it in the act. You're indicating to this House tonight: I'll do the first regulation \$200,000, but maybe next week we'll put it back to \$100,000. This is taking the authority away from this Legislative Assembly to set this rate.

Now if the backbenchers were probably told what to do today and if they're willing to do that and we're only three of us over here, and if it's going to happen, it's going to happen. But it's not going to happen under my watch. We're not going to move this important value from the Legislative Assembly, and I want to express this. We're not going to move the value of \$200,000, the authority of this Legislative Assembly, over to the executive. Now you backbenchers might have been told today to

do that or might have been told the other day. But let's stand up tonight and say we're not going to allow this to happen, because this is moving that, and any Thursday they can change it.

So do you want to have the control under the executive for any Thursday that they can change it, or do you want to maintain control in the Legislative Assembly? I want to maintain the control in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Murphy: That's fine, as I said. Our decision internally within the department on this - and the same as we put section 5.1 in. From time to time we read - when we get to 5.1, same thing. It's an administrative type of thing. Talking with staff on this - because we do monitor these on an ongoing basis - it just allows us quicker to what's happening out there in terms of real estate transactions.

But as you say, I don't disagree with your point, but the House does sit twice a year. If you would like to wait until the House goes in the fall, the House goes in the spring, make the changes in the Legislature, I'm not hung up on that. But the purpose of it is not to get away or lower the amount. It's to be able to react from the administrative quicker. But if you want to delay things - delay is a bad word, I guess. If you don't want to make the changes or react to the changes for two or three months, so be it.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Minister, we've seen time and time again in this House legislation that's brought in. Tax law legislation is always retroactive. You know that as minister of finance that when you bring in a piece of tax law, okay, you have the authority and we agree in this House, when you present your budget in this House and you present a new tax measure - gas tax, for example, is going up tomorrow. You get up on the floor of this Legislature and you say: Gas taxes are going up tomorrow, gas tax

goes up tomorrow. You introduce legislation at a later date and it's retroactive back to the budget.

That's the tradition of this House and that's the tradition of parliament, and we accept that tradition because you're the minister of finance, your budget, and I agree with that tradition when you bring in budget amendments that require tax changes. I'll support those amendments each and every time. Because it's your budget, I may not support the budget, but I'll support your legislative changes that come through.

But I will not - we can do the same here. This is a taxing measure. You can come in in the next sitting of the Legislature and say: This new amendment, we're going from \$200,000 to \$210,000, and it's retroactive back to the last sitting of the House or the last budget. You can do that. It's been a tradition of the legislatures across this country, across this world, that you present your budget, any tax measures that you say in the budget.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Look, I've got to give the Minister of Tourism another education in taxation. Now look, minister, I'm going to tell you how it works. Because quite obviously you don't know how it works.

Now we all know how this works in this Legislature. You know he's given a hon., honourable, he thinks he's got a PhD, but he doesn't. Now I'm going to tell you something. Just because you got an hon in front of your name doesn't mean you got a PhD after it. You're not given no honorary degree because you got an hon in front of your name. I'm going to tell you. He doesn't know our tax law and I'm going to tell him what a tax law is.

The minister of finance came come in this

House at any time and present his budget. In a budget he presents tax measures and he says: Tomorrow taxes will go up or will go down. But he has no authority to do that. Technically he can't do that. But he then introduces legislation which is retroactive back to the budget (Indistinct) and that's where he gets the authority.

Now I'm telling him that this minister can do the same. This is a taxing bill. He can exercise that principle of parliament at any time, and that's what I'm saying. I think at any second term in the March sitting or in the September sitting he can come back and make it retroactive. I hope that you backbenchers will educate your minister on that tax law. The next time you meet in Caucus, please try to explain that to him because I've tried four or five times already.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Leader of the Opposition: Are you going to take it out and leave the 200,000 in?

Mr. Murphy: Members can vote on it. I don't agree completely with the Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: I don't have an hon so I don't have a PhD.

Mr. Murphy: No, you're right in one respect, but there is a reason for that. So if you're going to change income tax or gas tax, then when the budget speech is made those changes are announced immediately. There is a reason that they're announced immediately, as I know you'll understand why they're announced immediately. Because they have to come in effectively. The legislation, you can't, there is no way you can introduce the legislation and pass it on those effective dates. Other pieces of taxation policy are a little bit different, all

taxation policy is not the same. (Indistinct) I have no issue. It was simply for administrative purposes. There is no sinister thing here. If you'd like to move a motion to delete (b) of that that's fine. See if members would support that.

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

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Is there any consideration in getting rid of the tax for first-time home buyers?

Mr. Murphy: No.

Leader of the Opposition: Are you sure?

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: How much a year are you taking in a year from first-time home buyers?

Mr. Murphy: I don't have the breakdown of first-time home buyers. The total tax is slightly more than 3 million.

Leader of the Opposition: The total tax -

Mr. Murphy: The land transfer tax.

Leader of the Opposition: Land transfer. Let's say, first-time home buyers, it's got to be over 200 - I think we're talking somewhere in the vicinity here of maybe \$100,000 to \$200,000 that you're probably taking in a year on first time home buyers.

Mr. Murphy: Of course we're only taking in above the 200,000.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, exactly. I'm saying that just by having those there, first-time home buyers, you're probably only taking in the 100 to 200,000. Now I'm

looking at the hon. member's district there from Stratford. I don't know how many homes there are going for under \$200,000. I see a lot of young families moving into those areas. I know in my area where I've got a nice elementary school and there are families looking to move in, there are not that many houses going for under 200,000.

I'm just wondering can we - Summerside area, your area, Miscouche, the member from Miscouche who is right here. You've got beautiful new areas going in there. I saw your beautiful house, beautiful subdivision there, and the one over by the school, that's a new beautiful subdivision. I'm sure there are not many homes there under 200,000. You're hoping that there are going to be some nice young families moving in there. Why don't you just get rid of it for first-time home buyers?

Mr. Murphy: Kind of our reasoning by wanting to do it by regulations. So as we track the housing market we see in those cases where those levels continue to rise - and they're rising rapidly because of economic development or whatever reason - then we would be quicker to respond. That was our thinking around that. Just administratively it's easier to do that.

The average transaction - and the way we do this, it's the same as setting assessments, all assessments are not equal. You go by sales in particular areas of the province. So we're sensitive to that. That was part of our discussion for wanting to be more flexible.

Leader of the Opposition: I know exactly what you're saying. And you want to know what? You're probably partially right. The only problem is, no offense, I don't entirely trust you that you're not going to lower it, and I don't think the tax should be there at all. So why don't we just get rid of it? Like, if you don't even know how much you're taking in from it, it's obviously not that

important.

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct) I don't have the breakdown of first-time home buyers.

Leader of the Opposition: But I'm guessing 3 million on housing here on PEI. So we're talking the amount of people that are first-time home buyers that are buying houses over 200,000. It would be so minimum, but would be so good. I hear the Premier (Indistinct) away. He was in Ottawa a few years ago, and Montreal, asking young Islanders to come home. We're worried about people moving off to Alberta and Ontario to get jobs, and if we can do something little that's probably going to make a minimal amount of dent in terms of the provincial bureaucracy - great way. We're trying to recruit new doctors to this province. They have to move here. Probably a lot of those new doctors are going to buying a home over \$200,000. That can be more of an incentive to get in new young doctors here.

Mr. R. Brown: You could put that in your brochure.

Mr. Murphy: Yeah, but let's be (Indistinct) of the rules. It's the first time you've owned a home anywhere. If you owned a home in another province, you don't qualify. It also applies to all real property. So if you sold land, if somebody sold a hotel, if somebody sold a commercial building, then that's all part of the 3 million in revenue that comes in. So it's not just residential (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: I totally agree with you. But that's why it probably affects so few people.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Leader of the Opposition: Anyway, I'm looking forward to (Indistinct).

Premier Binns: Mr. Chairman, on a matter of privilege I'd like to recognize the presence in the gallery of Pat Mella, of course the former provincial treasurer, former leader of the opposition. It's interesting that she enjoyed this place well enough to come back and pay us a visit now and again and enjoy the evening's proceedings. I would point out to her that her name even comes up in debate now and again.

Mr. R. Brown: Yesterday.

Premier Binns: I think it did yesterday perhaps. I don't know who passed that on but I'm sure she'll be right interested in the context of that (Indistinct). She, without a doubt, is one of the greatest examples of the power of one on Prince Edward Island. Because all by herself she did an outstanding job of trying to keep the government of the day in check. It was a tough job and she did an extremely good job and it's always a pleasure to see her back here in the Legislative Assembly and I wish her well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: I, too, would like to recognize Pat Mella. I know that she kind of never had the opportunity in here. She kind of fell between the Ghizes coming in here. She never had the opportunity to debate in the Legislature. Sometimes when we run into each other we get to have some nice conversations with each other. She tells me she agrees with me a lot. So she obviously knows what she's doing (Indistinct). But I know - I hope she's enjoying her new career today. I'm not sure if she's still on the board of Atlantic Lotto, but I understand she's also with the Canadian Revenue Agency I think as well now.

Mr. R. Brown: The tax woman.

Leader of the Opposition: I hope that she's enjoying things, and perhaps she can give some of her colleagues here a lesson in some tax stuff, as the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Kings Square was trying to do earlier.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Ready for the question?

Mr. Murphy: Have to read number 4, we didn't read it all.

Chair: Section 3. Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: 4. The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 5:

5.1 The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) respecting the declarations required to be filed under subsection 5(2);

(b) prescribing, for the purpose of determining a person's entitlement to the exemption from tax under subsection 5(2), the maximum dollar amount referred to in clause (b) of that subsection; and

(c) respecting such other matters as the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable to carry out the purposes and provisions of this Act.

Shall it carry?

Leader of the Opposition: No.

Mr. R. Brown: Could you read through section 5(1)(c)?

Chair: The hon. Member from

Charlottetown-Kings Square.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, the last page. I'll not be voting for this because, Mr. Chairman, I think these clauses in legislation are horrible. I don't think we should allow it as legislators. I want to read the clause one more time: "respecting such other matters as the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable to carry out the purposes and provisions of this Act."

This is basically saying they can make whatever regulations they want. There's no restrictions on the regulations. You know what you may as well just do? Just put that regulation in and forget all other regulations, because you can do anything you want on any Thursday or Tuesday or whenever the Premier's driving into town, he phones up and says: I want this to happen today.

This is an open ended clause that allows the executive to do whatever it wants and I think this is improper and poor legislation and I'll be voting against.

Mr. P. Brown: Do you have a PhD?

Mr. R. Brown: Very smart person, yes.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: Nay!.

Chair: 5. This Act comes into force on a date that may be fixed by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Murphy: I move the title.

Mr. R. Brown: Ram it through.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Real Property Transfer Tax Act.*

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Murphy: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Chairman, 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 Real Property Transfer Tax Act*, I beg leave to report that the Committee has gone through the said Bill and has agreed to the 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 move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that the 2nd Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 2, *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Act*, Bill No. 2, 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 read a Second Time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Act*, Bill No. 2, 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 Evangeline-Miscouche, Chairperson for the Committee of the Whole.

Chair (Arsenault): 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 Civil Service Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Agreed. I'll ask the minister to give

us an overview of the bill.

Mr. Murphy: This amendment comes about as a result of a request from the Auditor General. I believe that he has written all the members of Legislative Audit Committee requesting this change take place. My understanding is that he has support from the members of the Legislative Audit Committee to make these changes.

Basically what this does, Mr. Chair, is that under the *Civil Service Act* it moves an officer or an employee of the Office of the Auditor General into the excluded employee category.

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

Mr. MacDonald: They're still civil servants (Indistinct)?

Mr. Murphy: Yes, but they're excluded.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: I'll proceed with reading of the bill. It will take 30 seconds, then we'll proceed into questions.

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

1. The *Civil Service Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. C-8 is amended by the addition of the following after clause 43(2)(b):

(b.1) an officer or employee of the office of the auditor general.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Spring Park.

Mr. Murphy: Perhaps, hon. member -

Mr. MacAleer: What's the status of those

employees currently?

Mr. Murphy: The present section 43(2)(b) of the act reads as follows. It says:

the union shall be the authorized representative of all persons employed pursuant to this act for the purpose of consulting in negotiating with the employer other than (a) an employee of the Executive Division, (b) an employee of the Legislative Assembly or in the office of the Executive Council, Treasury Board, the auditor general or staff of the board.

So it allows for the Auditor General's staff to be in the excluded employee category. This is a request, I believe, from the auditor. I believe it is consistent with the changes made in the way the auditor is hired and the role that the Legislative Audit Committee plays.

So that's why we brought the changes forward.

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

Mr. R. Brown: How many people is this?

Mr. Murphy: In the Auditor General's office, I'm guessing probably 14 or 15 individuals.

Mr. R. Brown: So these people are now currently members of UPSE. They will be moved out of UPSE and moved out of that union and moved into the excluded, which has no union.

Mr. Murphy: That's correct.

Mr. R. Brown: I can't support taking people out of the union.

Mr. Murphy: Hon. member, as I said this was a request from the auditor. He did write

members of Legislative Audit Committee requesting this change take place. I believe it is his feeling -

Mr. R. Brown: I'm not on the audit committee.

Mr. Murphy: No, I'm just saying, hon. member -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: I consulted. I consulted.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Sure, I'm flip-flopping on this. It's taking members out of the union.

Chair: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Bagnall: Ask your leader. (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: No, I'm not.

Mr. R. Brown: No, he's telling me he's not flip-flopping.

Chair: The minister has the floor.

Mr. R. Brown: I'm glad to flip-flop on this one. (Indistinct).

Chair: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Murphy: In my discussions with the auditor, when he asked us to bring this legislation forward, he wanted it, I think, for a couple of reasons. Changes were made - the auditor's an officer of the Legislative Assembly. We do meet, hon. member, the Legislative Audit -

Mr. R. Brown: The Premier flip-flopped, why can't I flip flop?

Mr. Murphy: We do meet as a Legislative Audit Committee to make those decisions. It

was my understanding in discussions with the Auditor General that he had written members of the Legislative Audit Committee who were in agreement that this change take place.

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

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) does that make any difference in their pension plan and so on?

Mr. Murphy: No. I mean, as an excluded employee you're still entitled to participate in the superannuation plan, the pension plan, your years of pensionable service, etc. But when it comes to negotiating contracts etc., it's the excluded group that does that on your behalf as opposed to the union.

Mr. MacDonald: Who in this excluded group, who is the person that does that?

Mr. Murphy: They have a negotiating team. They select who would negotiate on their behalf.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Murphy: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Civil Service Act.*

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Murphy: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Chairman, 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 Civil Service 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 move, seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, that the 1st Order of the Day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Adjourned Debate on the Draft Address.

Speaker: It had been adjourned by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Dunn: Mr. Speaker, he has concluded his remarks.

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

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

First of all, I want to welcome you back as Speaker. You're doing a wonderful job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: Now, I'm jealous. I don't think I ever got a clap like that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: I also want to welcome the Clerk and Clerk Assistant, and Sergeant-at-Arms. It's always good to see them all back. Welcome to the new staff.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: Also welcome Pat Mella to the gallery. It's nice to see her here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald: Also I'd like to welcome the staff from Hansard and the kitchen staff. I don't know how we get along without them all. Even the staff at the parking lot. Everyone makes the House that much more enjoyable.

I want to talk about the throne speech. Perhaps before I get into that, I can't believe sometimes how the expansion of the province has taken place. I believe the expansion started back when the development plan came into being, but it took a long time for that to really expand the economy.

There's nowhere where you go on PEI anymore that you don't see cars moving at all kinds of time. Small businesspeople have expanded. There's small business people everywhere. The I-tech section, all the new companies that are coming to the province. I can remember as minister of

industry how hard we had to work to get the industrial mall full with people. It was a real hard job, but today it's so different. It's really making a difference.

Of course, this is a budget that does a lot for seniors. We already had a motion on the floor today about trying to get seniors to become involved more in the workforce.

I want to talk a bit about my riding of Belfast-Pownal Bay. I know that it's going to be changed after the next election. I've had the privilege of being a candidate since 1982 in the riding. I was a candidate federally for awhile.

An Hon. Member: That's almost as long as the Premier.

Mr. MacDonald: Actually, I ran in Belfast-Pownal Bay since 1979 either federally or provincially. I do have a lot of friends there on both sides of the political fence, I must say. Over time you cultivate a lot of people. I've also lost a lot of friends over that period of time, some of them real good people.

I think of people who came to me one time and said: Your family's on the right side of the Belfast riot. I said: That's great. I wouldn't dare ask them which was the right side. We don't talk about the Belfast riot in the riding. There were four people killed at the Belfast riot in that day. I remember talking to the former minister of agriculture in New Brunswick. He was originally from Murray River. He was a MacLeod man. He said if I had that Belfast riot in New Brunswick we'd make a fortune out of it. They would expand it and (Indistinct). I don't even know where that field was.

The person who had run that time was a Douse. One time, Lou Douse and I, when it was double, we ran together. He was always worried that he'd run into somebody in Belfast that would take a crack at him

because he was a Douse. His last name was Douse, the same - in Belfast there is the Douse Road. I think that road may indeed be called after the candidate who had to run that day. His name was Douse. He later came back and won the thing.

We don't really know much about the Belfast riot. I'm sure it's the only riot in Prince Edward Island's history of any advantage. The people that were killed were all buried very quietly. I know there's one buried in the Vernon River Cemetery. I happened to be walking through it one day and I noticed. This man's name was a Cain, C-A-I-N.

It'll never be developed until the older people all pass on, then someday somebody's going to write a history and it'll really become very important. It is a part of our history, a part of democracy in Prince Edward Island. I am not sure even to this day why that riot took place.

I am called a north pole MacDonald. Some people will say we're called the north poles because after the Belfast riot they had to create a pole, which called the north pole. That is why when I was told I was on the right side of the riot I couldn't very well ask him which side. To this day we don't know. Anyway, it's part of the history of Belfast.

There was a lot of work done in the riding this year. I want to thank the Minister of Transportation and Public Works for that. We did 2.9 miles on the Trans-Canada, probably the worst part of the Trans-Canada from Wood Islands to Borden-Carleton. We also did 2.7 on the road from Montague to Wood Islands, which is a road we said we were going to redo when we came into being. It's pretty well along now. Of course, all those roads will be turned over to the Premier after the next election. So, I've been working very hard.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: That's the trouble. I should have paved them from the other end. But you have to do that. Even next summer I hope to continue the pavement and all. We have to look after the riding no matter where it is.

I'm also trying to save the bank at Point Prim. They were supposed to do it the last of October. I've sent an e-mail yesterday. I'm not sure what's happening there. The bank is going pretty bad at the road into the lighthouse at Point Prim.

Now, Point Prim is a unique spot. Not that many years ago there was 27 farmer-fishermen in Point Prim. Today, there's not one farmer left in Point Prim. It is owned a lot by Americans. I've met quite a few of them, including the grandson of the founder of the Morgan Bank and many people like that who live in Point Prim.

I also worked the land down there for awhile. You never had to pay for land. People were just coming to you continually trying to get somebody to work the land so the weeds wouldn't be growing up. I had to give that up because it was just costing too much money. It's a long way from home.

It is a beautiful part of the province. I think what is going to develop there is a tourist area. I don't see anything else that can happen there. There's a few farmers farming it, but they don't live on the point. Point Prim Road is 10 kilometres. You can imagine 10 kilometres and nobody left farming on it. It's quite a change to it.

One of things I've found over the years as a member of the Legislature is being able to do things for individual people. I've always told young people especially that they have to be educated if they can at all. Go back to school. Many people I've had now have

gone back to school.

I met a young fellow about a week ago. He was in real problems two years ago. He came up to me and said: I went back to school just like you said and now I've got a job. That's a big thing when you can get people to go back to school.

I sat there listening to the last bill. I should have went over my notes, but I didn't.

Anyway, I want to go into the budget. I think there's a lot of things in this budget that we should look at. That's what this speech is about.

Next year will be the year of the public servant in Prince Edward Island. That's unique too. They probably haven't been recognized as much as they should be over time.

I notice in the budget that we talked about Mark MacDonald, the horse driver, but we also have to recognize that other people have moved to Ontario. There's a young Shephard, a young Cheverie, and my grand-nephew Mark Campbell. All of them have moved. A lot of these people first drove their horses in Pinette, including Mark MacDonald. The first drive he had was in Pinette. Pinette is a matinee track. The former minister of agriculture did a tremendous amount of work there. A new building has gone up there. Besides the building that's there, now we have a private building going up which houses 12 horses. One of the local potato farmers has put it up.

That's what's going to happen to these tracks out in rural PEI. It's the training tracks. They start racing every Wednesday night at 6:00 p.m. If you go there early, there's lots of horses. These horses sooner or later work their way into Charlottetown. Come late September or so the horse numbers have dropped unless some of the

horses from Charlottetown haven't made it. They go back. It's quite a place. A lot of people go on these Wednesday nights. It's quite a social event.

I'd like to just talk about this. It says: "My Government is focused on clear goals to deliver better results for Islanders: increased income and job opportunities;" - you see that all across the province, what a change has taken place in this province over the last 20 years or so - "enhanced health and well-being;" - we were this evening at the diabetes dinner, we learned a lot about diabetes tonight, how it's so important to take care of themselves and what they have to go through, especially parents with young children - "improved learning and skills development;" - what we fail to recognize - I've never believed the statistics that 20% of Islanders are illiterate.

But I've been finding out lately, it's surprising the number of people who can't read the paper. That's surprising too. People who've gone through a lot of the things. I read where the government has found out that there are some people in civil service who can't read either. That's not their problem. It's because we just haven't seemed to be able to (Indistinct). I believe the Department of Education has a responsibility there.

We had a presentation at social development this week about young people who seemed to be pushed through the Department of Education through their grades without being able to read. I had that experience myself. My grandson couldn't read when he was in grade 4 or 5. He was having terrible problems. So his parents took him to Spell Read Canada. Today he reads a book pretty near every day. He just came ahead, just flew ahead once he learned to read. If you can't read, it's pretty hard to do things.

Although there's lots of people out there

who haven't got the education today and probably can't read, they can do things besides. They can't understand it. They just have that ability to be able to do things. It's a wonderful thing to be able to read. If all we can do in education is to read and the math, that's the big things for people.

I guess you back to the old idea of reading, writing and arithmetic. The three of them are still very valuable, although today we're going on to the high tech centre.

Also one of the things that the government has done is to reduce wait times here at home and through innovative new approaches. Legislation enabling nurse practitioners to contribute to collaborative health care in Island communities, and that's a good thing.

Family health centres operating in eight Island communities giving Islanders more access to integrated health services. We don't have a health centre in our area, so I'm not too familiar with them. We do have the opportunity in the riding of going either to the Montague Hospital or the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Investments of \$47 million to upgrade and better organize health services at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I think the Premier and the minister of health were there today to make an announcement on that.

I want to talk about the cancer treatment centre. As you know, I've been in and out of there quite a few times in the last 18 months. It's amazing. It's one of the better and nicest places I've ever been. The staff is so conscientious. The volunteers are there. If you happen to be sitting there waiting they come in with the teapot and give you tea and cookies or whatever they have. It's just a great place. The doctors are wonderful.

There are a lot of sick people come in and

out of there. There's no question about that. You see people you wouldn't know had cancer come in there. It's a wonderful addition to the province. Very few people have to go out of the province now for chemotherapy or radiation. There are a few. It just depends on where the cancer is. It's a wonderful addition to the health care system of Prince Edward Island. All you have to do is go there to know that.

There are a lot of improvements. A lot of people are winning over the battle with cancer. If you go there that's where you find out. They have a good feeling about the cancer treatment centre and that's a very important part too.

We have an all-time high now of 189 full-time physicians and we have an all-time high of psychiatrists, 15. Eighty new nurses have joined the health system in 2006. Seventy-one nursing students sponsored for Island students this year.

The government will continue to support measures that will benefit Island families. Tax amendments will be introduced to allow parents of children under six to offset provincial tax on the Universal Child Care Benefit. The Young Child Tax Credit will apply in the 2006 tax year. That's a big advantage to some young families.

I was interested in the Premier's talk on the last motion about the numbers of children and the statistics that show people don't have children till they're about 26 or 27. They don't get married near as early. There's much less of a number of children.

We had the resolution today on Island seniors growing in the workforce in our society. The needs of active Islanders in early retirement are very different from the needs of people over 85 years of age. How many years ago would we say there's a difference between people over 65 and 85?

You wouldn't live to 85. Today it's really moving along.

Of course, the big one is a change to assessments for long-term care, to consider a senior's income rather than a senior's assets will be made. In addition, seniors will no longer be required to pay the medical costs of nursing home care. When implemented these measures will improve fairness and affordability for Island citizens.

A year ago we had our aunt put into a senior citizens home. We found out that the average age in a nursing home now is something like 84, which was quite surprising. This is quite an addition. There are a lot of seniors, and not just seniors, who spent a lot of time trying to save enough money for their retirement. This is going to be based on their income. It's a little more fairness to everybody.

I thought this was a tremendous throne speech. I was very interested. Investment in literacy and learning is the cornerstone of sustained economic and social progress. That ties up what I'm trying to say. If we put more investment into literacy and learning, it's what really picks up the economy. If everybody gets more educated, the economy picks up more.

I could keep going on for awhile, but I know there are other people want to speak. I have contracted a cold. I don't know where it came from.

It's certainly a pleasure. I was trying to come up with yesterday how many throne speeches I've heard. I think it's 17 or 18, although one time I think we sat for two years with one Throne Speech when we came in 1996. Isn't that right? So, that would cut it down another one.

It's wonderful to be able to be here. I certainly enjoyed the Legislature

tremendously. I still do. I think it's a great place. I encourage young people or anybody to run. Put their name in an election and run for election because it's an experience you'll never forget. It's also a pleasure to work for people no matter where or what they want. I find that that's the great reward you get when you're an MLA, being able to help people out in whatever problems they have. We can't solve them all, but I think we solve most of them. That's the joy of it all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Rodgeron: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like the previous speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand here in this House and to talk mainly about things of importance for my district that are showing up here in the throne speech. I guess when we look at the many things that are in it - and it almost seems that I'm almost right on the front page, but not quite. I guess when we talk about health care which is near and dear to Islanders and we look at just our ambulance system, that in the past although it created a lot of anxiety at first (Indistinct) discussion changed in the system that we have. I know in my community of West Prince everything I've heard is positive about the new Island Emergency Medical Services. You can see an ambulance sitting at a corner. The staff seem to be quite pleased with their work. I haven't heard a negative comment, even though talking of change sometimes is a little unsettling for most of us.

But the next item on the throne speech here is about building a new hospital in West Prince. On November 14th I had the opportunity to be master of ceremonies for the ladies' auxiliary of Community Hospital. When I was doing some reading on the

history, 50 years on the 14th day of November since the Community Hospital Ladies Auxiliary came together to do many things in support of the hospital. People often wonder why - it seems like West Prince is always in the news in regards to the hospital. I'm going to share a little bit of that history which will help people understand the attachments to these facilities that have provided many things for the people of West Prince.

When I think of the first community hospital, again that opened in July 1956, I can remember that day myself, I was about ten years old. Went down to the supper, it was a cold plate, and the excitement in that community you could not believe. Then, the communities really owned the hospitals. There was a group of ladies from all over West Prince got together to support Community Hospital. When you look at the things they did over the years to fundraise, and some of the members that started Community Hospital Ladies Auxiliary were at the meeting the other night. There are some members that are still living like, Isabelle Stetson, Mrs. Mary MacKenzie, who now lives here in Charlottetown, Mrs. George Dewar.

When you look at the work that these ladies did - I'm just going to mention a few - numerous ways were used to make money: spring teas, fashion shows, concerts, fall fairs, bazaars, (Indistinct) amateur cavalcade. That was one of the highlights for me. We would go to this little hall and all the local entertainers would come and entertain. The entertainers, at first they would get a chocolate bar for participating. I can remember some of these young people and some of them not so young that got up to put on this (Indistinct) amateur cavalcade. They also had homemade candy sales, birthday boxes, cookbooks, they put on (Indistinct) shows, parcel post sales and they held annual picnics. The aid also catered to

many banquets in the community to raise money. In 1968, they decided to gather rags suitable to use in garages. They had many special projects such as the travelling apron, sales of afghans, sale of crafts that brought in a lot of money.

Each year they'd have a fall fair and they started out by buying face cloths, ashtrays at that time - now that wouldn't fit in with our health care today - hot water bottle covers, combs, toothbrushes, soaps. Then they also started buying equipment for the hospital. They furnished the matrons' office, they furnished the doctors' office, they furnished the children's ward, they also finished the nurses room. They raised money to buy uniforms for the nurses. They bought things such as filing cabinets, trolleys, OR tables, OR lights, fans, heart monitors. So this was just in the early years. They raised money by saving coupons from the Premium West Flour. They also used the flour bags to make pillow cases and things for the hospital. They bought anaesthetic machines, IV stands.

Then they also, and this again, we used to have a (Indistinct) in O'Leary, believe it or not, in this big community that we have. I'll never forget that show, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, where again it was a fundraiser to raise money for the hospital. It was 500 bags of potato chips donated by Marvens Limited. The different stores in the community donated refreshments. The quilts that were on display, they sold tickets for ten cents each or three for a quarter. They rented a sewing machine to do repairs on all the repairs that was needed for sheets or whatever at the hospital and what could be even pajamas.

Then again, in 1957, they bought their first set of dishes for the hospital from the Cream of the West Flour promotion. So to say this, the coupons found in the flour had to be saved in order to get a set of dishes. So

some very useful articles were donated. These ladies even made homemade soap for the hospital.

So this is just a little bit of the early history of the hospital. So I guess you can see why the people feel so attached to these facilities. These little hospitals were not only for acute care, they were your addiction centre, they were your mental health centre, for whatever happens and whatever need there was. Everybody arrived at the door of the Hospital and their needs were well met. Like I say, that supper that I went to back in 1956, the price for adults was \$1 and children could eat for 50 cents.

So over the course of the 50 years, this ladies auxiliary raised almost half a million dollars. Today, this group of ladies which came from all around the areas of West Prince, on any given night there could be from 30 to 50 ladies attend their meetings. I mean, this would be unheard of today. So it wasn't just the community of O'Leary, it was the bigger community that surrounded the community of O'Leary.

So I guess I felt honoured to be asked this year to be the MC at their 50th anniversary. At the present time they still operate what they call a New to You shop in O'Leary that, again, is staffed every day by volunteers. Not every day, every day they're open, which is four to five days a week. This provides a great service for low income families who can dress their children as good as any child in the school. They wear name brand clothes the same as all the other children. One of the ladies that coordinates this who got presented with an award the night of the 50th anniversary is Marjorie Wood. I know today that shop would not be going without her leadership. You can go in every single week and that lady is there supporting Community Hospital. If anybody read the *West Prince Graphic* here possibly a couple of weeks ago and the debate around

whether we should have a new hospital or not, you could see this lady's picture in the paper now willing to step forward and support the new hospital in West Prince.

So that is the example of the commitment that happened in West Prince 50 years ago which started, really, the beginning of what they felt was real health care in a rural area.

So when I look here again at the end of 50 years and see - it appears that we're entering into another new era, hopefully that will carry us through for another 50 years. I'm pleased to say that this government took a lot of time listening to the people in West Prince. I can tell you - and I guess in January of 2004 - well maybe I'm a little ahead of myself. In 1988, when surgery was discontinued at Community Hospital, I went to a community meeting. I was going to go and help fix it. So out I went to the meeting and lo and behold, since 1988 my life hasn't been quite the same. So from 1988 until the present day -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. members, listen.

Ms. Rodgeron: - I certainly have taken a great interest in trying to help plan for health care for my community and for the future.

I remember in 1988 after many committee meetings, we were going to get surgery back. Work as we might, we never did find the second anaesthetist to come and give the anaesthetic. Because I've had surgery in that hospital, my four children were born in that hospital, and I wanted surgery back. Times were changing, and due to not being able to get the health professionals to make that happen, we never did get surgery back.

Our next goal was to keep obstetrics, and again times are changing. A lot of the young mothers want to see a specialist. A lot of

them were heading of to the big City of Summerside and our numbers were dropping. We again needed an anaesthetist to do the backup if they needed surgery.

But anyway we worked at that and for a while obstetrics continued. As time went on, because the numbers dropped again and we'd have to send nurses out for training, we had to try and keep it staffed 24/7 because, not me, but somebody might come in at 2:00 in the morning or 5:00 in the morning and again the challenge became to keep professional staff 24/7 with the skills to meet those demands.

Eventually we didn't have obstetrics, but as time went on, then we came into the early 1990s when the real challenges began in health care. At that time I was on the Community Hospital Board, Then there was this new West Prince Health. Again I go to the meeting, I'm going to help, I go into that meeting, come out. Nobody would be the chairperson. Well, guess what, again I said: Okay, I'll be the chair, somebody had to do it.

So I then became a member of the West Prince Health Board and again the challenges were no easier. At the same time I was a member of the Provincial Agency Board. As I looked across the province and saw the challenges of QEH, the challenges of Prince County and the challenges in rural PEI, I really got to see what the challenges were in the whole health care system.

I can remember many nights, and the meetings then were rotated between Summerside and Charlottetown, which was a good thing for the provincial meetings. Between attending the West Prince Health Board or the board meetings and the provincial meetings it was a fairly daunting task and many nights I remember sitting and trying to plan for Prince County Hospital. The cost of keeping the hospital running was

equal to what would have cost to pay on a new hospital. So again at that time dollars weren't easy to come by and it was kind - didn't happen, didn't happen, we were still patching up and trying to keep things going.

Again I'm pleased to say since I became part of this government in 2000 we have seen the opening of the new Prince County Hospital.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Rodgeron: Again, as you'll know, the challenges have been ongoing as well in rural PEI. We watched the struggles, whether it be in Souris or in West Prince in trying to - or in Tyne Valley, in trying to maintain the services that our constituents valued.

I know I watched my colleague, Andy Mooney, I don't know if there is another Islander that has spent as many hours trying to retain doctors for his community as Mr. Andy Mooney. I remember Dr. Toomas' name as long as I'm connected to this Legislature. I know that man worked two solid years trying to get one physician to come and keep the services in the Souris Hospital. During that time I could relate to what he was going through because, again, as being a former chair of the West Prince Health Board, I'd been through, as everybody remembers, in 1996 the proposed closure of Community Hospital. I was there when the fire trucks were out blocking the highways. I was there when the minister of health feared for his life to come to West Prince. I was there -

Mr. R. Brown: Your board recommended closing it.

Ms. Rodgeron: No, it wasn't.

Speaker: All right, hon. member.

Ms. Rodgeron: I was there when they put skits on at the local community school to raise 55, \$65,000 to try and keep the hospital open.

As we go down the road and see the challenges in trying to keep our facilities open now, as early as this June 6th I got a call from the administrator from the local hospital. We did not have a doctor to keep the coverage going over the summer. Everything hinged on a doctor from South Africa getting into this country to help us cover off the outpatient department.

Dr. Vanzyl had been here before, he had a two-year work permit, but he was hung up somewhere in immigration. He was supposed to fly in on the 6th of June, couldn't get out of the country.

So when I got the call through to Jason Lee who got through to Mr. MacAdam who got through to the hon. Peter MacKay and with all their work -

Mr. R. Brown: Who, Kevin MacAdam?

Ms. Rodgeron: - Dr. Vanzyl was able to come to Canada. When his agent went to pick up his passport there were four doctors waiting to come to Canada. Dr. Vanzyl was the only doctor that got on that plane that day and he feels sure if it hadn't been for the work of Kevin MacAdam and Minister MacKay and Jason Lee, Dr. Vanzyl wouldn't have been here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That was Liberal immigration only got it.

Speaker: All right, hon. members. It's been a long day, let's finish it off right.

Ms. Rodgeron: So that's just one of the challenges. Then on September 6th I got

another call to go to Community Hospital, they're having a meeting. Didn't have enough nurses scheduled in for the following week and into the following two weeks to keep the shifts covered. So the decision was going to have to be: What do we close down? Do we close down the emergency department, do we move people out of acute care beds if we don't get a nurse to cover these shifts?

So again with workers that have already worked their shifts, workers are supposed to have a day off, these people have been so committed that they come back, they work on their days off in order to keep the services going for the residents of West Prince. So that's just two of the most recent examples.

So now I'm going to jump back a little to January 2004. This has not been a new challenge. In January 2004 there was a planning day to look to the future to plan for the health care in West Prince. It was open to all members of the community, whoever would like to go and participate, and myself as well as my other colleagues here from West Prince were at that meeting. When we went to listen we didn't go to tell them how it was done or how it should be done. We went to listen. As we sat around that room it took all one Saturday at every table in that room, and on every chart the recommendations came forth for a new central acute care facility for West Prince. At this time government didn't even know that this was being talked about.

So the West Prince Health Board started to meet with the community. They went first and meet with community councils, they meet with the ladies auxiliary, they met with the hospital foundations. I'm sure when the annual meeting came up - and like I say, the government didn't know these discussions were happening, and I think everybody will remember when the minister of health who

is still our present minister of health was approached about this idea. He said it is not even on the radar screen or right away. Then the board who was out working quite hard to talk to people held their annual meeting that fall, which the minister came up, and they told the community at that time they were going to take a step back on the consultations because they didn't feel they had the support of government.

I'm just going to read a couple lines out of that annual meeting which, again, was open to everybody in West Prince to come out, if they had any concerns at all about the health care in West Prince.

It said here: It talked about their meeting in January of that year, said with regard to a vision to address the things, the things that they wanted to work for as they went into future was illness prevention, health promotion and collaboration, seniors and children, a new model for health care sensibility, and a need for programs to benefit the working poor.

So just below that it says: With regard to a vision to address these themes, particularly one, three and four, the consensus was that the movement to a new centrally located acute care facility would be a major step in the right direction. The planning session resulted in your board approving a new mission statement as well as (Indistinct) statements, with these reflecting increased emphasis on the region working together as well as importance of our staff. With regards to the vision of the one new central acute care facility, we have made a commitment to consult with all stakeholders and provide opportunity for input from the citizens of the region prior to - this is the most important word - prior to approaching government with any proposal. The process is ongoing.

So it's amazing today to hear people say that this was government's idea. This was at the

annual meeting in the fall of 2004. These are the minutes from the annual meeting. So again, this was started by the people of West Prince, the same way it did back 50 years ago when the first hospital was built.

When you look at the amount of consultations that went on in West Prince, again, almost 1,200 individuals participated in the consultation process, which includes six private stakeholder meetings, six public forms, and many methods of giving their input. They could do oral presentation, they could do written presentations. There was a toll-free line that they could call into. There was no way that anybody was shut out of this process.

So when they went around to the -

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Binns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hate to interrupt the hon. member, I'll only be brief, but I wanted to stand and recognize a distinguished Islander with us in the gallery tonight.

I'm talking about none other than Brendon Duffy. Brendan works in the employment of the provincial government, Queens Printer, and is well known to everyone in the building complex downtown for his dedication to his work. You'll see him delivering mail and other goods to people throughout government on a daily basis, and he's a great friend to all. He's a member of the Knights of Columbia and when he's wearing his colours there isn't a finer looking gentleman on Prince Edward Island. As well, very active with the Royal Canadian Legion and his church. It's a pleasure to welcome him here to this Assembly this evening.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Rodgeron: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So again, as I was saying, there were lots of avenues for people to come out and give their input. I can say that so far I have not gotten one phone call. I had one phone call two weeks previous to the announcement in regards to another matter, and during the course of that discussion the gentleman brought up the discussion. I knew that he wasn't supportive of the new hospital, but I can say today that I never got one phone call.

Now ten years ago, as I said earlier, roads have been blocked by fire trucks and anybody that was in the Legislature here would know, busloads of people coming to the Legislature. So it appears to me from the feedback that I'm getting, I'm sure there are still people that have concerns, and everybody is not totally agreeable with this concept. But so far I really have been trying to go and talk to people that may have concerns to see if I can help shed some light on the work to date, if they have an opportunity to be aware of all the things that have been happening.

So over the course of the meeting people were asked a question. If they felt that they couldn't maintain the status quo - and there was many views put forth - but the one that seemed to come through from everything I can see in the report that was really guided - all the people that participated in it - was the overriding factor was that the majority of the people that came out to these meetings and the input they got, whether it be from e-mails or whether it be from the toll-free numbers, was that there was an overwhelming support for this new facility.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Dunn: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Glen Stewart-Bellevue Cove, that the House adjourn and stand adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.