

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Kathleen M. Casey

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Standing Committee on Community and Intergovernmental Affairs

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MEETING STATUS: PUBLIC

LOCATION: (1) ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION, SUMMERSIDE; (2) ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION, O'LEARY

SUBJECT: DIFFERING WAGE SYSTEM

COMMITTEE:

Robert Henderson, MLA O'Leary-Inverness
Paula Biggar, MLA Tyne Valley-Linkletter
Olive Crane, Leader of the Opposition
Sonny Gallant, MLA Evangeline-Miscouche
Pat Murphy, MLA Alberton-Roseville
Buck Watts, MLA Tracadie-Hillsborough Park, replaces Cynthia Dunsford, MLA Stratford-Kinlock

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jim Bagnall, MLA Montague-Kilmuir
Cynthia Dunsford, MLA Stratford-Kinlock
Gerard Greenan, Summerside-St. Eleanors

GUESTS:

Summerside: Miscouche Convenience Store (Kevin Dugay); Village Store, Bedeque (Susan Whelan); Anne Christopher; CUPE PEI (Carol Ferguson, Milo Murray); John Curtis; Sandy MacKay; Margaret MacKay

O'Leary: West Prince Chamber of Commerce (John Lane); Debbie VanBuskirk; CUPE Local 1779 (Wanda Livingstone)

STAFF:

Marian Johnston, Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees
Ryan Conway, Research Officer

The Committee met at 2:00 p.m., in Summerside

Chair (Henderson): Welcome, everybody.

I'd like to welcome people here to our meeting on the Standing Committee of Community and Intergovernmental Affairs, discussing the topic of different minimum wages. I apologize to some in the audience there. My vocal chords are a little strained there from a weekend at the ECMAs, but anyway, it was a very entertaining weekend in that regard.

Mr. Gallant: Get any awards?

Chair: A little hard on the vocal chords, so my singing career is going to be in jeopardy, I think.

Anyway, we'll start off. We'd like to welcome the presenter. Our first presenter is Kevin Dugay. I've introduced you, but I'd like you to identify yourself and whether you're speaking on behalf of yourself or whether you're speaking on behalf of an organization. We have allocated about 10, 15 minutes for a presentation on the particular subject of different minimum wages.

So I'll turn the microphone over to you.

Kevin Dugay: Thank you very much. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Kevin Dugay. Along with my wife, Brenda, we own the Miscouche Convenience store and we're speaking on behalf of ourselves and our business.

We actually think the two-tiered minimum wage system is a good thing as long as it is implemented in a proper way. Just to paint a picture of our business itself, a typical day. My wife and I would come in, in the morning, we run the day shift. The evening

shift, we turn it over to staff members, usually which consists of one student who would be out of high school and then an adult as well. We don't always need the two people on. We like it for security reasons. Especially, it's nicer to have two people there.

It's not a business that we make huge money in. Like, we're making a living like most people. We have to cut costs where it needs to be. We bought this store two years ago and in those two years we've seen minimum wage jump three times. I don't recall ever seeing it jump that fast in my life, personally. What it has ended up doing, we've seen it hit our bottom line, and we didn't want to, but what we've ended up doing is we've had to cut back shifts, like the shift that might have started at 3:00 now starts at 4:00, and we work that extra hour. We've even seen it when things got slow enough where we've cut two people's shifts totally and one of us will walk in, say on a Sunday morning, and work that full shift.

So as it's increasing, we don't see it really helping our staff. We see them maintaining or losing in this. If it keeps jumping up the way it does, we don't see it helping them either that way.

Sorry, I've lost my place already.

Chair: Just one quick question. So if you've seen - if minimum wage is increased, I mean, what - your only option is to cut expenses or is it to increase prices?

Kevin Dugay: We come down to - we've got the two options. We either decrease our expenses or we increase our prices. Right now, we don't see the increase being very feasible because we think we're already at the top of our margins we can get now. You start jumping up too high in prices, the customers just stop coming. So you've got to find that balance.

Right now, wages is one of the spots where

it's easy for us to cut because - but by doing that, it just means we end up working more ourselves as the owners and operators.

We'd love to have the staff working more because we'd love to have more time with our family ourselves. We're open 365 days a year because that's the nature of our business. You're looking at getting up to \$10 an hour, that means we've got to pay two staff members \$25 an hour to work a staff holiday. Fifty dollars an hour is not feasible. So stat holidays, we're in there ourselves again. They're enjoying their days off but we're the ones that have to open. They're great days for a business like ours because all the other stores are closed. However, they're not that lucrative to be spending \$50 an hour on wages.

We're also not saying that we think wages should be rolled back. Like, I mean, they've hit where they're at now, that's fine. What we're looking at more is taking the minimum wage where it is now, if you're going to go to the two-tier system, freeze it, and as the minimum wage goes up, the lower tier stays where it's at and the upper tier will go.

Chair: What would you suggest as some of the tiers? Like, how do you define what the difference is?

Kevin Dugay: That's kind of where we're looking at, too. We've heard talk of the student versus non student, the beverage server, food server, tip organizer, wages, as opposed to the regular working wage, and we've also heard the experience/inexperience wage. The one thing that we're looking at - there is that breakdown of: Where do you define a student?

To us, our student is the high school student. They're not out looking to pay rent, groceries, utilities, make a living. They're looking for their spending money, like we all did at that age. We've got our cars and

whatever we want. You know, go out and do this and do that. But then we recognize you've got the university student who is out there looking to make as much as they can till they go back in the fall, and you've also got the mature student that goes back that might still have the family at home. But if you put that - you got to figure out where that cut is, be it high school and university is the difference of what a student is? Also, the experience/inexperience where they had mentioned you walk in inexperienced, you get the lower wage till you get experience.

I've heard people discussing the 3-month thing. To me, that doesn't quite fit either. I would prefer to see an hourly thing. If you work for me two shifts a week at seven hours or you work for me 35 - 40 hour a week, that three months is a big difference, hours to time.

Chair: Paula Biggar has a question.

Kevin Dugay: Sure.

Ms. Biggar: Just in regard to that, how many hours do you consider then would be, if you froze it, say, on a non-experienced worker at what the present wage is now, for how long would you suggest then - how many hours would it take before you would consider them to go up to what everybody else is making?

Kevin Dugay: Again, probably, you might even have to try and figure that out as to whether it's skilled labour or not, shall we say.

Ms. Biggar: In your store.

Kevin Dugay: In my store? It wouldn't be skilled labour. You could probably easily say 300 or 400 hours on something like that. Whereas I also have a bookkeeping business; 300 or 400 hours, it's not going to give you near as much experience as 1,000 hours you might put in, to get you up, depending on your experience coming in.

Ms. Biggar: If somebody is trained in bookkeeping, like would you consider them a student? You're not going to hire a student to do bookkeeping, more than likely.

Kevin Dugay: No, and that's the thing, too. You wouldn't be walking into a job like that at minimum wage either, because you're getting skilled labour coming in.

Ms. Biggar: Correct.

Kevin Dugay: So I mean, even if I wanted to hire someone at minimum wage, I'd never find somebody to work at it.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, okay, thank you.

Kevin Dugay: I guess the only other thing I wanted to mention was the fact that the two-tiered system has been set in place in other provinces and we've seen it work well there. Like everything else, there's going to be people that try to abuse the system, figure their ways around it. I think if it's set out right it could work really well for everyone involved.

I'd like to thank you very much for your time.

Chair: Okay.

Are there any other questions for Mr. Dugay?

Okay, we'd like to thank you very much.

Kevin Dugay: Thank you.

Chair: Our next presenter up is Susan Whelan from the Village Store in Bedeque.

Thank you very much, Susan, for attending. I would like to ask you to sit down and you can get used to the routine here. It's to identify yourself, and if you're speaking on behalf of yourself or an organization, we'd like that to be known.

Susan Whelan: Yes, I'm Susan Whelan, and I am speaking on behalf of myself as the owner of the Village Store in Bedeque, and I've got some notes here because my memory tends to go when I'm under pressure.

The store has been an integral part of the community for over 100 years. I was chatting with a lady yesterday from British Columbia. She was visiting her parents in Bedeque and she mentioned the fact that she'd worked at the store when she was a girl and she said it seems to be our right of passage with growing up in Bedeque, working at the store.

In my tenure as owner I've had 22 employees, 17 of which are teenagers. I usually have five people working in the off-season part-time, and I need up to eight in the summer. I'd love to have somebody working full-time, but it's not been possible to hire anybody full-time with experience who'll work for minimum wage. Although I've only got one or two working at a time, I don't want somebody going to school and working more than a few evenings at a time, so I split it up. I give each kid a couple of shifts a week. Even with five kids on call I can end up working a 15-hour day because if one of them calls in sick the rest of them are not available when you want them.

Training new help is a very costly endeavour and it takes about three times as long and it's twice as hard when it's somebody's first job. Depending on how quickly they learn it can take at least a week or two and sometimes much longer for any employee to feel comfortable behind the counter on their own. I've got to pay two people to do the job of one during that time because I need to have somebody with them at all times to teach them.

My store is very old-fashioned. I don't have a bar code reader. Employees need to learn the prices and they need to learn what's taxable and what's not. Then I've also got

the postal outlet and they need to learn basic stamp prices. It takes about a year for the younger ones to even attempt to learn how to do a parcel, and we can do that right on the computer, or how to do a money order and that's fairly simple. But it still takes about a year before they'll even consider trying to do it.

In the meantime, if that service is requested, I have to be on call. When the younger kids are comfortable working without supervision in the store, without the post office, I still have to be there because I won't leave a 15- or 16-year old alone in the store without - my apartment's out behind and I've got a buzzer system set up, and I'm always there when the younger ones are working.

Since I've owned the store I've given 17 kids their first job. I've taught them how to work and that real life is more than texting your friends. Depending on the employee, I've lost a lot of money with teenagers. The last two that I hired had discrepancies of \$80 and \$90 respectively at the end of their first solo shifts, and that was after intensive two-person training. I can't afford to pay tax on income I didn't receive and I can't afford to pay GST and PST that wasn't charged. It takes me hours to find the mistakes, when I do find them, and in this case it turned out that both of them were asked for Interact cash back and instead of just doing it on the Interact machine they entered the amount that they were requested in the till. So I was being charged for money that I didn't sell. It's months before some employees can balance the cash, and I figure for every mistake I know about there's probably two that I don't.

One dear girl who's in university now used to guess at the prices instead of looking them up, until I caught her doing it. You'd think scooping ice cream would be a simple job, but one of my employees was making cones so big that the customers were actually complaining. We're very well

known for the size of our ice cream, but I warned her and warned her, and every time I'd not be there they'd get bigger and bigger until it was actually costing me more than I was making.

Profit in convenience stores is measured by pennies. Independent convenience stores are a dying breed and it's for good reason. Most store owners have to put in ridiculous hours to make ends meet. We can't afford to pay ourselves most of the time, much less pay more than minimum wage to our employees. I have an older retired lady who has been with me for four years and I wish I had three of her. She's invaluable. Unfortunately, she just doesn't want to work more than a few days a week. I'd like to pay her a lot more than I do. I do pay her more than minimum, but with small profits and with so much money spent on training, squeezing an extra quarter an hour for her means that I have to work more hours myself to make up for the money I'm giving her. So I'm cutting somebody to give her the extra. But I'd rather do without than pay her the same hourly wage as a 14-year old, which is what minimum wage is.

A convenience store is the perfect starting place for kids to learn how to work, especially when the customers are mostly their friends and neighbours. They learn responsibility and how to deal with the public and customer service, the basics of marketing. Most of all, that they can be proud of doing a good job, no matter how menial or small.

I do love my kids and they send me their graduation pictures and their prom pictures. I'm very proud of them and I encourage them to go further, especially to go on to university, and I feel that I do contribute to their lives. But at the end of the day I've got a business to run, and if people have to support themselves or a family, they should be able to do that on a minimum wage. But when they're 14- or 16-years old and just learning what work is all about and costing

me money to teach them, I truly believe that they should not be entitled to earn as much as an experienced person, because it's an entry level job. Once the kids get some experience they often move on and then the training cycle starts all over again.

I realize this is a very contentious issue, but I'd like the people who oppose a two-tier system to try to run a small business and deal with young people. As long as I have to pay full wages to a 14-year old serving ice cream I can't afford to pay the good experienced worker what he or she is worth, and that's the true shame of the one-tier system.

Chair: Okay.

We have a question from Buck Watts.

Mr. Watts: Yeah, Susan, with the minimum wage now at 8.40 an hour, what wage do you suggest, like, say, the inexperienced worker? How much less than 8.40? And the experienced worker, how much more than 8.40? Or do you have like a figure in mind? Or would one -

Susan Whelan: It would be nice to give an experienced worker \$10 an hour. I mean, that would be ideal, but we can't always live in an ideal society, unfortunately. I don't think the kids should make more than \$6 or \$7 an hour, to be quite truthful. If the minimum wage is going to go up and keep growing to \$10, I agree with the last person who said that it should be frozen at where it is now for the younger people.

Mr. Watts: But you would suggest six at the low end and 10 at the high end.

Susan Whelan: Yes.

Mr. Watts: Or somewhere in between.

Susan Whelan: Yes.

Mr. Watts: Okay, thank you.

Susan Whelan: If you could give \$6 to a younger person, I'd be saving \$2 an hour on their wages and I could give \$10 an hour to somebody that was worth it. I've got two people now that are worth it, that I'd like to give more to.

Mr. Watts: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Sonny Gallant, please.

Mr. Gallant: Susan, can I just ask: What would the age of your youth be when you hire them?

Susan Whelan: Fourteen.

Mr. Gallant: Fourteen?

Susan Whelan: Yeah. They come in when they're 14, then they're - usually they stay until they're 16 and then at 16 or 17 they start looking for something where they could waitress and get tips, or do a little better than I can pay them. And they want to get out and see the world, and go a little beyond Bedeque.

Chair: Pat Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: Hi Susan.

Susan Whelan: Hi.

Mr. Murphy: What time frame do you think - like, if there was a wage for inexperienced workers, how long of a time frame do you think that should be until they become an experienced worker and get the higher wage?

Susan Whelan: I think it should depend on age. I think if it's a 14-year old it should be a year or maybe even two years. If it's a 15-year old, a year. Once they're 16, then it would depend on the hours.

I honestly haven't thought about how far it would go or who would you consider. Some of the kids will come in and within three

months they're great. But there are some that are still calling me in a year and I don't get any time if they're on shift, I have to keep running back and forth, and in and out, and I only get five hours off a day. We're open 15 hours and I have a five-hour afternoon shift, so if I'm running in and out when I'm off, I don't get much rest.

I'm sorry, I should have been more prepared for something like that. I don't know how you would consider who was -

Mr. Murphy: No, I just wanted your opinion on it.

Susan Whelan: Yeah, I think a young person under 16, it should be a year before they're really ready to be considered experienced.

Chair: Sonny Gallant.

Mr. Gallant: Just one more question, Susan. We're speaking to you and to your business relation here. Of these youth that you hire, like the 14-year olds, do you find, do you spend a lot of time on training? Like, do they have any experience when they come into your business at all, like, as far as cleaning, as far as -

Susan Whelan: Babysitting.

Mr. Gallant: - babysitting is the only experience they've had?

Susan Whelan: Yes.

Mr. Gallant: So you have to teach them how to clean, you have to teach them how to ring things in, you have to teach them everything.0

Susan Whelan: Actually, the biggest thing you have to teach them is how to look around and see that something needs to be done. They are used to having everything done for them and they just have no idea what it's like to need to look to see what has

to be done. But yes, you have to start them right from scratch. You have to keep things clean. You've got to keep things stocked. You've got to look for messes, and if the floor gets dirty you actually have to wash it. It's right from scratch with them.

Chair: Susan, do you feel that if you based it on the students with a lower wage, like you were saying, \$6, \$7 for students, 14 to 16 or whatever, you're going to be more apt to get turnover? I mean, other employers that are out there that would tend to pay more. I'd be thinking that instead of students staying with you right till they're 18, you maybe finding it self-defeating to a certain degree by paying that much lower of a wage. Just what's your opinion on that?

Susan Whelan: My opinion is that no, you wouldn't. When I take the 14- and 15-year olds, they know nothing and there's very few people that would hire them. If you're talking Burger King or McDonald's or Tim Hortons or somewhere where they could come in and actually make a bigger wage, they've got such a choice of young people that they aren't going to take the ones with absolutely no experience.

Chair: I guess what I'm getting at is that once that person who starts with you at 14, maybe by the time they're 15 they're going to go to the, I would say, Burger King, McDonald's or whatever, that might be paying a little bit higher wage, as an example. So hence, you're going to be, really training people more and more all the time versus - I'm just saying, I could see that as a possibility for some, so you turn -

Susan Whelan: Just in my personal experience, or for my store, I'd say, no, simply because - maybe when they're 16 and get their driver's license. But when they're 15 they're going to hockey and they're going to different social things during the week, and their parents have to drive them, and they can usually ride a bike or walk to the store to work. If they worked

in town, it's kind of self-defeating. Their parents would lose the extra money on gas.

Chair: Okay.

A question from Buck Watts.

Mr. Watts: Yeah, just another question, Susan, it's really got nothing to do with wages. You're running a store in rural Prince Edward Island?

Susan Whelan: Yes.

Mr. Watts: How long have you been running this store?

Susan Whelan: Five years.

Mr. Watts: Five years?

Susan Whelan: Yes.

Mr. Watts: In the past five years, how has - not prying in your business - how has your business - do you find it's gone down in the last five years, it's kind of held its own, or -

Susan Whelan: When I bought the store, it had been a little neglected and sales doubled the first year I had it, and I find it has gone up every year since, and last year was the best year I've ever had. Our community's growing so I would say that this year should be - so far, doing my books, I've noticed an increase in January and February -

Mr. Watts: Is that right?

Susan Whelan: - so I'm hoping I'll have an even better year.

Mr. Watts: Well, that's good to hear, Susan. I'm glad to hear that some sectors of rural PEI are thriving.

Susan Whelan: Yes.

Mr. Watts: So I'm glad to hear that.

Susan Whelan: So am I.

Ms. Biggar: Congratulations.

Mr. Watts: Thank you.

Susan Whelan: Well, thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much, Susan.

Susan Whelan: Thank you for letting me give my opinion.

Chair: Our next presenter is Anne Christopher. So I would ask Anne to come forward.

I guess I was remiss in saying it's great to be here in the Summerside Canadian Legion. It's a great facility for hosting such an event like this, the legislative committees.

Anne Christopher: Hi, my name's Anne Christopher and I'm here, I guess, I'm looking at it at a different aspect of the whole as the last two speakers.

I'd like to remind the public that I'm speaking not only of myself, I'm speaking of a lot of people, I think, today.

With the cost of living going up faster than we can say payday, you want people to work less. There is a name for that and it's called slave labour. I can't express it any other way. I would like to know whose idea it was to have the audacity to even take it to our government and for our government even to consider this. It's unbelievable. We should be talking about wage increase, not wage decrease.

Chair: I might interrupt saying I don't think anybody has ever said there was to be a wage decrease. It's just looked at the concept of different levels of minimum wages.

Anne Christopher: Well, from the aspect I took from it when I was reading the paper is

that the inexperienced were going to be paid less, less than minimum wage, that's what I took -

Chair: Any scenario, I guess, is possible, but I don't think anybody has said that we're looking at lower, anyway.

Anne Christopher: That's how I read it in the paper, that there was going to be less. I mean, minimum wage can't go less. It's too low now for what the cost of living is today.

If this is coming from larger companies and restaurants and tourism, then it's time for them to evaluate their company. Instead of paying less for the employee, why don't you train the employee to do the right job and put them on a probation period? If it doesn't work out, tell the employee that it just isn't going to work out for them. Forget paying them less. Give them a reason to want to stay. Stay on their job with some incentive, that wages will get better as you improve yourself. Like every six months or a year. Pay them a wage so they can afford to go to work to support their family and pay bills.

Now the last two speakers were speaking of teenagers working and whatnot. I'm thinking there is a lot of people that are not teenagers that have family of their own and are trying to work and they're working for not a whole lot more than minimum wage. Because instead of this country going ahead, you're putting the people that do the labour that some of you people wouldn't do.

If you look at it, we are the people - like, we have to pay taxes. We're not exempted. We don't get tax breaks, and large companies. I don't get a tax break because I had to buy a car to go to work. In some cases, in a lot of families, we don't have bus services here downtown in Summerside. If you've got two people working in your family, you have to have two cars. We don't get exempt from that. We don't get our mileage or we don't get a tax break from that.

A lot of these companies, they can claim their car and their stuff like this because they need it for this, that and the other thing, but we don't. Most businesses get a job - and there's a lot of businesses get a job subsidy from the government program. The training time - but the company should have a good reason of letting them go after a subsidy runs out. They need to be accountable to the individual and the employee as the employee should be accountable to the business.

Tourism. Like, you get a lot of these businesses that are working, that are open so many months of the year, and they talk about how poor business was. Well, cry me a river. Everybody has a hard time and so do we, as going to work, as working people. I mean, if you're having a bad business, it's no fault of the employee. It's not the fault of the employee because business wasn't good, tourism didn't show up or whatever the case maybe. The labour workers' there to do the job and helping them with their business.

Minimum wage here on PEI is 8.40. It should be \$10 or more. And like most other provinces, what about our students, as was mentioned, who work when not in school to save for college? Then when they want to start, the tuition is up more than it was the year before.

Another thing that was mentioned is how to treat people that make tips. Tips are given to an individual for the great service they served in each company they're working in, whether it be in a restaurant or whatever the case maybe, a bar or whatever, that's where you get the tips.

Companies are not understanding the fact that they got a tip because they gave the customer good service. When they give the customer good service, those customers are going to come back to your establishment. So why are they bickering about people giving up their tips? They should claim their tips with income tax. They should share

their tips amongst all the other staff in the restaurant. That's totally bogus, particularly in a restaurant. A waitress up front gets all the lowdown when the customer is not happy. It's up to the waitress or the waiter to make that customer happy, to keep them happy, and to be responsible for things that other employees in the restaurant didn't do.

I've worked in the restaurant business all my life and I would have never give up - I've never given up any part of my tips to anybody nor have I claimed them. If I was working them today I would not claim them either because it's a gift that you got from an associate. You can come after me if you want, but good luck. But a tip is given to the waitress or the waiter for doing a good job.

Now, I've been talking to different people working in the restaurant field since this issue come up. Some of them have to give so much percentage to the dishwasher, so much percentage to the cook. Let the employer pay these people for what they're worth and let the waitress go out there and do the job that they're paid to do plus receive their tips. I mean, it's ridiculous even to bring this subject up to anybody because you know what I hope happens if they have to count their tips, share their tips with other staff members or whatever? I hope every waiter and waitress walks out of every job in this province, and I'd be on the front line with them because it's not fair.

Some of these people go to work. They go to work for their tips because they don't get enough money being paid by the employer, and they shouldn't be, and they go there and work their butt off to do a good job, to make extra money on tips. Then the employer or the government should back off and let them do their job because they're working hard.

You, our government are crying: How come our people are leaving the Island and working and going to school elsewhere? You just answered your own question. Give us a reason to stay.

It was quoted in the *Journal-Pioneer* by the Summerside Chamber of Commerce that should someone have just started a new job should get the same minimum wage that their co-worker that has been there for 10 years. Well, hello. If you've been working on a job for 10 years and you're still working minimum wage, it's time to change jobs because your employer is taking you for a ride.

I don't care what type of job it is. That would solve the problem. If you've been working at job for 10 years - I'm backtracking - and you didn't get a pay raise every year, I would suggest changing jobs. I don't care what type of job it is. That would solve the problem of someone new starting in the same position and getting the same pay. I can understand why we are labelled as working poor because we are the working poor.

You know that just because we earn low wages we are not exempt from paying our bills. We still have all our household bills and need a car. I said that already. We need to keep our families, not to mention our medical and our other emergencies. It has been quoted that PEI is on top of the list for unemployment rates, welfare, I can see why. People that are on welfare can't afford to go to work. They make more money on welfare.

Allowing this to go through to satisfy a few companies will be terrible for all of us because the reality of this is the number of suicide rates, welfare, people being jailed are doing triple, and that is all tax paying money which is something else we're not exempt from. The stress of not being able to provide for one's own family will outweigh any other situation in this province.

For our government to stand and say how well we are doing on PEI or Canada and doing that is just a load of crap. It is the rich guy that's doing well because while the rich guy is eating surf and turf in a restaurant, we

are eating macaroni without the hamburger in our house, without any power, because we can't afford to pay the lights, because we don't have any money, because the minimum wage is only 8.40 an hour.

I have a few words that describe all of this and they all came to my mind when I read it in the paper, and the word is bullying. It's discrimination. There's disrespect. It's degrading and outrageous. I'm sure that if you change this system (Indistinct) you will be making the biggest mistake that you've ever made. We are taxpayers. We are paying for it. You, as a government, will be crying for votes that won't be there. Some students are old enough to vote, and gone are the days when you vote what your forefathers voted. You vote for who's doing something for you in the Legislature.

The change, if there's any change to this system, it should be changed how permanent workers and part-time workers can get benefits at work. Because right now, today, if you're a part-time worker and a permanent worker, you can't get benefits. You can't afford to be sick. When I expressed all these words that this is degrading and outrageous and everything, I had a meaning for them all, but I know I've outdid my time and I do have to get back to work.

So, this two-tiered wage, I think you should raise the minimum wage up to \$10 an hour and keep it going. Because you know what? As soon as you put it up to \$10 an hour, we'll still be like at 8.40, because the cost of living will go up anyway. It's the same as the Canada Pension cheques. It went up one week and the next night the oil went up, the price of gas went up. Big deal.

That's what I have to say.

Chair: You're not interested in any questions?

Anne Christopher: Oh, I'm sorry.

Chair: But I'm not sure if there's any questions, but anybody have any questions for Anne?

Sonny Gallant.

Mr. Gallant: I'd just like to thank you, Anne, for your presentation and it was a very passionate presentation. We've certainly heard some of the comments you've made today, and I just want to say thank you very much for your presentation, once again.

Anne Christopher: Thank you.

Chair: Paula Biggar, and then Buck Watts.

Ms. Biggar: Anne, certainly you and I have had conversations about this and I know you're very passionate, and that you work, in your volunteer time, with a lot of different segments of our population and I know from where you're coming. So thank you for your opinion.

Anne Christopher: Thank you.

Chair: Buck Watts.

Mr. Watts: Yeah, Anne, I just want to thank you for your presentation. Very simply put, I have great admiration for anybody who speaks their mind. Thank you.

Chair: I want to welcome Olive Crane to our meeting. Olive, I don't know if you had any questions quickly, but -

Leader of the Opposition: No, but I'll just give you my apologies. There's only three of us in opposition. We're triple-booked and we had an event in Charlottetown, and we got in a detour which caused me to be late, so I apologize. I would have loved to have been here, but I'll read the transcripts, Anne.

Chair: Okay, thank you very much, Anne.

Anne Christopher: Thank you.

Chair: Our next presenter is Milo Murray, president of CUPE PEI.

Okay, Milo, I hope I'm pronouncing that properly.

Milo Murray: Yes, it is, and thank you.

Chair: Okay, anyway, I'll ask you to introduce your guest with you -

Milo Murray: I certainly will.

Chair: - and the organization you're representing.

Milo Murray: It's going to be pretty hard to top that last speaker, speaking from the heart like that, even if she was for against, but that's great.

Good afternoon. My name is Milo Murray. I'm president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees here in the Prince Edward Island division. With me today is Carol Ferguson. She's maritime research from CUPE, from the Maritime region.

After my presentation I'll supply you with some copies. I don't know how many we brought. I wasn't expecting this large a committee.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) sorry, Milo, we'll get more copies for the committee, if need be.

Milo Murray: Great. The last time I was in front of a board like this there was just two people, so that's when I got here, I said Holy Hannah, what am I getting myself into?

Chair: The quorum is five.

Milo Murray: Okay.

Anyway, CUPE is Canada's largest union, including 600,000 public sector members working in virtually every community across the country. In Prince Edward Island

we proudly represent some 2,400 public sector employees in education, health, University of Prince Edward Island, group homes, nursing homes, and the Island EMS.

I'm here today to strongly urge the Standing Committee on Community and Intergovernmental Affairs to recommend against proclamation of this recent amendment to pass to the *Employment Standards Act* that would create different minimum wage rates.

I want to say that while I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this select committee today, this is not the way we should be making public policy. The amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* have already been passed with wordings so deliberately vague that all of us - including members of this committee and the Legislative Assembly - are left to speculate what classes of employees or what kinds of employment might be affected and to what degree.

We really don't know what changes government plans to make to the minimum wage or what the government hopes to achieve by changing it. For the majority of the workers on PEI, whose works are not covered by collective agreements, the *Employment Standards Act* set by government is one of the few forms of protection they have. A number of positive changes, long overdue, were made to the *Employment Standards Act* back in December of 2009. But right now, non-unionized workers earning the minimum wage, who really have no one to represent them, are left wondering how these other unspecified changes to the minimum wage could affect their economic future and the security of their families.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees acts on behalf of its members to negotiate favourable terms of conditions of employment that normally go beyond the minimum wage standards of the

Employment Standards Act. These changes will not affect the members of CUPE directly, but they will affect our communities.

CUPE has always been a community union. We seek for others what we seek for ourselves. We do not want to live in communities where our neighbours and friends live in poverty and without economic security. The lowest paid workers on Prince Edward Island, approximately 2,000 men and women earning minimum wage of \$8.40 an hour, cannot afford a wage cut. That is why I'm here today on behalf of CUPE members on Prince Edward Island.

CUPE welcomes the two recent increases made to the minimum wage, but at \$8.40 an hour full-year minimum wage workers still fall below the poverty line as measured by Stats Canada low income cutoff.

Food banks in Prince Edward Island report that almost 40% of the clients last year employed or on unemployment insurance are still not making ends meet because of low wages and insufficient work hours. As Food Banks Canada stated in its report of 2009: It is clear that Prince Edward Island needs a higher minimum wage just so families can survive.

Without a minimum wage index to cost of living, minimum wage earners will continue to fall further and deeper into poverty.

Other provinces are raising the minimum wage, not cutting them. In Nova Scotia, the minimum wage will rise to \$9.65 by October 2010; Newfoundland and Labrador, which at one time was known as the poorest province in Canada, is raising it to \$10 an hour in July; Ontario to 10.25 in April; Quebec to 9.50 in May, and our sister province, New Brunswick to \$9 September 1st.

Governments that believe in the value of paid work should believe in supporting paid

workers. Someone working full-time should be able to get out of poverty. Our existing minimum wage is already a substantial wage and should not be lowered.

One of the possible versions of a two-tiered minimum wage being floated by government is to pay a lower minimum wage to employees who earn gratuities. Serving the public, particularly in a restaurant setting, is a very demanding job. Tips are a way of customers showing their appreciation for the service they receive, but they are not a consistent source of income. Anyone who works in the service industry can tell you that tips vary widely, by the job, to the restaurant. Even at the same restaurant, tips vary from season to season, day by day, and by week. By the time of the day, someone can make 50 cents on a shift or another person can make \$150 on a shift.

Many employees do not have control of their tips even once the tips have been received. Some businesses require tips to be divided amongst all of the employees. This money might be distributed at the end of the shift, at the end of the day, or the end of the week. Tips are completely unreliable as a source of income. The minimum wage on Prince Edward Island is already low. If workers in the restaurant industry were legislated to lower minimum wage on the expectation that they would make up the differences through gratuities, well, there's no way to enforce the expectation.

Service industry workers are already financially vulnerable. Many have part-time rather than full-time jobs and cannot count on consistent hours. This makes budgeting and meeting financial commitments difficult. It is incorrect to assume that service industry workers are working just for pocket money. Many wait staff are trying to make extra money to pay student loans or support dependents. These workers can't afford a pay cut.

As far as the impact that this might have on

the hospitality industry, it may reduce the wage bill at the local coffee shop, but it also gives a wage cut to large corporations like Tim Hortons and McDonald's who can well afford to pay more to their employees.

Cutting the wage is not going to save local businesses from competition of national chains. It may even discourage workers from staying in that important sector of the Island economy.

Another possible version of the two-tier wages is based on the idea that new workers or young workers need training or experience and therefore should be paid less than the established worker. The International Labour Organization recognizes, for example, that an apprentice can be paid less than their full qualified colleagues. It's hard to see how this rationale would apply to young workers employed in minimum wage jobs in food services and retail. Clearly for most of the jobs being done by young workers, little or no training is required. After a very brief initial period, they're performing work equivalent to that of others by receiving less pay for the privilege.

Since 2001 British Columbia has had reduced minimum wage that allows new entrants to the labour force to be paid \$2 less for the first 500 hours worked. A recent survey conducted by the Canadian Centre for the Policy Alternatives asked public school students in British Columbia about their employment experiences. Very few young workers reported they have received much training. The rest had either never been trained at all or had received only a few training sessions, and this was done typically at the first of the start of the job. Most reported they worked with minimal supervision.

If PEI enacts legislation allowing employers to pay young workers a reduced training wage, would there be legislation that requires employers to actually provide the

training? How would this be enforced? Of course, there are many individuals who could fall under the new entrants category who are not really new entrants at all: women who move in and out of the labour force trying to balance family and work responsibilities; the new immigrants who have work experience elsewhere but take their first job on Prince Edward Island. How would these workers be treated under the two-tier training wage?

Yesterday, March 8th, women across Prince Edward Island gathered to celebrate International Women's Day. Some of them would remember the day when you could advertise a job with a pay scale for men and a different pay scale for women, with the pay rate being lower for women just because of their gender.

Our union believes that wages should be based on the job done and not on who is doing the job. The principle that people should be paid equally for work of equal value is not new. It has been recognized internationally since the 1970s by international labour organizations and the United Nations, and more recently, in pay equity legislation enacted in many Canadian provinces. Equal pay for work of equal value means you can't pay someone less for doing comparable work. It is discrimination, and that's exactly what creating an inexperienced minimum wage would do.

In addition to being discriminatory, there's no evidence to suggest that the reduced new entrants wage increases youth employment by giving employers an incentive to hire young people. Instead of helping the workers, the reduced wage merely subsidizes low wage and often inefficient employers. We should welcome the new entrants to our labour force and treat them with respect, not discourage them through discrimination and wages.

There's no evidence that increases in the minimum wage lead to job losses. A study

by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives examined research in the area and concluded that minimum wage is, if anything, a bit player when it comes to employment rates. Over the past 25 years, increase in the provincial wage has been followed by increases and decreases in employment, showing that other trends in the economy are much more important.

Evidence does not show higher minimum wage - sorry. Evidence does show that higher minimum wage can result in less staff turnover, easier recruitment and a subsequent reduction in the cost of hiring and training of new employees. Money in the pockets of the lowest paid will go right back into our economy and likely back into the very businesses that are concerned about wage levels in the first place.

A lower minimum wage does not help our economy here on Prince Edward Island. Higher wages positively effect our communities through reduced costs to our health care, education and our social service system. Higher wages provide a better tax base on which to build our communities. Higher wages means more disposable income to spend on consumers' goods and services, supporting our own local economy. This is especially true since people with marginal incomes are more likely to spend money locally.

A higher minimum wage can increase the independence and self-sufficiency of teens and youths, enabling young adults to leave home and helping them to reduce the post-secondary debt loads. Family and communities are looking for the government of Prince Edward Island to improve our standard of living, not lower it.

In a brief presented by CUPE PEI to the PEI *Employment Standards Act* in 2009, December, we requested that minimum wage be raised to \$11 an hour by January 1st, tied to the Consumer Price Index thereafter. We repeat this recommendation

to this committee.

In conclusion, CUPE opposes a creation of a two-tiered minimum wage because it is discriminatory towards our young, our students, women, and immigrant workers. Such a policy would harm, not benefit, the citizens of the communities of Prince Edward Island.

I thank you for hearing me today on behalf of the CUPE members.

Chair: I want to thank you for that. So you're basically saying that you'd rather leave it up to the discretion of the employers to what wages be paid based on a floor minimum?

Milo Murray: Yeah.

Chair: Yeah, okay.

Any questions then for Mr. Murray?

Olive Crane.

Leader of the Opposition: Milo, you talked about the BC example. Do you have any other research as well as it? I think you mentioned that when they went to the training wage for 500 hours, after interviews with the young people affected, there was actually no training other than two or three days. Is that consistent? Are there other places that you have examples similar to that?

Milo Murray: Right now I just went into BC to get that information.

Leader of the Opposition: Right. Because a big part of this change is giving employers the opportunity for three months to maybe use a training wage.

Ms. Biggar: I don't think it's spelled out exactly what's in there, Olive.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: It doesn't say that in the amendment that it's three months.

Chair: I think it's based on hours, my understanding, in British Columbia.

Ms. Biggar: We're talking about this amendment, it's not specific (Indistinct) -

Chair: Oh yeah, no, for this, there's nothing in this, yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: No, but I think that that's my point is in terms of experience in other places, when they chose the 500 hours or whatever was chosen, from the research that you found even in that example it was only two or three days of training. Although the students were still given the training allowance for a larger length of time. Was that -

Milo Murray: Yeah, it still continued over that 500 hours.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Milo Murray: - and what it was, they basically received little to minimal training at the first of, we'll say, their career.

Leader of the Opposition: Right.

Milo Murray: After that, there was very minimal supervision.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Any other questions?

Just a couple of questions I had. When you mentioned about, like, the situation with Tim Hortons as an example. We'll just use them as an example as an employer. I mean, it's probably a little bit on the lower end of the wage scale, but wouldn't you see the possibilities that if a person was starting out at Tim Hortons - we'll just say at 8.40 an hour or nine, whatever their wage is - after a

certain period of time, wouldn't it be a benefit to legislate that their wage is increased to, say, \$10 an hour after one year?

I mean, I would see that as a possible benefit versus the situation of leaving it to the discretion of the employer because I would think there's a lot of people that work at organizations like that, that probably are making that same wage for years. So you're leaving it at the discretion of the employer to leave them at that wage.

Milo Murray: You'd think there'd be something legislated in the fact that if you start at the minimum wage, we'll say what it is today, \$8.40 - and then we're suggesting, as CUPE as \$11 and go with the consumer index - that that person would eventually keep creeping up the ladder and it would be up to the employer if (Indistinct)

Chair: But if you legislated that to the employer, they'd have to do it, correct? Versus the scenario of leaving it to the discretion of the employer. So it sounds like you're on both sides of the issue here.

Milo Murray: I couldn't hear what my learned friend - go ahead.

Chair: Sorry about that.

Carol Ferguson: Oh, I was just going to say: Are you saying you're prepared to legislate Tim Hortons to do that?

Chair: No, I'm just saying that that - but the scenario exists that that could be a possibility of different minimum wage. I'm not saying it's going to happen, but I'm just saying -

Carol Ferguson: But it's only a scenario. I mean, the reality is that traditionally the minimum wage has protected workers who are unable to protect themselves.

Chair: Yes, that's right.

Carol Ferguson: Government has opted that. As far as I'm aware, no government has attempted to legislate the wage rates beyond that in private industry (Indistinct) -

Chair: Well, they have. Actually, there's four provinces that have.

Carol Ferguson: In what way?

Chair: They have different minimum wages. I think Nova Scotia, BC, Ontario, Quebec, I think, are the four that have different legislated minimum wages based on - some of them is experience; some is on occupation base, as an example.

Carol Ferguson: But you were talking about legislating for higher wages. That's a different thing.

Chair: It's the same thing.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) well not really, because if you're looking - my understanding, if you're suggesting \$11 an hour, and that is the minimal standard, and then the employers can pay whatever. I think with the example that the Chair is talking about that the \$10 an hour sort of would still be beneath Milo's example of \$11 as minimum wage. Am I correct? Yeah.

Chair: But I mean, there is that scenario that could exist that you could have one minimum wage at 8.40, another one at 10, another one at 11. Like, I'm sure in your union, nobody gets paid the same wage. The more experienced probably get more money, correct?

Milo Murray: They do get paid for equal work for equal value.

Carol Ferguson: Equal value.

Chair: Yes, so by being more experienced, they do more value to their work, correct?

Milo Murray: I'm not here to debate, I'm

just here to provide a hearing.

Chair: Paula Biggar.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, thanks Milo, for your presentation. I do find the concept of minimum wage being indexed quite interesting, though. Certainly some good valid points there.

Milo Murray: Thank you.

Chair: Sonny Gallant.

Mr. Gallant: I want to thank you very much for your presentation too, and compliment you on your good bowling game Saturday.

Milo Murray: Thank you.

Mr. Gallant: You did a good job. Just a quick question in regards to the minimum wage. There was a package that went to the Legislature, it wasn't just the two-tiered minimum wage, it was - as you had mentioned, there are other benefits that came out of there that are quite valuable to workers on PEI. Correct, Mr. Chairman?

Chair: (Indistinct).

Mr. Gallant: There was never any mention of reducing the minimum wage that now exists. There has been some concern out there. We've heard it at other committee meetings, but that was never a mandate of this committee to reduce the minimum wage as we see it now. It was just to go out to the public and hear their opinions on what they'd like to see happen in that regard.

Milo Murray: Eleven dollars to start would be fine, Mr. Gallant.

Chair: Anyway, okay, if there's no - any other questions for Mr. Murray?

Anyway, we thank you very much, Mr. Murray.

Milo Murray: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and the committee.

Chair: Thank you.

Our next presenter is John Curtis. We don't get one?

John Curtis: Yeah, we got a couple there.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: I don't have copies for everyone, Mr. Chair.

John Curtis: I didn't know there would be five of you (Indistinct). I know a quorum is now five.

Ms. Biggar: We can get more copies.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Oh yes, I'll be able to distribute copies.

Chair: Okay, Mr. Curtis, you probably are familiar with our process here. But anyway, you just identify yourself and if you're representing an organization or a group or just yourself as an individual and we'll grant you 10 to 15 minutes.

John Curtis: My name is John Curtis. I'm here representing myself. I'm a father and grandfather.

I am opposing the two-tiered minimum wage which is already redundant. Our young people have already spoken. They do not want part-time minimum wage jobs. The Island's Minister of Finance is complaining we have no natural resources. The Ghiz government has failed to recognize our greatest asset is our young people.

In an article in *Employment Journey*, entitled "What are students looking for in the workplace?," students from Holland College, University of Prince Edward Island and Charlottetown Rural have spoken. I'll just read this part here. Here's what they want:

They want workplaces that have a good reputation that will be recognized by future employers. Employers who offer a training program which clearly spells out what the student is expected to do. A challenging and fulfilling job with continuous learning opportunities. Rotating to different jobs within the community to gain a better understanding of business. Opportunities for career advancement and growth. Opportunities for travel and clear mobility in other provinces and abroad. Employers who are engaged with their staff and show a passion for their work. Flexible scheduling that allows the employee to set their own hours of work. Support and feedback from the employer.

Here's what they don't want. I'm sorry, here's what they do want. They want to work enough hours and receive pay above minimum wage. Okay?

Now, the first two pages I'm going to read this because I have a tendency to ramble on. The first two pages are a little fragmented, but the third page is going to hit home, okay?

So I told you what they want. They don't want minimum wage. Now, there are people here that go to other provinces. All right. Nova Scotia, which supports a two-tiered minimum wage, has predicted a labour shortage within seven years. Nova Scotia has been governed by Liberals, Conservatives, and now the New Democratic Party. Neither of the three political parties can stop the labour shortage. Family size has shrunken to basically four members, to two adults and two children. Prince Edward Island will accelerate the labour shortage with the two-tiered legislation.

Businesses who pay minimum wage don't want to pay employees with five or more years experience, a pay raise, okay? These sectors want to hire a person for \$9.50 an hour instead of providing employees with a

standard of living. Basically, they want white niggers.

The Vanier Institute of the Family has shown it takes two people working or one person working to earn a living. Piss off?

Chair: What's that?

John Curtis: Don't mock me, you heard me.

Chair: I was just saying that the word - I don't know what to say (Indistinct).

John Curtis: Okay, I'm going to explain white niggers, I'm going to explain that to you. I took a course. It was on health and safety. A person who's injured and killed in the Province of New Brunswick, the company is charged \$200,000. A person who is injured and killed working on Prince Edward Island, the company is charged \$10,000. Human life on Prince Edward Island is worth little.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) a better way of putting it.

Chair: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: That's all I think the Chair meant, John.

Chair: Yes.

John Curtis: Okay, all right. But you get where I'm going at.

The Vanier Institute of the Family has shown it takes two people working or one person working overtime. Canada is a signatory of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25.1 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states:

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and

necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

This is what we're entitled to, and your two-tiered minimum wage isn't going to deliver this.

The province cut taxes by \$50 million to businesses. You can't justify a two-tiered minimum wage. The average Canadian household, debt is \$95,000, which gives a debt to income ratio of 145%. The reason is because wages haven't kept up with inflation since the 1980s. The Bank of Canada is warning interest rates will raise later this year to deal with inflation. The business community wants the province to harmonize the Goods and Services tax with the provincial sales tax which will cause a further raise in inflation. So you're entitled to a standard of living. Okay? The low guy on the bottom of society is going to pay for it.

Islanders are delusional if they think our young people will accept minimum wage, pay down our province's \$1.5 billion debt, and then pay for government services. It was my parent's generation and my generation that put our province a billion and a half dollars in debt. Okay? A person earning \$8.40 an hour, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, grosses \$17,472. A person earning \$10 per hour, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, will gross \$20,800.

Our province can't blame the federal government for capping provincial transfer payments while the province is subsidizing wages to companies who pay low wages. Our province can't sustain our existence because of the wages. Okay?

This is where it's a little thing, but you'll see the next page where - all right.

Our province will lose its right to exist as a

province simply because many Islanders don't - you don't get your raise. You don't have the income to sustain a province. Summerside, they want amalgamation. But what happens is, these economic projects that were promised, they're going to pay low wages. Take a look at them now. They're \$10 an hour jobs.

Eighty per cent of the new jobs in Nova Scotia require post-secondary education. Seventy per cent of new jobs in New Brunswick will require a post-secondary education. There's no future in suppressing wages. Bring companies to our province that require a post-secondary education and won't pay \$10.00 an hour.

This isn't all bad. You got businesses who support the co-op program and you have companies that support institutions like Holland College and the University of Prince Edward Island, and they see the value of our young people. Okay? Now here's where I got to tie this together.

Prince Edward Island is using federal transfer payments to subsidize low wages. This is coming to the end with the federal government freezing transfer payments. People have two choices. Businesses either pay higher wages or you leave Prince Edward Island. Islanders pay higher prices to offset higher wages or Prince Edward Island can join Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and form a single Maritime province, which, incidentally, I support.

These low wages aren't providing Prince Edward Island with enough revenue to maintain Prince Edward Island as a province. Okay? I'm going back to this now. I'll give you an example here.

A person earning \$10 an hour, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks, that's \$20,800. You give a \$50 million tax break - I'm not opposed to that - it would take 4,808 people working \$10 an hour and giving back half their pay to pay back the \$50 million. We

pay interest payments of \$120 million. It would take 11,538 people earning \$10 an hour paying back half their income taxes to pay our province's interest payments on our debt.

Two of my nephews and my nephew's girlfriend left Prince Edward Island for Alberta. Now my nephew and his girlfriend have a son. Alberta's population has increased by four. Prince Edward Island's population has decreased by four. Two of my nieces now live in Ontario. Prince Edward Island's population has decreased by two more. Our province's finance minister blames Ottawa for Prince Edward Island not receiving an additional \$29 million in transfer payments instead of acknowledging the fact that Islanders pay low wages and our people leave.

My daughter has a decent boss who provided her with full-time employment, paying above minimum wage, and now I have a grandson. It is time Islanders get with the program. These companies who demand two-tiered minimum wage are driving our young people off the Island and will result in our province losing transfer payments.

I just caught this here last night. There was a report that if pensions aren't adjusted, one-third of the baby boomers who will retire in the next 20 years will live in poverty.

Businesses who want two-tiered minimum wage are sending the wrong message. They want - what I told you before - and they will continue to scare young people away. The Constitution of Canada places the onus on the legislatures to prove their legislation. So let the people that support the two-tiered minimum wage prove that our young people earning low wages will be able to sustain Prince Edward Island as a province, and let those who support a two-tiered minimum wage so that people won't live in poverty when they retire.

The long and the short of it: when you take

care of the lesser in society, you're going to take care of the greater. But the Island has this mentality that -

Unknown person in audience: (Indistinct).

John Curtis: Well, we're here. We got a captive audience and they pay them less.

But you're heading towards a labour shortage. Our greatest asset is our people. Companies here - and I've seen so many of them come into Summerside - they pay the low wages and then they're gone. They got their government subsidies and they're gone. But instead of sitting down and saying to a company: Hey, look, you come to PEI, you're heading towards a labour shortage and it's been acknowledged by I don't know how many - you got your federal government, you've got your different governments here, Nova Scotia. Instead of sitting down and saying: Hey, you come to PEI, you pay wages over and above \$10 an hour, you'll have a workforce.

I read an article in *MacLean's* magazine. What our young people wanted here was what the young people across Canada wanted. It's no different. There was an article in *Progress* magazine where businesses in Atlantic Canada had to raise wages over a three-year period. They did so because our young people were leaving for Alberta and Ontario. The argument wasn't that they could afford to, the argument was they couldn't afford not to. No workforce, no business. You take care of the lesser in society, that means wages are going to have to raise, even in the higher ones. I want to give you this because this isn't mine.

Chair: Give it to the Clerk there.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: I'll take that. Thank you. Put that in our (Indistinct).

John Curtis: Listen to our young people. Those who are educating our young people,

they have.

Chair: So the issue you sort of see: Is it a case of unskilled labour minimum wage or skilled labour force? Because I mean, there was certainly - I think everybody would agree that there are certainly skilled labour shortages in some professions and some occupations in Prince Edward Island as well as in other parts of Canada. Because if you look at the concept of Alberta, I mean the minimum wage there is the same as in Prince Edward Island. But yet, supply and demand incurred (Indistinct) -

John Curtis: But they also incurred - supply, that's right.

Chair: That's correct, yeah.

John Curtis: Given the history of Prince Edward Island, you're going to have to legislate wages. You're going to have to legislate a minimum wage. Because there was a girl that came up here - I was reading it in the newspaper - there was a young girl came up and she sat down, she said: She didn't want someone coming in earning \$10 an hour after she had been working on the job five years. She's a student going to university. This is my whole point. Her employer, unless he's legislated, won't give her a pay raise. The thing is that's the way it is.

My daughter's employer, right?, he employs 40 people. He's a decent boss, pays her above minimum wage, good benefits. Now I have a grandson. If you got people like him, you don't have to legislate it. Okay? But my daughter's boss recognizes the value of his staff. But there are people in this province - and I'm telling you, if you don't legislate him - that one lady back there sat down and said \$6 an hour? There's where you'd be. I'm telling you, that's exactly where you'd be if you don't legislate them.

Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll have a 15-minute break and we got three MacKays lined up for after that.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:

Thank you.

[Recess]

Chair: Okay, we're going to reconvene our hearings from our short recess.

We'll invite Sandy MacKay to the chair.

Sandy, I guess you're probably a veteran on these presentations and whatnot, so we'll ask you to identify yourself and what organization, if there is an organization, that you're representing and ask you to give your presentation, 10 to 15 minutes, thereabouts.

Sandy MacKay: Well, thank you, and no, I'm not representing anybody but myself.

Chair: Okay.

Sandy MacKay: Other than for 30-some years I was involved in the labour movement as president of the Federation of Labour, and as president of the government's employee union, the Union of Public Sector of Employees.

All the years that I was involved in that, we kept making the same presentation to every - it didn't matter whether it was Jim Lee or Angus MacLean, or Robert Ghiz or Joe Ghiz or Catherine Callbeck - I don't think I missed anybody, but I might have. But it was the same issue with this one. In fact, when I was starting to do some research - and probably what I could do, first off, is try to get some clarification. Because I emailed - and I should have written his name down - I think he's the clerk of this committee to find out, or to the clerk of the legislature, I'm not sure, but if I -

Ms. Biggar: Ryan or Charlie.

Chair: Charlie MacKay is the Clerk of the

Legislature.

Sandy MacKay: No, it wasn't Charlie.

Chair: And Marian Johnston is the clerk of this committee.

Sandy MacKay: So it was neither of you then.

Chair: And Ryan was interim clerk while Marian was away.

Sandy MacKay: Did you get an e-mail from me asking about where the Hansard was - my question was - because I couldn't find all the - like, the girlfriend says: Get rid of all this paper you got. I said: Sometimes it comes - you need it - and here is a time where I could look back and said in 1995 or in 1994 or 1996 some government said: Enough is enough, and they did away with the two wages. There was a wage for people under 18 and people over it.

Chair: That's correct, yes.

Sandy MacKay: I tried to find that information. Because I know in 1969 that men made a \$1.25 an hour and women made 95 cents, and I don't think that's what the committee's looking at.

Administratively, a couple of things I'd ask the committee to do. One is, I think I mentioned to this - maybe not this committee, but somewhat similar - is that whenever a committee is going to do work of the Legislature, you can now register on the government website. You can register and you get all the emails every time government does something. I don't know if that also is the Legislative Assembly, but it should be. So that when you put out your piece in the paper, which I don't get a newspaper - I shouldn't have to buy a newspaper to find out when I can make presentations on Maritime Electric or labour or any issue that I might be interested in. If Islanders want, and government wants to be

transparent, and the Legislative Assembly which should be the most transparent body of all, there should be an email go out. Like, I got an email today that said that the Minister of Health gave \$6,000 to each of the -

Chair: Students.

Sandy MacKay: - paramedics, right? So that's good. But I didn't know that this committee was meeting here today, only that I sent an email and they sent one back. So let's try and do that.

The other thing, when I read the Hansard of your meetings on the 13th, the 26th - anyway, I won't quote each one - but I noticed, and I don't know if you guys can fix this, but it'd be easier - we're taught, or I was taught, to read from left to right and right down the page and not have to go back up and see. If you look on the web page, it goes down, like, it'll go down like that, right? Like if you click open the file of the 13th, I'll see the start - Chair welcomed everybody, blah blah blah. It goes to the bottom of the page, and then I got to go back up here to finish reading what was down here.

Chair: Columns, yes.

Sandy MacKay: Yes, so it should be just - I know in paper, let's save paper. So put as much on a paper, but if you could administratively, because it was hard to follow.

Chair: Maybe we'll get an explanation on that at a later date for our committee. I guess I -

Sandy MacKay: No, these are just some administrative suggestions.

Chair: (Indistinct) your point, that's actually a pretty valid point.

Sandy MacKay: Yes, and the third one was I tried to figure out what you're here for,

because as I read the proposal, section 5.3(1), which I believe is good, says that if - in layman's language - if there's going to be research on minimum wage, that hearings will be held. But when you read section 5 at the start it says there's going to be something but it's not clear what it's going to be.

So I was wondering why it's a committee as opposed to what - has the legislation been passed? What is -

Chair: Legislation has been passed on the *Employment Standards Act* -

Sandy MacKay: Right.

Chair: - that allows governments to implement different levels of minimum wages. The former minister has then made a request to the Legislative committee to go out and find out whether that's something that has any merits or not. Should it -

Sandy MacKay: Okay, so administratively (Indistinct) -

Chair: - so we, as a committee, made the decision that we would go out and make hearings, but we will be making a recommendation back to the Legislature in April.

Sandy MacKay: Okay.

Chair: It would be still up to government to decide whether it wants to implement that, our recommendations, or go on its own and that would be up to it.

Sandy MacKay: But section 5.3(1), which I believe is good - because what it requires, if anybody is going to do any changes, they have to have public input first. Again, that's one I again say if you're going to do that, send an email to people that want to register to wherever you're going to register. Because now that everybody in PEI is going to have high-speed Internet at some point -

Chair: A good point.

Sandy MacKay: - that it makes life simpler and you want to be transparent, that's the way to be. If you want to be a government that wants to be accountable.

As far as the issue, I think it's pretty simple from me is that the minimum wage is the minimum wage. Make it simple. Say it's a minimum wage. I mean, it's the lowest rate that an employer can pay. We argued for years and years, and every time we said make one minimum wage, we also said make it easy for the other people that don't want to make minimum wage to change that. That is that you allow 50% of employees who vote by signing a union card to join an union and get certified and they can negotiate a better rate.

Listening to some of the presentations that have been made, I think there's a couple amiss. One is that two-tiered wage system is discriminatory. It's not discriminatory. I don't know of a collective agreement that doesn't have several wage. In fact, in 1995, after Catherine took away the 7.5%, the way we got it back was to implement - the first time it ever was done, I certainly didn't support it, but I wasn't president that year - is that they brought in a two-step system for even people that flag.

So you now go - I think it takes them five years. They have to get five years of work in order to build those hours to get to what the job is worth. Because unions negotiate what the job is worth and then some employees - and I've read some of the presentations where they said: This is the only way. Why should I, after working five years, make the same as you? Well, don't lower, because that's what it will do. Nobody negotiates. No employers negotiate, or very few negotiate up, they usually say: The job's worth \$10, so you're going - like an apprentice mechanic - you're a licensed mechanic, you're going to get \$20 an hour, but when we hire you the first year, we're

going to give you 15. After you get your block release two, you're going to go to 16, 17, 18, 19.

The danger to doing what I've been hearing about these hours is that - and I just mentioned it to the reporter - is that let's say her and I go for a job interview to Robert Henderson's country store. Robert can't ask questions that are discriminatory or gender-based or whatever, but you can ask me: Sandy, you got any experience? Oh yeah, gosh, and then I'll brag about all the jobs I've had. Then you turn to her and you say: have you got any experience? No. So who are you going to hire? You can hire her at, let's say, 8.40 and me at 10. It's a no-brainer if it's a job that doesn't take a lot to learn.

So I would hope that you would steer clear of that. I looked at the rates across the Atlantic region because we've always been told - and I don't think this government's any different than any other government - that we can't be too far out of whack with Atlantic Canada or businesses won't come. That's the other one that I read, my good friend Coles - I used to ski with him - about lowering the minimum wage and it will create wealth. It will only create wealth for the person that has these people hired at minimum wage. If that was true, PEI would have zero unemployment. Newfoundland would have zero unemployment. New Brunswick would have zero. Because we're - and historically have been - the lowest in workers comp, in minimum wage, and labour standards.

So if I have one suggestion for you, it would be go back and say: Look, we've listened and we will recommend to the Legislative Assembly that minimum wage should be minimum. That what we should look at is if the goal is - because I've been listening to what you've been saying - is the goal is, well, how do we get people up above? Then make it easier for them to join a union, and let them make - then that's their choice. I want to work for 8.40 an hour? So be it. But

if I want to join a union I should have the right to do that without fear of being fired. It doesn't matter what we say here today, I don't think there's an Islander you could go to that doesn't believe they'd be fired if they signed a union card. Yet it doesn't happen because we've dealt with the Labour Relations Board.

So that's about it, other than I notice -

Chair: Just a quick explanation. So what are the protocols to join a union as far as an organization or an employer in the union groups? Like, is there a certain amount of people they have to have signed cards?

Sandy MacKay: Yeah, see, here it's a longer process. In Nova Scotia and some other provinces - BC used to have a real good processing. Actually, Ontario did it for a couple of years and I think they did away with it.

But here you got to present to the employer to show that you have the majority of support, and then the board will hold hearings. The employer can call witnesses, the employees can call witnesses, and they can do all these games, and the employer can see stuff that - and employees have a fear of that. Whereas in Nova Scotia - and I don't know if it still is - but when we argued this, because we used to use them as a benchmark, and BC, is that all I should have to demonstrate is I have - there are 500 people work here and I have 300 of them who have said they want to join the union. I have the majority. That's democracy. Here's the cards. Here's their signatures. You get from the employer the list of employees and then it's automatic, within seven days. Then they have so many months to get a collective agreement. If they can't reach one, then it's imposed. It's minimum. It says: You got to have this, you got to have this, you got to have this, and the wage rate.

So it makes it -

Ms. Biggar: A question from Paula Biggar.

Sandy MacKay: Sure.

Ms. Biggar: I guess I should know this, having been a part of CUPE at one time, but is the union legislation already in place here? Like -

Sandy MacKay: Well, there's legislation under the *Labour Act* to how to join the union.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Sandy MacKay: But there isn't an Islander that you could talk to that believes that you would not be fired because there have been people fired.

Now, you know, it's the same thing. Who can afford the lawyers to fight to get my job back? Then in most cases employers will say: If you go to court, what was the job? Well, it was a 6-month job. So we'll give you six months' severance, so you're still out of a job.

Ms. Biggar: So you don't feel there's enough protection for the employee?

Sandy MacKay: Yeah. I think all the arguments that we've ever made is that it's got to be clear to people that you have a choice. Or you can do like they did with the fishermen and say: You have to join a union. So if you work in the restaurant business, if a restaurant wants a - what do they call it - servers, if that's your official title, if you want a server, then you go to the server's union. If you want a carpenter, you go to the carpenter's union. If you want a labourer, you go to the labourer's union. I don't think government's going to do that. It would be great if they did.

But certainly, tourism would be - because then the union would train them - because that's what the carpenter's union do, they make sure they're trained. So when you pick

up a phone and say: I want a server for a restaurant that's a 5-star, you're going to get a 5-star server, and you're going to pay the wage rate negotiated, and you're going to charge and so it's - it'd be good for PEI.

The other thing I noticed here is you're called the Standing Committee on Community and Intergovernmental Affairs. What happened to labour, was it not supposed to be there?

Ms. Biggar: It's under a different committee now.

Sandy MacKay: Oh, so you're doing something for labour that - I'm confused now.

Chair: Yeah, it's a bit odd why we're the ones that the letter came to, but anyhow.

Sandy MacKay: So there is a committee that looks at labour?

Ms. Biggar: It's just a different terminology, I guess. Our names of the committees changed and I think Community and Cultural Affairs, which encompasses labour, also covers this committee. Am I correct, Madam Clerk? I should know. Our committee did those changes.

Chair: No, I will stand corrected here. Actually, the Standing Committee of Community and Intergovernmental Affairs, that the said committee be charged with matters concerning community, cultural affairs, labour, justice, intergovernmental affairs and the Constitution of Canada.

Sandy MacKay: Okay, so that's the title of the committee?

Chair: I guess that's probably why that letter came to us.

Sandy MacKay: Yeah. And the minister of labour is not part of the committee.

Chair: The former minister of labour wrote us that letter.

Sandy MacKay: No, the new one. Janice.

Ms. Biggar: No, no.

Sandy MacKay: She's not a member of the committee.

Chair: No.

Ms. Biggar: Not any more since she -

Sandy MacKay: But she was all along?

Ms. Biggar: She was under the former committee.

Sandy MacKay: Okay, which held hearings.

Ms. Biggar: Which was totally called something else. But now that she's a minister -

Sandy MacKay: She should hear from you because she'd be in conflict of interest, I suppose.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, certainly.

Chair: Exactly.

Sandy MacKay: Because she should be promoting the legislation that Carolyn brought in even though Carolyn shouldn't have brought it in. I already told her that.

Chair: Okay, anyway, proceed. Sorry, we interrupted you a little bit.

Sandy MacKay: No, no.

Chair: At least, we clarified a few points.

Sandy MacKay: Yeah, because some other people asked so I mean - I think that if you want to be progressive and do the right thing you should go back to the Legislature and

say: Look, we've heard from Islanders and you've listened, and it's clear. I haven't seen anything to argue why you should not say: Leave it the minimum wage. If you want to do something else to get people a better wage, that's a different place that it should be, but it shouldn't be - the minimum wage should be the minimum wage and you should try to get it up to - we could sit here all day and argue what it should be.

Chair: Yes, exactly.

Sandy MacKay: I argued to one premier, I forget whether it was Pat Binns or Jim Lee, that the government should pay people during the summer about \$30 an hour because you get more of it back because they'd be on EI. They'd get maximum EI. They can't leave the province technically, because they're on EI. They'd lose their EI. All the money would stay here so we'd get more money from the federal government than we would pay out. So you might want to do the math on that. Tell Robert to think about that one.

But thank you for letting me come and make a presentation. I just hope that they listen.

Chair: We certainly have (Indistinct) -

Sandy MacKay: I know you will listen, but -

Chair: Oh, thanks. We certainly have had different views.

But anyway, questions for Sandy MacKay, please.

Anyway, thank you very much, Sandy, for your presentation.

Sandy MacKay: Thank you.

Chair: Okay, our next of the MacKays, we have Margaret MacKay. We'll ask Margaret to come forward, and she did make it clear that they're not all related.

Margaret MacKay: I'm not related to any of the other MacKays, and I won't comment further with that.

Chair: Anyway, Margaret, you know the routine here, but identify yourself and whether you're representing an organization or yourself as an individual and I will ask you to present. You have 10 to 15 minutes.

Margaret MacKay: I'm going to try and run through this fairly fast.

I'm Margaret MacKay, and I'm here as a concerned citizen representing myself. I will admit right up that I am employed by a unionized employer and do have a fair knowledge of unions also. I'm going to sort of do an overview but I am going to - you and I, Mr. Henderson, Chair, have had a fair number of meetings and we've had some pretty rough rides through some of it. I'm going to ask that I be shown the same respect and the same treatment as your other presenters, and hopefully, we will get along well in the whole thing.

Chair: Hopefully.

Margaret MacKay: I am presenting that I would prefer that the province not go to a different minimum wage than what the present legislated 8.40 an hour wage is, minimum wage.

There's a number of things going on in the province, and especially in the Summerside area, that would make legislation like that useless and it's going to hurt the employer. We do have a large employer in the Summerside area who offers short-term contracts and their start wage is at least \$14, \$15 an hour, and their students usually start at, at least \$10 an hour and increase with each year.

The result is when they offer short-term employment for something like three months, six months, the people's EI rate is quite high and the result is that often they

don't want to go out and work for minimum wage. Restaurants and other businesses have a hard time getting employees here in the Summerside area because of that.

So to legislate a lower minimum wage for people training, you're probably going to get the level of an employee that you're - or I should say, a different minimum wage. You don't want to talk about a lower minimum wage. But the result is that you're going to get the quality of an employee that you're paying for type thing, and I think it's going to greatly hurt the whole economy.

Often, what's happening too, is a lot of these employees are working two and three jobs. They're often part-time and they're trying to survive on just minimum wage. I did work a job a number of years ago for about a month that was at minimum wage when it was \$5 an hour and I had to go to social services for assistance to survive that month. So this is what you're getting into when you get into lower wages.

We have employers here in the Summerside area that are trying to get around, and are getting around, this minimum wage already.

What they're doing is hiring children that are between 10 and 14 years of age, claiming they're 14 or 15. These kids can - if you go into the business, you can't see them when you go in. They're what you call, they're lower than the counter and it's hard to say - I mean, we know in Summerside that we have considerable short citizens, but they're not that short that you can't see them over the cash register. These kids are reaching for butcher knives and stuff in this business and it's in order that they pay a lower wage to these children. Basically what you're getting into is child labour.

Sandy brought up about - at one time, there was two levels, depending on the age groups. Maybe that's a way to go back to handle this situation, rather than go to a

situation where you're saying so many hours of training and then you go to a higher wage. We also have a new employer that came into the area and what they're doing - it's a lessor. Some of you are acquainted with him. What they're doing is they have told their employees - they've lost all the good employees that the other employer had - and what they're doing is telling them is the maximum wage, no matter what, is going to be PEI's minimum wage, 8.40.

I have taken my business elsewhere with them because the service has gone down because of this. You can imagine how long this business is going to be in business with this attitude. Because if you're getting poorer employees you're going to lose most of your business. There's other places to go to get gas and get newspapers and things, type thing.

I realize, like, there are businesses that there isn't large margins. We've had some presenters here that when they were questioned it turned out their margins were increasing all along. But some of their training methods were resulting in the fact that they were having numerous problems with their employees. It's probably an interview problem. There's probably a problem with the training setup, and it's probably a case for you put them on probation. You give them so long. You give them the training they need and you got to put the time into it. You can't do training and spend a couple of hours.

My experience in a lot of the jobs I've worked in is there wasn't a whole lot of training. If you wanted it you had to go and look for it. There's not many youth that are that motivated to go and take the time to search the files and do different things to get the training that you need. I'm more than willing, whether it's a restaurant or whatever, to go out and pay more money for a decent meal if it means the employee gets a decent salary.

If I know of an employer that is paying a lower wage than minimum wage, I will be boycotting that business. That business I talked about, where they're using the youth, when they've - I've walked in there and the youth have been in there. They can't see over the cash register and they're yelling at you to wait on you and they've got no people skills. I've walked out. I don't buy from them. I boycott them and if I go back in and they're not there, I will buy from the business. But the business is losing. That employer, the owner is extremely wealthy and it's a large chain. I would suspect that he's not doing it in Charlottetown, but he's doing it in the Summerside area.

Chair: I'm just going to correct you. So you're saying that there are people employing people less than 14 years of age? Now correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought, as a committee, that the law states that you can't hire anybody less than 14 years of age.

Margaret MacKay: I don't think there's any law to say what age they are. Is there? You know better than me.

Chair: Well, I can't say that, but that was my understanding that you couldn't employ somebody under the age of 14, maybe other than babysitting or something.

Ms. Biggar: There has been a child labour act.

Chair: Yeah, there's laws on that. I guess the other question is why wouldn't you report that to the *Labour Act*, the labour -

Margaret MacKay: Well, they're claiming they're 14, but they're not. I mean, they haven't - puberty has not set in yet.

Chair: My point would be, though, is somebody would have to check to verify. I mean, I can look at people and think they're - I was at a science fair today and the kids did look awful young, but they probably were over 14, grade nine.

Margaret MacKay: My knowledge of the act, last time I checked, there was no age limit in it. Now it may have changed since. You, as a committee, probably should know more about that than I do, type thing.

Chair: I don't have the act in front of me, but that was my understanding.

Margaret MacKay: At one time there was two levels. There was the level for a certain age group, I think from 15 to 18, and then -

Chair: At one time, legislation did allow different wages for different ages.

Margaret MacKay: Right, and I don't have a problem with that. I think that's probably only fair. Saying that as a union employee, I probably shouldn't be saying it, but I think it's only fair that probably that's a possibility, because if you're using students -

Chair: So I guess I'm a little bit confused. So you're advocating for different wage levels, or are you advocating for leave it to the discretion of the employer?

Margaret MacKay: I'm really advocating that you stay away from having a two-tier minimum wage system. That's where I'm at.

Chair: Okay, so you'd leave it to the discretion of the employer based on a bottom level wage.

Margaret MacKay: There are situations where the businesses are getting around it already, and that probably needs to be addressed more than looking to try and help employers increase their margin. Because the businesses that are really having trouble will be out of business if they're having a major problem. This continues a level of poverty.

Chair: We have a question from Paula Biggar for you, Margaret.

Ms. Biggar: Just correct me, if I'm wrong, Margaret. So what you're saying is, obviously, I got the first part where you don't agree that inexperienced workers should get less than the minimum wage. That's correct -

Margaret MacKay: That's correct.

Ms. Biggar: - in my assumption. On the second part, what you're saying, and it just went out my mind, was that - I'm sorry, it just went out of my mind.

Margaret MacKay: Is it the part with the employees that are younger than 18?

Ms. Biggar: No, it was just the way you put it and it -

Margaret MacKay: Or the youth -

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, it just kind of clicked something in there and now I forget what it was. Excuse me, I apologize. I'll think of it after.

Margaret MacKay: On the tips thing, under the *Income Tax Act* - I'm saying this as an individual - tips are wages and I'm not going to say anything more.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) your employer.

Chair: Tips are considered taxable.

Margaret MacKay: I'm commenting only as an individual. I'm not making comments for anybody else.

Ms. Biggar: We are aware of some of the regulations.

Margaret MacKay: There are requirements.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Margaret MacKay: And you should be aware of what they are.

Ms. Biggar: I am, I am aware.

Chair: Okay.

Are there any questions for Margaret?

Leader of the Opposition: Margaret, the company that you refer to that may have underage employees, it actually may be under the child welfare act that you're referring to.

Chair: Okay.

Leader of the Opposition: That if children are under a certain age they're not allowed to be employed. Perhaps if you privately give the information to the chair or whatever he could actually have that establishment checked out on a private, confidential basis, just in case. Sometimes people can look young but they may not be young. But at the same time -

Chair: I guess that's the point, I guess -

Leader of the Opposition: - that you were trying to make.

Chair: - if there are issues, I think there would be departments that would look into that issue.

Leader of the Opposition: But they'd do it privately through you, Chair.

Margaret MacKay: You're saying I should call Mr. Doucette?

Leader of the Opposition: No, I'm saying that if you have the name of the business - and I'm just going to say Brenda's Poodle Parlour - that if you talked to Robbie as the Chair after, confidentially, he doesn't need to tell us because maybe, for example, they all look young and they're really of age or whatever. But he could privately go to someone at child welfare and they could go in and check on that establishment to ensure that the kids - they'd probably make a

couple of checks to make sure that they're of age. But that way, it protects you and it protects the committee.

Chair: Because I don't think we want to -

Ms. Biggar: Well, I think we are probably required -

Leader of the Opposition: By law.

Ms. Biggar: - if that's a concern, as a committee, or as somebody that if that's something that you -

Margaret MacKay: I am concerned about it because when you see a child trying to reach up and get a butcher knife and can't see where they're reaching it, it's getting to be a health and safety concern.

Chair: But height is not a requirement based on age.

Ms. Biggar: But if it's an age issue, as members of society in general, but especially if it's a concern and you, in confidence, send it to the Chair, then the Chair will ensure -

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) will check it out.

Chair: Because we certainly don't want to insinuate that there are any businesses out there that are contravening the acts, the child welfare act.

Ms. Biggar: And should there be, that should be investigated.

Margaret MacKay: The other area on it too, is it probably needs to be addressed from a labour issue. I had not thought of the child welfare - what did you call it?

Chair: Act.

Margaret MacKay: And it's probably from the WCB, what you call it, also a concern -

Chair: I think there would be a number of issues if there's an employer hiring people under the age of 14. I'm sure that there are.

Margaret MacKay: Okay. I had not thought of it from that angle. I knew some of the laws that used to be there had been removed and my, what you call her, I was concerned because there seemed to be no way to control it.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Maybe as was suggested -

Margaret MacKay: I'll have a talk to you after.

Leader of the Opposition: You just talk privately and then -

Chair: Just after, when we recess again, you can -

Margaret MacKay: No problem.

Chair: We have one more presenter.

Okay, if there's no other questions for Madam MacKay, we'll thank you very much.

Margaret MacKay: Thank you very much.

Chair: Okay, our next presenter is our third MacKay, Tim MacKay.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Mr. Chair, Mr. MacKay had told me he may or may not be able to make this meeting and if he was here at 4:00 we would hear from him, and if not, he thanks us for the opportunity but he wouldn't -

Ms. Biggar: There's someone else in there that's -

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: No, that's not Mr. MacKay.

Ms. Biggar: - oh, it was just another observer.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:
So if we could just perhaps recess for just a couple of minutes and then -

Chair: Oh, we're not 4:00 yet?

An Hon. Member: Five to.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:
It's five to four. We're a little bit ahead of schedule.

Chair: Okay, yeah, we'll just take a small break for five minutes and see if Mr. Tim MacKay shows up, and if he does we'll reconvene. If not, we will recess until 7:00 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion in O'Leary.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Leader of the Opposition: Just if you need the help, Robbie, once you get the information, you talk privately to the Director of Child Welfare.

Chair: Yes, okay.

Leader of the Opposition: And that's all you need to do.

Chair: Perfect, thank you.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Recess]

Chair: We will reconvene, 4:00. I guess our presenter, Mr. Tim MacKay, from the Downtown Convenience Store has not showed up.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:
No, and he did say, Mr. Chair, if he wasn't able to that we -

Chair: Yes, by four.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:
He thanks you for the opportunity to give his views.

Chair: Okay. With that, we will recess again until 7:00 p.m. at the Royal Canadian Legion in O'Leary.

Thank you.

The Committee recessed until 7:00 p.m.

[Recess]

The Committee resumed at 7:00 p.m., in O'Leary

Chair (Henderson): I guess we'll call our meeting back to order from our previous recess this afternoon and welcome everybody here to the Standing Committee on Community and Intergovernmental Affairs reviewing our topic of the different minimum wage systems.

It's a great honour to have the committee here to O'Leary, at the Royal Canadian Legion here in O'Leary. I was telling Brendan Elliott back there a little while ago, O'Leary Legion was considered the first legion branch on Prince Edward Island but we had to give up our charter number to Charlottetown. So we're #2. Charlottetown is now #1. But we are older as a legion.

Even to see that we have a bit of a crowd here tonight is also interesting. I know I was talking to some of the ladies earlier. They said: Gee, not many people here. But actually, that's pretty good for a turnout for these types of legislative committees.

Anyway, everybody has an agenda in front of them, and can we have an adoption of the agenda?

Leader of the Opposition: So moved.

Chair: So moved by Olive Crane.

Okay, our first presenter is West Prince Chamber of Commerce, John Lane.

John, I'm not sure if you're up on the procedure here, but anyway we ask you to start off by identifying yourself and what organization you do represent, and then you can take your presentation and we'll certainly give you 15, 20 minutes or thereabouts, and we'll take questions and go from there.

John Lane: Thank you.

Chair: Take it away.

John Lane: Yes, my name is John Lane. I am a past president of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce.

The West Prince Chamber of Commerce represents roughly 90 independent businesses in the West Prince area, and I would like to thank the committee for coming up west and giving us this opportunity to present our views on this very important topic of minimum wage and minimum wage standards.

The West Prince Chamber of Commerce polled its members over the last couple of weeks to get a feel of what the membership had to say and that's what I'm here to share with you. But I did have a question. A number of our members also had a question as to why is the province even considering such a system in the first place. How did this come up in the first place?

Chair: I can answer that little bit. We had a letter that was sent to us by the former minister of labour asking about looking at the concept of different minimum wages. I think there are four other provinces in Canada that have the concept of different minimum wages. So the legislative committee has decided that we would hear from Islanders to see what their views and

ideas would be on the pros and cons of such a concept.

So it's pretty loose in saying different minimum wages. I know we've had some discussion. Some perceive it as lowering minimum wage. I don't know if that's been ever on the agenda at all, but it's just the concept of different minimum wages.

John Lane: There's always the question of who's behind this stuff. You're opening up a can of worms. I guess you're already very well aware of that.

Chair: We've had numerous presentations, both pro and con on the issue. So, yes, it's a can of worms.

John Lane: Surprisingly enough, our business organization is against the thoughts of having two-tiered minimum wage or, for that matter, three-tiered minimum wage as some organizations have suggested. In fact, many of the members were adamant as to: No way, this is not the way to go. For a number of reasons, again.

There was a suggestion at one presentation, from the Canadian Restaurant Food Services Association, that: Hey, if we leave the minimum wage the way it is that we won't attract any restaurateur to PEI to start new businesses and it's going to cost us some ventures here on PEI. I think that that's blatant nonsense. Anybody who is going to start a business is not going to look at what the minimum wage is, and if that is the only reason they're coming to PEI then I don't think we want them. If they're coming here to create a good, strong, vibrant enterprise, then they should be willing to pay a fair wage. I don't even think minimum wage should be considered a fair wage. So when that kind of presentation is made you have to question the motivation and the people behind asking for this kind of a two-tier and three-tier minimum wage system.

Let's call a spade a spade. This is just one

way, I think, for mostly big business to try to save a few dollars and those few dollars are going to be saved on guess who? The backs of the poor and the youth of this province, and we're totally against that.

We acknowledge that operating a business in rural PEI has always been a challenge. The current economic conditions and the economic forecast for the next two, three, four, five years, is kind of bleak. It doesn't show that the times are going to be very easy. That being said, I don't think that we need to look at our lower wage earners and our youth to bear the brunt of this particular economic situation. Small businesses will continue to face challenging times but changing the minimum wage will not be the main challenge for businesses as most small businesses pay wages starting wages starting way beyond minimum wage.

One of the main issues in business today is attracting good, well-qualified workers, and then keeping them and keeping them from being lured from businesses in western Canada and other places. How is creating a two-tier system going to correct that or make that any better? Just that fact that you consider a two-tiered system means it's a form of discrimination in place, and as soon as you use the word discrimination I think that scares people away. Who wants to come to a province that discriminates against youth or poorer people?

Chair: Just to let you know, there are four provinces that do have it. I'm not for or against it, but I just clarify that.

John Lane: I do know that. I know which ones they are, too. I don't think PEI is one of the provinces that wants to entertain that. I think we've always been seen as a very fair people, the people here on PEI, and we're fair to the people, most that are disadvantaged.

I think these provinces that have gone that way are also under different economic

circumstances. Let's take Ontario, for example. Sure, if you're a restaurateur in Toronto or in Quebec, where they have a different wage rate for waitresses and waiters, yeah, sure, you're operating 364 days of the year. You might close for Christmas. You have a population in the millions that you can cater to. You don't have to worry about a Wednesday night, a storm day at the Rodd, when there's going to be one person come in maybe for a drink of water and you're a waitress making \$6, waiting for a tip. Come on. Give me a break.

So, yeah, you can see some of the bigger jurisdictions maybe, you know, go with that kind of a system.

Chair: Nova Scotia's one of them, too.

John Lane: I realize Nova Scotia is, and I don't think it's very well received in Nova Scotia as well from what I hear. If you want to be - well, for example, if you're going to some of the resorts there outside of Halifax they're not paying minimum wage.

Chair: No. Probably not.

John Lane: They're not going to use that as an excuse to pay minimum wage because you know what's going to happen? They're not going to attract the quality servers that they need to uphold the standards of the resort that they're trying to promote.

The other issue is that when they talked about two-tiered minimum wage, and the excuse that was talked about was that: Oh, yeah, inexperienced workers, we're going to train them because when you hire an inexperienced worker you're going to have to spend more time supervising them and training them. I've been involved in business for as many years as I can remember and I have students who have gone out to businesses for as many years as I can remember. I can look on my one hand at the number of employers who actually have good training programs in place for those

people coming in. They barely have an orientation program in place and they're telling me that: We're going to pay them less because they're inexperienced, because they're not well trained? Well, isn't that the job of an employer when you bring somebody in to orientate them to your business and give them the basic training to bring them up to snuff?

So why should they be paid less for that? They will still be carrying the same load as the worker next door to them that's been there for six months or nine months. And, by the way, who's going to determine inexperience, what that means? I'd like to see that.

Chair: The only thing I can say is that I think in British Columbia they defined it as somebody that works less than 500 hours in the same job. So after you work 500 hours you're entitled to more money.

John Lane: Yeah. Then you say: I've worked somewhere else for 500 hours. Then you'd have to have the burden of proof of: Yeah, show me where you got those 500 hours, and are those hours transferable? That would have to all be legislated. You're really opening up a can of worms that I don't know if government really wants to get into legislating that kind of stuff.

Then you've got to police it. If you legislate it, you've got to police it. Good luck doing that, as well.

Chair: That's right.

Leader of the Opposition: Are we able to ask questions?

Chair: Yes. If somebody wants to raise their hand and ask a question at some point in time, I'll intercede and -

Leader of the Opposition: Is that okay, John, or are you still going?

John Lane: Sure.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm just curious, the makeup of your chamber here.

John Lane: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Like, is O'Leary Produce and some of the - there's still a fish plant around here - are they members of the chamber? Do you have mostly restaurants? Like, who makes up your chamber?

John Lane: We have a pretty broad base. We have everything from restaurateurs -

Leader of the Opposition: Right.

John Lane: - and the Rodd's, for example, is a member as well. Manufacturers. Small manufacturers. We have potato produce, like potato processors.

Leader of the Opposition: Processors.

John Lane: Yeah. So we have a very broad range of members. Some are small retailers.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure. Because it's interesting from your comments, again go back to one of the presenters that you referred to, the restaurant group, who talked about the notion, from their perspective they felt it was really hard to compete. It's interesting, your perspective of your business group, that even in the hospitality sector paying a person a fair wage is still important.

John Lane: Yeah, it is up here.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes. Right.

John Lane: I think the other issue is if you look at the people who usually fill those jobs, the waitress, waiter jobs and that kind of stuff, they're typically young people that are going back to school or at university or whatnot.

We all know that going to school has become more and more expensive. We all know that governments have had to tighten their budgets. They're not funding the student loan programs as well as they used to, in proportion to the cost. We also know that the funds going to universities and colleges are just not growing at the rate that they should be. So these universities and colleges have to increase their fees and whatnot in order to keep up. So guess who bears the brunt of that? The young people who work as waiters and waitresses in the summer jobs, and whatnot.

If we start cutting back or minimizing their potential to earn a little bit of money so that they can go back to school, we're really putting them in a situation where they won't be able to go back to school. And guess what? What have we been saying for years on PEI? That if we want to attract business we've got to train our people well and we've got to educate them well in order to move ahead. We know that economic prosperity is always based on good solid education. Good solid education means you've got to have money in this day and age. You all know that. You've all had children or relatives that have gone to school and you know the cost is just astronomical, and asking them to borrow all the money to go to school is just mortgaging their future for 20 years.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) have people that are working year round in those sectors. We just left Tim Hortons. I held court there for an hour when I left you and it was really interesting from people's perspective, though, the number of years they've worked in sectors for minimum wage or slightly above it, and they're not students. They're trying to survive.

John Lane: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Would you have more people in the community that would be in that category as well? Lucky enough maybe to make \$9 to \$10 an hour, but still

not enough to have any disposable income.

John Lane: When the minimum wage was increased last year to \$8.40 it wasn't a big increase, but there are some people who are very happy to receive the 40 cents an hour, thank you very much, believe it or not. And they're looking forward to the next increase.

Chair: So what do you think the minimum wage should be John, from the Chamber of Commerce's perspective?

John Lane: We never polled the members on what they thought it should be. They do, and are aware - they do know that we are probably the third-lowest in the country right now.

Chair: Fourth. Yeah.

John Lane: Well, we will be the second by next summer. So -

Chair: That's correct. Yeah.

John Lane: I mean, I don't want to split hairs here but we're on the lower end of the scale.

Chair: That's correct. Yeah.

John Lane: But one of the things that - and I've got some recommendations and I'll have to send them in to you because I didn't prepare a good copy, I was kind of short of time - but one of the things that PEI has to look at is the basic personal exemption on incomes tax as well. Rather than look at minimum wage and dealing and tinkering with that, which is a can of worms that I really don't think you want to go into again, I think that we should be looking at that basic personal exemption. And that would not only benefit minimum wage earners but it would benefit any low income person.

Right now the basic personal exemption is \$7,708, I believe, the lowest in the country. That's a shame. That's a shame.

Leader of the Opposition: John, are you saying that needs to go up \$10,000? What's the cut off?

John Lane: I say it should go up to the middle of the pack.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

John Lane: So the middle of the pack, somewhere probably around 95. So somewhere around that area.

I mean, you look at Alberta, which we can't compare ourselves to, with a \$16,000 basic exemption. Even Saskatchewan's got a \$13,000 basic exemption. And we're at \$7,700. Come on. Give me a break.

I'll tell you, I was doing a senior's income tax return the other day and the man was making about \$14,000 and he had to pay \$91 in provincial income tax. No federal. He said: How come? I said: Talk to Robert Ghiz next time you see him because there it is. You've got a \$7,700 basic tax exemption. He'll be giving him an earful.

Anyway, I'm off topic a little bit.

Chair: Okay. Continue.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) a question there. When you were speaking about your experience with people that are employers that actually train people, did you say four or five people may actually have more than an orientation?

This refers to a presenter this afternoon talked about in British Columbia people would work for 500 hours and receive a training wage. Again, when I tested that hypothesis down at the Tim Hortons, a lady reminded me of what it was like to work in a fish plant. After three days you do the exact same job and you're trained, right? So from your experience, though, what did you say? Was it -

John Lane: From my experience most people who have gone to jobs have gotten and received very little training orientation. They're expected to come in somewhat fully trained. They get on the job. They will show them where the washroom is and the coatrack is, and then they're expected to get at it and start working. In some cases they might get a little bit of training in order to catch onto the particular system in that particular workplace, but after that they're on their own.

Chair: So, John, but as the Chamber of Commerce who are those businesses, what are you saying to your own membership? That they're not doing a very good job of training the workers?

John Lane: Absolutely.

Chair: Okay.

John Lane: We are. In fact, we had some meetings last year about that kind of topic. In fact, we even, through Resources West, had some training for employers in the human resource management area.

So, no. Business has to take some ownership of it as well. But, again, like every other small business, things are tight. So to spend \$5,000 on training is an impossible thing for most businesses right now, especially small business.

Chair: But it might be a good investment for them.

John Lane: It might be, but they can't see it up front, unfortunately. Of course, you know where I'm coming from. I'm an educator by trade. So -

Chair: I know. I know you are.

John Lane: - of course, I support that.

I guess I jumped around a fair bit so I'll try to get back somewhat on track.

Some of the points I'd like to make is that - and I made the one about the cost of education - but there's also a big difference between educating a kid that comes from the country, such as, you know, West Prince, Alberton, Tignish, that absolutely has to leave the area pretty well to get a university or college education, or if you live in Charlottetown where there's a college and there's a university and so on and so forth right in your back yard. So if you have to leave your hometown and pay another \$5,000 to \$10,000 in food and your rent, that becomes very difficult for these people to get the education.

Again, if you're instilling a minimum wage policy that is suitable to an urban area such as Charlottetown, it may not be suitable for the Souris or the Tignishes or the Montagues or Morells of the world. So I think you've got to be very careful when you start looking at these policies that they're not suited for a few big businesses in Charlottetown that will save a few dollars and to the detriment of the rural communities.

Chair: So you're thinking we should have a different minimum wage for different geographies?

John Lane: Definitely not a different minimum wage, but I think that you should be careful that you don't listen to some of the urban centres saying: Oh yeah, we can do without. Because it may not be the case for the 60% of the population that doesn't live in downtown Charlottetown.

The waitresses and waiters of the rural areas may not agree with the policies of a smaller wage because you're possibly a tip gainer.

Chair: Maybe it could be higher in rural areas.

John Lane: I suspect that you know better than that.

Chair: Well -

John Lane: I don't know about you but -

Chair: You could get some good arguments there, though.

John Lane: - I know a number of meetings I was sitting at the biggest resort in the West Prince area, the Rodd's, and I might have been the only there with my spouse, having a beer or having a snack. So that poor waitress couldn't have done too well on tips in that evening. So if she has to take a cut in pay because the minimum wage for waitresses and waiters is \$6 or \$7 and expecting to get tips, that's not going to happen in a rural area. I somehow suspect that if you go to Souris on a Monday night at the local Bluefin Restaurant that you're not going to have a whole bunch of people waiting outside to get in. You might in some of the pubs in Charlottetown, but you won't elsewhere.

These policies have to be universal, I think, and I think they have to be geared so that they're fair to the people that live in the rural areas because we are still a rural province. Don't fool yourselves. Charlottetown isn't that busy that in the middle of winter the restaurants are packed solid that they can afford to take a cut in minimum wage in order to be able to make up their dollars in tips. It's not going to happen.

The other thing with the hospitality industry, it's so seasonal. We know that from June to September is not too bad. We've got a number of visitors that come, and I mean the tips are probably good in some of the restaurants, but it's only from that June to September. The rest of the time it's sporadic. Let's not fool ourselves.

So I think we've got to be very careful what we do with these two-tiered or three-tiered systems. I'm against it, our Chamber of Commerce is against it, and I hope that other

business organizations will see the light. That for the good of their organizations, for the long run, they need people who are going to come in and work well and be well trained, and paying them peanuts isn't going to do it.

Chair: So you feel it should be up to the employer then to just, at their discretion, determine what the wages should be.

John Lane: I think that it is the responsibility of a good, solid and kind government to set the minimum standard as to what the wages should be. I think if you look at the history of why minimum wage were put in place, they were put in place to make sure that there was a certain standard in place so that it would at least try to alleviate some of the poverty that's out there and try to minimize the abuse that employers would be taking on employees.

Now I know I represent an organization that does the hiring, but this came from every one of the employers that responded to this survey. Said the same thing: We want that minimum wage level to be in place. That is a safeguard for the rural areas more so than the urban areas.

Chair: But ultimately it boils down to that, based on a base level of minimum wage, that it's up to the discretion of the employer to increase the wages at their decision.

John Lane: Oh, absolutely. I don't work for minimum wage. I don't think you do either.

Chair: No, no.

John Lane: Because if you really look at the discrepancy or the suggestion that you should be paid based on experience and inexperience, when you started as an MLA you'd be inexperienced. So you shouldn't be paid the full rate. But yet you'd be still doing the full job. You'd still be doing the committee work and everything else just as if you - the first day you started probably,

just like you're doing now. So why should there be a discrepancy? (Indistinct) it might have taken you a month to get up to snuff.

I think that you're doing this - and I see it in your face, I see it in your eyes - there's not too many of you here, by the looks of what I see, that are in favour of a minimum wage, of a two-tier minimum wage system. I would be shocked if I was wrong on that one. I hope that if you are thinking of going that way that you look deep down in your heart and take a look at the community around you and see the people that you're serving. They don't want it. They want to have some sort of an assurance that they are going to be treated somewhat fairly, especially on the wage scale. That you won't leave it up to employers to decide that: Hey, we'll give you the inexperienced rate or the student rate or whatever it is. I think if you're going to go work for somebody you deserve at least a fair baseline, which is called minimum wage.

Chair: Ultimately, that's the question. Do you leave it to employers to decide what the wages should be or do you legislate different wages?

John Lane: Do you want a long answer to this?

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Chair?

John Lane: No.

Ms. Biggar: Can I ask for clarification on what you're saying there? Because I think we're leaving the impression from that comment -

Chair: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: - not to be argumentative, Mr. Chair, with you, that this is considering going below the minimum wage.

Chair: No. I don't think that's so.

Ms. Biggar: So I think we better clarify that here and now.

Chair: Yes. That's correct. The minimum wage is a set base rate that the Employment Standards Board determines and then it's up to the employer then to decide what they should pay beyond that amount.

John Lane: That's the way it is now.

Chair: That's the way it is now. That's correct. So that's what you're in agreement to?

John Lane: We have a minimum wage of 8.40. If you want to pay 10.40, you're welcome to do it.

Chair: That's right. That's right. Exactly.

John Lane: Absolutely. Yeah. I don't think -

Chair: The alternative to that is that legislation would allow to say that, once again, after a period of time somebody could be entitled to a set wage higher than that amount.

Does that clarify it, Paula?

Ms. Biggar: I just wanted to make sure that everybody understands, I think, what we were referring to.

Chair: That's the two options that are basically in front of us, I guess.

John Lane: I don't think government has ever wanted to be in the business of setting wage rates or classifications. You have enough trouble with the government classifications.

Chair: That's the question, I guess, and that's why we're here to hear the feedback and views.

Ms. Biggar: That's what the whole

conversation is about.

Chair: That's correct.

John Lane: Yeah. Be perfectly clear. I think we stand for and what we are looking for is a base minimum wage rate as it has been in the past, and hope that will continue.

We have a few recommendations. One, that you raise the PEI basic exemption. I already made that point.

Chair: Yes. That's good.

John Lane: I want that to be very clear.

I think we also have to have an automatic indexation on both that personal exemption for income tax purposes and also for the minimum wage rate. I'd even go as far as saying that the increases in the minimum wage rate should be set at the same rate as the MLAs' wage rate increases that they're going to get in the future. So if you are getting 5% as an MLA, then your basic minimum wage should go up 5%. If you're going to get zero, then I hate to say it, but then so should the minimum wage get zero.

Chair: Okay. Yeah.

John Lane: I would also suggest and recommend that the lower personal income tax rates on lower income levels change. Where right now the people in the lower income brackets should pay less taxes than those in the (Indistinct) so that income tax bracket should be changed.

Absolutely, by no means should you implement an inexperienced rate or a gratuity rate earner other than the minimum wage rate for all Islanders. That is one of the recommendations we would make.

I'd like to thank you for your time. I know I spoke more than I had planned to. I wanted to come up and just be very plain and simple and say no to the changes in the minimum

wage system. But obviously I had more than that to say.

Chair: Oh, no. That's good. It's good to hear different views and lots of different ideas and that's what it's all about.

Pat Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: I'd like to thank you for your presentation, John.

I'm just wondering - and the only reason I'm asking this question is because it's the West Prince Chamber of Commerce has certainly taken a different stand on it than the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce - and I'm just wondering what number of your membership responded to the poll?

John Lane: First I'd like to ask you: Are you surprised?

Mr. Murphy: Pardon?

John Lane: Are you surprised that the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce might have a different viewpoint than ours?

Mr. Murphy: I'm a little surprised. I figured that they might be a little more aligned.

John Lane: Okay. Maybe you don't know your co-business people as well maybe as you should. Sorry about that dig, but - your question was again?

Mr. Murphy: I'm not saying that - I'm here to listen.

John Lane: Oh, you were asking how many?

Mr. Murphy: I'm asking what - you're speaking on behalf of the West Prince Chamber of Commerce.

John Lane: That's correct. We had about 25% of the membership respond and every

one of them emphatic. In fact, I had one kind of take a strip off me that I was the one trying to change the minimum wage.

Chair: Yeah. I know.

John Lane: I kind of sat back and took it with a bit of a smile.

Chair: You know how we feel sometimes.

John Lane: Yeah. But I have a kind of question too, and I kind of promised myself I wouldn't ask it, but I couldn't help it, I guess, and you'll have to pardon me for the way I am. But how many of you MLAs that are on this committee actually hire people? I know, Pat, you have a business.

Chair: I have.

John Lane: You have, or have now, or had?

Chair: No. Have. Not at the moment. No, I'm not an employer at the moment.

John Lane: To me, to protect yourself, I think that's a conflict of interest because if you're in the business of hiring people - in your case probably, I would assume, students and what not - then really you're sitting on the committee that might influence wages that you might have to pay in the future. To me, that is a conflict of interest, by definition. I kind of question how come that happened in this committee and I'm surprised that I'm the first one to ask that question.

Pat, I'm not doing that because you asked me the question, but I've always been very adamant because conflicts of interest on PEI are absolutely sometimes mind-boggling and you'd think you'd want to stay away from that kind of an issue.

Mr. Murphy: No, I don't see the advantage to me, one way or the other. If I was supportive of multiple level minimum wage, if I wasn't, I don't see that as any advantage

to me.

Chair: I guess the way, the committee - it's probably a combination of both. Some that have been employers in the past, and some that have never been an employer.

John Lane: I'd have no problem in the past. There's no problem with the employer in the past. But if you're employing somebody right now, the decisions that you make today on this committee and recommendations you make may influence what you may have to pay your employees in the near future. Therefore that constitutes a conflict of interest.

Chair: But it may also impact what the employer situation is too.

John Lane: Now, I suspect, in fairness, Pat, I suspect that you probably pay beyond minimum wage anyway. But who knows? Maybe minimum wage will be recommended to go up to \$10 and then you're in a conflict of interest because that's not what you're paying now, maybe.

So, just a point I'd like to bring up. I think that, not only in this committee, on any committee that the Legislature takes on the road, I think you have to be aware that there are some people wondering: How come so and so sits on this committee when he's an employer? Just a thought.

Chair: But it's like any committee, there's always two sides of every issue and you're going to get a combination. Like I say, there's some around the table that have been employers and it could impact employers. If we increased minimum wage, as an example, there's some that are employees and have been employees and it could impact them. It depends what the decisions are made, I guess. I don't know how you'd find all of one or all of the other.

John Lane: It's just a thought. Think about it.

Ms. Biggar: Ultimately it's a majority decision.

John Lane: Yeah, but it's still just a thought. Just think about it.

Ms. Biggar: It's a good point.

Chair: Sonny Gallant.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, John, for your presentation. It was very informative.

I'd just like to make two comments. One is there seems to be some misconception out there. From my knowledge of sitting on this committee there was never any instruction that the minimum wage would go down. It would go from here forward.

John Lane: I agree.

Mr. Gallant: We already do have somewhat of a two-tier system in place now, and you've mentioned it, and we all know it. You hire somebody new, you pay them minimum wage till they pass their training. So there's a two-tier right now and it seems to be working well. Unfortunately there will be some that will stay at 8.40 because maybe they're only working for two months during the summer and maybe the employer can't pay them any more. Hopefully next year if he brings them back he'll pay them more. But there's no control there right now. But there is somewhat of a two-tier system in place, if you look at it that way.

We had a gentlemen say to us at one of the committee meetings that someone walked in off the street and started the same job as he did, and was at it for five years, making \$10 an hour. So he's standing across from him and he started yesterday and he's making \$10 an hour and he's been there five years.

I mean we're hearing it all. We appreciate everyone's views. You know, this legislation came as a package. Correct me, Mr. Chairman, if I'm wrong here.

(Indistinct) was part of it. Because it was legislated doesn't mean it's going to be enacted. The minister asked us to come out and listen to people and see what they have to say, and that's what we're doing, and I certainly appreciate your comments.

John Lane: Thank you.

Chair: It might be clarified that, like I say, we will making a recommendation to the Legislature. It's a matter - this is a dual party organization here, as far as our committee.

John Lane: Yes.

Chair: So we will be making our recommendations to the Legislature and at that point in time it's up to government to decide what it wants to do from there. It can accept our recommendations, it can reject our recommendations, it can leave the status quo in.

John Lane: I see.

Chair: So that's - our role is try and get viewpoints on behalf of the Legislature.

John Lane: I hope you make good recommendations.

Chair: Yeah.

John Lane: I have confidence that you will.

Yeah, I understand that it's a two-tiered - it doesn't matter how you slice it. If you're going to go work somewhere you are going to earn up to a certain point and then you'll plateau.

I remember - again, I'm talking here ancient history - when I started my first job working in the banking industry and there was some ladies had been working in the bank for 20 year. I came in as a management trainee making more than they were. I wasn't worth more. Don't fool yourself. I wasn't worth a

cent more because those girls were absolutely wonderful women and they were extremely smart and did their job extremely well. But they had to pay that to get me instead of me going to somewhere else.

So employers face that all the time. They hire somebody for the potential over the next 10 years. I know that happens. It's frustrating. It's not even fun when you're getting the higher wage than somebody else, but that's the way it is. However, I still go back to that baseline minimum wage.

Chair: That's fine.

John Lane: You have somewhere a line and I know that it's - what would you say? Not arbitrary. I guess arbitrary might be the word. How do you get it right? I don't know. Right now all I know is that we're at the bottom echelons and I'm hoping that somewhere along the line it will come up a little bit and be somewhere in the middle of the pack.

The reality is a lot of people are making more than minimum wage. We know that. But we have about 5% to 7% of the population that is working right now that is making minimum wage. That's the reality. It would be nice if that minimum wage came up a little bit. However, that's not the point of this particular hearing.

Chair: Buck Watts.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Our sound technician would ask you to pull your microphone closer to you. We're just getting some echoes.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Okay, Buck Watts, and then Olive Crane.

Mr. Watts: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yeah, John, it's a very interesting

presentation you have made. Of course, as committee members we do have to sit here and we have to listen and consider both sides of this story. Of course, we've heard presentations that are on the opposite side of the fence towards yours. But I will say that you have made a very good presentation, a really good presentation. I also like some of the recommendations, John, that you have made, and I think I personally would like to pay heed to some of those recommendations or maybe all of them.

So I just want to thank you for your presentation, and good work.

John Lane: Thank you.

Chair: Olive Crane.

Leader of the Opposition: John, just one more question in terms of the Chamber, and you were talking about baseline and you did give us recommendations, but you never mentioned - one of the other areas that the *Employment Standards Act* passed was the notion that after five years of employment if an employee was sick they were entitled to one sick day a year. What were your thoughts, or did your chamber - I know you teach business courses - did you look at that aspect of the act and, if so, how do you respond to that?

John Lane: We didn't.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

John Lane: No, we didn't. We only looked at this one particular aspect. It was a time constraint.

I think what also has to happen is there has to be some - I don't know if it's promotion or education done with the employers as to what has happened with the changes in the *Employment Standards Act*. I think most employers might not even know they exist until maybe just lately. That the fact that all of a sudden what is this thing that is coming

up? They're aware that they have certain things that they have to do, like pay vacation pay and that kind of stuff.

Leader of the Opposition: Right.

John Lane: But they really don't take it out and read it on a regular basis. So most of the changes probably have gone unappreciated or at least most employers would probably be unaware. A lot of employers just don't have time to read everything that comes through.

Chair: It might be a good idea for the Chamber of Commerce to ask the department of labour to come up and brief your organization on those changes. I'll just throw that out as a suggestion. There would have to be a request come from them.

John Lane: It would be an excellent suggestion, considering there hasn't been changes for a lot of years. This is the first change in how many years? Major change in how many years?

Leader of the Opposition: Probably nine-plus years.

John Lane: At least that.

Leader of the Opposition: But the other part to that, again going back to a lady earlier tonight, her thoughts, as well as the minimum wage, was that whole issue of benefits and for employees to stay in, especially in rural areas, you know, it has to do with health benefits, etc., and I was just curious.

But, thank you.

Chair: Okay, any other questions for Mr. Lane?

Thank you very much for your time, John.

John Lane: Thank you, and thanks for coming up to West Prince and listening to

us.

Chair: I guess after getting a pretty good turnout maybe we'll come more often.

John Lane: There you go. Thank you.

Chair: Okay, our next presenter is Debbie VanBuskirk. Hopefully I pronounced that halfway reasonable. I apologize if it wasn't.

Anyway, so you maybe caught on a little bit of the idea. So the idea is to identify yourself and whether you're representing a group or you're just representing your own views of yourself.

Debbie VanBuskirk: After him I don't think I'm going to be quite as good, but I'm just going to try.

I'm just representing myself in the workforce. My co-workers are here, but this is just my saying. Okay?

Hi. My name is Debbie. I have been in the food and beverage industry for 23 years. I started out making about \$4 an hour and now I'm making \$8.40 an hour. Isn't that a joke? Twenty-three years. Same people. Not one raise.

Workers in our business seldom get a raise so we look forward to the increase in the minimum wage. Am I supposed to work for \$8.40 for the rest of my life, especially at my age? Our job is a very hard one, and with the tips, which are a gift, we are just making a living. Some people do not believe in tipping at all, and some others, with the cost of living being so high, the tips are not even 10%. I would like to see one government official come to work with me and tell me at the end of the shift that we don't deserve at least \$10 an hour.

Our job consists of a lot more than delivering food and drinks and keeping our customers happy. In the morning we have to vacuum, stock the fridge, get ready for the

day. No tips there, \$8.40. At night we clean the fridge, microwave, sweep the floors, all for \$8.40. No tips there.

The tips are a gift from a satisfied customer and have nothing whatsoever to do with management. All the servers I know also have to give a percentage of their tips to the dishwashers, hostesses, and bus people so we can subsidize their wages, sometimes up to 20% or more. So the management does not have to give them a raise. We pay to supplement them.

I think it's disgrace for the government to even consider setting a freeze on minimum wage, especially at \$8.40 an hour. I'm sure your wages aren't froze at \$8.40 an hour, and you don't have to depend on tips from other people to make a living.

As for the young people entering the workforce, they're usually students trying to put themselves through college. Do you remember what it was like trying to pay for a student loan? They need this money. They are summer jobs, probably 10 to 14 weeks, and not much time to make money.

I just wrote this off the top of my head -

Chair: And that's fine. You don't have to -

Debbie VanBuskirk: - so this is about it, and thanks for listening to me, giving me an opportunity to share my views and options with you. I hope it just shows a little bit of how hard we work and how little we get paid.

Chair: Good. Good.

Do we have any questions for Debbie?

Ms. Biggar: Not so many questions, but -

Debbie VanBuskirk: Sympathy would be good.

Ms. Biggar: I've done your job -

Debbie VanBuskirk: There you go.

Ms. Biggar: - so I emphasize, believe me. When I was a younger mother I saved my tips for a dryer, so I know.

Debbie VanBuskirk: You know what it's all about.

Ms. Biggar: I can (Indistinct).

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: But again to clarify, the recommendation that you're referring to about, for servers in particular, that's not something - you know, it was something that was presented.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: It is all part of the feedback that we as a committee are getting.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: And I certainly take note of your presentation.

Chair: I think to clarify, from my understanding, is that there are two provinces that have segregated out the issue of liquor servers as a different minimum wage than others.

Debbie VanBuskirk: No. We are food and beverage. I work in a restaurant.

Chair: Anyway, I'm just saying that's what, I think, two other provinces have done it that way where liquor servers receive a different minimum wage. That's the only thing that's out there in the concept of it. It's certainly nothing that our organization has said we're going to do or not going to do.

But just a quick question. What's your thoughts when you talked about - so is the employer forcing you to give tips to the -

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yes.

Chair: - people behind - the employer is (Indistinct) -

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yes. In a book - well, we all had a book and in it it says he is allowed to make us pool our tips. If we didn't agree last summer to pool at least 20% of our tips, we were out the door.

Chair: That's interesting.

Debbie VanBuskirk: It wasn't very interesting for us because it's hard enough. The gift's a gift to us. It's not a gift to the kitchen staff.

Chair: Has anybody from your group ever checked that with the Employment Standards Board?

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yes, I did, actually.

Chair: And that's permissible?

Debbie VanBuskirk: It is. Yeah.

Chair: Go on.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Under this little quotation, just the way it is written. Shouldn't be. Like you were saying earlier, if you left it up to the employee to raise your wages -

Chair: Employer.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Employer. Sorry. One of our girls a few years ago went in and asked for a raise and he said: If you don't like what you're getting paid, go up the road. Waitresses are a dime a dozen.

Not the good ones. I wouldn't be there for 23 years and the rest of these girls for 20, 23 years. So I think it's just a slap in the face myself. It really is.

Chair: My final question: What do you

suggest that the minimum wage should be for your profession?

Debbie VanBuskirk: I think for somebody like me at least \$10 an hour. Because we're trained the girls, we've done everything. Right down to the cash, to the bar, everything.

Chair: I appreciate that. Yeah.

Paula Biggar, and then Olive Crane.

Ms. Biggar: That kind of raises a little question. You're the senior, obviously, waitress or -

Debbie VanBuskirk: Well, I'm not called that, but I've been there the longest. Yes.

Ms. Biggar: So when new employees come in, you're - and I'm making this assumption - you're the one that's doing the training.

Debbie VanBuskirk: There's three of us that do the training.

Ms. Biggar: And you don't get paid any more for doing that training.

Debbie VanBuskirk: No. No.

Ms. Biggar: That's interesting, for sure.

Debbie VanBuskirk: See we do - like the old girls - well, I'm not going to name their names, I guess.

Ms. Biggar: The senior employees.

Debbie VanBuskirk: The seniors, usually in the spring and fall we end up doing the bartending, the hostessing, the cash, and everything at the same time and still getting \$8.40 an hour. Four jobs, \$8.40 an hour.

A lot of my friends do not believe I'm even still working there for that kind of money, you know.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yeah. You're welcome.

Chair: Olive Crane.

Leader of the Opposition: Just an opinion from you, Debbie. When John was presenting he talked about if you want to have more money go to people maybe we should look at increasing the personal exemption under income tax.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm curious. Your opinion, in your own circumstances and with the women that are with you, would that help have more money in your pocket, or would it be the minimum wage, or does it need to be both?

Debbie VanBuskirk: It would help greatly for sure because the exemption is not very much. But the minimum wage would help us a lot too because we've got, like I said, between 12 and 14 weeks to make money. Then we don't have a job to go to after that. It's not that - you know, they say the Island is lazy. The Island's not lazy. We don't have jobs.

I'd like to ask you a question.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

Debbie VanBuskirk: You had said something earlier about getting one sick day per - is that in seasonal, or is that just -

Leader of the Opposition: Well, in the *Employment Standards Act*, and the act hadn't been looked at in a long time, it was originally written that people would work for 10 years and after 10 years they'd get one paid sick day. Right?

Debbie VanBuskirk: A year.

Leader of the Opposition: For the whole time. Just one day, right?

Debbie VanBuskirk: Okay.

Leader of the Opposition: Anyway in the fall, thankfully, at least there was an amendment to get one paid sick day after five years. For myself, personally, I think that that needs to be addressed, but I was curious as your opinion. Other people seem now to have the information on looking at the two-tiered minimum wage, but for all the people that work like yourself -

Debbie VanBuskirk: We can't get sick.

Leader of the Opposition: No, because you go back to the H1 -

Debbie VanBuskirk: We go to work sick.

Leader of the Opposition: Let's go back to the H1N1 virus, is what I'm getting at. On one hand we were saying to people: If you're sick, stay home. But if you have no resource you have to be there.

Debbie VanBuskirk: You have to be there. Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: That's what I was trying to get at to see if people were also having concerns or interest on that as well.

Debbie VanBuskirk: I thought that was - like, I worked with migraine headaches for the first 15 years of my job up there, and I'd work for 10, 12, sometimes 14, 15 hours and I'd go sit in the car and cry. Had to do my work. I had two kids to support. I could not stay home. It wasn't the paycheck I was going for, it was the tips. Sorry, the paycheck just wasn't cutting it. Yeah.

Chair: Sonny Gallant.

Mr. Gallant: Debbie, thank you very much for your presentation.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Thank you, Sonny.

Mr. Gallant: Coming from the restaurant business I know how hard you work, and how organized you are, and I really appreciate your comments. Thank you.

Debbie VanBuskirk: Thank you very much.

Chair: Anyway, okay, if there's no other questions, I'd like to also thank you, Debbie. I think one of the comments I would have is that your issue somewhat hit home when they're from a person who is actually doing the work as a waitress and a server.

Debbie VanBuskirk: It wasn't (Indistinct).

Chair: We appreciate that you have the interest to come -

Debbie VanBuskirk: Well, it's something.

Chair: - and take it upon yourself to make that presentation.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) courage.

Chair: Yeah, and I'm sure there's a bit of courage to that. So we appreciate that.

Debbie VanBuskirk: We're in the liquor store, or close to the liquor store.

Thank you.

Chair: Okay, our next presenter is Raymond Gallant. I don't think we see Raymond, if it's the Raymond I'm thinking of. I don't see him.

Anyway, our next presenter is Leonard Crawford.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Mr. Crawford was scheduled for 8:00 (Indistinct).

Chair: Mr. Crawford was scheduled for

8:00. So that means we're 10 minutes early. I guess we'll take a small break and we'll reconvene back here whenever we see either Raymond or Mr. Crawford come forward. Okay? And otherwise we'll wait till 8:00 and go from there.

Small recess. Thank you.

[Recess]

Chair: Okay, I'm going to call our meeting back to order after that short recess.

I guess we've got a little bit of a change in our agenda. I'm going to ask Wanda Livingstone to come forward representing CUPE Local 1779.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Chair: I think she was prepared. Anyway, you know the routine, Wanda. At this point just identify yourself and what organization you're representing, or if you're representing yourself.

Wanda Livingstone: I represent CUPE Local 1051, actually, and I'm the president of the PEI Health Council.

Chair: I'd ask you to state your name too.

Wanda Livingstone: Wanda Livingstone. With an e.

I also sort of represent labour because I'm the treasurer of our Community Hospital Ladies Auxiliary and we do employ people, and I have a lot empathy for those people.

I have to take my glasses off. I can't read with them.

Has this bill already been passed or -

Chair: The *Employment Standards Act* has been passed. Yes. That 's correct.

Wanda Livingstone: And is this in the

Employment Standards Act?

Chair: The concept of being able to administer different minimum wages is in the legislation but it has never been implemented as a policy.

Wanda Livingstone: Okay.

Passing legislation for a two-tier minimum wage structure is a bad deal for the working poor of this province and those who support it have no sense of social justice. Low wage will become the common wage, and layoffs and turnover will take care of any problems the employer may have. It will permit the moving of employees so that they don't have to pay the higher rate of pay for the years of service. New people will be at the lower wage and they'll keep it that way. I mean, there are good employers out there, yes, I agree, and they pay more than minimum wage, but there are those that don't and they will use that.

Most minimum wage people are women, single mothers, and the working poor. I'll take, for example, the auxiliary. We operate a New to You shop here in O'Leary and in the summertime - we work with volunteers all the time through the winter and that, but in the summertime these older ladies are getting more scarce and they like to have time with their families in the summer. So we have the opportunity to help people to get some work and, of course, on PEI is get their stamps.

I would have been a little more prepared. I would have taken the pay thing that I have that I pay these people with, with the minimum wage, and I can't just remember. After you take off their Canada Pension, and their EI, and their income tax, provincial and federal - I'm just trying to think - it's something like 259 or something like that. I wonder to myself how do them people live on 259 a week.

My light bill last month was 195. So if

you're working for that much, one week is going to pay your light bill, the next week, maybe your groceries, and then there's your phone on top of that. Heaven forbid you get sick and you have no benefits, because these people have no benefits. The cost of a prescription could take half of that week's wages.

Minimum wage is too low in the first place. I just don't know how people live on it.

Chair: Give a suggestion what you think minimum wage should be.

Wanda Livingstone: Should be at least \$10 an hour. I really do. Minimum wage is just too low. If you put in a two-tier wage, as the lady before me said, it's usually the ones that are there probably longer has to train these people. The employer has nothing to do with it, with training these people, which is also, you know, and they don't get anything extra for that and for the work that they do.

I guess that's probably all I probably have to say on that is it's just too low.

You take, for instance, the divorce rate, the separations that are going on today, the violence, family violence that's going on today. It all stems around money, I think, the pressures that these people have that they can't make a living, an honest, good living.

You take the robberies. In Alberton just two weeks ago, or whatever, a woman was mugged in Alberton for cash. People don't have money. They're trying to support their families. I know some of it's drugs, yes, but I just think that the low wage contributes to a lot that's out there.

So I guess not being prepared that's all I have. But, anyway, I certainly do advocate for the working poor of this province and the women and single mothers that are among those.

Thank you.

Chair: So you also feel that it should be up to the discretion of the employer, above the base rate, whatever that base rate would be.

Wanda Livingstone: Yes. But the base rate should be higher.

Chair: Higher.

Wanda Livingstone: Definitely higher.

Chair: Just clarifying your point, I guess, I'm saying.

Any questions for Wanda?

Just a question. Let's just go hypothetical. If the minimum wage went to \$10 now, do you think it would have any impact on the cost of living in the area? In other words, if stores had to pay more money, would that increase the cost of the goods that they provide? Just a question.

Wanda Livingstone: I don't think so.

Chair: You don't think it would?

Wanda Livingstone: No.

Chair: Okay.

Wanda Livingstone: Most of the jobs here on PEI are seasonal. That's another issue that I have also, is most of the jobs here on PEI are seasonal, mostly done by women, single mothers, young single mothers.

I take, for instance, the ladies that I pay at the New to You shop. When I'm making out the pay I think of it. When she's done, her pay for the 10 weeks or whatever, and I give her her final pay, I'm thinking: What a cut that lady's going to take. She's going to get EI on that and it's going to be cut in half, you know. A lot of people in this province depend on EI because there are no jobs out there.

Chair: And we'll assume the person - if the person's only working 14 weeks they don't even have the link through to the cycle. They can only draw -

Wanda Livingstone: Yeah. It's just a vicious cycle.

Chair: Yeah. There would be weeks that they'll go with no money coming in. No EI, no earnings either.

Wanda Livingstone: Yes. And, for heaven's sake, they have to wait, what?, two or three weeks for that. So they have to try to -

Chair: There's a two-week waiting week as well.

Wanda Livingstone: With the waiting week.

Chair: And it may take another couple of weeks before the check actually arrives.

Wanda Livingstone: Yes, and then somebody in Ottawa will probably wonder if that person worked, or they'd have to do some research and see if they - you know. So that holds it all up and they have nothing.

Chair: (Indistinct).

Wanda Livingstone: So anyway, thank you for listening to my rant.

Chair: It was a good rant, Wanda.

Any other comments then? Okay.

We still have a little bit of time. I will open the floor up if there are any individuals that would like to come and make a few points on their behalf. Nobody? Everybody's content with the viewpoints that have been given. Okay.

Just because we had one individual hasn't showed up I thought I'd give everybody that

opportunity. You are protected by legislative privilege if you are sitting at the table, just so you know.

Okay, I guess if there's nothing else, I'll ask for an adjournment.

Mr. Watts: So moved.

Chair: Adjourned by Buck.

The Committee adjourned