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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



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Speaker: Hon. Kathleen M. Casey

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today I'd like to welcome everyone in the public gallery today, specifically students from my old high school, from Colonel Gray High School. They are the grade 10 Canadian studies students. Their teachers that are here today are Rob MacAdam, Dominique Lecours, Shawn Doiron and Jeff MacDonald. Also, one of those students happens to be a cousin of mine.

I'd like to say hello to Rachael Loggie who is in the gallery today. She is a great athlete and a great musician. We were actually at a great fundraiser last night for the Special Olympics and Rachael is actually going to be representing PEI at a national event in London, Ontario in July, I believe. I'm sure all members join me in wishing her good luck when she attends that meet in London.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier Ghiz: Great to see Eddie Lund here, as well, and everyone else here in the gallery.

Of course, on the weekend there was a tragic accident involving one of our employees. EA to the minister of education, Stephen Turner, at the age of 27 passed away. He was a great Islander, a great advocate. I'm sure that all members join me in passing along our condolences to Stephen's family. I know the minister of education will have a minister's statement later on. But I think it would be appropriate if we took a moment of silence right now to remember Stephen.

[There was a moment of silence]

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to rise and welcome all our visitors in the gallery today, our regulars, and all the students from Colonel Gray. Thank you out in the hallway for helping me prepare a few extra special questions for today's session.

I also want to say hello to Rob, Dominique, Shawn and Jeff, who are the teachers that are with us.

I, too, would like, on behalf of opposition, to offer condolences to Stephen Turner's family, to the government members' office, and to the minister of education. I'd also, finally, like to offer condolences to the family of George Roach who had passed away in my own district.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General.

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

I rise today, too, to welcome all our special guests. I know the students in particular from Colonel Gray High School and acknowledge Rob MacAdam with the group, Shawn Doiron and Jeff MacDonald, and Lori is there with a constituent of mine as an EA who does great work in the system. I can't help but acknowledging Dominique Lecours as a former colleague of mine and now is in administration and was a tremendous educator at Birchwood. I know that the students from Colonel Gray are benefitting from all her skills and her love

for her profession.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to welcome some special guests from up in Alberton. My sister Kelly is here, along with two long-time volunteers in the community of Alberton, Alan and Lynda Curtis. Alan is a member of the Alberton town council. He gives freely of his time and Lynda pretty much runs the museum up there in Alberton, and the Historical Society. I'd like to welcome them here today.

I'd also like to welcome all those that are watching in the beautiful District of Alberton-Roseville on EastLink.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McGeoghegan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody to the gallery today, especially my favourite younger sister, Amy, sitting up there. She just loves it when I point her out. Also Barry Smith and Eddie Lund.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: I, too, would like to welcome everybody to the gallery here today, and say hello to everybody out there in West Royalty-Springvale. A special hello to Allister Cummings who was in the hospital for a few days last week and is home now and is recovering very comfortably. So all the best, Allister, and get well.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. members, before we move on, for the benefit of the students from Colonel Gray, you'll notice that we have some students working here on the floor of the Legislature. They are students chosen from high schools across the Island in grades 11 and 12.

If you're interested, we usually see your social studies teachers. The teachers from the schools choose the students, if you're interested. We do have somebody from Colonel Gray with us today. Dunja Stajic is from Colonel Gray. So you'll see her around your school. I would also like to welcome you all.

Statements by Members

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

Congratulations to curler Kathy O'Rourke

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On Sunday, February 7th, all Island curling fans, and indeed most Islanders, were glued to their televisions and computers watching the championship game of the 2010 Scotties Tournament of Hearts, featuring team Canada's Jennifer Jones and PEI's Kathy O'Rourke from the Charlottetown Curling

Club. The outcome of that game was an 8-7 extra end and the Island team captured the silver medal.

The O'Rourke team created history in becoming the first Island women's team to reach the final and, in doing so, caught the attention of the Canadian curling community. Coach Al Ledgerwood couldn't have been more proud of the 2010 Island team - of lead Trisha Affleck, second Erin Carmody, who throws skip rocks, third Geri-Lynn Ramsay, and skip, Kathy O'Rourke, who throws second stones, and alternate Shelly Bradley.

At the awards banquet that evening, Erin Carmody of Summerside was presented the prestigious Sandra Schmirler Most Valuable Player award as a top curler in the playoffs at this year's Canadian women's championship.

I might add that along with Erin, both Geri-Lynn and Kathy began their curling careers with the junior program in Summerside.

I'm sure the members of the Legislature and, indeed, all Islanders will join me in extending our congratulations to the O'Rourke team for making our One Island Community so proud of their success this year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Administrative Assistants Week

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize the hard work and dedication of administrative assistants across our

province. This week marks Administrative Assistants Week.

This annual event was originally organized in 1952 as National Secretaries Week. Today, more than 475,000 administrative professionals are employed in Canada. Millions more administrative professionals work in offices all over the world.

Fellow members, the Administrative Assistants Week was established as an effort to recognize contributions in the workplace and to attract people to secretarial/administrative careers.

In the year 2000 the name changed from Professional Secretaries Week to Administrative Professionals Week and Administrative Professionals Day to keep pace with changing job titles and expanding responsibilities of today's administrative work force.

I would like to thank administrative assistants across our province for their commitment, dedication and hard work. These people are the backbone of many of our businesses and industries across Prince Edward Island.

I would now like to formally recognize the administrative assistants within the government members' office. They include Hazel Gallant, Nancy Drew, Kathy Paugh, Allison Lawlor and Kim Munro. Thank you, ladies, for your continued hard work.

In closing, I would like us to take this opportunity to congratulate all administrative assistants across our province for a job well done.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Tribute to Don Anderson

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today to pay tribute to a truly remarkable Islander, Mr. Don Anderson. Don was a proud resident of St. Peter's and a dedicated husband and father.

Don was well known in the potato industry, not just on PEI, but around the world. He operated a 500-acre family farm and was previously the director of the PEI Potato Marketing Board and the founding director of the World Potato Congress. He also had the distinction of being the first Islander to be appointed to the Potato Association of America.

Don's production of such things as disease-free seed is seen as just one example of his dedication and innovation in the industry.

Don was honoured in 1998 with an induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame. Despite all of the national and international attention he received, he remained a dedicated family man and a strong community supporter.

I want to extend my condolences to Don's wife Kathleen, and his daughters Sharon, Susan and Sally, and son Scott. Don will indeed be missed by all of you but his legacy in the potato industry and his community will live on for generations to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

Evaluation of immigrant partnership category in PNP

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Auditor General told the government a year ago to conduct an evaluation of the immigrant partnership category of PNP. My first question to the innovation minister. Minister, your response on the 2010 Auditor General report shows that you have refuted this recommendation. Why?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With respect to that particular recommendation, staff at IIDI are awaiting a framework for evaluation to be put forward by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. We are yet to receive that. When we do, we will certainly complete that recommendation.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, a question to the minister.

The Auditor General asked you a year ago to do this. An evaluation to the program, not the 30,000-foot framework, which is entirely different, that the feds are talking about. But the Auditor General asked your department to do a thorough evaluation, why did you refuse to do it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe I indicated we didn't refuse to do it. I don't remember in the Auditor General's recommendations anything about a 30,000-foot level evaluation. We are expecting the regulatory framework to be forwarded to us by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and when we do receive that we'll be pleased to carry out that recommendation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, let's remind the minister, in April 2009 you told this House you'd be discussing the evaluation with your staff.

In fact, you said you couldn't overstate the importance of the program. You said: I'll take that under further advisement and have the discussions actually today.

Tell us about the evaluation that you were working on a year ago.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, we're waiting for the framework for evaluation of our partner category. We have a commitment from the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada that we will receive that framework, and upon receipt of that framework we will conduct the evaluation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On page 57 of the Auditor General's report of 2009 the Auditor General says: IIDDI should conduct an evaluation of the immigrant partnership category of the PNP program.

Why do you refuse to do that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I don't believe I have refused to do that. As I indicated, we're waiting for the regulatory framework to be forwarded to us by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. When we do receive that we'll be pleased to complete the evaluation.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this is the same minister that a year ago told us he was in direct discussions with a federal minister on a new program. He told us how many times there was a settlement strategy. The Auditor General asked for an evaluation. When are you completing an evaluation on this program Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I believe in the same Auditor General's report that the Leader of the Opposition refers to, with respect to that particular recommendation, the response from IIDDI

was that Citizenship and Immigration Canada are completing a framework for a national evaluation of Provincial Nominee Programs, and PEI will be participating in that evaluation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Maybe to the same minister, let's talk about what should be in that evaluation. If you're going to be either completing the evaluation that the Auditor General asked or if you're waiting for the federal government to design a framework for you, my question to you is: What will we expect in the evaluation framework, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As I believe I indicated, that evaluation framework is being drawn up by Citizenship and Immigration Canada so it's hard to comment on what we might expect in it. Perhaps if the Leader of the Opposition is talking to some of her friends in Ottawa they may enlighten her as to what might be in it. We're still awaiting that framework, and when we do receive it, we'll be completing the evaluation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you,

Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Mr. Minister, you're the minister of this department, you're the minister on this file. We all know how mismanaged it's been. The Auditor General asked you to do an evaluation. Surely to heavens you'd understand or have a few ideas in terms of the methodology that should be used in an evaluation. Please inform the House what you expect to cover in such a framework.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition constantly refers to the mismanagement of this program. I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that this has probably been one of the most beneficial programs that this province has ever seen in its history.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Campbell: Whether those benefits be tied to the investment in the business community in this province, whether those benefits are with respect to the cultural diversity that we've built - and I see probably some of our new Islanders joining us in the gallery here today. It's an absolutely fantastic program, and if that's what she refers to as mismanagement, I'll take it any day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Going back to the same minister, I believe you were going to answer in terms of what you expect to be an evaluation framework. What would the methodology be? Perhaps you might want to comment: Will you be doing an evaluation from the beginning of the program? What's the sample size, etc.? What are the expectations? After all, you're the second minister on this file, and it's been thoroughly mismanaged.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Ms. Dunsford: The third minister on this file.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Just perhaps as a note of correction, I'm not the second minister on this file. I believe the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters was also a minister on this file.

As I stated already, it's premature to talk about what might be included in that framework. That framework is being devised by the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. When we receive that framework, as I indicated, we'd be very happy to complete the recommendation of the Auditor General.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. This is the minister that told us he was in discussions last year with the federal minister on a new program. Actually, I think I read in the *Guardian* here a couple of weeks ago he was going to have a new program. Surely to heavens you'd

have the evaluation completed.

My question to you is - after all, it was your department that actually called in the police on immigrants in the past - what's in the evaluation framework, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's hard to comment on what might be in the evaluation framework, as we haven't received it. It's the same question, it's the same answer. We're awaiting that evaluation framework from the federal government, and when we receive it we'll complete the recommendation of the Auditor General to a T.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Mr. Minister, you're always in this House saying that you're following through with every recommendation of the Auditor General. The Auditor General asked you to do an evaluation, not waiting in the future, but to have it done for this year.

My question. In his report the Auditor General found many problems of mismanagement. He only reviewed less than 4% of the files. My question to you, Mr. Minister: Will your evaluation include 25%, 50%, 70% of all files? Tell us what's going to be in it.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Perhaps, following Question Period, I could get some contact information for the federal minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, since it's he that's devising the framework for evaluation. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition could check with him to see what might be in it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this is the minister that's responsible.

It's a co-managed agreement. Right clear in the original agreement it talks about the province designs the provincial part. My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: What do you have as expectations in the evaluation framework? You're the minister, it's three years late, are we going to have another minister? Someone else that can actually do the work on the file?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With respect to any expectations that I might have with respect to evaluation of this great program, I expect that the hon. minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada will put forward a very good document with respect to a regulatory framework for evaluation.

I also expect that IIDI and this government will take that framework and provide an

evaluation as per the recommendation of the Auditor General.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This minister talked about this framework a year ago. Who in your department is the lead? Is it Dr. Michael Mayne?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

There is certainly a number of very professional and dedicated senior bureaucrats in my department who work on this file. As I indicated in the past, I'm very pleased with the hard work done by senior officials at IIDI. A great group of professional and dedicated public servants in this province doing a great job for all Islanders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Mr. Minister, are you telling us you do not know who in your department is the lead on this extremely important file?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

As minister responsible for the department and also for IIDI, I'm the lead on the file.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this is the same minister who's told us many stories in the past.

Now we're getting some answers. So it's your responsibility and you've chosen to do nothing on this file. Is that the case, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: No.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Since you are the sole person responsible, when you are working on the framework with the federal people in CIC, who's designing the framework? Is it your IIDI staff or is it the senior deputies' committee that the Premier often talks about that's helping you out with the Population Secretariat and their work? Who is it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I don't know, maybe the Leader of the Opposition didn't hear what I stated earlier, but that framework is being derived by the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada at the federal level. As per who

might be designing that in Ottawa, again, if she'd like to contact the federal minister, perhaps he could provide those answers for her.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

For the last several years, the last three in particular, we often hear about the federal-provincial team that's working on this file. Provincial is part of that. We're asking you today about who's on your provincial team. Who's responsible? Is it Dr. Michael Mayne? Who is?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I believe, as I indicated earlier, as minister responsible for the department and overseeing IIDI, I am ultimately responsible for the file.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

Could the minister tell us one thing, one action you're actually doing on this file? On the evaluation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, with respect to the evaluation of the file, it's like any other government program. It's evaluated on an ongoing basis like any other program might be. But this particular file, we're awaiting an evaluation framework from the federal government, and when we have that framework we'll complete the Auditor General's recommendation as per the Auditor General's report.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Mr. Minister, you told everybody last year that you were working on a settlement strategy, and we found out just lately you had to hire an outside consultant to do that. My question to the minister, a standard practice with the program that, according to the previous minister, brought in over 400 million to the province in 2008. Are you using an outside agency to do any part of this evaluation?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, we have a lot of very senior public servants here in the province working on this file. Again, we're working closely with the federal government awaiting that regulatory framework. We've got some great dedicated staff. I'm very proud of the work they do. Again, as we receive the framework that's necessary we'll be pleased to conclude the evaluation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Is it Dr. Michael Mayne that's working on the framework here, or is it because he's so busy trying to deliver on the famous prosperity plan that no work's getting done?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Dr. Michael Mayne's probably one of the most dedicated professionals I've ever encountered in my life. The Leader of the Opposition claims that there's no work being done on the Island prosperity strategy. I believe I quoted some figures here just last week with respect to the results of the Island prosperity strategy to date.

The aerospace industry in PEI has grown by over 24% over the last two years. It now accounts for 25% of our international exports from this province and employs upwards of 900 people in the province. The bioscience sector, one of the fastest growing sectors here in the province, IT companies are expanding in the province, great companies like CGI Group Inc., like Advantage Communications, like Virtual-Agent Services, who's expanded, who's set up in Bedeque. We have bioscience companies like Nature's Crops International in Kensington. As I indicated last week and as I indicate again, the Island prosperity strategy is a great plan, and the plan is working.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last week we learned in the Legislature that the Population Secretariat certainly were travelling a lot to Europe. I guess their work, according to the IIDI report - I actually went back to check my figures - they actually attracted less than eight workers to the province.

Methodology of evaluation

To the same minister. In the evaluation, from the provincial perspective, can you explain the due diligence that you're working into the methodology, especially in the area of staff training, staff bonuses, and staff that actually participated on this file? Explain the due diligence, please.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd just like to speak also about the great work done by the Population Secretariat here in the province of PEI. Under the CEO of the Population Secretariat there's been a lot of great work done with respect to recruiting, and I want to thank Mr. Jim Ferguson for the hard work that he does at the Population Secretariat in leading the group over there.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about, I don't know, it was eight or nine people who moved to PEI that resulted from recruiting trips. I don't know how she would measure that. We don't go over, pick a country - we don't go to foreign countries with an empty

plane and just ask people to get in and then take them back to PEI. There could be people who have come to the province over the last year or two years as a direct result of the recruiting missions of the Population Secretariat. I don't know how she measures that.

But I do want to thank the Population Secretariat for its great work in getting out and promoting PEI and helping us to deal with the skilled labour shortage here in the province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I'm starting to see the picture really clear.

It's actually in your report -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: - it's in your own report, minister, the methodology that you used to use the figure of eight skilled workers. So perhaps you should go back and have a good conversation with your own department on the methodology they used to do the 2007-2008 report and the 2008-2009 report. Because obviously it's not that clear to you. Would you like to go back to your own department, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'd be very pleased to go back to my own department. It's just a great group of individuals doing a lot of hard work and I want to thank them. I want to thank them on

behalf of this provincial Legislature and this government for the hard work they do for the great people of Prince Edward Island day in and day out in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, to the same minister.

When you're back in the department, maybe you can talk to your lead, or whoever is working on this file, and ask what the due diligence is going to be and the methodology, especially because your staff participated directly in this program. So my question to you is: How are you going to write the due diligence and the methodology on the evaluation to make sure we all get a clear understanding of the depth of the issues in this program, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would expect when we receive a regulatory framework from a federal government department, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, that that will no doubt outline the due diligence and the methodology. Again, we're awaiting that regulatory framework. When we do receive it we'll be pleased to exercise it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Expected retention rates

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you,

Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. This is the minister that last year in January, or actually in April, told us he was in full discussions with the federal minister, and we found out very clear there wasn't one discussion.

So my question to you is - you're co-signed on that agreement. You're responsible for the provincial part. Obviously if you're talking about a new program you're going to try to be clear to the feds that you've actually done some work on the old program.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is this: In your original goals, what were your expected retention rates for 2007, 2008 and 2009, and how were they included in the methodology for the evaluation, Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition refers to communications and new programs. I can assure you that I and staff at IIDI have been in contact with the federal government with respect to the release of new programs. As a matter of fact, I sent a letter off to the hon. Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, informing him of our intentions here in PEI as per the regulations of the federal-provincial agreement on immigration. I'm awaiting a reply from Minister Kenney as to his thoughts on new programs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the

Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this is extremely disappointing to the public, who want answers on this program, and to the business community, who are expecting a new program.

You've obviously done no work in your own department. But my question to you was on the retention goals. Can you tell us what your original retention goals - especially when you ram, what, 1,800-plus applications through - what are your expected retention rates for that cohort?

An Hon. Member: One hundred per cent. We always aim for (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The cultural diversity side of what the Provincial Nominee Program has brought to this province has been absolutely fantastic. We see it day in and day out on the streets and in our schools.

Obviously, as new Islanders arrive here in PEI, our goal is very simple - we'd like to retain each and every new Islander who arrive in PEI. Now, we know that's unrealistic, it's not going to happen, and that's the great part about the great country that we live in, Canada. If someone arrives in PEI, it's their choice. They're free to move about the country. That's what makes Canada such a great country.

But our goal remains the same: to retain each and every new Islander who arrives in this province. We'll strive each and every day - it's a priority of this department - to see those retention numbers grow here at home.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct), Madam Speaker.

Mr. Minister, I'm glad to hear that you are wanting to retain all our newcomers, many of which came here because of their interest in the Canadian dream.

So, in the evaluation, how many interviews will you be doing with each applicant to find out and determine if they stayed here, if they didn't stay here? Why or why not? Because that would be included in any evaluation, Mr. Minister.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps replying to the evaluation. Again and again I'll tell the Leader of the Opposition that we are waiting the framework as per the notification we received from the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

I have the hon. minister's email address here. I can provide it to the Leader of the Opposition following Question Period if she wants to share her views on what might be included in that framework. I'm sure he'd be more than happy to hear from her.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Evaluation and businesses

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Mr. Minister, you're the man that's responsible for this program. You're the man that has had this file - the second minister, we'll have to admit. There's nothing done. Are we batting for number three to be next after the session closes?

My question to you, Mr. Minister, since you're not doing individual follow ups, let's talk about the evaluation, especially from the business perspective. Many evaluations often include when people are not eligible or refused participation and especially with the huge number of businesses that were refused participation in this program. Will you be reviewing 25% of the businesses that were rejected, 50% of the businesses? How many per year? What's the provincial expectation on this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Again, the provincial expectation is that the regulatory framework for evaluation as put forward by Citizenship and Immigration Canada will be followed to the T, as per the recommendations of the Auditor General. The Auditor General has done a fine job in reviewing this program. He made a series of recommendations and we are acting to implement each and every recommendation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Examination of impact of immigrant partner program

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is the minister that has no discussion with the feds but tells everybody he's working on a new program. Tells everybody not once, not twice, probably about five times, that he's working on a settlement strategy. Now he has to hire somebody else.

Now, in terms of the evaluation, which the Auditor General's asked for, he's done nothing.

But my question to the minister. You, in your response to the Auditor General, indicated that you're completing, with an outside party, an examination of the economic impact of the immigrant partner program. Minister, who is doing this work?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With respect to the economic impact of this great program, it's easy just to see the economic impact of this great program. Leading the region in housing starts, leading the region in new auto sales.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Campbell: Fantastic program, Madam Speaker, that has brought a lot of investment, but more importantly, has grown the cultural diversity and has grown the population, leading the region in population growth as well, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Campbell: It's a program we're very

proud of, Madam Speaker.

I am in consultation with the federal government. I'm releasing new programs so we can continue the great work that's being done here in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Replacement of Maplewood Manor

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. After many years of lobbying by the people of West Prince of the former administration, the people of West Prince are very pleased to hear that this government is going to replace Maplewood Manor. What I'm wondering is: Could the hon. minister please tell the House what is time frame for the replacement of Maplewood Manor?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Certainly want to thank the hon. member for his question. It's a very exciting time in his community and in long-term care in this province, and in terms of our commitment to aging strategy here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

To the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, your community and the Maplewood Manor that's being replaced under a 55-million-plus capital infrastructure that's being invested into long-term care facilities across this province - I am pleased to tell this House today, and

to tell the member for his community, that the tenders are going out, that work will start in May, and full construction will begin in later summer, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: That's great to hear, Madam Speaker.

Of course, there's going to be many other questions surrounding the replacement of this manor. I'm just wondering: Is there a public presentation plan to lay out what the plans are to the public of West Prince?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

There is going to be one tomorrow for the - we have another manor replacement taking place in the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning's -

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: There is a public meeting there tomorrow, but for the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville concerning the Maplewood replacement, on Thursday afternoon there will be a time for family, the residents and staff, to come together with all the staff from our shop, and then there will be a public time in the evening that everyone from the community can come between 7:00 to 8:00, approximately, to see the plan and have an informal conversation and question (Indistinct)..

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Use of mussel mud for fertilizer

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I'd just like a little extra time.

Last fall the minister's department undertook a dredging operation out at Corran Ban for the removal of a sill of mud, that had gathered under the bridge which was restricting the flow of water going upstream. That project was completed, and I want to thank the minister for doing that, and finally a department listened and the job was completed.

But I had some blueberry growers come to me and ask about the possibility of using that mud that was pumped out of there as the fertilizer on their blueberry growing operations. Personally, I think that's a great idea.

But my question to the minister is: Mr. Minister, does your department have any plans to do more dredging in the future and if so, would your department, consider ways of using this mud, this mussel mud, as a fertilizer on agricultural land?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: The first place of all, the watershed group and yourself did a lot of lobbying to get that done. We will be reviewing these on a situation basis and how much money's being involved.

Using mussel mud for fertilizer, I don't believe it's a fertilizer. I believe it's more like a lime. If you're a blueberry grower, I would think you'd want your pH very low,

and if you mussel mud on your blueberry land it might drive your pH up.

Now the Leader of the Opposition could probably inform me better here, but I would say that - if you could just take indulgence here, too - but if I rented a farm and there was mussel mud on that particular farm, along the shores, we found that the pH was always higher because the lime - shells kept breaking down over a period of time and that increases lime.

So I would say that what I will do, I will refer it to the minister of agriculture and have his department have a look at it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Number of people hired to look after closed schools

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question today is also for the minister of transportation and public works. Last week, it was uncovered that the minister has hired a number of individuals to look after the schools you closed. Can you tell me how many individuals you hired?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: Could you repeat that question?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last week it was uncovered -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. M. Currie: - that the minister of transportation and public works hired a number of individuals to look after the schools your government closed last year. Can you tell me how many you hired?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: I'll have to probably take that information back to you. I know that we are disposing of the schools to the communities or any non-profit organization that wants them.

I know that we're putting so much money towards operating that school for probably a year or so. I also know that St. Peter's, I believe, is looking for more down there. I've talked to them. Whether who was hired to look after them, I'll have to get back, or how many, I really don't know.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, the minister of education pointed his finger to the minister of transportation and indicated that you do know about it and you did hire them. I'm just wondering: How many people did you hire? (Indistinct) uncovered.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: Maybe if the minister of education knows how many we hired because the schools are his, but I really - I'll have to find out how many people we hired. Because we hire so many people. There's something like 1,800 people working for us across this province. We're creating jobs all the time. Good, long-term meaningful jobs and we're moving the department of transportation into the future in this province.

How many people are actually are here or there? I'll have people that'll find that out for you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, a question for the minister of transportation.

Did you advertise these positions for these people to look after these abandoned schools or did you go through your local MLAs?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: You're the MLA in the area. I don't know if our department went through you or not, I'll have to check out and find out.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the minister of transportation also, in his negotiations with one community, has promised that one of these individuals could be the general manager if the community took this abandoned school.

Is that true? In St. Peter's.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: St. Peter's. I talked to Mr. MacAulay, Jim MacAulay from St. Peter's, the teacher, former retired teacher.

The only conversation we had was I believe we offered him 90 - I forget what it was, I

shouldn't say the figure - \$94,000 and they wanted 130 or something because they wanted us to pay the insurance and some other things. We never got into who was going to be managing it. I just assumed it was going to be run by a group of volunteers. I'm not sure.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Is part of your negotiations with the community of St. Peter's that you include in your funding salary for a general manager? Is that part of your negotiations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: All I can tell you is we have so much money going to these schools, and I believe it's 94,000 or something. I don't have the figures here for that particular school. But whatever they want to do with it, that's up to them what they do with it. They can do whatever they want with that 94,000. I hope they keep it for updating the school and that and they want more, but I don't think I'm going to have any more money for them.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Community interest in taking over closed schools

Mr. M. Currie: Minister, can you tell me how many communities have indicated that they are interested in taking over these empty buildings?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: I would say there are probably - there are proposals for Grand Tracadie, Dundas, St. Peter's, Eastern

Kings, that have been received from the communities. The proposals are under review by our government now.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Would the minister please indicate what kind of a budget you have in total for these empty buildings now, if you're in discussions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: Well, what you'll have to do is wait until Friday afternoon, I'll tell you, when the budget comes down.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, the minister has been in negotiations since last May with these communities.

Certainly he must have some sort of a budget in place to indicate how much you're going to spend on downloading these empty buildings to our communities.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: I am the minister of transportation. We have a figure there. The communities have a figure they're looking for. But I got to wait until the budget comes down to see exactly what's in the budget. I don't think Friday afternoon is too long for you to wait.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Road tax

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, that's disappointing, that he's been dealing with this file now for almost a year and he doesn't have a budget figure in place.

I'll go to another subject. Minister, a year or more ago I think it was promoted quite aggressively by your government to implement HST into this province. I believe that the road builders were lobbying your department and it's my understanding that you were in support of bringing HST to the province in support of the road builders. Now that you've broken that promise with them, are you going to lobby on behalf of the road builders to take the road tax off those non-registered vehicles for the construction industry?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: Madam Speaker, for a former minister of disaster, or whatever it was - highways, at that particular time - he should know that the road builders, whether there is HST in it or not, the road builders go by the government rate (Indistinct).

That's what they go by. These rates are there. If the HST was there, they got it back, their rates would be lower for their equipment. The only thing I ever promised these road builders when I met with them, I would give them lots of work. Put as much as I possibly could out for tender and try to make it fair to everybody, but the other government never did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, question to the minister.

Are you going to follow through, minister,

with your promise, in lieu of HST that you're going to remove the road tax off those non-registered vehicles for the construction industry? Are you going to follow through with that promise?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: I don't (Indistinct) what happened here over the weekend down there, but there must have been something in it. Because the poor member - I don't have anything to do with the taxes, the taxes belong to the minister of finance. Check with the minister of finance. I'm not the minister of finance. I'm the minister of highways that paves all those nice roads for you getting back and forth, and all the bridges.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Bypass road test results

Mr. M. Currie: Speaking of all those nice roads, I'm wondering, minister, on the bypass road from St. Peter's Road to Brackley, I believe it is, there was a new section paved in there last fall. Have all the test results come back on that road. Are they in compliance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: When they pave the roads here in the Province of Prince Edward Island they've got to guarantee them for a year. So we do continuous testing. If they don't come in to compliance, we put a penalty against the companies that did them.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: I'll try the minister again.

Minister, on that section of road that was paved last year it's my understanding that the tests have been taken. Are they all in compliance on that section of road?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: All I know is we're paving lots of roads, we have a year, our department will make up the decision on those particular roads. Our department will make up the decision whether they're done right or not. If they're not done right we have a year for warranty. More than you had. Because on your roads they were bumpy bump. If you want to go out to Long Creek, you fixed that corner over there six times, and it was bumpy bump bump, every time. We went out and we did it right. Out there across the West River Causeway. We did the Dunedin Bridge. You had an old wooden bridge there that wasn't even safe to travel over.

So, if I'm out checking the roads and checking - down at the lab checking this and that. I have people that have arrived there, have full confidence in them and the amount of roads we're doing, you should be thankful that you're even in opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I believe my question was very specific in regards to a road that was paved last fall between St. Peter's Road and the Brackley Point Road. It's my understanding that a lot of the test results have failed. I want to know: Are you going to tear that road back up now and redo it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: That road there, you're talking about the perimeter bypass. That road has got to have move paving done this year because we didn't get the seal on last year.

That road was done very efficiently, it was done great. Even if you're coming in from Morell way - even the Leader of the Opposition is coming in now - it's not lined way back to Jamie Ballem's. Now see, there are two lanes that are turning this way. So I mean - or if you're turning from that way to go to Cornwall or anywhere like that, that's a new modern road that's working very well.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, final question.

Mr. M. Currie: Madam Speaker, it's very clear here today that the minister is avoiding the question, and it's my understanding that the samples that were taken have failed and it's important

It's important, before he allows the contractor to put a seal coat on, that he makes a decision. So are you going to overrule the workers in your department or your deputy minister on this file?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. MacKinley: We'll have a look at the thing. What we're doing, we're building roads. Chapman's are one of the best companies we have here in the province, the same as Island Coastal (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKinley: That's what we're doing. Eastern Kings. Their paving all over

Atlantic Canada. So the poor member, when he was there, he was so busy ripping up intersections that he didn't build right. Wasn't anything to do with the paving. He spent all his time under the cloud at night doing that work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General.

Tribute to Stephen Turner

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my sincere condolences to the family of Stephen Turner, who died suddenly over the weekend.

As you know, Stephen has very capably attended to the needs of my constituents in District 11 over the past few years. Stephen was a kind, compassionate and dependable young man with a very bright future.

His consistent good-natured ability to see the best in people and circumstances won him tremendous personal and professional respect. His strength of character was clearly defined by his solid work ethic and his genuine desire to do what is good and right for others.

Stephen Turner was a generous, caring gift to all of us. He was passionately committed to his family, his friends and his community. His cheerful, positive, larger than life personality will be missed by all who were fortunate to have known him.

My heart goes out to his grandmother Audrey, his parents David and Gloria, and his sister Kathy Ann. I want them to know they can be very proud of the person Stephen had become. I hope they will find

strength in knowing this in the days ahead.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

2010-2011 Provincial Budget

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

On Friday, April 23rd, I will present the 2010-2011 provincial budget here in the Assembly.

These are challenging financial times for government, and for all Islanders as we emerge from one of the most difficult economic periods in many years. In times like this, Islanders expect strong leadership from government to address the impact of the downturn and to help get the province back on the road to recovery.

As such, we have invested a great deal of time and thought in putting this budget together. Following extensive consultations, our priorities have been, first, to continue to stimulate the economy through record capital investments of \$500 million over five years while moving towards a balanced budget.

Secondly, we remain committed to investing in priorities such as health and education, while working to make programs more effective and efficient.

Finally, we wanted to identify potential savings in government expenditures, while respecting the excellent advice we received from the business community, the provincial public service and individuals from across the Island.

The budget I will deliver on Friday is a well thought out plan that will support our strong economy, enhance our social programs, and set us on a strategic path towards a secure future.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Culture Days launch

Mr. Vessey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today to announce that the official kickoff for Culture Days has been launched both locally and nationally. This morning I was very pleased to join in celebrations at MacKenzie Theatre with several members of the cultural community in Prince Edward Island.

Culture Day is a learning experience about the richness and vitality of a province's culture. The importance of this sector may be underestimated by many Islanders, except by those individuals who participate directly in the arts, culture, or heritage sectors. Culture Days celebrates the importance that culture has in the lives of Islanders and Canadians. It speaks to who we are and what we're all about.

At today's launch we got a taste of some of PEI's talent with a performance by Chuck and Albert Arsenault. In addition, throughout the MacKenzie were exhibitors who had different cultural experiences and activities on display. It was evident to see that there are many wonderful and exciting things going on in PEI, and for a small province, we certainly score big when it comes to a diverse culture.

Governments do not and cannot create

culture because culture must come from ourselves and our communities. Culture is what makes us unique, and Prince Edward Island is fortunate to benefit from a variety of cultures, all of which contribute to our One Island Community.

As I look forward to September, when we will formally celebrate Culture Days, I am aware that in Prince Edward Island every day can be a Culture Day.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the steering committee. This includes Darrin White from the PEI Arts Council, Laurie McBurney from PEI Arts Council, Peggy Reddin from the Confederation Centre, Rob Oakie from Music PEI, Sue Urguhart from Atlantic Presenters Association, Ghislaine Cormier from Fédération culturelle de IPE, Marie Walsh from Innovation PEI, Annette Campbell from Symphony PEI, Mark Sandiford from Film/Media and Gaming, and Penny Walsh and Dan Wall from the Confederation Centre.

I encourage all Islanders to participate in the wonderful cultural activities planned throughout the province during Culture Days.

On behalf of the government of the Province of Prince Edward Island, I wish every success in this celebration.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Changes to Breast Screening Program

Ms. Bertram: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to report that changes to the provincial Breast Screening Program will

significantly reduce wait times for this service over the coming months. The improvements to the provincial Breast Screening Program have included much more than the installation of three new digital mammography units, which took place late last year - two units at the Queen Elizabeth and one at Prince County Hospital.

Staffing shortages have been addressed with the addition of new positions. A radiologist has been secured and will provide much needed support to the program on a more frequent and consistent basis. A new centralized phone number and booking system has been installed and fully implemented, and hours of service at both breast screening sites have been expanded.

Providing timely access to our Breast Screening Program is key to early detection and diagnosis. Enhancing our technology, adding health resources and improving our processes are collective means to improving patient care. With all of these elements now in place, we are excited to be able to improve access to this important service and reduce wait times for Islanders.

The current wait time for a breast screening appointment is approximately 12 months. Beginning this month, the Breast Screening Program will be adding up to 150 additional appointments per week between both sites. Improvements made to the program will reduce this window to a three- to four-month wait time by the fall.

Women with symptoms or in urgent situations, as referred by a physician, have a wait time of less than two weeks.

Being able to reduce wait times is also an important element in the program's effort to encourage more Island women to get screened. I urge Islanders to visit the website on our government website, or to

call toll free, and I say today, 1-888-592-9888, to learn more about our Breast Screening Program or to make an appointment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Community Internships

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the great success my department has had with the community internship program. To date, this program has placed 108 recent graduates in internships with NGOs and municipal governments across the province. The program provides wage subsidies to these community organizations to help them employ the interns for up to 26 weeks.

This is an excellent opportunity for recent graduates to build on the skills they developed during their studies. The program is a great step towards ensuring that skilled young people who want to live on PEI can find work relevant to their degrees or diplomas. It is also a great benefit to employers, who are receiving help in their important work, to make their communities better places to live.

We have heard great things about the interns from the community organizations who have hired them so far. I'd like to welcome Sherri Smith from Child Find PEI who is here in the gallery with us today. Child Find PEI has given jobs to two interns. Justin Douglas will redevelop the Youth Runaway Program, and Todd Roswell is going to work with Child Find PEI to develop a website that will help the group to reach teens and

parents, and that the staff will be able to update easily.

I would also like to thank Lynda and Alan Curtis, coming to represent the Alberton Historic Preservation Society, as well as Kelly Murphy who is working as an intern for the society. I've heard that Kelly has far exceeded the Society's expectations in her job coordinating the Alberton Heritage Centre's May to December schedule of cultural and educational events.

These are just two of over 100 community organizations who are benefitting from the chance to work with skilled recent graduates.

As government moves forward with the Rural Action Plan, this program is an excellent way to respond to the needs of communities across the province. I am proud to see my department partnering with community organizations to offer valuable work experience to young people, and I would like to thank groups like Child Find PEI and the Alberton Heritage Preservation Society for their role in supporting the Island's recent graduates.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Environment Advisory Council appointments

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker, last week I had the pleasure to welcome three new members to the Environmental Advisory Council: Neil Harpham, a Charlottetown entrepreneur; Daryl Guignon, a former biology professor; and Richard Davis, a food inspector and farmer.

The Environmental Advisory Committee provides advice and recommendations on environmental issues and opportunities for public education programs to our department. These three gentlemen bring strong backgrounds in environmental issues and community challenges facing PEI.

I'd also like to take some time to recognize the appointment of Allan Hicken as chairman of the Environmental Advisory Council and Paula MacKinnon as vice-chair. Both have done great work during their time in the council and I look forward to more great work by the Environmental Advisory Council under the new leadership.

Protecting and preserving the environment is the responsibility of all citizens. I am pleased that there are many voices advocating for good environmental practices to create a sustainable environment for future generations.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

April 18th to the 24th is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week across Canada. It is an opportunity to raise awareness about victim issues and about programs, services and laws in place to help victims of crime and their family. It is also an opportunity to recognize the dedication of victim services providers, police officers, professionals working in the justice system, community agencies and individual volunteers who work in our communities.

This year, in recognition of National Victims of Crime Week, I would like to tell the House about a significant improvement in our courts which has been developed to help the most vulnerable victims of crime, our children. In collaboration with Justice Canada, we have installed new videoconferencing equipment that provides closed-circuit television capability in all Prince Edward Island courts which will facilitate the testimony of children and other vulnerable witnesses.

Testifying at a trial can be a very frightening experience for a child. With this new equipment, we can set up a video-conference within the courthouse. So a trial would be conducted in one courtroom, but a child witness could provide testimony through a video-link from another courtroom in the building.

Even though the equipment has only just been installed, it has already been used successfully with three child witnesses. The closed-circuit system is currently being installed in all four courthouses in PEI, which include Summerside, Georgetown and both the Supreme and Provincial Courts in Charlottetown.

The project required purchasing new equipment, upgrading the wiring in the courthouses, and developing an interface with existing digital recording equipment. It was jointly funded by Justice Canada and the Province of Prince Edward Island, and I would like to thank our federal partners for their contribution.

This program is just one of many we have introduced to make court proceedings less intimidating for children and other vulnerable victims or witnesses. We have also established child-friendly waiting rooms in each court and upgraded testimonial screens.

Although technological improvements are certainly welcome, we must always recognize that it is the people who work within the justice system who have greatest impact in improving services to victims. They continually strive to address the needs of victims, and respect and compassion for victims of crime remains a touchstone throughout our justice system.

There are also a large number of community groups who work very closely with victims of crime. Their members give freely of their time, energy and creativity to build stronger, safer communities and provide support to victims of crime. These groups deserve our gratitude and I am extremely thankful for their contributions.

We belong to One Island Community, and the harm done to one member of that community diminishes each and every one of us. For that reason it is important that we recognize National Victims of Crime Awareness Week and acknowledge the hard work being done within the justice system and through community organizations to support victims.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Annual Report for Holland College for the period ending March 31st, 2009 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs, that the said document be now received and do lie on the

Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Madam Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said committee and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McIsaac: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from O'Leary-Inverness, that the report of the committee be adopted.

This report is an account of committee activities since last reporting to this House in November of 2009. Your committee requests that by receipt and adoption of this report by the Legislative Assembly your committee be authorized to sit beyond prorogation of the Third Session of the 63rd General Assembly in order to conduct its business intersessionally.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour, that the 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 17, *An Act to Amend the Child Protection Act*, Bill No. 41, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Child Protection Act*, Bill No. 41, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'm going to call on the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock to come down and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Dunsford): The House is now in a

Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Child Protection Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Ms. Sherry: Madam Chair, may I ask permission to bring on the director of child welfare to the floor, please?

Chair: Permission to bring on director?

Mr. Bagnall: Sure.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Child Protection Act*.

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

1. Section 1 of the Child Protection Act R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. C-5.1 is amended

(a) in clause (f), by the deletion of the word “administrative” and the substitution of the word “governing”;

Question? The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: What is the word difference and why is it that you’re changing the word difference there? What does it read before and what’s it going to read after?

Wendy McCourt Director: The difference is in our consultation with the chiefs. They identified that actually governing body is the correct use, not the administrative. So they recommended that change.

Mr. Bagnall: Who recommended that?

Wendy McCourt Director: The chiefs, the two chiefs of our Aboriginal communities.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Thank you.

Any other questions? I’ll continue.

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

(h) “child means a person under the age of 18 years;

Mr. Bagnall: Is that a change?

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Every section I want (Indistinct) I’m going to ask questions on.

Chair: I still have to identify you.

Thank you.

Wendy McCourt Director: The change is that in the present act in (h) it speaks to the age of 16 to 18, where a person is developmental, mental or physically incapacity, or appears to be unable to protect himself or herself. So the change now is that that caveat is taken out and so it allows us to address all 16 to 18-year-olds.

Mr. Bagnall: So how will it read now -

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: - with the change?

Wendy McCourt Director: It will be: A child is in need of protection up to the age of 18.

Mr. Bagnall: And all the other was taken

out?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes, as far as whatever we had in there, speaking directly to the age of 16 to 18 is taken out.

Mr. Bagnall: How come there wouldn't be a deletion of that, then?

Wendy McCourt Director: There is a deletion. It is repealed. It's removed.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. It's a repeal of clause (h)? That's what clause (h) said?

Wendy McCourt Director: The second part of - if you were to look in the act as it reads, a child means a person under the age of 16.

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Wendy McCourt Director: So we now have changed that to a child means up to the age of 18.

Mr. Bagnall: Why the change?

Wendy McCourt Director: It seemed to be an area that for workers and for the public in the consultations was a very confusing area. The issue for the 16 to 18-year-olds is across the province at times workers weren't really clear on when to assess and who assesses whether they have the capacity or incapacity. Sometimes that would make it very difficult to serve that age group who were in need of protection and did need to have service. So this allows a clearer way to respond to that.

Mr. Bagnall: So the question here I'd ask is: Are all the changes being made in the *Child Protection Act* going from 16 to 18 years of age? On every single situation? Or are you picking and choosing?

Wendy McCourt Director: No, it's

consistent throughout. There is a section which will be further identified. We do need to recognize from 16 to 18 year olds at times may not be willing to work with us and we have to respect that, as well. So we have tried to attend to both those youth who do need to have service and will engage with us, and also respect the youth who may not be willing to engage and refuse service.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. Just so I get this right, if someone the age of 16 doesn't agree with child protection services, what happens? I mean, between 16 and 18? Do you make them go into child protection?

Wendy McCourt Director: No, we don't have that ability to force them to accept this service. What we would be doing with them is also reviewing what - like, many 16- to 18-year-olds may be able to find a place, may not be the best place to live, but may be okay for them and keep them safe and attend to their situation.

Mr. Bagnall: So if they're not safe?

Wendy McCourt Director: Pardon?

Mr. Bagnall: So if they're not safe? If they don't find a place that's safe, what happens?

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, from 16 to 18, I think one of the issues is I could take them into care and bring them to a group home, but if they're going to refuse that, they probably are just going to leave, and then we continue. So they certainly are at an age where they can start to make some decisions, and we would need to respect that.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So why are we changing it, then? Because you don't have any power with this, according to what you're telling me, and then you're changing it.

Wendy McCourt Director: But those who do want service, and those that would engage with us, this does allow us to engage with them.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Any more questions?

(c) by the repeal of clause (j) and the substitution of the following:

(j) “child protection services” means intervention with children, youths or parents, in accordance with this Act;

(d) in clause (m), by the deletion of the words “section 7” and the substitution of the words “section 5”;

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: What’s section 5? What are we putting in there? Because we don’t have it here in the bill. And what did you take out?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: I’m going to reread that. The one the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir is questioning on is:

(d) in clause (m), by the deletion of the words “section 7” and the substitution of the words “section 5”.

Wendy McCourt Director: I know we’re rewording, or we’re renumbering, and I would say that’s a difference in the renumbering.

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: We’re

requesting that the act be renumbered, and so that will change some of the numbering in the act. So it looks like that’s probably what we’re attending to there is it may change section 7 to section 5.

Mr. Bagnall: Section 7 says what? Because if you’re taking that out, obviously you’re deleting, you’re deleting section 7. So, if you’re taking out section 7, it says what?

Wendy McCourt Director: Okay. Actually, 7 says: the director may delegate to any person the power to provide child welfare services and the ability to exercise specified powers and duties.

Actually, we see that that can come out and we can deal with that as far as to what the director delegates to the workers through policy.

Mr. Bagnall: Why would you take it out? What’s it going to do, taking it out of there?

Wendy McCourt Director: Pardon?

Mr. Bagnall: What’s it going to do for the act or for the department by taking section 7 out?

Wendy McCourt Director: It would just change where that we would deal with the delegation. That delegation would be done through our policy.

Mr. Bagnall: So you’re taking that part out?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: Who would do the - who was doing that before?

Wendy McCourt Director: The delegation -

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Wendy McCourt Director: - is through the director of child welfare. What it is is delegating specific powers to the child protection workers.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Any more questions?

(e) in clauses (m.1) and (q), by the deletion of the words "Social Services and Seniors" and the substitution of the words "Community Services, Seniors and Labour";

(f) in clause (o),

(i) by the deletion of the words "Child Welfare" and the substitution of the words "Child Protection", and

(ii) by the deletion of the words "section 5" and the substitution of the words "section 4";

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So why are you changing it from child welfare to child protection?

Wendy McCourt Director: This is the *Child Protection Act*, and there appears to be confusion. Child welfare is much broader than child protection. So often what is happening is the public often are confused as to what we can and cannot provide and why we can't. So the recommendation is that by changing it to child protection, it makes it much more specific and clearer to what we actually are responsible and mandated to do, and that is to provide child protection services.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. In the second part of that, your deletion of the words section 5, well, in the previous section you just

included section 5 and you go down one section and you're deleting it again. Can you explain that to me?

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, what is happening there is section 3 will still be in there but it's going to change because of the reordering of the numbers.

Mr. Bagnall: No, I'm saying section 5. On (d) you told me you were substituting the words and you're putting in section 5, and then when you come down here to (f)(ii), you're taking section, you're deleting section 5. It's all in the same section.

Chair: In clause (o) and above we're talking about clause (j).

Mr. Bagnall: It's all in the same section, though, and you're, it's all section 1 and you're deleting it in one part and you're adding it in another, and then you're deleting it again. I guess that's what I'm trying to find out is why.

Wendy McCourt Director: It's reordering it, so it's not actual - at times it's not going to be actually deleting it, it's actually just changing the order. So it may be 3 in the present act and it could be 4 in the - so they have to -

Chair: It's just to make the act flow better. Right now it jumps from one place to another, so they've done a complete realignment so that -

Mr. Bagnall: No, I'm looking at section 1 of the act, and you're coming down and you get the one clause where you're adding section 5 and I go two lines later and now you're deleting section 5.

Wendy McCourt Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: So you've added the words in section 5 up above. Now you're deleting

those words again, so I guess that's my concern here. Why are you adding and deleting?

Wendy McCourt Director: I'm thinking maybe section 5 is the powers of the director, and there is - which may be what it is - is we have put some of them, we've kind of realigned them to be more clear as to what are the powers of the director and what are the powers of the minister. So some of that is deleted out of 5 and goes to the minister.

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, but it doesn't say - and I know I'm being difficult here, but anyway -

Wendy McCourt Director: No, that's okay.

Mr. Bagnall: The problem is you come into the act and you say you're deleting section 7, you're adding section 5. It doesn't say - and then you said you were, then you go down to the next line and you say: I'm deleting section 5. It doesn't say part of section 5 or it doesn't say anything else. It says you're deleting section 5, so that means you're taking section 5 all out again.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: I don't know if I can help on this, but (Indistinct) section 5 down here is now becoming section 4.

Ms. Sherry: Right.

Wendy McCourt Director: (Indistinct).

Chair: Would that be the explanation?

Ms. Sherry: Yes.

Chair: Okay, why don't you -

Ms. Sherry: Do that.

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, it's, we're looking at it. It is -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: If we could just have everyone's patience for a second.

Wendy McCourt Director: It is the renumbering so, yes, it is deleted as (5) but it's going to become (4). It's just changing in the numbering.

Mr. Bagnall: So why wouldn't you have said: I'm deleting section 7 and I'm adding section 4 instead of going through the whole thing over and over again here?

Ms. Sherry: It has to be specific. So when you're moving them around, you have to refer to them specifically. That's the best explanation I can give (Indistinct).

Chair: If I could just go to the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you.

I guess my question's to Wendy. I know that back in June of 2007 when I was the minister responsible, this was a piece of work that had been sitting for a period of time. My understanding at that time, the work to do the consultation was stalled. Is that correct? It's by legislation every three years, is that correct?

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. D. Currie: We were how many years out before that work started in 2007?

Wendy McCourt Director: The act came in 2003.

Mr. D. Currie: So the act came in 2003 so it was to be amended and it was to be

amended and brought out to public consultation in 2006. Is that correct?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. D. Currie: I remember the - and I commend the department for their leadership and work on this file because obviously it's a very important piece of legislation. It's about protecting children in this province. So could you give me just a little update about - you know, the consultations were extensive. They were very broad. They were well thought out. Could you give us, sort of, just a quick high-level overview of those consultations and what were the concerns that Islanders were hearing in respect to the protection of children under this act?

Wendy McCourt Director: The consultations were provincial in nature. There were public consultations across the province that the public were certainly invited to. The public, staff, other professionals did attend across the province. You were able to email in concerns. They met with professionals who wished to have a personal meeting to express their concerns, and there were continuous themes which had to do with, again, the 16 to 18-year-olds and the confusion as to whether we service them, whether we don't service them. Therefore, that's the change in the change in the child.

We had the Aboriginal consultations who addressed as they felt that they needed to be informed much earlier on in the process so that they better could advocate and support their families.

We had, again, the director of child welfare and we have the director of child and family services, and that has been very confusing for the public to know who do they contact for what. So we have tried again and you'll see - address it as the director of child

protection which is clearly what my rule and mandate is, in regards to the act.

As we came closer to moving into doing the amendments, we again consulted our Aboriginal community who participated, and we shared our suggested amendments, gave them an opportunity again for input.

We invited our judicial to come to the table to give us a sense of if we were missing anything in the act that they felt needed to be addressed.

We checked, consulted with staff. We have continuously consulted and insured that we are listening to the voice of Islanders and attempting to improve the areas that we need to attend to, and also making sure that the areas that we have identified that are working well that we don't neglect and attempt to change them when they are working well.

So I think we have consulted, we have listened, and I truly believe that the voice of Islanders is represented as best we can in these amendments.

Chair: We'll go back to the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you very much.

My former life - the consultation piece was very reassuring, very empowering to me as the minister. Because, as we know, the authority of the act and legislation is your responsibility. It's not even the responsibilities of the minister because of the way the act is laid out.

I know that, as a former educator, as a guidance counsellor, I was involved with the department over the years, particularly in child protection cases and particularly, my last few years, working with kids at risk who

were in foster care and in group homes. Do you see that this process that you put in place has allowed for a more updated, clear understanding of the legislation and the roles and responsibilities in respect to all the stakeholders that are engaged with youth that fall under your responsibility?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes, I would say that these amendments have attended to the areas where we have had any kind of confusion from the public, from other professionals with our own staff. The hope of this is that we will be able to be clearer and that the public will have a much clearer understanding of our roles and our ability to provide protection to children.

Chair: Any other questions?

(g) in subclause (s)(ii) by the deletion of the semicolon and the substitution of a comma; and

(h) in subclause (u)(ii), by the addition of the word “and” after the words “for a child,”.

Shall it carry? Carried.

2. Subsection 2(1) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words “section 3” and the substitution of the words “section 9”.

Shall it carry?

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, what are we deleting there in section 3?

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, this is in regards to the reordering. I know that seems confusing, but although section 3 is being repealed, it is going to be moved because of the reordering.

What we’ve done is tried to reorder the act

so that if you want to or need to look at the act, right now we have up front the child is in need of protection, the definition. Then at one point later on, I think section 22 is mandatory reporting. So what’s happening is if you’re trying to understand what our authority is, it’s very hard right now to read it through and figure out exactly where you need to go. So what we’ve done is tried to reorder it so that it flows better and much quicker. Can I understand, where do I need to be? When I look at what’s a definition for a child in need of protection, then what needs to come right after that will follow more effectively than it is presently.

Mr. Bagnall: Now, when you make these changes are you using the exact same wording? Are you changing the wording in these sections at all? Are they exactly the same when you’re making them or are you making wording changes to the section?

Wendy McCourt Director: No, if we were making a change in the wording, it would be identified in here. No.

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: If we were to make a change in the wording, we would be identifying it through the amendments. But no, it’s a matter of - if it’s 3 now it may go to 5. So it’s going to be section 5 rather than section 3 if you were looking in the act.

Mr. Bagnall: But it’s going to be the exact same wording?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes. That’s not a matter of changing wording. It’s a matter of where it will be placed in the act.

Mr. Bagnall: So if I go to the old act and after there amendments, I’ll see no other wording changes?

Wendy McCourt Director: Except where

they're indicated.

Ms. Sherry: There are some wording changes that are -

Mr. Bagnall: No, I understand -

Wendy McCourt Director: Only where they're indicated. There won't be any other changing. It would just be a matter of taking it from this and moving it over here.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll give way to the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter for recognition.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd just like to recognize Kent England in the gallery today. He's one of my constituents from the Grand River area. Great worker. Thank you for joining us today.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General.

Mr. D. Currie: Just a question. Can you just give me just a little more detail on the process to the writing of the amendments, please? I guess the process, when we're looking at the amendments, what's the process to make the amendments on the -

Wendy McCourt Director: Okay. Actually, what we did was we went through the act line by line, we reviewed whether, like, were there areas that we knew needed to be changed? We used all the consultations to look at that. The reason that we went line by line is to make sure that we were addressing any of the issues that we saw needed to be addressed or amended.

At times, there were things like - there is in the present act regional authorities. We

don't have regional authorities any more. We need to look at that and take it out. With the changing of our department we needed to address that. With looking at taking out child welfare, putting in child protection, we needed to address that. So line for line we were going through it to make sure we were catching anything that we needed to attend to.

Mr. D. Currie: So this work is in respect to work that is going on in other jurisdictions and is very standard in respect to all across the country?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes. Many of my counterparts are in the process of amending, upgrading, making changes to their act. It's like a living document, because as we move forward this - what is here today may not be as relevant -

Mr. D. Currie: That's right.

Wendy McCourt Director: - in four to five years, and therefore we need to be staying current so that our practice fits with what is relevant today.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you.

Chair: 3. Section 3 of the Act is repealed.

Shall it carry?

Mr. Bagnall: No.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So what are we repealing?

Wendy McCourt Director: It's just that we're going to change it from Section 3 to where it's going to.

Mr. Bagnall: Where is it going to? Because it doesn't say it's going anywhere according

to that.

Wendy McCourt Director: Section 4 -

Mr. Bagnall: Section 3 of the act is repealed.

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct) 5 is the old 3. Section 5 of the (Indistinct) is - all it's saying it's renumbered as section 4.

Wendy McCourt Director: I do know section 3 in the act is our definition that we would define a child -

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon? I can't hear you.

Wendy McCourt Director: Sorry. Section 3 in the act is the definition that defines for us a child in need of protection, so that would - it's being renumbered, but it's definitely not coming out because that's actually what we have -

Premier Ghiz: It's Section 9.

Wendy McCourt Director: Pardon?

Premier Ghiz: Section 9. Check Section 9.

Wendy McCourt Director: Okay. Section 9 in the present act is disclosure, which is changing. In the new act it's going to be Section 9.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. Where's this Section 9 here?

An Hon. Member: Making you look smart.

Chair: Shall it -

Mr. Bagnall: It's going to be in Section 9 -

Ms. Sherry: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: - so it's going to be added to Section 9 here?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: You want to bring them down, too, from the gallery so they can answer the questions?

Premier Ghiz: (Indistinct) she's doing a very good job.

Mr. Bagnall: I know she's doing a great job, but if they have more information it might be easier. Anyway -

Ms. Sherry: I don't know why they let people -

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Bagnall: I'll carry.

Madam Minister?

Chair: Oh, did you not - you're saying not to carry it?

Mr. Bagnall: No, no, I said carry it.

I just, minister -

Chair: Okay.

Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I just want you to know that I agree with this being 100% good legislation.

Ms. Sherry: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: But I want to know every change and everything that's taking place here. Because if there's any concerns or any acts and people that I get more calls and people coming in feeling that child protection is - it's with families, that's it. That's why - although I agree 100% with child protection, and I'll support it 100% - I want to know every change that's taking

place and every improvement that's going to be happening here. I will be asking probably questions on every single line going through the bill because I want to make sure that I'm getting answers on it. But I want you to know that I do support it. So even though I'm maybe - (Indistinct) thinking I may be a little difficult here, but I think this is one of the most -

Premier Ghiz: No more so than any other day.

Mr. Bagnall: - one of the most important pieces of legislation we could ever pass on this floor of the Legislature.

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely.

Mr. Bagnall: I want to - I'm going to make sure that I'm happy with it.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

Ms. Sherry: This is an incredible, comprehensive piece of work. When we're speaking about the protection of children in the province I can certainly understand the concern and needing to go through.

It was a huge document to go through in the way the department has, taking into consideration the stakeholders and the tediousness of reordering and changing wording, so I have absolutely no problem to sit here and continue on -

Mr. Bagnall: No, no.

Ms. Sherry: It's important.

Mr. Bagnall: I just -

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Section 4. (1) Subsection 4(2) of the Act is

amended

(a) in clauses (a), (b) and (c), by the deletion of the words "child welfare" and the substitution of the words "child protection"; and

(b) in clause (c), by the deletion of the words "among service delivery agencies in the province".

2.

Mr. Bagnall: Just in (b) there?

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: So you're taking that out. Are you putting anything in?

Chair: He's speaking about (b).

Mr. Bagnall: Clause (b) in that section? You're among services delivered and agencies in the province. Why are you taking that out and what does it do to your act by taking it out?

Wendy McCourt Director: It's to try to clarify the fact that this is the *Child Protection Act*. It's child protection services that we're delivering and responsible for. The way that's in there, it's not clear enough. It sounds like we have other responsibilities to other agencies -

Ms. Sherry: Yes.

Wendy McCourt Director: - that we don't have responsibility for.

Mr. Bagnall: So you're taking that out. Are you putting anything in different, then?

Wendy McCourt Director: No. It's just trying to clear that up so that it's child protection services that we are responsible

for.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Any more questions?

(2) Subsection 4(3) of the Act is amended

(a) in clauses (a), (b) and (c), by the deletion of the words “child welfare” and the substitution of the words “child protection”;

(b) in clause (b) by the deletion of the word “and” after the semicolon;

(c) in clause (c), by the deletion of the period and the substitution of the words “; and”;

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

(d) monitor and evaluate service delivery under this Act.

Mr. Bagnall: Yeah.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Why is that put in?

Ms. Sherry: Are you following him?

Chair: Could you be specific? What one are you referring to?

Mr. Bagnall: (d).

Chair: (d) by the addition of the following after clause (c):

(d) monitor and evaluate service delivery under this Act.

Mr. Bagnall: Yeah. So, is that a change to the act?

Ms. Sherry: Right here.

An Hon. Member: Okay.

Mr. Bagnall: Was there no monitoring before? Or evaluations?

Wendy McCourt Director: We’ve always been responsible to monitor the act and evaluate, but this will allow us to have someone look at it from arms’-length to make sure that we are following - we are being consistent with our legislation and carrying it out appropriately.

Mr. Bagnall: Is this legislation fashioned under other jurisdictions across Canada?

Wendy McCourt Director: The original, yes. We have looked at other legislation, and again, it may be different - each province it’s a little different, but many of the things are similar.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, so -

Wendy McCourt Director: This is actually originally -

Mr. Bagnall: - all of these changes, did they reflect from other jurisdictions across Canada, or just your own that you’ve -

Wendy McCourt Director: These changes are a reflection of what we need to update at this time, based on what the public has told us, based on our own staff, based on the experience with the act over the last several years.

Mr. Bagnall: So there are no other jurisdictions that - you’ve gone to no other jurisdictions then, doing these changes?

Wendy McCourt Director: We have, at the directors of child welfare table -

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: At the directors of child welfare table -

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Wendy McCourt Director: - at a national level we have many discussions around our act and what's working. All of the acts across Canada. We do borrow and we do discuss so that we have the opportunity to know whether or not we're current, whether or not this legislation may or may not be current in Ontario and BC. So we do jurisdictional scans. Those scans may not meet what we need for our act, but we certainly look at them.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: (3) Section 4 of the Act is renumbered as section 3.

Any questions?

Mr. Bagnall: So we've gone from seven to five, and now we're down to four, and now we're taking section four and we're going to three so far.

Chair: Are you following it?

Mr. Bagnall: I don't know. Seems to me - are we going to go down to 1, 2 and then take it right off the bill altogether?

Wendy McCourt Director: No. It is about the renumbering. I know it sounds very confusing because it is confusing. But once it's renumbered, as we're hoping it will, it won't look as confusing.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, convince me as we go along.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

5. (1) Subsection 5(1) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "Child

Welfare" and the substitution of the words "Child Protection".

(2) Subsection 5(2) of the Act is amended

(a) in the words preceding clause (a), by the deletion of the words "of Child Welfare";

(b) in clause (c), by the deletion of the words "section 22" and the substitution of the words "section 10";

Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: What's in section 22?

Wendy McCourt Director: Section 22 addresses mandatory reporting in the act.

Mr. Bagnall: From who? I mean, it's mandatory reporting from who?

Wendy McCourt Director: That is any of the public. Anyone, if they're aware of potential or child protection concerns, like where a child may be harmed, the expectation is that they are. So mandatory reporting would say is to report that. We're not taking that out, we're just changing where it will be in the act.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: (c) in clauses (d), (e), (g), (I) and (j), by the deletion of the words "child welfare" and the substitution of the words "child protection";

(d) by the repeal of clause (f);

(e) - question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: What are we taking out of clause (f)?

Wendy McCourt Director: What we

would be repealing in clause (f) is to establish policies and procedures for delegation. Again, what we're looking at is that will be dealt with in policy rather than in the act.

Mr. Bagnall: So we're taking it out of the act and you're putting in policy?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: Why?

Wendy McCourt Director: Policy will be able to give a clear - other than the act may say that the delegated (Indistinct), the policy will allow us to be more clear and more specific as to how and what that will look like.

Mr. Bagnall: So what are we taking out, then, that you're going to move it to policy from the act?

Wendy McCourt Director: It's the reference to the director of child welfare in subsection 5(1) of the act is changed to the director of - the provision changes.

Again, in (f) it's to establish policies and procedures for delegation of the director's powers as it is in the act and to establish policies respecting direction and supervision of the delegates. So we're taking that out and we're putting it in to policy.

Mr. Bagnall: So what does that mean? Like what you said, what did that mean actually to the act?

Wendy McCourt Director: What it will mean is that particular section won't be in the act, but it will be that we will address it directly in policy. So the policy will outline what powers will be delegated, how that will happen -

Mr. Bagnall: Why are you taking that out

of the act, then? Because that's what the act is for.

Wendy McCourt Director: Because it was felt that that can be better -

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: Because it's felt that that can be better dealt with in policy.

Mr. Bagnall: Who felt that could be dealt better?

Wendy McCourt Director: After the consultations as we went through the act that that is an area that can be better dealt with in policy.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: Any more questions?

(e) in clause (g), by the deletion of the words "to regional authorities"; and

(f) by the repeal of clause (h).

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Is that the new health authority (Indistinct)? You're taking it out to regional authorities so you're eliminating them altogether?

Wendy McCourt Director: There are no regional authorities that would be responsible for the act.

Mr. Bagnall: There used to be, is that right?

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. Bagnall: That's what I'm trying to (Indistinct).

Wendy McCourt Director: Yeah.

Mr. Bagnall: You're just matching that up to - that you got rid of the regional authorities, now you have to make that change in the act?

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: (f) by the repeal of clause (h).

(3) Section 5 of the Act is renumbered as section 4.

Shall it carry? Carried.

6. (1) Subsection 7(1) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "child welfare" and the substitution of the words "child protection".

(2) Subsection 7(4) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "of Child Welfare".

(3) Section 7 of the Act is renumbered as section 5.

7. Section 8 of the Act is renumbered as section 6.

Shall it carry? Carried.

My apologies, we didn't - I heard the echo but didn't respond in time. I'm asking to carry section 6.

Shall it carry? Carried.

I've read section 7, shall it carry? Carried.

8. (1) Subsection 9(1) of the Act is amended by the addition of the words", and shall determine the access required to such records for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating service delivery provided under this Act" after the words "information gathered in the administration of this Act".

Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Why is this being put in or what is the rationale behind it?

Wendy McCourt Director: Because right now, as the act is, if we were noticing a trend, something that was going on - and perhaps across Prince Edward Island we are seeing children being harmed at a certain age, certain specific type of harm - right now, as the act stands, we don't have any way that we could bring someone in who may have the skills, abilities and knowledge to be able to come in and help us look at that trend so that we can better evaluate. Is there something different that we can do? Are our partners out there able to? Also, we can share that with them so that we can better service our Island communities and, hopefully, minimize risk and harm to children. So that's what we're trying to attend to here, is that it would allow an expert to come in and assist us with that.

Mr. Bagnall: Who were your partners that you were talking about?

Wendy McCourt Director: It could be mental health, it may be Best Start, addictions, education, justice. Those are our partners that we would work with on a regular basis. Sometimes these children do cross the borders of all of the various services. So this would allow us to be able to look at: Is there something that we didn't pick up? Is there something happening in families that if we put in services and they looked a little different that it may decrease the chance of a child being harmed? At the same time we could enhance and strengthen a family.

Chair: (2) Subsection 9(2) of the Act is amended

(a) in clause (g), by the addition of the

words “, a criminal court proceeding following an investigation,” after the words “a criminal investigation”; and

(b) in clause (h), by the deletion of the words “child welfare” and the substitution of the words “child protection”.

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Chair: Not yet.

(3) Subsection 9(4) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words “section 22” and the substitution of the words “section 10”.

(4) Section 9(4) of the Act is renumbered as section 7.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Bagnall: No, question.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Back to (a) section there, the criminal court procedures following an investigation. Why is that being put in?

Wendy McCourt Director: Right now -

Mr. Bagnall: If we're into child welfare why would we be into criminal charges?

Wendy McCourt Director: For example, if a child is sexually abused, it would be a criminal investigation and it would be our investigation.

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Wendy McCourt Director: So right now the act allows us to - for the criminal investigation, they may request information from our file. We can provide that while they're in the stage of investigation.

Mr. Bagnall: You can't supply it?

Wendy McCourt Director: We can. However, if they are further on and their investigation is completed, we may not be able to give them the information that they require. So this will allow us to better work with our police and justice in regards to attending to ensuring that a child is safe.

Mr. Bagnall: So you'll be able to give them the information after this?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: So in a lot of cases they will be able to go to your department and get any information they want dealing with that case?

Wendy McCourt Director: Only in regards to the charge. Not everything about the family. Only what would have pertained to the charges that they are addressing in the criminal system.

Mr. Bagnall: So who does that go through? Does that go through the freedom of information that would allow this information to come out? Or who does it go through?

Wendy McCourt Director: No. It would go through - our act allows for the director of child welfare to provide information so it would be in that section of the act.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

9. Section 10 of the Act is renumbered as section 8.

Shall it carry? Carried.

10. That Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 8:

Child in need of protection

9. A child is in need of protection where

(a) the child has suffered physical harm inflicted by a parent;

(b) the child is at a substantial risk of suffering physical harm inflicted by a parent;

(c) the child has suffered harm caused by

(i) neglect of the child by a parent,

(ii) failure of a parent to adequately supervise or protect the child, or

(iii) failure of a parent to provide for the adequate supervision or protection of the child;

(d) the child is at substantial risk of suffering harm caused by

(i) neglect of the child by a parent,

(ii) failure of a parent to adequately supervise or protect the child, or

(iii) failure of a parent to provide for the adequate supervision or protection of the child;

(e) the child has been sexually abused by a parent or by another person where the parent knew or ought to have known of the possibility of sexual abuse of the child and the parent failed to protect the child;

(f) the child is at substantial risk of sexual abuse by a parent or by another person where the parent knew or ought to have known of the possibility of sexual abuse of the child and the parent failed to protect the child;

(g) the child has been harmed as a result of being sexually exploited for the purpose of prostitution and the parent has failed or been

unable to protect the child;

(h) the child is at substantial risk of being sexually exploited for the purpose of prostitution and the parent has failed or been unable to protect the child;

(I) the child has been harmed as a result of being exposed to or involved in the production of child pornography and the parent has failed or been unable to protect the child;

(j) the child is at substantial risk of being harmed as a result of being exposed to or involved in the production of child pornography and the parent has failed or been unable to protect the child;

(k) the child has suffered emotional harm inflicted by a parent, or by another person, where the parent knew or ought to have known that the other person was emotionally abusing the child and the parent failed to protect the child;

(l) the child is at substantial risk of suffering emotional harm caused by a parent, or by another person, where the parent knew or ought to have known, that the other person was emotionally abusing the child and the parent failed to protect the child;

(m) the child has suffered physical or emotional harm caused by being exposed to domestic violence by or towards a parent;

(n) the child is at substantial risk of suffering physical or emotional harm caused by being exposed to domestic violence by or towards a parent;

(o) the child requires specific medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment to cure, prevent or ameliorate the effects of a physical or emotional condition or harm suffered, and the parent does not, or refuses to, obtain treatment or is unavailable or

unable to consent to treatment;

(p) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not addressed, could seriously harm the child and the parent does not or refuses to obtain treatment or is unavailable or unable to consent to services or treatment to remedy or ameliorate the effects of the condition;

(q) the child has been abandoned, or the only parent of the child has died or is unavailable to take custody of the child, and adequate provisions have not been made for the care of the child;

(r) the child is in the custody of the Director or another person and the parent of the child refuses or is unable to resume custody of the child;

(s) the child is less than 12 years old, and the child, in the opinion of the Director,

(i) may have killed or seriously injured another person,

(ii) poses a serious danger to another person, or

(iii) may have caused significant loss or damage to property, and the parent of the child does not obtain or is unwilling to consent to treatment for the child which may be necessary to prevent a recurrence of the incident or danger; or

(t) the past parenting by the parent has put a child at significant risk of harm within the meaning of this section.

Shall it carry?

Question, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: How many cases would your department be dealing with in a year

with this section?

Wendy McCourt Director: Pardon?

Mr. M. Currie: How many cases would you be dealing with in your department under this section?

Wendy McCourt Director: This would be any family we work with have to fall within this section. Across the Island it could be 500, 600, 700 families. We have, at times, 300 children in care.

Mr. M. Currie: You have in care, at any given time, 300 children?

Wendy McCourt Director: We have had up to 300 children -

Mr. M. Currie: That are taken from parents because of abuse under this section?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: So how many cases would you file against these parents?

Wendy McCourt Director: Not every time we go into a home and we assess that a child is in need of protection does a child need to come out. We have many more cases where our workers are in, working very hard with families to deal with the issues to insure they're ameliorated in such a way that children are not continuing to be at risk.

Mr. M. Currie: Three hundred's a large number, isn't it?

Wendy McCourt Director: For PEI? Yes. Compared to other jurisdictions, it's not as great a number but it certainly, on PEI, sounds like a big number.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Question, the hon. Member from Montague-

Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Section (s), in a 12-year-old -

Chair: The child is less than 12 years old, and the child, in the opinion of the director - would you like me to finish reading it?

Mr. Bagnall: No. May have killed or severely injured people. I mean, a 12-year-old?

Some Hon. Members: It happened.

Ms. Sherry: It happened in England.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, we're not in England. We're here in Canada. Has it happened here? Is that why it's been put in? Has it happened here in PEI or has it happened -

Ms. Sherry: It's not really something that you can discuss, to talk about individual cases. It's a breach of confidentiality.

Mr. Bagnall: I'm just asking if there's been ever a case of that happening. We're not asking any information on it.

Ms. Sherry: I think that the very reason that we've include all of these clauses is to make sure that we cover every possible circumstance that could arise so that we have ultimate protection of children.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. It just seems like 12-year-old killing people. Okay.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Before I continue with (11), I'll give way to the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale for recognition.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to recognize Frances Blanchard, a

former educator and a great member of the Acadian community and a fine member of District 15. It's great to have you here today, Frances. Excuse my fumble here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: 11. (1) The heading "MANDATORY REPORTING" immediately before section 22 of the Act is deleted.

Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Why are we deleting mandatory reporting?

Wendy McCourt Director: It's not that it's being deleted. It's again about moving it, the reordering. Certainly, mandatory reporting would not be deleted out of the act. It's a very -

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: Mandatory reporting would not be deleted out of the act. It's a very significant piece in the act.

Mr. Bagnall: So how come we keep saying it's deleted and deleted? It doesn't say it's being moved from -

Ms. Sherry: If you look in the explanation of the bill at the back it clearly says -

Mr. M. Currie: Seven years, and you lost it in seven months.

Ms. Sherry: Section 11 renumbers section 22 of the Act as section 10. The heading "Mandatory Reporting" formerly found immediately before section 22 of the Act is

now placed immediately before section 10 of the Act. The provision protecting the identity of a person who has made a report is amended to remove the reference to a person who provides information respecting a child, as being protected.

Mr. Bagnall: So how is this going to be read in the next section? This mandatory reporting, how is it going to read in section 22, now, I guess?

Ms. Sherry: When we get there, if there's any change in the way it's written, we'll be able to go through those changes when we get there. What we're doing right now is just realigning, and when we come to it, where it's now falling in the act, we'll go line by line, and if there are any changes to the wording we'll deal with them one at a time, as you've requested.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Ms. Sherry: Okay.

Chair: 2. Subsection 22(3) of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words "or provided information respecting a child" and the substitution of the words "to the Director".

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Explain why you're making that change.

Wendy McCourt Director: It just makes it a little more specific as to who they're making the report. The report is made to the director, and so - not that, it's just so that we can be more specific who's being protected, as the reporter, and who they're reporting to.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. Just a - does this give

the director now, according to the changes that are being made, everything seems to be going to the director. Is this putting more power in the director's hands related to this (Indistinct) and what she can do? Or what the director can do?

Wendy McCourt Director: Okay. The director is the authority in the act. What happens is I delegate down to workers. So I don't take every single report that comes in, but my delegated workers, who I've given that authority to, they do take the reports. So that would cover. So when we speak to the director -

Mr. Bagnall: So who's the director?

Wendy McCourt Director: I'm the director, but the director also is represented by the workers who do the work in the field.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. But the act is telling us that you get the power.

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. Bagnall: Everything goes to you.

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. Bagnall: So -

Ms. Sherry: Or anybody you -

Wendy McCourt Director: And anyone - like, and that's what section - in the act what I - the powers that I delegate down would be allowing - I would delegate down to the workers in the field who have demonstrated and who have the requirements to meet delegation.

Mr. Bagnall: Do they all have the requirement and the education to do it?

Wendy McCourt Director: The education they would, because it's required by law to

have a social work degree. As far, then, from there, we do training.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: There's training -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Sherry: Having a hard time (Indistinct) because of noise.

Wendy McCourt Director: There's training that would be done once you come in and are hired as a social worker, that would be specific and ensure you understand the authority you carry with our legislation, and there's a process. There's a personal interview that I do with the workers that speaks to, there's written documentation, before they're actually delegated.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: So there would be nobody working in child protection that doesn't have a degree in social work?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Excuse me, hon. members, if we could just have a little respect here. People can't hear.

Thank you.

Wendy McCourt Director: As a child protection social worker, they must have, because that's what the law says. They must be a registered social worker. In order to be registered you have to have a social work degree.

Mr. Bagnall: You have to have the degree.

So there's nobody in that department, period, without a degree?

Wendy McCourt Director: In child protection, there may be still a few workers that may have not had a degree from years ago before that legislation came in, and they would have been grandfathered in.

Mr. Bagnall: So there are people, then, working in child protection without a degree?

Wendy McCourt Director: They would have been because they would have been prior to that legislation. Anyone now being hired must have a degree.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So you don't think it's important that they have a degree now, because for the simple reason is you're - they have to study it, they have to go through university in order to get it, but we're also allowing people without it to do the job?

Wendy McCourt Director: I guess they would have been grandfathered in and would have been hired in a system years ago before our legislation would have come in, and as a social service worker. So we wouldn't be taking them - and they still have a job. So at that point they would have received training since they came in, but anyone being hired today, since that legislation came in, has a degree in social work.

Mr. Bagnall: So what training would they have taken?

Wendy McCourt Director: They would have taken - what happens is worker readiness training, that prepares them to do the work in the field. They, again, would - often there are workshops and training that we all take. We are obligated to stay current in our practice.

Mr. Bagnall: So who supplies the training? Do they go to university to get this extra training? Or is it a university course? Or is it -

Wendy McCourt Director: The worker readiness training is provided through the director's office, and it's specific -

Mr. Bagnall: So you supply the training?

Wendy McCourt Director: The worker readiness training is provided through the office of the director that's specific to the work that you do as a child protection worker, in regards to the act, and the work that you're doing in families. We have an expectation of ongoing training, and that may be - it can be through a university, it can be a workshop. We may bring someone in because we recognize that's an area we need training, so we may bring in an expert in that area.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So you have a training program?

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct) confused (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: Do you have the training related to these individuals? Do you have a training program that's followed? I mean, that you have?

Wendy McCourt Director: The worker readiness training.

Mr. Bagnall: Is that a program you have?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes. All workers take that.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So, who does the curriculum for that?

Wendy McCourt Director: The director would see based on what is needed to carry

out the authority of the act.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So it's -

Chair: Before I go to the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I'd like to give way to the hon. Premier for recognition.

Premier Ghiz: *Merci beaucoup, Madame la présidente.*

J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à M. Blanchard qui est ici aujourd'hui. Il est vraiment un bon supporteur de la communauté acadienne et francophone ici à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Il était quelqu'un qui vivait dans mon - je ne sais pas le mot en français - backyard quand j'étais un enfant puis il était quelqu'un qui m'aidait beaucoup et puis je pense que quelques semaines passées ou quelques mois passés, j'avais une lettre de M. Blanchard avec l'histoire de l'école François-Buote puis j'aimerais dire merci pour ça.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to welcome Mr. Blanchard who is here today. He is a great supporter of the Acadian and Francophone community here on Prince Edward Island. He lived in my - I don't know the French word - backyard when I was young and he would often help me. A few weeks ago or a few months ago, I received a letter from Mr. Blanchard with regards to the history of École François-Buote and I would like to say thank you for that.

So I (Indistinct) welcome Mr. Blanchard to the Legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: If I may, the 300 hundred

children that you have in your care today, how many of them, what percentage of them would go back to those parents that abused them? Or any?

Ms. Sherry: Do you have any statistical data on that? It would be hard to measure.

Wendy McCourt Director: I don't have the stats right here (Indistinct). I don't have the stats right here to give you. Any child who comes in care, our beginning is to work with the family for the child to return home.

Mr. M. Currie: I can't hear you.

Wendy McCourt Director: Oh, sorry. When a child comes into care, we begin from working with the family for the child to return to the home. So that's what we call temporary care. There are times when families are not able to do it, and we have to make a decision that the child can't wait any longer, and that it is not a safe place for the child to go back to. That's when we would be going for permanent care.

Mr. M. Currie: It's a pretty drastic move to go in and apprehend children from a family, and especially if you have 300, and I'm sure that there's reasons for that. But I'm struggling here with trying to understand. Do 90% of those children go back to those families that you went in and took them from? Or is it 80%? Or 60%?

Ms. Sherry: The approach is always to make sure that they remain as a family whenever possible.

Wendy McCourt Director: It's very difficult for me to answer that because every child who comes in care, we always start from wanting to return that child to the family. However, there are circumstances - and that's what's hard to say, because we could have 100 children in care today, and maybe only 30 of them may return to their

family. We could have 100 children in care, and maybe 80 would.

Mr. M. Currie: But if you want to return them to the family, do you not try to rectify why you took them from them?

Wendy McCourt Director: That would be what we first do. Every day, with the families that they work with, is that they are working with that family to address the concerns so that the child can be returned safely and not continue to be harmed.

Mr. M. Currie: If you return children to a family, how many would reoccur and you would go back in and take them? What percentage is that?

Ms. Sherry: It does happen, but again that would -

Mr. M. Currie: If any?

Wendy McCourt Director: Oh, certainly we have children that we return home because parents are able to do what they need to do to lessen the risk, and then they may end up having issues again that will cause the child to come back into care.

Mr. M. Currie: Come back into your custody again?

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. M. Currie: So you do have reoccurrence?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. M. Currie: So you do the draw the line then in the sand?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes. Actually, the act, we are trying to amend that to speak to. Right now the act speaks to continuous care, we are hoping to speak to -

Ms. Sherry: When enough is enough.

Wendy McCourt Director: That's right. Cumulative care, which speaks to each time a child comes into care. Continuous care is only the time they're in that care of the director.

Mr. M. Currie: You guys have a difficult job.

Ms. Sherry: Yeah.

Mr. M. Currie: I'm sure. I'm really surprised over the number, I really am.

Wendy McCourt Director: I could assure you that we -

Mr. M. Currie: I thought it would be way less than 100.

Wendy McCourt Director: We take that very seriously any time we go in a home and we look at apprehension. That is our last resort and it's not where we want to start.

Mr. M. Currie: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: (4) The Act is amended by the addition of the heading "MANDATORY REPORTING" immediately before section 10.

Shall it carry? Carried.

12. Subsection 11(1) of the Act is amended

(a) in the words preceding clause (a), by the deletion of the words "section 22" and the substitution of the words "section 10";

(b) in clause (d), by the deletion of the word "or" after the semicolon;

(c) in clause (e) by the deletion of the period and the substitution of the words "; or"; and

(d) by the addition of the following after clause (e):

(f) the person who made the report may be advised that the information provided in respect of the report does not meet the eligibility criteria for an investigation under this Act.

Mr. Bagnall: What was there before?

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: What was there before?

Wendy McCourt Director: Actually, there wouldn't have been anything. What this will actually allow us to do - the investigation speaks to what we can do. That section speaks to our powers and authority, but what this allows is there are times when people call in and make a report about child protection -

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Wendy McCourt Director: - that they see as child protection, but that when we review the definition, it may not fit our definitions, and therefore we would not be able to go out and investigate it.

So this would allow us to let - if you called in, to possibly call you back and let you know that it doesn't fit. Because of confidentiality we can't always share around a family, and the public professionals have identified this as a concern in that they make a report and they have no idea whether or not anything happens or not. The difference may allow, if that - say it was a guidance counsellor - to be informed that we actually -

Ms. Sherry: Followed up.

Wendy McCourt Director: - it doesn't fall

within our act, and therefore we won't be investigating. They may have other options that they may then put into place and help that child.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. This allows you to get back to the person who makes the complaint.

Wendy McCourt Director: That's correct.

Mr. Bagnall: To tell them, one way or the other, whether you can do something or not.

Wendy McCourt Director: But it's very important that it's "may," because may allows us - it doesn't mean we have to do it every single time. There may be times where it's not appropriate to get back to the person. So we need to make sure that we're not tied into a shell that means we have to do it every time and it could actually put a child at more risk.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

13. Section 12 of the Act is amended by the addition of the following after subsection (3):

(3.1) Where the child who is the subject of an investigation is an aboriginal child and a registered member of a band, the Director shall notify a designated representative of the band that the Director is conducting the investigation.

Mr. Bagnall: Wait there.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I guess why I'm asking that is - you've talked about confidentiality all the way through of a person's file with the parents or - and that's where it is. But, according to this, you're taking out that confidentiality and you're allowing that

individual case to be reviewed by the chief, or a representative from that band. Does that not break your confidentiality laws? And does that not ruin the rest of your act according to your confidentiality?

Wendy McCourt Director: No. In the case of our First Nations Aboriginal community, it's very important -

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: In the case of our Aboriginal First Nations community it's very important that we work collaboratively with them to really respect their culture. Respect, at times, if they - what we have realized is at times they actually may be able to intervene on behalf of their community and their family and child, but because of the way the act right now is, we don't notify the designate until we're already in court, and that's quite a ways down the road.

This kind of will allow them to actually be more involved with their community at a much earlier stage and also ensure that we are taking care of and attending to the cultural sensitivity.

Chair: Question from the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Mr. Bagnall: I know.

Ms. Biggar: Just to clarify, you've had discussions obviously with the Aboriginal communities on this. Has there been agreement on who the designated person would be within the band or have they identified who they would be most comfortable with being the designated person?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes, and actually -

Ms. Biggar: Or maybe I missed it.

Wendy McCourt Director: It's okay, because in the definition of the act - and we didn't change that - the designated representative is defined as: a designated representative means a person designated by the band council to represent the band respecting an Aboriginal child.

Ms. Biggar: Okay. So they are going to be the ones that they're comfortable with representing. Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I'm back to that. I guess I'm trying to figure out how you can have confidentiality in for everyone in the files, and then when you get to an Aboriginal there's no confidentiality because you turned around and you discuss their file and their case with an independent person. That may be not an independent person from the family, but from the band itself. So how can you have confidentiality when you do that?

Ms. Sherry: Did you want to answer that one?

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, it's because we are - in our Aboriginal community - we are respecting their cultural differences. Their experiences may be very different. Across Canada, Aboriginal people do, in our acts, receive some different standing to attend to their cultural differences, to ensure that they are informed and are a governing body that has a responsibility to their community.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, so -

Wendy McCourt Director: It's not that we would share everything. We would just be informing the designate that we are -

Ms. Sherry: Working. Yeah.

Wendy McCourt Director: - investigating.

Mr. Bagnall: That you are what?

Wendy McCourt Director: That there will be an investigation.

Mr. Bagnall: Into a specific family or individual?

Wendy McCourt Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: So you don't disclose anything that the investigation is about or what it's about?

Wendy McCourt Director: What we need to do is inform them. They may then enter with the family, because they can engage the family in a different way than we can.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So, I guess I'm getting back to what you said there is - so you don't talk about the case, period, when you talk to them. You say: We're investigating family such and such. And that's it. You don't tell them what you're investigating them about -

Ms. Sherry: No (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: - or what the case is or -

Wendy McCourt Director: We're not reviewing all of our -

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: We would not be reviewing all of our concerns. Now, when we meet with the family, we would ask them if they would like the designate to be a part of that.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So it's still - you're still giving a third party information out.

Ms. Sherry: No. If you read that part back, it says: "a designated representative of the

band that the Director is conducting the investigation.” That there is an investigation happening. That’s all we’re doing.

Mr. Bagnall: Next question is: The representative, does the chief appoint that person - of the band - the representative?

Ms. Sherry: Appointed by band council.

Wendy McCourt Director: No, again it’s appointed by the band council.

Mr. Bagnall: The band council.

Wendy McCourt Director: Band council.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, and can that change to a different representative for every case?

Ms. Sherry: That’s a good question.

Wendy McCourt Director: I can only speak to - right now we have it in the act in the support hearings that we would notify the band representative. That person has been consistent. Now, if they go off and maybe they move from PEI or something happens, then the band council would be designating someone else. So it could change, but at this point it’s been quite consistent.

Mr. Bagnall: At this point - historically it’s been the same person all the time?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: Has it been a chief or has it been the representative?

Wendy McCourt Director: No, it’s a representative.

Chair: (3.2) Where the Director believes the child who was the subject of an investigation is an aboriginal child who is entitled to be registered as a member of a

band, the Director shall give notice that the investigation is taking place to a designated representative of the band that has been identified by

(a) the child, if the child is 12 years old; or

(b) the parent of the child, if the child is less than 12 years old.

Shall it carry? Carried.

14. The heading immediately before section 13 of the Act is amended by the deletion of the words “CHILD WELFARE” and the substitution of the words “CHILD PROTECTION”.

Shall it carry? Carried.

15. (1) Subsection 13(1) of the Act is amended by the words “child welfare” and the substitution of the words “child protection”.

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

Question, hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Subsection 13(2) of the act is repealed. What are you repealing? Or is that shifting it again?

Ms. Sherry: It’s just another move around. If I can find the section at the back here -

Chair: We’re on 15.

Mr. Bagnall: To me, it doesn’t sound like this one is shifted.

Wendy McCourt Director: This particular section speaks more to the 16 to 18-year-olds.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, but that wasn’t in the

act before. Was it?

Wendy McCourt Director: Yeah, actually it was in the act, which is going to be a little confusing for you because it was in section 14 which is now coming out because section 13 will address it.

Mr. Bagnall: No, I thought you told me earlier that we didn't have anything in the act from 16 to 18 and now you're going to put that in. So what are we repealing in that?

Wendy McCourt Director: No, I'm sorry if I misled you. The 16 to 18 has been a more confusing area, both for the public and for workers, as to whether or not they fit that particular piece of the definition that addresses capacity. We've taken that out.

Mr. Bagnall: And you're putting in this new?

Wendy McCourt Director: Section 14 in the act as present speaks to youth services. A youth service - we can enter into an agreement with youth over 16 that doesn't mean the child is in care and may only provide some services if the youth agrees to it. So what we are trying to do is take section 14 and now kind of add it into and make section 13 address this.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay.

Chair: (2) The Director may, following an investigation, enter into an agreement with a child for the provision of child protection services in respect of the child, independent of the parent of the child, where

(a) the child is at least 16 years old and is apparently capable of understanding the agreement; and

(b) either

(i) the parent of the child is unavailable to

consent, despite reasonable efforts by the Director to make contact with the parent,

(ii) consultation with the child and parent indicates that serious difficulties exist between them, making it impractical to make an agreement with the parent for the benefit of the child,

(iii) the child no longer lives with the parent, or

(iv) the Director determines that the involvement of the parent would likely be harmful to the best interests of the child.

Question, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Like, you say reasonable effort. What do you mean by reasonable effort? Because anything could be reasonable effort in someone's mind. I mean, you make a phone call and you don't get an answer, it could be a reasonable effort. What do you class a reasonable effort when you're talking about child protection?

Wendy McCourt Director: A reasonable effort would be at least attempting to meet with the parent to determine whether or not they're even going to be in agreement with this area.

Mr. Bagnall: So reasonable effort would always mean that you would meet with the parents?

Wendy McCourt Director: No, because maybe the parent - like, for example, a reasonable effort could be attempting to meet with the youth who's refusing to meet with you. They may not have a way but we have to demonstrate that we have attempted it and made an effort to do that. It may be more than one attempt and we may continue to try to engage both the family and the youth.

Mr. Bagnall: It just seems like reasonable effort leaves the door wide open to your department, and to what extent? I'm not saying that's wrong. I'm just saying, it just seems like it's very vague. A reasonable effort could mean that you made four phone calls and didn't get an answer so you went ahead and did something. It seems to me that there should be always a personal contact made, at least with the parents or the child in a reasonable effort. There should be contact made, not just attempt.

Wendy McCourt Director: I'm not sure any worker would see that a phone call would be enough. Certainly, we would be pushing to do everything that is possible to engage a family, to meet with a family. I think that's probably a little bit wide and gives us a bit of discretion because it can't tie our hands into saying we have to attempt to meet with the family five times. That may not be appropriate. So it allows that discretion, but certainly one or two phone calls would not be adequate. As a director I would not see that adequate.

Mr. Bagnall: Yeah. It just seems like everything is in point (a), point (b), you have to do it or else. Yet when it comes to your department checking into it, it's with reasonable effort so it seems to me that - it just seems to me like it's very vague and it should have been more pointed on the question.

Ms. Sherry: I think that when you're dealing with children -

Mr. Bagnall: I understand.

Ms. Sherry: But you're kind of leaving the impression that it's wide open or that perhaps not enough attempts are made in these circumstances.

Mr. Bagnall: But this allows for that. That's why, with the loose wording, I'm saying it

could allow for that to happen.

Ms. Sherry: But the rigidity sometimes created more of an inability to make several attempts and I think that's what - they're trying to make it more flexible so that they can be more creative when they're trying to engage these children. Because you have to realize they can make up their own mind at 16 and 17. If a 16-year-old is floating in a community somewhere, not attached to anyone, and we have a great social worker who's determined to try to help this child, a little bit more flexibility may save that child. So I think that the workers in child welfare do an extraordinary amount of work and go well beyond their limits sometimes in order to save children in our communities.

Chair: Question, the hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Ms. Biggar: Just expanding a little bit on that scenario. There are times, we know, where a child is, for whatever reason, if there was conflict and either the parent has asked them to leave for whatever reason or perhaps the parents may themselves leave the province and leave that child with a neighbour or wherever. So the effort is, you know, to what extent do you make? Do you follow that parent all over Canada if they've left the province? You have to ultimately put that child's care and safety first.

I know with the workers that they do make every effort, but I think you have to look and not assume that the child is always in the home with that parent or that the parents may always be available, because I know that's not always the case. I think we have to have some flexibility there to also allow that to happen. It's not so much a question but, I guess, just expanding on it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Like, we're dealing with 16- to 18-year-olds, I realize, when we're talking about this section. So if a child's no longer living at home how are you going to make the connection and how are you going to deal that the child needs protection or the person needs protection?

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, we would receive a report.

Mr. Bagnall: From who?

Wendy McCourt Director: Could be maybe the person that the 16-year-old's living with. It could be a parent. It could be the 16-year-old who's calling and asking for help. It can come from the public. It can come from - we then have to assess whether or not it even falls within the definitions of a child in need of protection. So, I guess, it could be a 16-year-old who makes a decision that they're not going to live at home and is not in need of protection.

Mr. Bagnall: So, for instance, if I was a parent and my 16-year-old child went out on their own. So I make the complaint to you that I can't get my child back in the home, that he's out living in a house where it's not good for his benefit or anybody else's benefit. Then you follow up on that.

Wendy McCourt Director: We would need to assess whether or not that child is in need of protection. A child is in need of protection, harmed by the parent or substantial risk of harm -

Mr. Bagnall: So -

Wendy McCourt Director: - by the parent.

Mr. Bagnall: So the parents' view, then, saying that my child needs support, my child needs help, means nothing to you.

Wendy McCourt Director: We may not be

- child protection may not be the right service. That doesn't mean there isn't something that may be more appropriate out there in the community.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, like what? I mean, if my child leaves my home and is moved in to a house where I think maybe there are drugs or whatever going on -

Ms. Sherry: Call the police.

Mr. Bagnall: That's not, then - as a parent, I can't ask child services to help me, because it may not be appropriate.

Ms. Sherry: That's right.

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, we would have to assess whether the child is in need of protection. We don't have the authority to go into every home for every child on PEI. They must be in need of protection in order for us to be involved.

Mr. Bagnall: So my telling you that he's in - or she or whatever - is in a drug infested home. There's whatever is going on there - it's not good enough for the department to do an investigation?

Ms. Sherry: That's enough.

Wendy McCourt Director: No, that's not what - I'm just saying we would need to assess whether that is a youth who is in need of protection.

Ms. Sherry: He may be in need of services, but it may not be child protection services that he is requiring.

Mr. Bagnall: What would you consider that?

Ms. Sherry: It could be addiction issues -

Mr. Bagnall: Would you not consider that a

child protection?

Ms. Sherry: It could be -

Wendy McCourt Director: Legal.

Ms. Sherry: - legal issues. It could be criminal issues. But our department, we're talking about child protection. The director of child welfare would assess that child to see whether - if that child was at risk for harm. If the child wasn't at risk for harm, then it would not be a case that would stay in our jurisdiction. It could be mental health issues.

Wendy McCourt Director: Addictions.

Ms. Sherry: Addiction, yeah.

Wendy McCourt Director: Justice.

Mr. Bagnall: So that's just - it seems to me that's pushing it off to another area, then -

Ms. Sherry: No, it's not.

Mr. Bagnall: - if you don't want to deal with it. Instead of taking - because child protection is really the strongest act or strongest regulation that we have in government, as far as I'm concerned, and yet, when you have a chance to do something, you're going to say you're going to turn it over to addictions?

Ms. Sherry: But you're getting it confused.

Mr. Bagnall: No, I'm not getting it confused.

Ms. Sherry: You're getting confused with what the *Child Protection Act* serves in the province, and other issues such as criminal issues, addiction issues, mental health issues. There are many different areas that can impact children's living. It doesn't necessarily have to be a circumstance that

warrants them in need of protection by the province.

Mr. Bagnall: But it just seems to me, like, if you're 16 to 18, and the parent makes a complaint here, that you're more interested in pushing it off to addictions or something else rather than child protection stepping in here where maybe they should.

Wendy McCourt Director: Again, the legislation's very clear. It's about harm by the parent. A parent calling up and saying that their child is living down the street in a home where they may be using drugs does not necessarily mean it is child protection. That parent may not be doing anything that would place that child in harm's way.

Now, their behaviour may not be appropriate - the child - that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to come under child protection.

Mr. Bagnall: So child protection is only dealing with parents.

Wendy McCourt Director: It's harm by parent.

Ms. Sherry: Harm by parent.

Mr. Bagnall: Nothing else.

Wendy McCourt Director: That's clearly what the child protection -if you look - section 3, which is our definition, is quite clear: a child is in need of protection where the child has suffered physical harm inflicted by a parent. It's all about harm that a parent may be doing, or substantial risk of harm to a child.

Mr. Bagnall: So any other harm -

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

Mr. Bagnall: - for a child is permitted by your department, then.

Chair: Question or comment by the hon. Minister of Environment, Energy and Forestry.

Mr. Brown: When I was in opposition I promoted a bill that - a lot of provinces were promoting the bill - I just want to make sure - I agree with the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

There are provinces that have legislation in now -, and I want to make sure that we have legislation and protection, especially if a child is 16 to 18, or 13, 14, that is in a drug-infested house, or in an environment that, number one, that parents can force that child into treatment. Is that anywhere here?

I have a child - I don't, but I mean, if I did - that's in a situation that he's caught up or she's caught up in an environment that is - you know, the drugs and the scene and it's an easy way of living at that point in time. The parent says: Look, I want to have my child into drug treatment. Is the protection or is the support there for that to happen?

Other provinces have done it. I know I tried to get it through when I was in opposition. I was just wondering: Do we have that in this? Like, I've got to agree with the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir. Sixteen to 17, even 14, 15 - the child may be in harm from its parents, but it also may be in harm from itself, or him or herself. If I'm harming myself, as a child -

Ms. Sherry: That would be the *Mental Health Act*. *Mental Health Act*, I think, is what you're speaking of.

Mr. Brown: *Mental Health Act* is a drug act?

Ms. Sherry: *Mental Health Act*. That would

be covered under the *Mental Health Act*.

Mr. Brown: I'm just thinking there's a big need out there. I know when I was in opposition there was a big need of a lot of parents seeing their children going down the tubes.

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct) child protection.

Mr. Brown: At that point people were saying: The Charter of Rights. Well, sometimes the Charter of Rights - the protection of the child has to be overridden here. You know, I'm not - it's pretty hard for a parent to see their child go down the tubes and try to ask for help from government and none of it's available. That's - you know.

Ms. Sherry: Those questions that you're mentioning, those scenarios, they would not fall under the *Child Protection Act* per se..

Mr. Brown: I guess I have to agree with the Member from Montague-Kilmuir that a child is a child is a child. It may be harmed by their parents. If there's another person harming that child, that's harm too. Is there any law that says if I see a child being harmed - is that in here? - the person that sees the neighbour -

Ms. Sherry: To report?

Mr. Brown: - abusing the child and doesn't report it, what kind of penalty is there for that type of person?

Wendy McCourt Director: That would be under mandatory reporting.

Mr. Brown: Okay. Are there penalties in that?

Wendy McCourt Director: There are.

Mr. Brown: Good.

Wendy McCourt Director: I think it's -

Mr. Brown: No, no, I'll wait.

Wendy McCourt Director: There is actually a piece of the legislation in here that would cover not reporting.

Mr. Brown: So the message is going out there: If you see child abuse and don't report it, expect to be charged just as well.

Wendy McCourt Director: I'm not sure that we - but certainly we promote reporting it, and would follow up if we were aware that you weren't reporting.

Mr. Brown: Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

Ms. Biggar: I guess I just want to put this scenario out there, where a child between 16 and 18 may leave the home and move in with someone in a relationship that's over 18, but it's at their own - you know, they've decided it, they weren't forced to do that. I know a situation where there was no recourse even though the family didn't agree with it. So this doesn't cover anything like that.

Wendy McCourt Director: No.

Ms. Biggar: It has to be - if they decided that on their own then this does not cover that scenario. Yeah, okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: I'm back to this same thing on 16 to 18 years of age. I, as a parent - my child, let's say, got addicted to drugs, and he moves into a crack house and he's in there. I've called you, or your department -

Ms. Sherry: You're calling the wrong department.

Mr. Bagnall: - called child protection and say that my child is in harm there and your department doesn't do anything because you say: Maybe it's addictions or something else. If that child has an overdose and dies, who will child protection come back after? Will they come back after parents or will they come back at whom on that type of issue? Who is going to be liable and who is the department or child protection going to come back after?

Wendy McCourt Director: I'm not sure that child protection may even have a role there.

Mr. Bagnall: Why not?

Ms. Sherry: No.

Wendy McCourt Director: Because if the child is not in need of protection, based on our definitions -

Mr. Bagnall: Obviously he was in need of it, he was a drug overdose -

Wendy McCourt Director: Okay, who -

Mr. Bagnall: - he dies, I mean somebody was in need.

Ms. Sherry: Happens every day in PEI. That happens every day. Car accidents, young people driving in a car and get in a car accident.

Mr. Bagnall: No, this is a complaint made before an incident happens to have child protection to go and support or to help a child. All of a sudden nobody responds. All of a sudden this child dies of an overdose. Who is responsible? Are you going to come back to the parents and say that you should have been protecting your child? The parent

has gone to you. Who is going to be liable? Are you going to be liable because you wouldn't follow up on it?

Wendy McCourt Director: No. I wouldn't see we would have the liability because we did our assessment and the child is not in need of protection. The parent is not harming the child.

Ms. Sherry: The child is harming themselves.

Mr. Bagnall: So the child wouldn't be -

Wendy McCourt Director: The child is harming themselves.

Mr. Bagnall: I would think that that would be one of the most important times for your department to step in, not to step away.

Mr. Greenan: Not under this act.

Ms. Sherry: Not under this act.

Wendy McCourt Director: Not under this act.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, it seems like -

Ms. Sherry: Maybe under the *Mental Health Act* -

Mr. Greenan: It might be under -

Ms. Sherry: - but not under child protection. We are dealing with children who are in need of protection from harm of their -

Wendy McCourt Director: From their parents.

Ms. Sherry: - parents or their caregiver.

Mr. Bagnall: Well -

Ms. Sherry: Outside of that -

Mr. Bagnall: - if they're -

Ms. Sherry: - it's another act.

Mr. Bagnall: - living in a house, who's the caregiver? If they've moved into a house, who's the caregiver? The person that owns that house?

Ms. Sherry: Not necessarily.

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Ms. Sherry: Not necessarily.

Mr. Bagnall: Then who is?

Ms. Sherry: I have no idea.

Mr. Bagnall: They're not an adult, they've moved into a home, somebody has to be the caregiver. If it's not the parents because they're not living in their home, then is the person that they moved into their home, are they the one that is responsible?

Wendy McCourt Director: That could be two youth.

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Wendy McCourt Director: That could be a couple of youth living together. If we assess that it's not child protection because the parent is not harming that child, yes, certainly the behaviour that the child may be engaging in is harmful behaviour. But it may not fall within this act. This act is not there to cover every single kind of situation that is out in the community.

Mr. Bagnall: So what you would say -

Mr. Brown: If the parent's not getting the child out of the situation that they're in, then the parent is neglecting the child. My kid is in a crack house or a drug house. I should be in there getting him out of there, and if I'm

not in there getting him out of there, then therefore I fall under the definition of not protecting my child.

Wendy McCourt Director: I guess maybe it's very difficult because you're talking about an age group that has begun to make decisions for themselves, even if they're not good decisions. At this point there's nothing in our act that would give us any authority to go in there and remove that child, that youth, and where would we put them?

Mr. Brown: Youth centre.

Wendy McCourt Director: We don't have that authority. That would be through justice.

Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Brown: Good discussion anyway, you're pretty smart.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gallant: I guess just in light of these comments, would it not be possible to entertain maybe changing some of these things over to your jurisdiction? If this falls under the *Mental Health Act*, maybe some of these things should be moved over to the *Child Protection Act*. What would be involved for that to happen?

Mr. Brown: Now we're going to test you.

Wendy McCourt Director: It would begin right from we would have to change the definition of a child in need of protection.

I'm not sure that child protection should be responding to every single situation. Child protection is one of the most intrusive forms of legislation in families lives. So I think it's very important that it stays specific and clear and that we don't broaden it to where we are actually being intrusive in families where

we shouldn't be.

Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Brown: (Indistinct) I think you have the toughest job in PEI myself.

An Hon. Member: No question.

Mr. Brown: No question about it.

Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Ms. Sherry: But I think some of the scenarios that are being spoken of may fall under the *Mental Health Act*. So we're not saying that there isn't already legislation in place under other acts in the province. What we're saying is those scenarios that you're bringing forward to the director of child welfare do not pertain to the *Child Protection Act* per se. It's about children at harm.

A person can explore the *Mental Health Act* and various other acts in the province to see if some of these situations are covered there, but they do not fall under the director of child welfare or the *Child Protection Act* as it's written and its purpose.

Mr. Gallant: I appreciate your comments, Madam Minister.

I thank you very much, director Wendy. I guess the concern I have from speaking to some parents is there's a void. So these children don't fall under the *Child Protection Act*. The *Mental Health Act* can't help them either, correct? The parents feel they can't do anything either. The child is out of control. Like, a 15-year-old is in this crack house and nobody can do anything because they made that choice. I guess that's why I said - and I hope you didn't take it as a sarcasm - that's why I said maybe we should be bringing it into this act.

Ms. Sherry: I can appreciate your point of view, Government House Leader.

Again, I'm going to emphasize that right now we're looking at the *Child Protection Act*. Certainly they're all very valid scenarios, and as parents we see it happening in our communities. But again, that's for discussion for another day. We're talking about child protection as it pertains to our department's act.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: (Indistinct) the same thing again here.

Parents responsible to the child until 18. If they leave the child and they move into another home - but you know, Madam Chair, or Madam Speaker, or whatever.

Chair: Chair will do.

Mr. Bagnall: My concern is that not all 16-year-olds have the mental stability of a 16-year-old. Some of the 16-year-olds are maybe operating at a mental capacity of 12 or 14 or 13 years of age. They're not to that level as far. Who's responsible for them then?

Ms. Sherry: Again, I'm going to stress that today this particular act talks about child protection.

Mr. Bagnall: I know what this is, but we're talking about between 16 and 18 years here in child protection.

Ms. Sherry: Yes.

Mr. Bagnall: I'm talking about child protection when I'm dealing with this. To me, I just can't believe that we're prepared to say: That's somebody else's responsibility, it's not mine. The person

could overdose and now we don't even know what act it would fall under. We're thinking it might be under mental health, it might be under something else, or it might be under - but we don't know. I guess -

Ms. Sherry: To the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, with all due respect, I think that the department had offered you a briefing on this particular act. Perhaps if you had have reviewed the act those questions may have come up in your study of it, and you might have been able to reference the *Mental Health Act* and other acts and seeing what the loop holes may have been.

Mr. Bagnall: What are you saying? You want to push this through without getting any debate on the floor, Madam Minister?

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely not.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, so why are you bringing that up?

Ms. Sherry: We're talking about the *Child Protection Act* and I think we need to stay there.

Mr. Bagnall: So if you want to get in to that type of - we can get into that, too. The problem I'm concerned about is the child, and I think that we're missing that because we are saying: once the child moves out of the home of the parent that you don't have any responsibility for them. I think that's terrible.

Ms. Sherry: And there would probably be a lot of people who would agree.

Mr. Bagnall: I think that that's a big void in your act here, and it should be there. If you plan on making changes to deal with 16 to 18 in your act, then you should be making the changes to deal with it.

Ms. Sherry: Need of protection.

Wendy McCourt Director: That are in -

Ms. Sherry: Need of protection.

Wendy McCourt Director: That are in need of protection.

Ms. Sherry: That's the piece you're missing.

Mr. Bagnall: You don't think somebody that's moved into a crack house and is a minor as far as voting age and everything is concerned is not in need of protection? Because they're in a crack house they're not in need of protection?

Ms. Sherry: To the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, the *Child Protection Act* is an act to protect children from harm in their home from their parents or caregiver. That is what the *Child Protection Act* is talking about.

You are referring to a situation where you have a child who decides to go and stay at a friend's house and perhaps get involved with street drugs or whatever it is. That is a choice, it's not necessarily a good choice. I'm not disagreeing with you.

Mr. Bagnall: It's a choice of who?

Ms. Sherry: What I'm saying is that the *Child Protection Act* -

Mr. Bagnall: It's a choice of a minor.

Ms. Sherry: - is specific to the child being in the care of somebody who may harm them.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, minister, the problem I have is you wanted to make the changes from the people from 16 years to 18 years. But when you get into the situations where it has to deal with people in that age you're going to pass it off to somebody else. I think

that's a very hollow spot in your bill here.

Ms. Sherry: So why didn't you change it?

Mr. Bagnall: I didn't bring it to the floor, you brought to the floor, minister.

Ms. Sherry: I realize that. But the bill is up for review every three years and the last time this bill was reviewed was in 2002.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, that's fine.

Ms. Sherry: So why wasn't it amended then?

Mr. Bagnall: They didn't bring in the 18 then, you did. All I can say is that, Madam Minister, it's very shallow in the way you're dealing with that section and that age group of people. I think it's terrible -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) call the hour?

Mr. Bagnall: - that you would allow a bill to come through without any protection for them.

Ms. Sherry: I don't think anybody would disagree with what you're saying in regards to 16- to 18-year-old children that are having difficulties in drugs and moving out of home. I would never dispute what you're saying.

What we're just trying to do is stay focused on the fact that we are dealing with the *Child Protection Act* and how it pertains to children that may be harmed in their home by a parent or a caregiver. It's a very specific act. That discussion is valid.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, one question for you. If I move into a home and there are adults in

the home and there are minors in the home and there are drugs going on there and I'm not the parent, who is the caregiver?

Mr. Campbell: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Ms. Sherry: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Child Protection Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

This House is in recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Good evening, everyone.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: Good evening, Madam Speaker.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Opposition calls Motion No. 47.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 47.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, the following motion:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Members of this Legislative Assembly encourage the Government of Prince Edward Island to immediately provide leadership to address the crisis in early childhood education and childcare to ensure both short- and long-term sustainability of the sector, while also ensuring quality accessible, affordable care for young children across the province.

Speaker: We'll now give the floor to the hon. Leader of the Opposition to open discussion on the motion.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

First, we would like to recognize in opposition that we recognize that Prince Edward Island really needs a comprehensive, broad, early year learning strategy to address the total needs of all the children across the province. We also want to recognize the great work that a number of community facilities across PEI provide to parents and children, especially Kids West, C.H.A.N.C.E.S., etc.

But tonight our focus is really on the crisis that's actually in the early childhood education sector, the child care facilities in the province. Back in 2008 government made a decision to move kindergarten into the school system, which many people acknowledge is a positive thing. However, up until that point, kindergarten was delivered through many of the community-based early childhood development centres across the province. Part of the dollars that came into the facilities, although it was there

for kindergarten, also went to cover materials and supplies, and a wage subsidy towards the early childhood educator.

Over the years many centres have worked hard to integrate the kindergarten program into their programming and operational structures. The decision to move the provincial kindergarten program into the school system had significant and will have significant impacts on many of the early childhood development centres.

According to the Early Childhood Development Association of Prince Edward Island, some of the potential impacts of this decision on early childhood development centres will include: a reduced opportunity for growth, reduced enrollment numbers because of sustainability issues, and decreased value and vibrancy of the early childhood education profession.

In order to effectively address these serious issues, government must work in collaboration with all stakeholders to implement a comprehensive, universal early childhood education system for the province. The provincial government had announced in their Speech from the Throne last fall that they would initiate a wider process to establish a vision, and a long-term strategy for the early childhood sector.

Last, I guess it was the 19th of November, a number of us in the House, including the then-minister of education, as well as a number of our MLAs, received a letter from Jane Boyd. Jane works a lot in this area. She also copied this in in this particular letter, and what it said at the time:

Dear Minister Greenan. On November 12th, 2009 the following was in the PEI Speech from the Throne:

“My Government is mindful that the magnitude of this change will have an

impact on the early childhood sector. My Government recognizes that early childhood education and care holds lifelong benefits for children - and provides vital support to Island families. My Government is working with the early childhood sector to define the financial and human resource impacts and to identify potential transition measures to help the sector move toward sustainability. In the coming year, my Government will build on this work through a comprehensive review to establish a vision and long-term strategy for the healthy development and well-being of Island children and their families.”

Then Jane, who is an Islander who happens to be living in Vancouver but does a lot of work here, in the press release from the department also stated:

The provincial government announced in the Speech from the Throne that it will soon initiate a wider process to establish a vision and long-term strategy for the early childhood sector. This will bring parents, early childhood educators and partners together to identify what we want for our children. And now we can work together towards a vibrant, sustainable early childhood sector in Prince Edward Island.

In the letter that she copied to us all, she asked the question: So which is it? Are we developing a vision and long-term strategy for the healthy development and well-being of Island children and their families? Or are we developing a vision and a long-term strategy for the early childhood sector? While there are direct connections between the two, the reality is vastly different.

Anyway, you can see that there's a number of people that are quite interested in the area, and quite concerned in terms of the attention that needs to be placed here, because after all, our children are our valuable asset in the province. Early last winter many Islanders were frustrated when

government hastily scrambled to develop the strategy which included a brief questionnaire for parents that lasted a mere week on the provincial website. Now, I know we had calls. A number of people identified that they thought this process was rushed, they thought there was no total, open public consultation, and in regards to the online survey, again, we had questions as to why the really tight deadline for that survey, and why would that not have been done a year ago, or even two years ago when the Premier made the decision to change the school entry and kindergarten entry age.

The issues surrounding early childhood education and child care are complex. Many questions remain. What about the current child care subsidies? Will there be a significant overall (Indistinct)? Will there be a focus on universal access as opposed to a targeted access? Will there be a freeze or a cap on new child care licenses? Will there be meaningful wage enhancements? What might they look like? Will they account for the current fragmentation and differences in pay across the province? Will they account for training and development and where's the balancing point?

We recognize that the budget is indeed coming out on Friday. However, for the last several months there's a lot of parents wondering whether or not they're going to actually have to move out of communities, whether or not they're going to have to put their name on an already long wait list in the Charlottetown area for child care spaces, or what they're actually going to do. The majority of kindergarten classes hold a majority of certified early childhood educators. Will there be measures to ensure consistent training? Are qualifications of early childhood educators, for example, eventually requiring a diploma at a minimum?

Prince Edward Island has historically had

the distinction of being a leader in the early child care legislation as we were among the first provinces to bring it forward. It's our understanding that the province's *Child Care Facilities Act* was up for review two years ago. Where again - like, parents wondering if it has been completed. What was the status of the review? If it hasn't been done, why not? The fisheries, aquaculture and rural development minister spent over two years coming up with a strategy for rural PEI, yet he neglected to include and integrate with other major policies such as early childhood education and child care. In that entire document there's two paragraphs that actually refer to the early childhood sector.

Whether someone's working in the fish industry, whether somebody's working in bioscience, whether someone's working in aerospace or in health, people really have to have affordable, quality and accessible child care. I cannot emphasize this enough. If there's no affordable access to early childhood education and child care, parents can't go to work. It's an issue that directly affects the future of our province.

Our population is vulnerable because of the exodus of workers seeking employment opportunities elsewhere. If we can't assure Island parents and newcomers of access to quality early childhood education and child care, then it will be to the detriment of Prince Edward Island.

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning has a whole section of the Population Secretariat, and although often we're talking about settlement strategies for our new visitors, or newcomers to PEI, many people are also wondering: What is the department doing in the area of retention, or in the area of population strategy, in order to help our numbers grow? What are the areas in his department that he has directly invested in

order to help the child care sector out?

On yet another issue, let's consider the ongoing operational costs facing the child care facilities. We are not looking just at the staffing costs, but the electricity and heating bills, insurance, paper towels, diapers, nutritional foods for meals, snacks, paper and paint, educational books and toys, and the list goes on and on. There is simply not enough income generated for the sustainability of these facilities.

I ask: Will government finally commit to invest in the youngest citizens of the province, the children zero to four years of age? We need affordable, accessible and quality child care. It's rather disheartening that the government has not demonstrated leadership here to help Islanders through this crisis other than giving sporadic reactions here and there.

Once again, the government continues to act reactively as opposed to proactively. Islanders need leadership, and they need someone in this government administration to take their concerns seriously. Not only are parents worried that there will no longer be a child care centre in their community, but they're also concerned with the cost increases. Many people are worried about other activities that are in the communities if we do not have children from our soccer fields, our baseball fields, recreation facilities. If child care facilities are not available in a community, it just offers another reason to leave.

Currently, the child care rates in the province are among the highest in Atlantic Canada. Does the government even understand that parents' choices are driven by the cost of the child care? Sometimes it comes down to a decision of leaving one's career altogether, taking a leave of absence, or continuing to work with little pay left after child care expenses are deducted. In

other cases it may mean quashing the dreams of a parent to have a bigger family.

With the lack of attention on this sector, many centres are also referring back to when government decided, with no consultation, to change the early age for children going to kindergarten and to school. That had a direct impact on child care centres. I refer to the child care in Tignish - 23 children moved out of the facility after those changes in age.

On one hand, it's nice that these children have the opportunity to go to kindergarten earlier. However, if the centre closes, what are parents going to do in Tignish? When a child's in the school system, often the schools open the door at 8:30. Who's going to be there to provide for the child before that? Many parents have to be at work at 8:00, or in transit, and have to be at work by 9:00. It also raises the issue: Who's going to be there to provide child care services when the school day is over at 3:00 or 3:15? Sometimes it's just another reason for parents to move closer to another area and leave the community. Another example of how the government doesn't understand, and often doesn't do all the work involved.

Many times this government's very short on details. Few people will argue the province needs a comprehensive strategy to ensure quality care for children, but what about our autistic children, or other special needs children? It's been well over a year since the Premier promised an autism strategy. Where is it? When is that going to be implemented, or shared with all the public?

Government's decided it was going to put kindergarten into the schools, but it forgot to consider the impact on the early childhood development centres that depend on kindergarten subsidies for much of their financing. Government has rushed through things without due diligence and careful consideration. Our early childhood

development centres need help and they needed help yesterday. They can't wait another two or three years while government puts together another glossy document. Island parents need a place for pre-kindergarteners, our youngest children, to receive quality care.

With an aging population, a declining workforce, a new early childhood education system is needed more than ever. We need an incentive for young families to return to Prince Edward Island as well as an incentive for young families to stay in Prince Edward Island, as well as an incentive for new families to actually settle here. The healthy development of every single child born in the province is critical in terms of the future health of our families, our communities and our provincial economy.

Here are just a few statistics. Prince Edward Island has the highest percentage of women with young children who are in the workforce in all the provinces and territories in Canada: 80.6% of women with children younger than three years old are in the workforce, and 84% of women with the youngest child between the ages of three and five years of age are in the workforce. There are approximately 7,800 children age zero to five on Prince Edward Island, and that was based on the 2008 population estimates.

The province's contribution to support regulated early childhood spaces is the lowest in Atlantic Canada, and the second lowest in Canada. While the average provincial-territorial investment for early childhood space is around \$3,259, Prince Edward Island invests only 1,166 per regulated space. In an average month 38% of the spaces are supported by the Child Care Subsidy Program. According to the 2008 figures, daily rates paid for child care subsidy are \$30 for infants, \$23 for two-year-olds, \$22 for three- to five-year-olds. There are 209 infant spaces in licensed

daycare centres on PEI. Charlottetown has 90 spaces and Summerside has approximately 42.

There are 219 children with special needs attending 64 licensed child care centres who receive special needs funding to increase the child to staff ratio, enhance their inclusive support. In 2007, 235 children with special needs participated in regulated programs here on PEI. In 2007, 1,547 children were subsidized in order to assist their parents with the cost of participating in regulated programs. Government must give this issue, and the children of Prince Edward Island, the province, priority attention. They must take immediate action to address the growing list of urgent concerns surrounding the future of child care in the province. I'm not referring to a piecemeal, fragmented approach here, but rather a comprehensive, universal approach.

Working parents with young children are afraid the cost of child care will skyrocket as child care facilities try to cope with the loss of the provincial government subsidies when kindergarten is integrated into the school system this fall. It is no wonder, while child care centres are fearful, worried they'll not be able to retain their financial stability when the new kindergarten program is launched.

In turn, this creates fear among parents that they may not have a place to take their children for quality care. Government needs to offer assurances to the early childhood development centres that funding is currently allocated for kindergarten in the province, that it will remain also in the early childhood development programs. Islanders need assurances that the province will not be taking funds previously earmarked for child care to cover the cost for the implementation of the school-based kindergarten program.

Staffing for the early childhood centres

remains another major issue. Currently, most child care workers earn about \$9 per hour. Employees at major retailers, even some people that are working in the agriculture fields as general labourers, earn more than this. At lower wages it's harder to attract and retain staff. To add to this complication, at least 110 staff from existing child care facilities are expected to be absorbed into the higher paying school-based kindergarten program.

Islanders need assurances that government will continue to provide a wage subsidy for certified instructors for the early childhood development facilities. Child care subsidies in the province have not increased since 2006. Some parents are being required to pay a substantial amount of money over and above the subsidy to help the centres pay for their rising costs for food, supplies, heat and electricity. Operators do not want to raise their rates for parents to cover the costs, yet they're unsure of how they'll be able to sustain themselves into the future.

There are indications of potential cost increases to parents of at least 30%. Currently, child care fees average \$140 per week per child, and \$250 for infants, therefore raising the cost to parents could be prohibitive. What is government prepared to do to ensure that Island parents can afford to pay for child care in the face of rising costs and economic uncertainty? What kind of transition funding is the Premier talking about when he says there will be funding available to assist these centres? Government has a duty to act now on these immediate concerns.

It is unacceptable for the families of the province to face a future where more than half of Island children do not have access to licensed early childhood education program to support their early learning needs.

There are hundreds of Islanders who have

been plunged into uncertainty regarding their jobs, their child care services, their businesses as a result of the decision to introduce kindergarten into the school system without doing the background work on the early childhood sector. These families, these early childhood centre operators and staff, deserve to have their concerns addressed and their question answered now.

A comprehensive review of early learning programs is necessary for the provision of quality, accessible and affordable child care programs in the province. The clock is ticking and the time for action has long passed.

If early childhood education is to survive and further develop on Prince Edward Island, a system has to be put in place that will transform and strengthen the existing network of early childhood development centres across the province. It must be implemented immediately. Government must commit to working in partnership with all the early childhood education stakeholders and advocates.

Last November the government issued a press release again boasting of the steps they were taking to support the early childhood sector as the kindergarten program transitions into the public school system. I quote: Whatever action has been taken, though, whatever communication efforts have been made or not made, the results have been inadequate.

This is an issue that affects thousands of Islanders - young children, their working parents, extended family, the child care workers, the facility operators and many others. Not to mention, in some instances, the entire future of a rural community. It's an issue that's in every community across the province and it's not going to go away overnight. Turmoil abounds. Many Islanders

deserve answers and need to have answers. Government must address the child care crisis as a priority.

MRSB did a financial impact study and analysis on the sector. Hopefully it's going to identify the supports and address specific needs that families and centres. It's our understanding that the study was completed and handed back to government in January. While government promised to release the study last fall, we're still hoping and waiting for the study to be released, hopefully this session of the Legislature.

Meanwhile, as Islanders wait for studies to be released, they have immediate concerns that need to be addressed. I know in our own communities of Morell, Mount Stewart and St. Peters, the Morell children are moving into the Morell consolidated, Mount Stewart have been travelling up to St. Peter's Bay for services, and now St. Peter's Bay, without a commitment, may be closing. So it creates an awful lot of pressure.

Many of the families are from registered nurses to people that work in the fishing businesses to small business operators themselves. Again, it's a priority, no matter what community, also including some of the child care facilities in Summerside and also in the Charlottetown areas.

Concerns such as the immediate impact on early childhood centres and the concerns as to whether families will have good future access to high quality early learning and child care.

With the accelerated training program for staff of early childhood centres, hopefully this is going to bring some relief, providing employees with full tuition and the opportunity to receive a diploma in early childhood care and education in one year rather than two. Access to more certified staff will hopefully provide some relief to

the owners and operators of a child care centre.

This government has stressed the importance of the early years for the proper development of children yet there's been little to no investment in the programs other than through the daycare itself.

The Canadian council on early childhood development has stated that one in five children entering kindergarten on Prince Edward Island is not ready for school yet and that 20% of Island children are unprepared for the classroom. It's just way too high.

It's my understanding that the president of the council had actually met with the Premier to ask for a significant increase in the early childhood development and to make recommendations for improving early childhood development here in the province.

According to the council, with more investment from government the children on Prince Edward Island would have fewer challenges in school and would graduate better prepared to enter the workforce.

In closing, I urge government to demonstrate leadership here, to work collaboratively with parents, early childhood centre operators, staff and other stakeholders to immediately intervene in the response to the crisis that's facing this sector in the province.

I join with my own colleagues here in opposition to express our gratitude to Sonya Corrigan, Alice Taylor and the Early Childhood Development Association of Prince Edward Island who each and every day are dedicated individuals who work with early childhood education and child care centres across the province from owners, operators to staff and volunteers, not to mention the parents and extended

family members. All these people, their time, their talents, their efforts are indeed appreciated and they make a great contribution to the overall well being of all our children across PEI.

We look forward to unanimous support of this motion from the colleagues here in the Legislature tonight.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: We'll now call on the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters to second the motion.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Before you get started, hon. member, I'm going to give the floor to the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness for recognition.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to recognize Eric Gillis, welcome him here to sit in on the proceedings. Eric's a constituent of mine in O'Leary-Inverness and a successful business man in the area.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. M. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's my pleasure to second this motion here this evening about the quality of child care in this province. I'm hoping that the government will make child care a priority in this province. Sadly, though, it appears this government does not understand the seriousness of this situation, and these parents of young children and child care facilities in some cases - even entire

communities - are at a crisis point.

I feel that if there's no funding and a lot of them close, a lot of parents that use these facilities are out now scurrying around trying to find other facilities or maybe the possibility of another facility if one closes. Sometimes when parents travel a long distance to work they are always concerned if anything happens to their child, if it gets sick during the day, that they're not close and they have to rely on other people to look after them.

We're being inundated with calls from parents across PEI who are not only concerned about possible closure of a large number of these child care facilities but also, in the event that there is some - a lot of them that stay open, they're going to jack the prices up by as much as \$100 a month.

That certainly is scary to a lot of these people. In a lot of them there's two in the family that are working and they rely on these centres. They open early in the morning and stay late to accommodate the working people in this province.

They're part, really, of a whole economic development strategy. That's part of why we have a workforce and why we have a large participation rate in the workforce in this province. It's because of these early childhood centres.

We have calls from quite a few of them, that they're not going to be able to continue without some kind of assistance when the kindergarten side of it leaves and they feel they're going to have a decreased number of children and it's going to be hard to maintain their staff.

This is a grave public concern and I have to stand with the parents, I guess, and the working people in this province. They need these facilities and they want the situation

addressed. I know that the budget is coming soon and there'll be another glossy document with a lot of empty pages in it.

I hope the government addresses this situation. They've been in government for three years now and they've failed to deliver on a lot of promises, but we got to clear the air and clear the confusion out there about what's happening with our child care facilities.

I guess the biggest one that is out there is dropping these children off early and now they have to run up the road, and if they have to drop their kids off at the school now, the kindergarten-age schools and the schools are not open. So I hope the government addresses all these issues so it makes it easier for the working people so that they can get along with life.

It was mentioned, I think, that we have one of the highest percentage of women with young children who are in the workforce. We do have a high participation rate in the workforce here in the province. We probably have the lowest amount of funding in the Atlantic region and that's under this Liberal government that's been in power for three years. They do have to address this some time, but they can find money for wine experts and they can find a million dollars for their gala parties out in Vancouver and they find money for their failed concerts. They're falling asleep over there, I might as well wake them up some. But they got no money for our child care facilities.

They put in place a rural development strategy and a prosperity plan which we call a poverty plan. These are all nice glossy documents that cost thousands of dollars, but yet when these early childhood people and working families across PEI go to see the government they close the door on them.

I think that Island parents would -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. M. Currie: Liberal times are hard times. They don't like to hear that over there, but it's the truth, and the facts come from this side of the House -

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. M. Currie: - and we ask questions - well, all he did was duck to the other fellow.

Madam Speaker, I think our Island parents would reasonably have assumed that early childhood development facilities would have been a key component of this government, yet it's three years in government and they have brought nothing to the table.

So I would implore this government to step up to the plate and deal with the current crisis, to demonstrate leadership and to ensure equitable, affordable, accessible, comprehensive child care for Islanders. All I've seen from this government is they want to close schools and they want to take our kids and herd them in buses, and they certainly have done a good job of that. They promised to close the schools, they did, and that shows that you believe in education.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. members, before I move to the minister of education, I'd just like to let you know we have a birthday in the House today, and it is Jessica, our Page's, 17th birthday.

Happy birthday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and

Attorney General.

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

I rise in the House this evening -

Premier Ghiz: To deliver some facts.

Mr. D. Currie: - to deliver some really factual information about the direction and the commitment and the priority that this government is making to the early childhood sector.

In the last three months I have taken on the responsibility of education and early childhood development in the Province of Prince Edward Island, and am pleased and proud to be part of a government that is putting children as a priority in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: Coming in to government when the initial priorities that we did, we took the early childhood division from social services and seniors and transferred that over to the department of education. So now we're looking at early childhood education and education from not a grade 1 to 12 system, but a zero to 12 system.

Over the last number of months as I've been learning my new role and getting comfortable with the issues and meeting the people, one of the realities is that our government have made a decision to transfer our five-year-olds, being the last province in Canada, to the public school system. Finally, our five-year-olds will get the same equal opportunity every five-year-olds in this country will get.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: In respect to the system

today, we know that the sector looks from newborns to five-year-olds. As we move forward and transition the five-year-olds into the public school system, we'll have an opportunity to focus and look at the zero to four-year-old sector.

In respect to the staff and the professionals that work in the sector, what they accomplish with our youngest citizens before they enter the school system has such an impact on how they learn later in school and in life.

I come along in the midst of significant change, an exciting change. I've been working hard to get a clear understanding of what the changes are. We are working with the sector and have travelled across Prince Edward Island to meet with the sector in Montague, Charlottetown, Summerside, O'Leary, and I listened and I heard. I heard the sector say very clearly that they've been ignored, they've been neglected and they've been forgotten about.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. D. Currie: What do these changes mean and to the children and the families of the One Island Community? Change is challenging to everyone. But it's constant, it is necessary, and when it's well managed, it is positive, exciting and rejuvenating. I've been saying from my very first day on the job, we have an enormous assignment in front of us and I want it done well and we want it done right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: As a parent and an educator, I'm excited about our government's priority to bring kindergarten into the public school system. It's the single largest historical educational event in our history. It's good news for education, good news for five-year-old children in this province, and it's

good news for our zero to four-year-olds in this province, and good news for the future of Prince Edward Island.

As I indicated, we are the last jurisdiction in Canada to make this transition. Over the last number of months we have made a number of announcements to welcome our five-year-olds and their families into the public school system.

We made an investment in Westwood Elementary of \$2.8 million, an investment in Glen Stewart Elementary of 8.9 million, we've made additional classroom space at L.M. Montgomery, West Royalty, Sherwood Elementary, for \$2.1 million. We've started and implemented our play-based learning with teachers, secretaries, bus drivers and all people that will be working with our five-year-olds in the system next September. I'm pleased to say the transition is well underway.

I have to tell you that I'm very impressed by the volume of work to make this happen in my department, in our schools and the early childhood community. I was excited last week when the PEITF ratified their contract and the memorandum agreement to welcome in 112 kindergarten teachers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: During my discussions with the kindergarten teachers there was a tremendous amount of anxiety as they were unsure and uncertain about how they would be perceived and welcomed into the public school system. I want to reassure all the kindergarten teachers in this province that they'll be embraced in every school that they enter next September.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: They will be getting their letters of authority to be granted permission

to work in the K-system next September immediately and will be able to sign up for courses immediately at the University of Prince Edward Island.

This is an ambitious initiative for any government organization. We are almost there. I can safely say we've achieved a new record for initiating a major change. For many jurisdictions this initiative would require several years. We are doing this in 14 months. From what I observed, it is being done well. We are consulting, we are listening, and it's being done right.

While much of our attention has been focused on the massive undertaking, I can assure you we have not lost sight of the learning needs of our youngest population or the needs and services required by their parents. We have not overlooked the hundreds of dedicated people who provide early learning and care to our children while their parents are at work or school.

Moving over 1,400 kindergarten in schools has certainly changed the business of early childhood education. But it has not changed the importance of early childhood, the importance of early learning and the importance of child care.

If I can leave a message here tonight, that would be: early learning and child care is important to our government. Our children are our most precious resource. They are a priority for our government and personally, and they are a priority for this government. We know that what a child experiences before the age of six and the age of five will directly influence their adult life. Educators who work in this field help create those experiences. We know the quality of a child's relationships with significant adults in their lives is crucial to their happiness now and into the future, and to their success. Along with parents, these educators in the early childhood sector are very important.

We also know that the quality of a child's learning prior to school entry is essential for long-term success at school, and in life. This professional group and cohort are important and will be respected and will be listened to as we move forward in renewing the zero to four sector. There are more than 8,000 children under the age of six living in this province. Almost half of them are in regulated child care. Eighty per cent of the mothers of children under age five are working outside the home in communities across this province. We need them there, and they need us to provide the early learning and child care for their children while they are at work.

We are very aware of the fact that we have created waves of concern and anxiety for early childhood educators, operators and parents. We have transferred an entire group of children from your sector - from their sector - to the public school system. Then we invited a number of your friends, who are the kindergarten teachers who will be leaving the system, 112, into the public school system. But we have a significant number of children who are still part of the early childhood sector. We have an important group of people, the educators, who we are counting on to continue the great early learning and care they need and deserve.

Now it's time to focus our attention on the early childhood sector, the zero to four-year-olds in this province, and the people who work with them. As you may know, we have turned to one of the most highly respected early childhood experts in the country to guide us towards a vision for the future. I've had some great conversations with Kathleen Flanagan. She'll be finishing her report and making recommendations to government, to communities and to the sector on ways we can partner and move forward, to renew and build a quality, sustainable early childhood education sector into the future.

She has been speaking to educators all across the province, and I understand the conversations have gone well, and there have been some frank discussions about the need and the future and the advice she was giving. I like what she is doing. I am pleased with her thorough and professional approach. She knows the business of early learning and child care inside and out. She's done the work for jurisdictions all across Canada. With that we did some work, MRSB did a fiscal impact analysis -

An Hon. Member: MRSB.

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

Mr. D. Currie: - and has provided us a clear picture of the fiscal impact of the five-year-olds leaving the system on facilities all across Prince Edward Island.

An Hon. Member: They'll get your report (Indistinct).

Mr. D. Currie: We also did some work - the Dunne Group gave us some work on the health human resource challenges -

Mr. M. Currie: That fellow that closed the schools, (Indistinct)?

Premier Ghiz: Shaun MacIsaac, he's the big (Indistinct) there.

Mr. D. Currie: This work, combined with Kathleen's work, will allow us to move forward into the future.

Because as minister responsible for early childhood development I'm taking this work very seriously. I told Kathleen Flanagan, I told my department staff, and now I'm reminding the House and my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, we're not fooling around. We have a window of opportunity. Early learning and child care is way too

important.

Premier Ghiz: That's right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: We are giving it our full attention. Our Premier knows that, and my colleagues at the Cabinet table know that. We are committed to creating a renewed system of early learning and child care, a system that really works for the children and families of our one Island community. A system of learning that cares, that helps our children flourish and thrive and encourages the educators to flourish and thrive, and get the respect and feel they are part of something very special.

They have our word as government: everything possible will be put into place to ensure that we have a strong, sustainable, quality early child care system for years to come.

It's taken a tremendous amount of work to get to this point. We will be looking forward to the budget, and the budget announcements. The reality of the sector is that with the investment we're making in our five-year-olds, we have to look at renewing and building the zero to four sector. I look at this sector, and the message was very clear by the sector, that they've been neglected and ignored for way too long.

It's been a long time since there has been any substantial investment to the sector. I've listened to them. They've talked about the challenges on wages. As a result, wages have impacted the inability to sustain a quality workforce because people just can't survive and live on the wages they're expected and what they've been given. We've talked about the challenges in respect to training opportunities. We're working with the college to look at new ways to

provide access to training and to quality. The sector has been reminded, and I've talked to the sector, as we build the sector, it's important that we talk about quality.

We talk about quality in communities all across Prince Edward Island, and that families in Tignish, Souris, Charlottetown, Central Queens, Georgetown, Stratford have the same access and opportunity that children have all over the province.

I strongly believe, as we make announcements through the budget, and we work with the sector, that we have an opportunity to build a system and finally start getting caught up to other jurisdictions in this country and provide the quality early childhood education that other jurisdictions are providing their children all across this country.

Together we will build a prosperous future for our one Island community as we transition by creating a promising system of early learning and early care for our precious children today. I look forward to the budget address to partner with the sector as we move forward, to build something very special for the sector and the children and the families and communities all across this great province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Great job.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D. Currie: I, too, we would like to make an amendment. Would I read that now?

Leader of the Opposition: No.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) he'd

done.

An Hon. Member: He's just improving it.

Premier Ghiz: No, he just said thank you.

Mr. D. Currie: I said thank you.

Can I make the amendment?

The original: Therefore be it resolved that the Members of this Legislative Assembly encourage the Government of Prince Edward Island to immediately provide leadership to address the crisis in early childhood education and childcare to ensure both short- and long-term sustainability of the sector, while also ensuring quality accessible, affordable care for young children across the province.

I would like to make the amendments to:

Therefore be it resolved that the Members of this Legislative Assembly encourage the Government of Prince Edward Island to continue to provide leadership to address the challenges in early childhood education and child care caused by the neglect under the previous administration to ensure both short- and long-term sustainability of the sector, while also hoping to ensure quality accessible, affordable care for young children across this province.

Premier Ghiz: Absolutely.

Mr. D. Currie: Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Do you have a seconder, minister?

Mr. D. Currie: Yes.

Speaker: Hon. members, there in an amendment on the floor before us.

Would anybody like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise in support of this amendment. I can say that I can understand exactly what the previous government - or the opposition and the previous government is trying to accomplish here through this motion. But at the same time I need them to be realistic. We support everything that they say, but the reason why we're in this situation today is because really no government over the last 30 years has chosen to tackle the issues associated with early childhood development in this province.

This minister of education said it quite clearly that we are the last jurisdiction in Canada to move kindergarten into the school system. This will be an investment of over \$5 million. We realize that under the previous government - I will say this - thanks to the leadership of the only New Democrat ever elected in the Legislative Assembly, Herb Dickieson at the time, the government was forced into providing the first ever subsidy for kindergarten in the province. That subsidy helped out the early childhood sector.

What our government is doing is we're taking kindergarten now, we're moving it out of the early childhood sector into the education system. We fully realize that now we have to make sure there's funding there for the early childhood sector for the first time ever in the history of this province.

We just have to look at the history in this province. It was the previous government that cut the Best Start Program, and thanks to the strong lobbying of the current

Minister of Health and Wellness we were able to help reverse that. It was our government that came to power and introduced some investments in the Best Start Program of \$219,000. It was our government that came to power and introduced funding to expand the breakfast program by \$100,000. It was our government that came to power and invested 750,000 in literacy programs. It was our government that came to power and introduced improvements to the age of entry. It was our government that came to power and introduced the Take 30 for the Family. It was our government that came to power and bought new computers in our schools. It was our government that came to power and bought the school buses, 60 new school buses, at a cost of \$4.8 million to make sure that our children could get there safely.

Now, I understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition definitely has her heart in the right place. She probably, if she could go back in time, wish she never joined the Progressive Conservative Party and became a Liberal like she always was. But she has a job to do now and that's exactly what she's trying to do. I know that she probably wasn't happy when she was part of a Conservative government that cut the Best Start Program, when she was part of a Conservative government that allowed the school buses to be run down, part of a Conservative government that neglected moving kindergarten into the school system, part of a Conservative government that supported Steven Harper's move to get rid of the billions of dollars that were going to be invested by Ken Dryden.

So when she talks about neglect of the government, she was talking about the government that she was part of. Unfortunately her motion did not make it clear that she was talking about the Conservative government rather than the

Liberal government that has made all these investments.

So our government is very excited about -

Mr. Brown: (Indistinct) loose and ready when she was in (Indistinct) government.

Premier Ghiz: Exactly. She probably did this resolution back when she was a Liberal, before she actually ran for the Conservatives.

But this motion is very timely. We've got a budget coming down on Friday. It's not going to be as good as perhaps budgets of the past. We are in a deficit situation because of a worldwide recession -

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Premier Ghiz: - but we are going to be making investments that we know are extremely important. One of those investments is in early childhood education.

It's really quite unfortunate that it was a Conservative government federally that cut a lot of the funding for early childhood education that Ken Dryden and the Liberal government did deliver on, but it will be our government again that will step up to the plate, that will make sure that dollars are on the table, dollars for kindergarten moving into the school system. Of course, we made some great investments in our education system, maintaining the complement of teachers to make sure that our class sizes are also coming down, but it's going to be great investments that we'll be announcing in early childhood education.

The facts speak for themselves. Do you want a Conservative government that cuts the Best Start Program, a Conservative government that refuses to put kindergarten into the school system, a Conservative government that supports a cut of billions of

dollars to the early childhood education sector? It was billions of investments that Ken Dryden was going to make. That's your choice. If Islanders choose to go down that path, by all means, vote Conservative, support the opposition.

If Islanders believe that kindergarten should be in the school system, that Island kindergarten students should have every right and privilege as every other kindergarten student across the country, if Islanders support safety with new school buses, if Islanders support investments in the Best Start Program, and hopefully on Friday, if Islanders support a provincial government in Prince Edward Island making the first ever investment in early childhood education, vote Liberal.

It's as simple as that. Either you want neglect or you want opportunity. You've got Conservative, you've got Liberal.

It's going to be my pleasure to support this motion supporting the minister of education and early childhood development in this province to make sure that every child, regardless of their socioeconomic background, has the same opportunity as every other child in our society.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services, Seniors and Labour to speak to the amendment.

Ms. Sherry: Madam Speaker, my department plays an important role in the early childhood education sector in Prince Edward Island through the Child Care Subsidy Program.

This program assists Islanders with children to access child care so that they can work

and improve the social prosperity of all Prince Edward Island. All low- and middle-income parents who have children in a registered child care facility in PEI can apply for assistance with their child care costs through this program. Grants are provided on a sliding scale based on the number of children in the family and the family's income.

For many low-income families in PEI this program will pay for the majority of their child care costs. More than 1,000 Island families currently receive assistance through the Child Care Subsidy Program. This means that 35 to 40% of all child care spaces in Prince Edward Island are subsidized by this program, and that is why this program plays such an important role in our child care system.

There is a delicate balance that has to be preserved with child care in Prince Edward Island. On one hand, parents need the best possible child care provided at a cost that allows them to work and contribute to our one Island community. On the other, child care centres provide care to our most precious resource, vulnerable children in need of loving care. My government is committed to working with both the parents and the child care centres to ensure that this balance is preserved for the best interests of all.

With the upcoming move of five-year-olds to a kindergarten, senior staff from my department have been at the table working very closely with the staff of education and early childhood development to participate in this exciting change to our Island school system. We will continue to work with the staff of education and early childhood development, the child care centres and Island parents to ensure that all of our children get the best child care possible in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinnock to speak to the amendment.

Ms. Dunsford: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to rise and support the amendment to the original motion. Although I was prepared to speak to the motion as it was, I would much rather prefer to support factual information than what was coming from the other side of the House just a few minutes ago. I like to support facts because it grounds us where we need to be if we're going to move forward. The facts have been wonderfully stated by two ministers already to support, with support, with the amendment to this motion.

The reason I'm standing is that to support the notion that we are in a crisis would be, as I've stated, not factual. In fact, what this province is in right now when it comes to early childhood development and education is we're in a transition. Let's be factual and let's recognize it for what it is. Transitions come with adjustments, negotiation, consultation, all of which the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General has been dedicated to and has been very passionate about. For the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir and the hon. Leader of the Opposition to state otherwise is just not factual. So it's very difficult not to stand and state the facts.

The consultations have been taking place. The transition is going forward. I need not repeat the neglect of the last 11 years within the education and early childhood development, it's all been stated. It was very frustrating to sit back as a parent and as an educator, and as someone who works with

children, and watch a government neglect early childhood development in this province the way it was. It was a very difficult thing to sit back and watch, knowing the people involved in programs like C.H.A.N.C.E.S. or Best Start, knowing the frustrations that they've felt over the years, seeing their funding cut by one Conservative government or the other, and then being encouraged by the future of knowing that a new government with a new vision, with a fresh start, to be able to fund a program properly, without not knowing from year to year, is really the only way you can move forward with early childhood development in this province.

As far as the kindergarten piece goes, it goes without saying when my children were of the age of kindergarten, which was over 20 years ago, that was far from the truth. I thought: It's only a matter of time, we'll see what happens when the next generation of kids comes up. Guess what? The next generation of kids were born, and still no kindergarten in the schools. Every other province in Canada had long implemented successful kindergarten programs within their school system. In fact, it's been decades for most provinces. So, for the fact that we have finally had the courage and the insight to do it properly, in a timely way, and to benefit children in this province, is nothing but to be supportive of.

It's not a difficult thing to get up and spout about what's been going on in the last couple of years as far as this government goes in early education and childhood development. I see this as a positive transition. It includes several different pieces that require a lot of attention. The attention is constantly being given to these things. Nobody said it was easy. Just because it's difficult it doesn't make it a crisis, it just makes it a transition like any other thing that this province has brought in that was long overdue from having.

In closing, I support the amendment. It's unfortunate that we did have to have so much neglect for so many years, but I commend the current minister and staff of the education and early childhood department for all their hard work, for continuing on with the most positive transition that this province has seen in the sector.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: To speak to the amendment.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Madam Speaker, tonight, we've really put attention on the early childhood sector, not the kindergarten sector, and everybody's quite pleased that actually kindergarten is moved into the school.

What tonight's motion was really about is to bring awareness to the crisis in the category of young people from zero to four.

I remember back on November 19th where we had a number of people that actually had what was called Black Ribbon Day, to be worn if PEI child care didn't get the urgent need of significant financial assistance, investment that they required. At the time, if you remember, there was a number of people in the Legislature and outside trying to bring attention. They wore black ribbons, and I have with me what they talked about - if child care facilities ended up closing in the province.

One of the areas they put attention to was closed licensed child care centres will be unable to provide valuable child care

opportunities to support the successful integration of immigrant families to our Island communities.

Another area they raised awareness is that if we had closed licensed child care centres, they'd be unable to provide for the early learning foundation that leads to social and academic success for our province's children.

They also identified that closed licensed child care centres would be unable to provide services to families while they work and study in the province, ultimately affecting our Island community.

They also raised awareness that closed licensed child care centres will be unable to provide early intervention services and early identification of our children's learning disabilities.

Prince Edward Island's licensed child care system urgently needs an immediate financial investment of hope. At that particular time the sector asked people to write to the Premier, to phone us, to send emails, etc., to try and raise the awareness in terms of just what a crisis this sector was actually in.

I know I myself, like the minister of education, have visited with facilities all across the province from Souris right to Tignish and the Charlottetown area. I still have yet to get to a facility in Cornwall (Indistinct) like me to go there.

This is an area that is really in a crisis. Whether you're a parent, trying to know whether you're going to have child care available in June or whether you're going to have to leave your job because it's not there, people need to know. This is a very serious motion.

What I suggest is I'd like to now move an

amendment to the motion that the minister of education has put in there to see just what kind of commitment this government has in terms of investment in this sector, and what I suggest is to drop his amendment from the therefore be it resolved and instead replace it with this - and I have copies if the Clerk would like it - seconded by the Member from Montague-Kilmuir:

Therefore be it resolved that Members of this Legislative Assembly encourage the Government of Prince Edward Island to immediately stop the practice of clawing back the national child tax benefit, clawing back financial resources from the poorest of the poor and encourage the government to finally invest with the government's own financial resources in this sector in the short-term and long-term for sustainability of this sector.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. members, we have an amendment to the amendment on the floor.

Do you have a seconder for the amendment to the amendment?

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) seconded by (Indistinct).

Ms. Dunsford: Can the amendment to the amendment be read again?

Premier Ghiz: (Indistinct) take a copy of it.

Speaker: There are copies being passed around of the amendment to the amendment.

Would any other -

Premier Ghiz: Did she delete the other one?

Speaker: Now we're dealing with the amendment to the amendment, right?

Hon. members, there is an amendment to the amendment. Would anybody like to speak to it?

The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I'm going to apologize in advance because I'm going to introduce an amendment on -

Mr. Bagnall: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Sorry, hon. Premier.

The seconder would like to speak first.

Mr. Bagnall: You jumped up too quick. Wait your turn.

Anyway, thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a great privilege to stand up and speak to this amendment to the amendment. Because the first amendment that was brought in was to try to block the motion from the government because government realized that they were being reckless and not doing what they promised to do. So then they get up and put a motion and try to blame it on somebody else for their mismanagement.

The minister was there three years now in the department, in the government. What did they do? They've kind of tore up the early childhood because they've got so much unrest out there and so many people that are scared. They're actually petrified there - what this government has done to the early childhood.

They have gone out and taken the kindergarten out, which was a good idea, of changing kindergarten and putting it in a school. Nobody's questioning that it wasn't a good idea. It was just very poor planning in how they were going to do it. They still don't know whether it's going to happen in

time or whether they're going to have everything ready for it in time. Putting it in schools is not a problem.

What I look at, and when I look at the amendments - and I'm speaking to the amendment to the amendment now, if I'm correct here, right?

Speaker: Yes you are, yes.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, the minister of health, it's too bad she's not here, because that was one of the things that -

Speaker: Hon. member, I would ask you not to refer to people who are absent from the House.

You know their ministries take them - they have lots of things that they have to do. So I would ask you not to refer to a member's presence or absence from the House.

Thank you.

Mr. Bagnall: That's fine, Madam Speaker.

Anyway, when the minister of health was in opposition one of her things was she fought diligently on this national clawback of national tax benefits. She was saying that government shouldn't be doing this, government shouldn't do this and government shouldn't that.

But what's happening here now is that this government, for the last three years, has been doing exactly that. They had been doing a national clawback on this. Instead of putting the money in resources for the poor or the working poor, it's not happening any more. So the investment is not near what it could be because of the clawback that this government is taking. It's causing instability in the sector. That's kind of disheartening.

I'm looking at the early childhood and we're

talking about making sure that we get the early childhood facilities licensed and early childhood up and going. Just an example in Montague now, there's a new early childhood place being set up and ran into problems upon problems by the minister of education and his staff. They wouldn't approve the licenses. They wouldn't approve the menus. Finally, after a few phone calls, we got it straightened out.

Premier Ghiz: Point of order.

Speaker: Yes.

Premier Ghiz: Can I ask the Speaker - nothing against this - but I believe we're debating early childhood education investment. I'm just wondering if this motion is in order and if the speaker would be willing to analyze that.

Speaker: Mr. Clerk?

Hon. members, I'm going to declare a five-minute recess and I'll consult with the clerks and report back to the House.

[Recess]

Speaker: Hon. members, I've reviewed the amendment to the amendment.

I would like to draw members attention to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* citation §568:

“It is an imperative rule that every amendment must be relevant to the question on which the amendment is proposed. Every amendment proposed to be made, either to a question or to a proposed amendment, should be so framed that, if agreed to by the House, the question or amendment as amended would be intelligible and consistent with itself.”

Hon. members, I've reviews the amendment

to the amendment and, if agreed to by this House, it would be inconsistent with both the main motion and amendment as proposed, and it is therefore out of order.

I will now revert to the amendment to the original motion.

Premier Ghiz: Question on the amendment.

Speaker: Question on the -

Mr. Bagnall: No, I'm going to speak to it.

Speaker: You're going to speak - what are you speaking to, hon. member?

Mr. Bagnall: I'm going to speak to the amendment.

Speaker: The amendment on the original motion?

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Speaker: Yes.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Disappointed that the government would bring in an amendment on this motion. The problem being -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Bagnall: The problem being is that this government has had three years to work on these issues, and yet every time they bring in a motion or every time they bring in an amendment, it's always going back to what the previous government did. They've had three years to correct the problems if there was a problem there, and what they've done is nothing. They sat there and did nothing.

What we have is - and it's really disheartening that the only thing that they could find to try to discredit the motion was talk about what happened in the 11 years before. They didn't bring in any positive that they were doing or they were going to do in their amendment. Nothing positive. Only thing was a negative. Trying to discredit the opposition's motion on this one because opposition has taken this amendment seriously. We take the early childhood people seriously. We're not joking and laughing like they are across the House on this, we're taking it serious. We feel that this is an important issue to be debating and to be making sure that it's going to happen.

Families, small families and working families today are very very upset that they don't know and got no security and nothing coming from government to tell them that there is going to be any support for them. We got families there that got two kids and they like to go to work, but without subsidy coming through to them and without money coming, they're going to have to pay more than they make a week in child support. So it's going to make it very difficult for plant workers and for other families with small kids to move forward on this. Just going to be almost impossible.

Needs and expectations of parents. In the summer of 2008, conducted a survey of 247 and the responses are being unable to care for their children while at work. Ninety-five per cent of the people had a concern with that issue, 95% of the people had a concern with that. Wanting them to be socially prepared for school, 64% of the people had an issue with that. Wanting them and believing that the child should experience - joy and experience, 60%. Wanting them to be academically prepared for school, another 58%. That tells you that parents with small children are really concerned with what's taking place out there. It's

difficult.

I know that government has some hard decisions to make. I know that they spent all their time looking after the kindergarten and then forgetting all about early childhood, until the early childhood people starting pestering them, then they started trying to deal with it because they forgot about it altogether. They didn't do anything, they didn't mention it, they never said how they were going to survive, nothing. They didn't do any of this.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: He's right. The Premier is right. I said to him awhile ago: This is a great motion and he said: Yes, but the amendment is bad. I agree with you, Premier. Your amendment is terrible, because that's what you said. You said the amendment was terrible. You said that. You said the amendment to this bill was terrible.

I said I understand why the Premier would say it was terrible, because the minister of education brought it forward but he put no thought into it and somebody else must have written it for him because I'm sure he would never write an amendment like that. So obviously somebody wrote that for him.

I believe these child care facilities across Prince Edward Island, they really have a valuable service to our children. It's a real valuable service. When kindergarten was in the same facilities they piggybacked on each other where they used funding that was coming and helped supply their early childhood. That happened.

But they're taking out the funds now for the kindergarten and they have come up with no funds for the early childhood people. No funds at all. They haven't announced anything. It's very difficult that a government would do that to these early

childhood educators. I'm really disappointed.

There is a lot of public concern across the province because there is a lot of gaps that haven't been addressed by the government. They haven't done anything, they haven't done anything towards this, except react to people calling them and telling them what the problem is, and the reaction is: We'll see what we can do. But that's not good enough. They have to take action and deal with the situation that's before them.

The Premier, I got to admit, the times I very seldom ever agree with anything he says, because he very seldom ever says anything except for his prepared speech. But what I have to say is that when he said that this amendment to the motion was terrible, I have to agree 100% with him. It's his motion and it is terrible and I want to thank him for recognizing that issue because that's exactly what he told me.

It's been well over a year now and my colleagues in the opposition have been calling on government to deal with these issues. But they haven't. They haven't called, they haven't dealt with them, they haven't done anything. Island parents need assurances from government, assurance that they will continue to have quality pre-kindergarten, early childhood support. They need that assurances. They're not getting it, not at all. There is not leadership from this government on that issue. Not whatsoever.

Premier Ghiz: None.

Mr. Bagnall: The Premier admitted that, he just said it again, that there isn't any. I'm glad he understands that he's got to get off his seat and do a little something about this. Because obviously he's listening to his minister over there, who - I'm disappointed in his motion and I imagine the Premier is too, because he said it was the worst one

he's ever heard.

So that's what we're dealing with. They need assurances that early childhood facilities across this province will continue to promote high cost, high quality. The costs are going to become so high, unless this government sees fit to come forward and subsidize these early childhood places. The working poor, small families, are having it difficult and government hasn't given them any assurance, any shape or form, that they are going to help them. That is a shame.

Premier Ghiz: So we don't have a \$200 million deficit.

Mr. Bagnall: Oh, so now, Madam Speaker, the Premier is saying he's not going to help them because he's got a \$200 million deficit, so he's going to let our children waste while he spends money on beer and wine, and he can't help our kids?

That's great, Mr. Premier, we know where you stand on this issue. We sure do. It isn't very good for the public. You'd sooner beer and wine expert than to help our kindergarten and pre-educated children. Or pre - you're getting me worked up. I'm getting excited here now. Because I can't believe that you would make those comments across the floor that you have no sympathy for the small families in this province, that you'd sooner spend your money on beer and wine than help the pre-kindergarten children. It's a disgrace.

Now, go on here to the next page. Early childhood centre operators feel they just can't compete for the trained educators because they have to pay them so much money and that there is no subsidy here to help them. Yes, the Premier would sooner put more money into beer and wine than he would into our children and into their education. So I'm disappointed that the Premier would make that comment. But

anyway, that's fine.

It's no wonder our early childhood operators are frustrated and upset with the lack of planning from the minister of education on this sector. They are so frustrated that the minister has got nothing planned, he hasn't done anything on the issue, he hasn't addressed the file except make an amendment to a motion that blames the previous government for 11 years and not take responsibility for his own actions. I find that to be very frustrating.

I can understand why the Premier's getting a little touchy and why he starts going on about everything else but child care, because that's (Indistinct). Everything but child care, we don't want to talk about that, we want to talk about Polar Foods, we want to talk about Meteor Creek, we want to talk about everything else, but we don't want to talk about child care, no, he doesn't. All he wants to deal with is anything that the previous government did and not take responsibility for anything that he said in three years, which has been very little, I might add.

Premier Ghiz: Very happy about it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Premier Ghiz: But you're okay with it.

Mr. Bagnall: Pardon?

Speaker: It's not Question Period, hon. members.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I understand that they're concerned, and I realize that they're going to be asking us questions very shortly if they continue to make decisions like this. So, we'll be on that side and they can ask all the questions they want.

Early learning operators of PEI want

government and the sector to develop a comprehensive child care system and to ensure everyone on PEI has access to quality, affordable child care. That's not asking a lot. That's what they're looking for, and what are they getting? An amendment that says neglect under the previous government, we can't do anything. That's what they're getting.

That's a great answer for a minister -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: That's a great answer for a minister that's been in government three years. It's really, really, really good.

Premier Ghiz: Glad you're making things up. (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. M. Currie: He's learning from you.

Premier Ghiz: You should be clearing all this with (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker -

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, I don't know why this government seems to think that early childhood is a laughing matter.

I can't believe that they are laughing. I can't believe they are making fun of the early childhood people across the thing. I can't believe that they think it's a big joke.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, you know -

Premier Ghiz: You were just laughing

yourself.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, it's very difficult when -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: It's very difficult when you have to try to combat a government that has no plan and has no direction on where they're going with early childhood.

Has government finished their financial impact analysis on the early childhood sector? Well, if they have, they haven't told anybody. Will all the recommendations be prioritized and implementation made? Well, they haven't told anybody if they're going to. They haven't done anything.

Already Islanders families are shouldering 42% of the cost of electricity across the province, but yet they're not prepared to do anything to help the early childhood.

Ms. Sherry: Now you're talking about your own (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: I can understand why they would get touchy, but you know, when you get a 42% increase in electricity costs in the last two years, that is a concern. Last two years, 42% electricity costs have gone up.

The early childhood families and operators are finding it very difficult with their increase in electricity costs that government is piling onto them.

Premier Ghiz: Should we take over Maritime Electric, then?

Mr. M. Currie: You said you weren't.

Premier Ghiz: (Indistinct) I'm asking you if we should.

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Bagnall: I don't know. It probably would be better than selling it out to Quebec like you're trying to do.

Some Hon. Members: Oh! oh.

Mr. Bagnall: With daycare facing imminent closure -

Mr. M. Currie: (Indistinct) the truth is coming out now.

Mr. Bagnall: When daycares are facing imminent closures across the province because they're afraid that they're not going to be able to survive, they're afraid they're not going to be able to continue to operate their businesses, because this government, cold-hearted government -

An Hon. Member: Cold-hearted.

Mr. Bagnall: - is not prepared to help them.

An Hon. Member: That's the minister (Indistinct). Cold-hearted thing.

Mr. Bagnall: It's a cold-hearted government, too, that turns their back on early childhood people. I find that really hard.

An Hon. Member: All of the children.

Mr. Bagnall: Early childhood centres -

Premier Ghiz: Complain about our deficit (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: - are facing a lot of difficult decisions. There are individuals who put their heart and soul and their passion and their livelihoods into providing quality care, the education for the young residents across this province. They're putting their heart and soul into it. They're doing everything they can. They're taking - a lot of them don't even get a pay cheque some weeks

because they don't have enough money, and yet if they raise their rates they're hurting families. They're hurting families because they know that the families can't afford to pay any more.

They're a small business that is looking for some support here from government, and what are they getting? An amendment. An amendment, it says here neglect under the previous administration is the reason why they're not giving us any money.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bagnall: That's what it says in there. Neglect under the previous administration. If you want to hang your hat on not helping out a sector because they're blaming the previous government, Madam Speaker, a pretty weak case, I would think, on this government.

In closing -

Premier Ghiz: No, don't close.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay, I won't. I'll continue. No, Madam Speaker, I could talk all evening on this amendment to the amendment.

Premier Ghiz: Please do.

Mr. Bagnall: This is the amendment, oh yeah.

This is the amendment that the Premier said was a disgrace to put on the floor. Anyway, and I agree with you, Premier, but I will close off my remarks -

Premier Ghiz: No.

Mr. Bagnall: - and the only thing I will say, is that what we have to remember here is we are looking out for our children, our early children. And the ages from two to four, or one to four -

An Hon. Member: Zero to four.

Mr. Bagnall: - or from infant to four -

An Hon. Member: - there you go.

Mr. Bagnall: - is the most important learning time in their lives. They learn more in that period of time than they will in any other time in their lives.

An Hon. Member: Wish you had have known that when you were government.

Mr. Bagnall: It is very important that government supports our early childhood and our early childhood workers, because our future depends on whether this government blames the previous government for neglect, or whether they want to step up to the plate and help this sector as much as they possibly can.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: They have a chance -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: They have a chance. The minister of education told us where he is on this issue. He's not prepared to do anything. Just prepared to blame the previous government. The Premier has said that his motion was terrible, and I agree. None of his other members have turned around and agreed, so I know that the government will defeat this amendment, because the Premier has already said it's been a terrible amendment.

So with that, I'll close off my remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

An Hon. Member: You've got them on the ropes.

Mr. Mitchell: I have them on the ropes now.

I'm very pleased to support this amended resolution this evening. A couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure to attend out at the Holland College Royalty Centre an information session put on the minister, the deputy minister, with a group of about somewhere between 50 and 60 early child care workers and early child care business owners.

The meeting began with the minister and deputy minister talking to these individuals about how the situation is going to look for them on a go-forward basis when kindergarten goes into the school system this fall. Everybody sat and listened in a positive nature. After some discussion we broke into two groups, and I had the pleasure of sitting on one of the groups.

I'm going to say there was close to 30 people around the table there and we went through, with everybody, as to their concerns and issues in regards to the early child care system as it is now. What was very clear from discussion and that meeting - these groups felt that over the last number of years they had been neglected, absolutely. They've had nothing but lip service, and the discussion has fallen only on deaf ears for the past number of years.

For the last 11 and a half years that's the response that they've had. They felt that it's time that somebody listened to them. They put together a substantial list, but a reasonable list of things and solutions that they feel would help them into the future. So as we came back as a group and the list was discussed, and a lot of good ideas came out

from those two sessions, and it was put on the table and everybody was very excited about it.

Just this past week I had the opportunity to stop into one of these early child care centres in my district and spend about an hour with the owner there and have some discussions. She was very excited about how that discussion went. They'd never before had that opportunity, to sit with the department, the minister and discuss their concerns.

Premier Ghiz: First time ever (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: First time ever, and they felt very excited about it.

As it was mentioned to me just the other day by this owner of this business that for the first time every they can actually see some light at the end of the tunnel and they feel that light is very near.

Also, all of these early child care workers and all these early child care businesses have reasonable expectations. They know the time that we're in today and they know they're not going to get there in one leap, but they know that there are positive things in the works and for the first time ever they have a really good feeling with early child care workers and businesses in this province.

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Minister, we're speaking to the amendment.

Ms. Bertram: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I certainly would like to speak to the amendment in terms of that members of this Assembly encourage the government to continue to find leadership to address the challenges in early childhood education and child care.

I think that what we're seeing here tonight - I think it's good that everyone's speaking very passionately in terms of support to an early childhood sector but also in terms of our youngest of our population.

This is something I'm very passionate about as well. As you know I come from an education background as a teacher in the primary or elementary level and this is very important to the future of Prince Edward Island, to the future of educational opportunities and the potential.

But with the amendment that we're showing to - that the minister has provided the amendment to the resolution is to continue to provide the leadership to address the challenges in early childhood education and child care. There are many challenges that exist out there.

I know the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir would like to allude to - yes, we're here. We've been in government for three years. But there has been neglect for far too many years in this province. I remember sitting in this Legislature. We were in opposition. We were fighting on the Best Start Program, where that government and that federal government cut back the Best Start Program. It was a 36-month program and that government cut it back to 18 months.

It was demonstrating the great asset to

families across this province and supporting like this is. This government took, when it came to power in 2007 under our leadership of our Premier and when we were in opposition, that we invested further into that program and brought it back up to where it was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: I think that's very important.

I remember when we brought, Madam Speaker - and again, this is childhood, in the sector and to child care in this province. I remember the hon. member that was speaking earlier, and I don't remember any positive comments in regards to further funding to the Best Start Program. He was agreeing to his government's cut back.

It was a Liberal federal government that had first instituted, under our justice program, in a pilot that came under Lawrence MacAulay, to this province as a pilot. So it was thanks to a Liberal federal government, and I'm not trying to play politics, no. But there's facts.

Furthermore, when Paul Martin were running there was a further increase that was going to be put into child spaces in this country. There was a plan to address the challenges that we're talking about in this amendment tonight.

Yet this previous administration did not show the support at the time, back in 2004.

I can go back to the Hansard where this - we're addressing challenges as the minister is talking about in the system. Yes, we're instituting kindergarten. This Premier, this government, has taken reins for three years. We have committed to bringing kindergarten into the public school system. Hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, we are committed to children in this province.

Yes, we are.

Furthermore, by the increased investment into kindergarten into the public school this year, this is - we can go back to the Hansard where the previous minister of education - you look at the staffing model back in 2005, and yet she was sitting, defending her budget estimates, saying: We're going to reduce the positions by 30 this year. No problem. And what was putting stress on the system and families in this province and our children? But no, did that side of the House speak to that? No, it did not.

There were members on that side that weren't Cabinet ministers, that were MLAs, that could have spoken to the minister but they did not, and stand up for families in their communities.

I am pleased -

Mr. Bagnall: The minister talks about the clawback and now she's (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Ms. Bertram: I am pleased, Madam Speaker, that our government is showing that commitment, that our minister is bringing forward and we are going through the budget process.

Our Premier, again, is committed to policy around education to early childhood in this province and we need to go there, we need to lead this country, and we have a wonderful opportunity to do that as a smaller jurisdiction.

Further, Montague-Kilmuir should realize that with the increased investment in the Best Start program that this government instituted in 2007 we are helping to support early childhood in the zero to 36 months of age. I would like to, from our perspective as the Department of Health and Wellness, that

we have - it's very critical within our department on the childhood sector and child care that our public health nurses are going in to homes across this province. They're visiting with new mothers, they're doing assessments.

The Best Start Program is there for those families that might need that extra support, those families, those others that maybe are experiencing postpartum depression, what have you, that there is support out there. We have nutritionists, we have a community nutrition program that is supporting proper feeding techniques, what diets should exist for our youth, our youngest of our population. We have speech language pathologists and OT supports that are out there for the very young of our population.

But not just that. What else are we supporting child care with? I can look to the Island Community Fund, I can look to the Community Development Bureau of the past, how it has supported non-profit day programs in our Island communities. I can look in our own district of Breadalbane, that (Indistinct) a not-for-profit. Island Community Fund has supported the upgrades and infrastructure to communities in rural Prince Edward Island that has been wonderful.

Premier Ghiz: Shame they didn't do it.

Ms. Bertram: Madam Speaker, I support the minister of rural development for what he is doing and what he is going to be doing with that program. Furthermore, I look to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, libraries -

An Hon. Member: Libraries, (Indistinct).

Ms. Bertram: - (Indistinct) child care. Within - you take that small rural community like Breadalbane, for example. You have a daycare program in the

basement, you have a library upstairs. That's wonderful support to communities, to children, to young families in this province. That's what it's all about, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bertram: Our government has continued to support the public and the community-based library system in this province, and we lead the country.

But in close, I want to support this resolution, I want to support the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Attorney General for his amendment to this. We will continue to support children, to support our youngest of our population, to see them grow, to see them being nurtured in this population of Prince Edward Island whether they're living in urban or in rural Prince Edward Island, within our one Island community. Under the direction of our Premier, we will be doing it. This government is committed to early childhood and to children in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Anybody else want to speak to the amendment?

Ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Are we ready for the question on the amendment?

Hon. members, the question is on the amendment to the original motion. All in favour of the amendment signify by saying 'yea.'

Some Hon. Members: Yea!

Speaker: Contrary minded.

Some Hon. Members: Nay!

Speaker: The motion is carried.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The amendment is carried.

Hon. members, we'll revert now to the main motion as amended.

An Hon. Member: Back to the (Indistinct).

Speaker: Any further debate on the main motion?

Mr. Bagnall: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: You're closing this?

Leader of the Opposition: Well -

Speaker: There's nobody else.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, sorry, don't close it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Bagnall: Madam Speaker, it's great to get back up and speak to the amendment, to the amended amendment -

Speaker: To the amended motion.

Mr. Bagnall: The amended motion. All right.

Speaker: (Indistinct) original motion as amended.

Premier Ghiz: Original motion as amended. Great motion.

Mr. Bagnall: You know, Madam Speaker, it's great to see the minister of health get up and be so passionate in her speech.

When she was on this side of the House she was a great advocate for all of these causes. One of her big things was on the national Child Tax Credit and the clawback. She spoke on that over and over again. So what does she do? She becomes minister, now she's clawing it back. I mean it, clawing it back. She could help put that money into the early childhood, but she's clawing it back to use in other areas.

We always tried to say that we were putting it in other areas. The minister said: No, definitely not, it's definitely a clawback and you're doing a full clawback on this. This money could be going into early childhood development and what they're doing, they're clawing it back. They're clawing it back so she can make her own department look good rather than helping the children.

She used to get up and go on about all these programs and now that she's minister she forgets all about them. Except when she goes back into the Hansard and pulls out the big book and says: I did say something about this a few years ago when I was in opposition. But now that I'm in government, I forget all about what I was saying. I promise one thing, and then when I get there I do another. She does that all the time. That's very difficult.

I wish she would get up to speed in her department. Like the minister of transportation and public works knows his department, I can't say that for this minister because she keeps talking one way and doing something else. It's too bad. I can understand why she gets upset because she doesn't like everybody to know that she

doesn't know what is going on.

Speaker: Hon. member, let's stick to the motion.

Mr. Bagnall: Yeah. I'm just referring to comments that the hon. minister made when she was debating this motion in the House.

But I will get back to this amendment. I guess I'll go back to say that speaking to this amendment, I can't believe that the government wants to play political politics with our children. That's what is happening here. The Premier wants to play political politics and put in remarks, rather than -

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Bagnall: - addressing the motion which really stuck to the issue of early childhood care. But what did they want to do? They wanted to get down and talk about what happened in the past rather than what they're going to do in the future. That's really disappointing.

The amendment that was made was excellent, the amendment to the motion - the motion was really good.

Ms. Dunsford: The amendment was excellent, you said.

Mr. Bagnall: The amendment, as the Premier said, was terrible. He couldn't understand why anybody would want to vote for it, but it was his government that made the amendment, so that's - I just can't believe that the government would try to play political football with the livelihood of our four to six, or our infant to four-year-old kids.

To think that they think more about trying to blame previous administrations or what

wasn't done in the past rather than try to work for the future to help our early childhood educators, help our centres that need some assistance. But no, they want to play football or political politics and talk about what happened in the past rather than move forward.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: So with that, Madam Speaker, I'm very disappointed in this government for bringing this type of amendment forward on a very important issue.

The original motion was excellent. The amendment to this one is not very good, and it doesn't respect the people that are working in this industry, so I can't support it.

Thank you.

Speaker: Would any other members like to speak to the motion as amended before I go to the mover to close debate?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition to close debate on the motion.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

First, I'd like to thank all the people in the early childhood sector that have been following this online tonight on the Internet. I want to make sure that they realize that there are many of us that really support the hard work that they do, and that there's - many of the people that really understand what it's like when you're a parent and you're worried about your child, whether or not that child has affordable, accessible, or quality child care.

To some of the parents tonight from the Souris area that are watching online on the

Internet, one of the big things that they're looking forward to is this government treating all facilities fairly, and that if a grant is available for free rent for one child care centre, that free rent is available for all child care centres across the province.

The other area that a lot of parents are looking forward to is some of the investment in the sector, especially where people have training in the early childhood field from Holland College. Many people across PEI are still making anywhere from \$8.50 an hour to, if they're lucky enough, \$10.00 an hour.

Many parents are looking forward to the day that the investment will include an increase in child care subsidy from the department of social services so that people actually have enough money to be able to cover their full expenses. In this sector, many early childhood educators are hoping that an investment will be in facilities so they'll be in a position that they no longer have to take dollars out of their own pocket to provide materials and supplies for children, such as diapers and other kinds of items, just because the families cannot afford them.

This is an extremely important area and, again, there's a number of people Island-wide that are worried. I know tonight we gave examples of Souris and Tignish, but there's also a crisis in the child care facilities in the Charlottetown area as well. Many parents who are now paying well over \$200 a week for an infant space in many of the centres. There's one in Charlottetown that has a wait list of 15 parents. Again, as people worry about the rate going up.

Mr. Bagnall: Call the hour.

Speaker: Hon. members, the hour has been called.

I'll call on the hon. Minister of Tourism and

Culture for the adjournment motion.

Mr. Vessey: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

