

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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## Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development

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**DATE OF HEARING:** 8 FEBRUARY 2017

**MEETING STATUS:** PUBLIC

**LOCATION:** COMMITTEE ROOM, J. ANGUS MACLEAN BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

**SUBJECT:** PUBLIC SIGNAGE LEGISLATION

**COMMITTEE:**

Bush Dumville, MLA West Royalty-Springvale [Chair]  
Jordan Brown, MLA Charlottetown-Brighton  
Kathleen Casey, MLA Charlottetown-Lewis Point  
Sonny Gallant, MLA Evangeline-Miscouche  
Matthew MacKay, MLA Kensington-Malpeque  
Steven Myers, MLA Georgetown-St. Peters  
Chris Palmer, MLA Summerside-Wilmot

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party, MLA Kellys Cross-Cumberland

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

none

**GUESTS:**

Tourism PEI (Chris Jones, Cheryl L. Paynter)

**STAFF:**

Ryan Reddin, Clerk Assistant (Research, Committees and Visitor Services)





The Committee met at 1:30 p.m.

**Chair (Dumville):** I'm going to call the meeting to order and I'll ask for approval of the agenda.

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Jordan Brown.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to welcome Cheryl Paynter and Chris Jones here today. It's great to have you with us. All I ask is that before you speak just put your names out there for Hansard. These do not amplify; they just pick up your voices for recording purposes only. If you wish, you can go through your presentation. If you'd like the committee members to ask questions as we go or hold their questions to the end, it's just up to you.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Sure, thank you for having us.

Cheryl Paynter, CEO of Tourism PEI. I'll let Chris introduce himself in a moment. Chris has a long history with this file, so that being said, perhaps I'll turn it over to him to go through the presentation.

**Chris Jones:** Chris Jones, Director of Strategic Initiatives with Tourism PEI.

I have about a 20-point deck here. What I'd like to do is take you through a bit of a history and I think this will set the context for discussion in terms of the signage law and its varied history over the years. I'll talk a bit about the purpose of the current act, the types of signage that are permitted in the province. I'll talk a bit about illegal signage and give some illustrations of that. I'll focus on the tourism directional sign. These are the blue signs that you commonly see along the highways. I'll follow up the conclusion and some questions at the end, if that's okay.

I'm going to take you back – and I think this sets a really good context for where we are today. A lot of the signage dates back to about 1936. There was an act called *An Act Respecting Advertisements Along the Public Highway*. It was first introduced and became the *Highway Advertising Act* in 1952. The focus of this legislation was to regulate the size and location of signs that could be seen

from the public road. Guess what? When we advanced this far, we're trying to do the same thing. I'm going to take you through a little bit of a chronology of events here.

Nineteen seventy one, I think, was kind of a seminal moment for the legislation. That was brought in by Alex Campbell. In conjunction with the province's tourism industry, government introduced a new system intended to eliminate the need for highway advertising. This system used an integrated approach, including a coordinated tourist literature package, a centre of tourism information centres that were located across the province. There were information stops or highway pull offs at major signage points and directional signs on the right-of-way to direct visitors to off-highway locations and establishments.

In 1976, a further modification – this was under the Joe Ghiz government – was made to this system to include Highway Information Signage System, or HISS, as it was commonly referred to. This system continued into the early 1980s, albeit with some modifications.

In late 1980s, the Rural Commission on the Land – and that was the Boylan Report that many of you remember – provided several recommendations intended to improve the Highway Signage System, specifically to reduce clutter, incorporating the goals and objectives of protecting the landscape and legislation and incorporating the HISS program into legislation.

Following the Boylan Report, the province established a committee of government and private sector representatives to examine the recommendations related to signage and it was a report commissioned called the Report of the Highway Signage Committee and it was dated 1991. Contained within the report were recommendations to limit the HISS program to the tourism industry, and that's a pivotal piece of legislation (Indistinct). The HISS became focused on tourism only.

The *Roadside Signs Act*, intended to replace the *Highway Advertisement Act*, was passed in 1992 but it was never proclaimed. Jump forward to the Binns government in 2001; government at that time established a committee to once again review the province's highway signage policy and this

is probably the most comprehensive review in our current times.

The committee released its findings in a report entitled *Direction for the Future*. The committee identified a number of emerging, critical issues including capacity and a concern over the number of HISS signs along the countryside. The committee referenced the fact that: Limits established under the HISS policy are being stretched due to the increasing number of new businesses opening across the province. Waiting lists exist where demand currently exceeds space. Some businesses are openly challenging the regulations by displaying signs clearly outside the intent of the program.

Through its work, the committee noted that the introduction of the HISS program began as a movement to take positive steps towards the protection of the Island landscape, and we're going to see this protection of the Island landscape proliferate throughout the legislation, in today's legislation too.

There was a proliferation of occurring of signage in the countryside. The committee further noted that prior to HISS the province was clearly on a trend to increase the number of signs advertising both the location and features of facilities. The temptation to use the road network of PEI as a means of advertising was magnified by the fact that HISS was an effort to deal with the issue before it reached crisis proportions and the landscape quality substantively compromised; key words.

As a follow-up to the committee's report on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the current piece of legislation, the *Highway Signage Act*, was proclaimed and the purpose of the legislation is clearly prescribed in section three that states that: This act provides for the control of the erection, the display, maintenance and placement of signs that are within view of the highway for the purpose of promoting safety of persons using the highways, preserving and enhancing the beauty of the unique landscape of the province, and providing an effective wayfinding system for the travelling public. Those three purposes found their way into the legislation and those are key.

The last amendment that happened with the regulations was in 2013, and that regulation allowed amendments to provide exemption to certain municipalities to be exempt from the act and regulations. Currently there are 13 of them. That's a bit of history.

Again, to recapture where we are today, the *Highway Signage Act*, the purpose – three key points: Is promote the safety of persons using the highways, preserving and enhancing the beauty of the unique landscape of the province, and third is to provide an effective wayfinding system to the travelling public.

There are five types of signage permitted within the province under the legislation. There are tourism directional signs and these are the TDS, we call them. These are the blue signs and I've got illustrations of those.

There are map stop areas and these will occur in areas where there is significant demand beyond the TDS allowance. One notable example will be Kensington. I've got a picture of that. The third is on-premise signs applicable to the business on the property. The fourth is special event signs and the fifth is symbol boards such as in Victoria, Belfast and Basin Head.

This is pictures of the TDS commonly blue signs and what you see is really three elements. First of all, you've got the name of the business. You've got the location from this particular point and there's a symbol on the right-hand side that displays – this particular one is for camping and you will see these commonly littered throughout the countryside.

This is a map stop; this particular one appears in Kensington. The elements of the map stop are really to reduce the – when you come to an intersection like in Kensington where you could have a proliferation of signs that are just distorting the view of the travelling public. What we've done here is we've created a map stop where people basically come into a parking lot. They get out of their vehicle and they can orientate themselves through a series of maps that you see on the right-hand side and then you've got a business name on the left-hand side there, so it kind of orientates what's in that particular community.

This is a sign, obviously for Polaris. This is a legal conforming sign to the signage act and this is typical, you'll see, throughout the countryside. This particular sign is on the individual's land. This is a legal sign.

This next sign here is a special events sign. This particular activity is for Cloggeroo which was down in Georgetown. During the event – leading up to the event – you'll see these signs around the area signaling to the travelling public that there's a special event going on and it identifies what that event is.

The fifth is a signage board; this particular one is in Victoria by the Sea. What this basically does is say what's located within the village, which is one kilometer away, keep on the right hand side and it gives you the symbol with the types of businesses that you'll see in that particular village.

The next thing is to talk about illegal signs. Just to give you a point of reference and I wanted to show you what was legal. Now the flip side to that is what is illegal and we've got some illustrations and I'll take you through a few slides here.

First one is – and I'm not sure exactly where it is, I can probably find out – but I think more important for the committee is to determine why this is illegal. First off, you see in the foreground you've got a long sign, wide, it's low to the ground, egressing that property, this would become a safety hazard for anybody that's trying to egress that property because it's blocking the view of the traffic. These signs would be taken down. They're in the public right-of-way, which is illegal. They're also violating from a public safety perspective, so these ones would have been removed.

The next one is illegal signs. First of all we've got a traffic sign here that would be implemented by the department of transportation and someone has taken advantage of that to locate their own homemade sign on the attachment there. Basically, what it is, it's a hazard because it would take your eyes off the sign which is proper; it could force someone to be looking in a different direction and miss the safety sign altogether.

This is a common occurrence we see throughout the countryside where this one is

real estate agents. I hope I haven't offended anybody (Indistinct) with the names (Indistinct). If I have, I'm sorry for that. But we'll see these again, a number of things here. This particular old fence here would be – first of all, it's in the public right-of-way. You've got many signs that are attached to the province's safety sign there of showing a dead end street with roads going east and west. This again would be signs that we would come upon and our regulatory officer would be removing and notifying the particular individuals who are to pick up their signs.

These next examples are to illustrate what could happen if we didn't have the regulations. I went to our neighbour provinces. This is Nova Scotia. So again not to offend anybody, but Nova Scotia does not have the regulations that we do. As a result of that, it's subject to the types of signage that you would see at a (Indistinct) intersection.

Again, if you look at the history of our province and the history of the landscape in preserving the landscape, you would find that this would be quite offensive if this was allowed to proliferate in Prince Edward Island. This next one again gives further illustration. Here you have a mix of what looked like blue government signs mixed in with various signs put up by individuals. These are locations of businesses, real estate, you name it; it's kind of a collage of everything. Appreciate if you're the travelling public that you'll probably not be able to see anything. If you do see something it's probably a visual blight more than anything else.

The next focus of the presentation is on the TDS blue signs. Now the blue signs are directional signs for tourism business as defined by S1.(2)(c) of the regulations. The limit, as by the act, is to limit signs to three standard with three signs per standard. What a standard is is a post – and this is by way of the public safety policy by transportation and infrastructure. Basically what it is you've got – at an intersection you can have three posts with three signs per post. Once you fill that each intersection up that's the maximum that you can go into the intersection. A business can have up to four signs; so at various locations around their area.

The limits on how many signs and how many standards are a policy of transportation. These policies are based on public safety. Again, when you're approaching the intersection from a visual perspective, your focus should be on the intersection itself and the travelling safety of the vehicles, rather than try to decipher in terms of signs and stuff like that.

The other thing that the regulations do, is they set out what types of signs are permitted and they define it by a tourism business. It's quite prescriptive. There's no discretion on behalf of the minister to allow anything else but this. We find ourselves when you go across the countryside, this is the only blue signs you'll see representing these types of properties and they are tourism businesses.

The last thing we want to look at is a number of facts. Based on the signage registry, went through some calculations that kind of illustrate the point. First of all, we estimate there are approximately 1,800 tourism businesses in the province. We know from our registration, 535 businesses – or 30% of the 1,800 – have TDS signs. The total signs issued to date are around 1,474 signs. We can see the distribution across the province by county.

If we've issued 1,474 signs to 535 businesses, this represents approximately 2.75 signs per business. The total number of sign standards in the province is 910. These are the allowable standards by transportation. Each standard has a maximum of three signs that would allow for a total of 2,730 signs. If the total capacity is 2,730 and we have 1,474 signs erected, we can place an additional 1,256 signs up across the province. If you apply the same ratio of signs per businesses 2.75 to 1,256, we could accommodate up to an additional 456 businesses.

Currently we have a wait list of 28 businesses. What we mean by that is that there are 28 businesses that can't get a blue sign because the standards in their area are full. What there is is a rotation basis. When that business closes down or goes out of business, the next person up gets to have a blue sign. We've got a waiting list of 28.

What we're seeing is we're removing more signs than adding because there are other opportunities to advertise your business through various means of Google addressing and everything else. The signs are important but we're seeing that they're becoming less important over time and there's other ways of advertising your business.

In conclusion, since the definition of the tourism business is defined by the regulations to include an additional business – and we've had various examples over the years where someone who owns an auto body shop, as an example, or something that doesn't fit within that definition, has asked us. The only way you can allow that type of business – because there's no discretion on behalf of the minister – it's a pretty prescriptive list of the types of business that are allowed. The only way you can get an additional business is to have a regulatory amendment. Obviously the caution that we have is that if you open it up to a regulatory amendment to allow other businesses then you're going to go back to the pictures I illustrated where you get a proliferation of signage across the province.

In our humble opinion, what we've done in administering the law as it's written right now, we managed to keep control in check making sure that we carry the intent and purpose of the act for the travelling public for safety, preserving the landscape and providing a good wayfinding system for the travelling public.

Questions?

**Chair:** Thank you.

Chair recognizes Cheryl Paynter.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Just as a bit of context, Chris spoke to a couple of things I just wanted to reiterate before the questions. One is the waiting list we have of approximately 28 businesses. We see on average that wait list about one season or one year and in some very popular intersections, it may stretch to two years. But just as a point of context there we are working with operators. Roadside signage, just to expand further on what Chris brought up, has kind of been dropping in importance to some tourism operators.

One thing we did to complement this, for instance, is we had a student on staff this summer that went through as many tourism businesses as they could do in that time period and assured that they were properly represented on Google Maps. We find that a lot of the travelling public now are using GPS and Google Maps and things of that nature which would result in a little less demand for our TDS, for sure.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Just before we proceed, just for the record, I'd like to note that Peter Bevan-Baker is absent, not with us today. He is a regular member of this committee.

Matt MacKay.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you both for coming in.

I guess I was kind of the one that was pushing to get you in, more on behalf of some constituents of mine that have expressed concerns and I just wanted to go over a couple of those concerns and after seeing this presentation, obviously safety has got to be the number one priority with whatever takes place.

What I'm hearing in my district alone have all been from tourism operators, so they're all seasonal that open sometime the first of June and close mid-September so they're trying to make a viable business in a short period of time. A lot of these businesses that have called me are off main roads so they are not right on the main road so they are trying to get traffic off to these rural roads more than anything.

One thing that they have told me, and I guess as I followed I have seen, so they were losing their signs. Somebody was coming out and physically removing their signs and taking it to Charlottetown. My first question: Who takes down the signs?

**Chris Jones:** We have regulatory officers that are assigned with the department. Those are illegal infractions so if you see something that's in the public right-of-way, their immediate reaction is to take that down before an accident does happen. When they take them down they advise the owner that

it's in the public right-of-way, to come get their signs.

**Mr. MacKay:** How many of those officers would be employed right now?

**Chris Jones:** One full-time and two seasonal.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay. My next question – I did take a drive out to see a couple of these signs. A lot of them I saw were sandwich board signs that were not necessarily on a road but on a side road with an arrow that were taken down daily. So they would only be up on business hours and they were nice looking signs, like they weren't – so even though they were taking them down after an eight-hour period, that's still not law.

**Chris Jones:** It's still not permitted within the law.

**Cheryl Paynter:** It's still illegal when they would be up, yeah.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay. Chair, I've got a couple more questions.

**Chair:** Keep going. I've got nobody else on the list now.

**Mr. MacKay:** My next question, which I've seen happened a few times, it was something I never noticed before, so then once the issue started coming to light I started driving around and seen numerous businesses that have these signs right from one end of the Island to the other, but they are not all losing their signs. So why are only some signs coming down and not other signs?

**Chris Jones:** Maybe I'll go back to my point where we have one officer full-time and two officers part-time.

**Mr. MacKay:** Right.

**Chris Jones:** I think it's a simply a manpower – I mean, these officers are not only regulating signage but they are also dealing with, under the *Tourism Industry Act*, the violations of non-compliance of licensed accommodation operators. So their time is spent – mixed between doing the duties of signage and non-licensed tourism accommodation operators.



What we do is at – yeah, when it's brought to our attention we will be in that area. If we know that there is a number of issues in that particular area our officers may be deployed in that area at various times but it is conceivable that we can't cover every inch of the Island.

**Mr. MacKay:** I guess that's one concern that I have because I'm all about everybody being treated fair, right?

**Chris Jones:** Sure.

**Mr. MacKay:** You've got a restaurant 10 miles up the road that has the sign out all summer long and then one restaurant, for example, that's blacklisted now because the sign has already been down. So he loses his sign every day and the other restaurant is up all summer. That is one thing that concerns me a little bit, that not everybody is following the rules.

**Chris Jones:** Everybody would be treated equally. Everybody may not be following the rules. If we are aware of a violation then we would enforce it the same for everybody.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Absolutely.

**Mr. MacKay:** Going back, I guess, obviously the main concern is safety. Is there not a common ground that can be looked at, both for safety and the financial stability of a business? Because the people that are calling me are struggling rural businesses that are trying to promote and from what I seen – like even the biggest sign I seen was probably a 2x4 sandwich board sign that came out every day and it was not on the road, it was off to the shoulder of the road, which to me really didn't even affect the traffic.

I'm just wondering is there a common ground that even if it's the minister's discretion or something that could be overruled and be looked at and said: Well, maybe this is an exemption due to where it's at, instead of having the same standard guidelines right through.

**Cheryl Paynter:** I suppose anything is possible, but as soon as you crack that nut – I mean, go back to those pictures of Nova Scotia and one sign, you may be correct and perhaps it's not as much of a safety issue or

a prominent road piece, but to your previous point about trying to treat everybody equally, all of a sudden it could become 32 sandwich boards and become a real issue.

**Mr. MacKay:** Obviously, you don't want to see the province covered with signs everywhere.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Right.

**Mr. MacKay:** I do understand that and that's why when the business that told me: Well, they take them down after the eight-hour period and we only put it up for a two-hour period when the traffic is heavy. And they were still getting penalized for it.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Well of course. The traffic, heavy period would be our biggest area of concern.

**Mr. MacKay:** My next concern, the real estate sign, so I'm a realtor as well and –

**Chris Jones:** We didn't show any pictures of (Indistinct)

**Cheryl Paynter:** We were aware of that.

**Mr. MacKay:** And the real estate signs, you'll come across some roads and they look terrible when you've got six or seven signs up there so I do agree with that to an extent, but at the end of the day we're trying to promote tourism. We're trying to bring people here. We're trying to get people to move here. We're trying to sell property. We're trying to build the economy. We're trying to make money and it seems with these rules, they just seem to be a little tight with the regulations that are prohibiting people from doing that.

**Cheryl Paynter:** They do, and I will share with you in my (Indistinct) meeting with other jurisdictions – Prince Edward Island is held out as a best in class example on how to preserve landscape, in particular in the tourism realm. We do rely very heavily on transportation infrastructure for the safety component of it and bolting onto safety signs has been deemed as an absolute no-no to do so.

In a lot of cases the real estate signs that you speak of seem to find their way attached to

safety signs, so they are removed on a quite regular basis, yeah.

**Chair:** The Chair recognizes Sonny Gallant, then Jordan Brown and we'll come back to Matt MacKay.

**Mr. MacKay:** Perfect, thank you.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much for your presentation.

A question, you alluded to the certain areas where signs are allowed. Are they municipalities or towns?

**Chris Jones:** Yeah there are 13 municipalities under the regulations that came in a number of years ago, Sonny. There is an exemption – what the exemption basically reads is that: The following municipalities are exempt from the application of the act and these regulations.

What's happened, is that they've taken these responsibilities onto themselves by the way of bylaws and we have continued to work with some municipalities who seek our assistance. Just for the record, those communities are Alberton, Borden-Carleton, Charlottetown, Cornwall, Georgetown, Kensington, Miltonvale Park, Montague, New Haven, Riverdale, the resort municipality of Stanley Bridge, Hope River, Bayview, Cavendish and North Rustico, Stratford, Souris and Summerside.

Over time, and I will give you an example of it, is the town of Montague. Instead of having the big highway signs, if you will, they have gone to a more pedestrian orientated type of signs where they have worked with us on a pilot project to bring in more customized signs that are more visually appealing for the walking public. They've been able to move people around their community by way of this type of signage, so it's proven to be quite successful.

Now, we will still, as an example Stratford – we will still if they want, continue to operate the blue signs within those jurisdictions to make sure that the travelling public has uniform signage and stuff like that.

**Mr. Gallant:** Okay, to Matt's concern, I'll just use any one of those 13. If an A-frame

sign was out in front of a business in one of those towns or communities and it was allowed, and outside the boundaries it wouldn't be allowed? Correct? Or it wouldn't be allowed inside?

**Chris Jones:** The best way to characterize it – if it met within the regulations in terms of size setback and if it was on their own property it would be allowed. It has to meet certain regulations, obviously, so whether – if it's in the province's jurisdiction it would have to satisfy those regulations. If it was in the municipality, they may have more stringent regulations or bylaws that lessen the size setback and things like that.

What we would ask is that the municipality not be any less stringent; in other words that they don't allow something bigger and bolder than what we would normally allow.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Jordan Brown.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Chair.

I have a few questions on these. The first one: Can you explain who pays for the signs and how they come to be erected in a certain spot?

**Chris Jones:** Blue signs are at intersections and you'll find that when you drive to an intersection – I'd say an intersection that's probably at its busiest point – it's going to have three standards. Those are three posts in the ground with three signs on it. You've got three posts, three signs, so you've got nine coming, nine leaving, nine coming, if it's a T intersection or a cross intersection. The individual pays for those – an individual business would pay for the sign and they would be erected by the Department of Transportation and Public Works.

**Mr. J. Brown:** They call you guys and say: I want –

**Chris Jones:** There's an application process. So they would make an application to the department for their blue sign and we would register it. In our data bank we would have all those signs registered and all the locations where they are across the province.

**Cheryl Paynter:** They are picking the intersection where they want to be when they are applying for the sign.

**Mr. J. Brown:** That was my next question: Is it just at intersections? Sometimes, my impression, you see them on the side of the road. Maybe that's leading to an intersection or T intersection.

**Chris Jones:** Yeah, if you're leading to an intersection giving it directions. There is never a straightaway sign. Most of these signs – the role of the sign – basically if you're travelling along the road the sign should give you a direction left or right to where that business is. They're more directional in purpose, as opposed to something that you're going to come up upon in a straight ahead fashion.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry, this probably answers that question, but just to be clear: Say I'm going to Chris's craft shop, would there ever be a sign like at the end of Chris's driveway or laneway, or whatever, that says: Chris's craft shop, turn left?

**Chris Jones:** No, Chris may have a sign in his yard though that's legally conforming that's up, like the Polaris sign that I showed you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The real estate signs that Matt was talking about, are they allowed at all? Just based on the list it looks like no.

**Chris Jones:** No.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Any of those road signs are –

**Chris Jones:** Again, I mean, how offensive are they. If they're on someone's property as they normally would (Indistinct), then that would be something that would be allowed under the normal operation. But when you start to see these proliferating into the public right-of-way and at intersections, clogging intersections up, and when you start to see them on the road signs then it becomes offensive and they're taken down.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Does that include the open house, Sunday 2:00 to 4:00 one that might go on the corner?

**Chris Jones:** It's probably a grey area. Again, I think if you were to see a proliferation of those, I mean they are the ones that probably happen every now and then and not a common occurrence. You don't see a lot of that along the highways; those are more in the urban area where you might see the open house signs and stuff like that. It's not a common occurrence in the rural areas that would be offensive.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I think just for what it's worth and to make the comment, I think this is an interesting issue. You have, as Matt says, a bunch of businesses that want to be –

**Chris Jones:** Competing interests.

**Mr. J. Brown:** - treated equally and really when we buy something, a property in particular, we buy the property, we don't necessarily buy the road sign when it's yards down the road or whatever it might be, but we also have the clear interest of promoting business and whatever on PEI, in a way that doesn't kind of stand out as an eyesore.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Fully appreciate that and that's why Chris took you through such the rich history of how many times this has been looked at and how we got to tourism businesses.

**Chris Jones:** I don't think through the history, I don't think we seen a demarcation from where they started to where we are today, it's all about protecting the landscape and have tightened it up now to give more restrictions and probably better clarity in terms of the enforcement in what we're looking at what's allowed and what's not allowed. I think they've tightened up the statutory requirements and the regulations over time.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Maybe one final one, Chair.

**Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. J. Brown:** What about the big billboards you'd often see in other provinces? Are we allowed to do those anymore?

**Chris Jones:** No, they actually fell by the wayside in the 1950s.

**Mr. J. Brown:** That just to be clear would be on somebody's private land but I could see it from the road, kind of thing.

**Chris Jones:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Chair recognizes Kathleen Casey then Matt MacKay.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your presentation. I thoroughly am familiar with the sign pollution they call it in Nova Scotia, the sign pollution that they have in Nova Scotia when I'm there.

My question is with regard to the TDS signs. You said somebody has to register or apply for a sign and they pay a fee, basically, and they buy their own sign. My question is: Is this a one-time fee or is it renewable? Do they have to pay a renewable fee each year? You did talk about turnover of the signs and the wait list. Who maintains them? If there was damage to a sign who does the maintenance on the sign?

**Chris Jones:** Highways would repair the sign or put a new sign up. If was repaired by – because of a snow plow or something like that – probably transportation pays for that. But there is a one-time fee and then there's an annual service fee for it.

**Ms. Casey:** A one-time fee.

**Chris Jones:** One-time fee, yeah. I don't have the fees, I'm sorry I don't have that fees on me, unfortunately. Maybe I do here. Fee payable for an application for each new directional sign for tourism business is \$160 per sign. The annual fee payable for continued direction is \$60 per sign. Those are prescribed by regulation.

**Ms. Casey:** So there's an annual \$60 fee. Is there a bill sent out every year to those people who have the –

**Cheryl Paynter:** We do a consolidated bill from tourism for licensing and visitor's guide, advertisements and things of that nature and it's packaged all up in one. Basically, we present it to you on what you purchased last year and you sign off that yes, everything is the same or you cross a couple off. We've been seeing a lot of cross

offs of the tourism directional, the TDS signs.

**Ms. Casey:** Is that because of the new uses or other uses of advertising?

**Cheryl Paynter:** I think so, yes. Absolutely, we have heard a lot of feedback in particular from tourism operators, in particular to rural tourism operators on the importance of GPS mapping their properties.

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Chair recognizes Matt MacKay, followed by Sonny Gallant, then Chris Palmer.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

I guess I just got four final questions here. Just going back to what Sonny had mentioned on the municipalities: How would the municipality amalgamation impact the regulatory framework of this?

**Chris Jones:** I think what we would do is (Indistinct) when and if there is amalgamation, we would take a look at those jurisdictions and see if they want to continue to be exempt. The onus would be back on to them to say: Yes, we do want to be exempt, or no, we're fine with the province taking back the responsibility.

**Mr. MacKay:** Also, looking at some of the signs in the presentation here – so how far off the road, I guess – the province owns 33 feet from the yellow line, is that right?

**Chris Jones:** You're getting into the details here (Indistinct) over the regulations.

**Mr. MacKay:** I'm just more concerned how far off the roadway before somebody could have a sign?

**Chris Jones:** Beyond the public right of way.

**Mr. MacKay:** I guess this is where – the big Polaris sign where I'm looking here, to see the distance from the road to that, then to the one with the regular gas and diesel. There's not much difference, but one is illegal and one is not.

**Chris Jones:** You can see where the public right of way is. You got the telephone pole, I think, might be your line. This one certainly fits within the highway and between the pole where the Polaris – where is my Polaris sign – you can see it is on the other side of the pole so this actually sits in the individual's yard.

**Mr. MacKay:** I guess there's my question. For that business, if he was behind that telephone pole he probably could get away with it then.

**Chris Jones:** Yeah, he does. What the regulations here – I won't take time to point to the specific regulation. What the regulations do is they do a number of things. One is, they give you a direction in terms of the size of sign itself. The size – that's a fairly large sign if you were to look up close to it. I'm going to speculate; maybe it's a 4x8, something like that. But the bigger the sign, the farther back you have to be within a certain regulation. In other words, you are going to have encroachment upon – your side yard or front yard is going to be limited by the regulation and the size of the signage and the elevation of the sign would be limited by the regulation. It's fairly prescriptive in terms of the box that you have to work within.

**Mr. MacKay:** Next question. On the events signs you mentioned – and you gave me one example there – what classes as an event sign?

**Chris Jones:** Good question.

Under the regulations – special event sign registration permit may only be issued to an applicant if the applicant is made in respect of the erection displayed maintenance or placement. The applicant provides the registrar with a written consent. First of all, it's by way of application.

Under the regulations it talks about special event signs means a temporary sign – temporary being operative word there – that contains an advertising relating to a special event or exhibition of patriotic, religious, charitable, artistic, social, sporting or similar nature. So they're fairly prescriptive in terms of what's a special event. If you can fit within that box, then you're eligible for those signs.

By policy we have limitations on the signs. Basically, you get six signs of 2x2 nature at locations no further away than 15 kilometres from the event and are to be kept from the intersections, at least 300 meters so safe stopping distance, and the location and distance is consistent with what is allowed by the tourism directional signs. We try to fit the policy within the existing guidelines. Those signs will go up prior to the event, but as soon as the event is over they are to be taken down and they are by way of an application.

**Mr. MacKay:** So there is no timeline on an event sign, it's just through the application process?

**Chris Jones:** That's right, and I'm not sure what you mean by that question.

**Mr. MacKay:** Well I'm just thinking out loud here. So if a business was having a sale, for example, and wanted to have –

**Chris Jones:** It would not fit within the special event.

**Mr. MacKay:** Right.

**Chris Jones:** Not a religious, not a sporting event, nothing of the nature that fits within that.

**Mr. MacKay:** If it was a sporting event that lasted the whole summer or a concert or along that line, that sign would be all right there for the summer period?

**Chris Jones:** I think the intent is it's a one-of event for a weekend or a day or something of that nature. When you start to see something over a two or three month duration, that gets beyond what might be considered special.

**Mr. MacKay:** And that's why I was wondering if there was any timeline in it at all.

**Chris Jones:** It would be by way of policy so I think we would take some guidance from what seems to be reasonable, and be given a reasonable interpretation.

**Mr. MacKay:** Just two final –

**Chair:** Yeah, okay, (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacKay:** Fines, are there any fines given out right now to somebody that has an illegal sign up?

**Chris Jones:** There is a prescription in the regulations and the statutory requirements for signs for penalties, but we try to deal more with the operator themselves to remove your signs because of safety, so we'll do that rather than try to penalize somebody.

**Mr. MacKay:** Just my final question, because I don't even know how to respond when I get the calls: What am I supposed to say to a summer business that's trying to survive and make a living over these sign issues?

I know it's a safety issue and I realize that's why it was done and for the landscape, etc. But what I've seen in the couple instances I have had the calls that I have gone out, didn't strike me as a safety issue and they weren't an eyesore of a sign, and they're making valid points.

You might have somebody at the western end of the province or eastern end of the province that has a sign up all summer but once you get blacklisted here and your name is on the list, they were getting their signs removed every second day or every third day.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Just to clarify, the concerns that are being brought to your attention, they're outside the realm of the tourism business or –

**Mr. MacKay:** They are all tourism businesses and they are all off the main road.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Okay, so they maybe already have their maximum TDS blue signage but feel it needs to be complemented further, perhaps?

**Mr. MacKay:** Perhaps, and they did make a good point. If you're driving down the highway and you're driving 80 or 90 kilometres and you're not looking for that business specifically, you might not see it, whereas, if you turn the corner and see: Well, I can get a hamburger here or an ice cream here then –

**Chris Jones:** They would miss the opportunity.

**Mr. MacKay:** That's right, yeah. I think everyone I have talked to, their intent is there; they're just trying to make a viable business. They're not looking to create problems or create anything negative to the viewscape or anything like that, or any safety concerns.

**Cheryl Paynter:** My response would be to have them contact our office and we'll go through all of the available options. Perhaps there's a better intersection closer to their business that a TDS application could be made for. We can make sure that they're profiled on Google Maps and have proper GPS coordinates. We'll work with them as much as we can within the regulations that we have, but absolutely. We would be pleased to talk to any seasonal tourism business trying to make a go of it.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay, thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Sonny Gallant, then Chris Palmer, and then Jordan Brown.

**Mr. Gallant:** I think my questions might have been answered, but I'll just touch on it. So currently there are 28 tourist businesses waiting for signs, so maybe one of those could be one he's speaking about, possibly, or maybe not?

**Chris Jones:** No.

**Cheryl Paynter:** I don't think so.

**Chris Jones:** He's got four of them so their operators have got four signs already.

**Mr. Gallant:** When you send out your package to a business and they decide they don't want the signage anymore, that's when one of these 28 people get on?

**Chris Jones:** That's when the next one (Indistinct) that particular intersection (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Gallant:** Yeah, depending if they're there. So if there's nobody in that location –

**Cheryl Paynter:** Yes, and a point of clarification: 28 businesses – the majority, 20-plus of those businesses would already have some TDS signage. It's just additional requests. I have basically, it looks like a couple in each county that are on the wait list that currently don't have any signage so it's whittled down a little bit from that number.

**Mr. Gallant:** It's possible that that business that didn't want it anymore – there's no business in that area that's looking for one, right?

**Cheryl Paynter:** That's right.

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct) put it somewhere else?

**Cheryl Paynter:** It's all based on standards and those parameters we work through of three standards per intersection, three signs per standard.

**Mr. Gallant:** Okay, and that was well defined. My next question, you answered it but, your officer would (Indistinct) – and I'll just say the real estate signs because that's the one that hit you the most when you showed us it and I'm not picking on the real estate – he would go and take those signs daily if somebody put them there. Would you contact the real estate companies and tell them?

**Chris Jones:** I think they're fairly knowledgeable already that they're probably not allowed, but this is an opportunity to get a sign on there and they'll take advantage of it. The officer will take the signs down, call the real estate agent up and say: Listen, we've got your – most of those signs have the name of the agent so –

**Mr. Gallant:** So they do contact them?

**Chris Jones:** Yes.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Yes.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you.

**Chair:** The Chair recognizes Chris Palmer.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to go back to something that Matt had touched on around that Polaris sign and I don't know if you have the regulations around what the acceptable signs are. Is it pushed back farther into my lot or it has to be higher or there are those kind of regulations? I assume that somebody who is interested could get those from you if you don't have them today.

**Chris Jones:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay.

**Chris Jones:** They're covered right in the regulations.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay.

**Chris Jones:** Yeah, and quite prescriptive too in terms of size, setbacks, distance, height and all of those things.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Palmer:** What's that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** All regulations are available online.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay, so they can check there?

**Chris Jones:** Or they could call an officer if there's an issue. They can certainly call the department and the officer will walk them through the process.

**Mr. Palmer:** If I put someone's sign on my land, am I allowed to do that? I can't rent out space to put signs up and that's in the regulations as well?

**Chris Jones:** It's in the regulations.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay.

**Chris Jones:** It's quite prescriptive, again. It's that the owner and operator of the business has to own the property itself.

**Mr. Palmer:** Does it have to be on site? Can I own a property two miles down the road and I can put a sign up if I'm the same owner?

**Chris Jones:** I think you'll find that the regulations on that property is what the regulations say, using the word 'that' property.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay, and the final one –

**Chris Jones:** Again, it's quite prescriptive.

**Mr. Palmer:** The final one, I think this probably is covered in that as well. If I park a transport trailer in the field somewhere with a big sign on the side of it, how do we deal with that?

**Chris Jones:** We'll contact you, and ask you to remove it. Subsequent to that, you would be fined if you choose not to.

**Mr. Palmer:** If I park it on my land with a big sign on the side of it then I can't have it there? Because effectively, it's the same as one of those large billboards, as you talked about.

**Chris Jones:** It is, yeah.

Yeah, I think many people would see that as a reasonable facsimile as a billboard and say: No, that's in violation of the regulations. So, it would be enforced.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay, good.

**Chris Jones:** We'd call you and ask you to move it.

**Mr. Palmer:** Good, all right, thank you.

**Chair:** Jordan Brown.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Chair.

I have been thinking about this and I guess firstly I will commend you – I received and shared a video there that was on the CBC website in relation to the [pointseastcoastaldrive.com](http://pointseastcoastaldrive.com) and 50 beaches, great work I think there.

What I'm curious in relation to – and whether they're connected or not I guess is part of my question – but if you either pick up a visitor's guide or you go – I know in some GPS software you can go to the closest gas station or closest restaurant, or closest bathroom or closest hotel or whatever, and it will give you all these different options

along the way. I guess what I'm wondering is: Do you guys do any kind of – you mentioned that you were cross referencing on Google Maps – but do you look at the visitor's guide and say: If I got on this how easy would it be to figure out where the closest this or that or whatever might be going along the coast?

**Cheryl Paynter:** I'll take a stab at that. Perhaps not exactly, but for a couple of businesses I think we're talking about the same ones as Matt is, we have tried to map that out. If I'm trying to find a business off the – I forget the route number in behind Stanley Bridge, how would I navigate myself there and if it's tucked in with trees – we have tried our best to understand the issues and get them the TDS that would best help that.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Are they all pretty uniform in how they're described in the visitor's guide or in whatever publications we might be putting out there?

**Cheryl Paynter:** Well, the visitor's guide is a pay-to-play publication, so only as good as the information is in, but our project of last summer was to try to get through as much as we could on those and make sure that the GPS coordinates were solid for sure.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Maybe to put it a different way: Is it you guys that decides or somebody perhaps within your department that oversees how those descriptions are laid out? Or if there was say, 150 different businesses on the Points East Coastal Drive, did they decide this is what I want you to put in the visitor's guide for me.

**Cheryl Paynter:** They write their ad; we require content to conform to, but they buy various lengths of ad. If they buy the largest ad they're obviously going to get a little bit more descriptive. It's usually related to service and amenities though. The civic address would be constant throughout, yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'll tell you part of what I'm thinking about. I was at a conference at UPEI last spring and there were a bunch of the delegates there that had some time to go to a beach and I was there trying to direct them to which ones they might like to go to and show them where they might want to



stop on the way there or on the way back or whatever.

I'll be honest in saying, I had a little bit of trouble at times figuring out the map and I was trying to do it quickly. In fairness, I'm not saying it's not laid out in an ideal way but I was trying to get them to the eastern part of the Island and show them: Go here and do a loop back around and you'd see a bunch of different things and then you'd look. Restaurants could be here and beaches could be there and you'd have to look in different parts of the guide to try and figure that out.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Correct. You're not alone in that and we would do annual training with our destination centre and visitor information staff to do just that, itinerary building for that reason. We work with a lot of the accommodation providers as well. They're getting very savvy on their concierge or front desk staff would have that nailed. I hazard to guess, beyond transportation staff they might be the only folks on the Island that can rattle off route numbers quickly, for sure.

I worked in the sector for a long time, in the private sector, so I understand exactly what you're saying. It's difficult because inherently we, around the table here, talk about: You turn left at the purple house and you go here. So you have to translate it into route numbers and building itineraries half-day, full-day, two days is what – we rely on a lot of help from our visitor's information centre staff, destination centre and our regional tourism associations.

**Chair:** One more.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Do we still do – I can't remember what it was called, but it was like call an insider or whatever –

**Chris Jones:** Ask an Islander.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Ask an Islander, how does that work? How are they geared up to say: Go to Rick's or go to wherever?

**Cheryl Paynter:** It's not so much directed, Ask an Islander to directions, it's more of local flavour. They're trying to get the inside scoop on – maybe they –

**Ms. Casey:** Ask local.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Ask the local kind of flavour, so that is vetted through our visitor information staff and it's not an immediate response. It's more of a thoughtful kind of – they're more in advance than on the spot when somebody is planning their vacation: I'm coming to eastern Prince Edward Island this summer, what are the must-dos? They're given the highlights from there. It's not so much direction and itinerary building; it's more around experiences and gems and local flavours.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Can you get bumped up on that list or down? Do you know what I mean? If you search Google some people figure out ways to get their name to come up first. Is it the same with that or is it –

**Cheryl Paynter:** With Ask an Islander? No. We respond to all of them and farm them out to our list of ambassadors and every one of them gets answered. But you brought up one of the leading edge things that is happening, is ad buying and – I don't know –

**Chris Jones:** All the Google (Indistinct)

**Cheryl Paynter:** Yeah, I don't know the right terminology here but –

**Chris Jones:** Programmatic buying and stuff like that.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Programmatic buying and GPS locations have predominately taken over roadside signage, for sure.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, great, thanks.

**Chair:** Matt MacKay.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

I just thought of something there, Cheryl, actually when you were talking. So, MLA Trivers has a business in his district. It was a restaurant and I believe he had some trouble. He had a sandwich board out at the end of the road and he was getting it taken down daily, so obviously with the safety in mind and the viewscape in mind.

But what he ended up doing and which I found funny at the time because he had to

get to that point, he put a clown on the road with a sign and for three or four days there was a clown at the end of the road promoting the business. So he had to get to that point –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacKay:** Yeah, so he had to get to that point to do that. I guess my fear is if the signage is too strict, is every business going to do something radical like that? And then we're talking some real safety issues there when somebody is driving and seeing a clown on the side of the road.

I'm just wondering if there's not a common ground, like a happy medium that can both protect the business and help it financially, as well as have the safety and the viewscape kept intact as well. I'm just wondering if it's not time to sit down and maybe reevaluate the legislation a little more just to see if there's a happy medium that would work for everyone.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Very well could. From our receiving end, I can tell you the number of operators who come forth with real issue and challenges; I could probably count on one hand so I'd love the opportunity to work with each one of those operators to try to solve the issue without opening the can of worms.

**Mr. MacKay:** I guess that's a very good point and if there's only half a dozen of them that are running into the problem and it's not a – why can't we fix the half a dozen issues?

**Chris Jones:** It may not be a particular signage solution that would solve the problem and I know the particular example that you're illustrating, without getting into names. My understanding is the Google Mapping address that they had was their post office box, so therefore, when you Google Mapped that it was the wrong location so we helped them get to the right location.

There are examples like that where the onus is somewhat on the operator to make sure that those checks – that they have exhausted all of those things we will work with them to try to resolve some of the problems.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you very much.

**Chair:** Thank you to all of the members; I don't see anybody else on my list so maybe I can ask a tiny question on the end here.

On the special event signs, and I think I know the answer to this but I just want to ask you a question – like church groups and schools that are doing pancake breakfasts or something like this and they have a sandwich board to put out for two hours in the morning, are they getting permits to do that?

**Cheryl Paynter:** We have a medley of different requests coming in for special events. What you just spoke about, I would say we might get a fraction by application. I would guess, Chris?

**Chris Jones:** Yeah, I think you're right.

You know, there's a good – like the Cloggeros that I showed you and some of these events that are well established, not-for-profit organizations, they would be working with their local or regional tourism authority who would understand some of the rules and regulations. They would put them in touch with us. An independent school may not be aware of what the signage regulations say. But again, we encourage everybody to certainly work with us and we'll work with them.

**Chair:** Well, the best job I've got today is to thank you, Cheryl and Chris, for coming in here today and presenting to the committee. It's great and I commend you for being the guardians of our landscape in Prince Edward Island because we've all probably been in the Carolinas and seen Pedro south of the border and we certainly don't want that here. I'm always amazed when I come back to the province after being away, even going through our neighbouring provinces, and I come onto Prince Edward Island and it seems so fresh and so nice and it's a subliminal thing and I'm thinking: Why do we look so nice here? It's the absence of signs that our neighbouring provinces and states have out there.

You are ahead of the game and on behalf of the committee, I thank you for that and thank you for what you do for Islanders and trying to be as fair to Islanders as you

possibly can considering all of the – we got to keep our economy going and the fact that you people – if we had too many signs there would be no business here anyway. To Matt’s point, if you can help an individual all the better.

Thank you very much for being here today.

**Cheryl Paynter:** Our pleasure, thank you.

**Chair:** Would the committee like a couple minute break to stretch or do you want to just keep on going –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacKay:** No, we might as well keep going.

**Chair:** All right, just two minutes. Chris has got to move there.

[Recess]

**Chair:** Here we go again.

Item No. 4, we have a request from the Belfast Community Action Committee. I’ll open the floor to discussion. Do you want the clerk – did everybody get a copy of the letter?

**Clerk Assistant (Reddin):** It’s in your memorandum, the first thing in there.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct), Chair.

**Chair:** Do you want to read that, Ryan?

**Clerk Assistant:** Sure.

It’s an email from Charlie McGeoghegan.

“Hi Ryan,

“I was asked by the Belfast Community to sit on their action committee in response to the rural school issue, and the Bob Andrews report, recommending that Belfast Consolidated School be closed for good.

“Our committee would like to present to the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development to offer a solution to this issue. We heard that the presenters from Nova Scotia on the Hub school model might be coming to present on February

15<sup>th</sup>. Would myself, and two other members from our committee, be able to come in on the 15<sup>th</sup>, as well, in order to offer the standing committee options that would help government solve this issue?

As you know, time is sensitive. Could you pass on our request to Chair, Bush Dumville, and let us know the reply?”

Thanks, Ryan

Charlie McGeoghegan

**Chair:** Steven Myers.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

I have no issue with them coming in. I’m just wondering if we do go ahead, if we should send a note to the other schools and see if they have any similar type presentation. I don’t really know what they’re presenting; it sounds like around the Hub school model. It doesn’t really say that, but I assume.

**Chair:** Jordan Brown after –

**Mr. Myers:** He’s talking about options there.

**Ms. Casey:** Well, he said solution to the issue.

**Mr. Myers:** Yes. I’m wondering if they’re going to present alternative options or the Hub school; if we agree to go ahead, we should reach out to the other four.

**Chair:** I’ll go with Jordan Brown and Kathleen Casey after Jordan?

**Ms. Casey:** No, I’m good.

**Chair:** Oh, you’re done? Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Chair, we did kind of just hit on what I wanted to talk about and I do agree. We talked a bit about this last day and we talked about the Hub school guys who were wanting to come in.

I think I have a pretty serious issue with everybody being treated fairly and the process that’s there now being allowed to work. I’d be worried that if us, as a committee, were not part of that process, get

involved in it before at least the recommendations phase of things from the Public Schools Branch goes off to Cabinet, or even is that, that we're kind of heading down a road that is a diversion.

My primary concern would be that Mr. McGeoghegan and this committee should be presenting to the directors of the Public Schools Branch and there's not really a conduit for us to get that information and make recommendations to them, which would be part of the process right now.

I would have a significant concern that (a), perhaps we should be doing that and (b), I'm not sure if we were to do that how we would ensure that we do justice and get whatever information might be there to the directors of the Public Schools Branch in a timely fashion so that their recommendations could consider whatever we'd have to close the loop out prior to, if it's March 10<sup>th</sup>, or whatever the date is, that the end of the 60 days is up.

I have a significant concern with timing and with another process kind of coming off the side if we end up having a bunch of groups in to talk about this. If you do, where do you start and where do you stop, I guess, is kind of the issue that I have with it.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Any other comments?

Steven Myers.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) if I could. Charlie spoke at the meeting last night in Montague, Charlie McGeoghegan. His message was pretty clear that it's the politicians, the decision rests with the politicians, was the message that he had portrayed last night. Of course, it is, because at the end of the day it goes to Cabinet. I don't know if we would ever have to make a recommendation to the Public Schools Branch so much as the Legislative Assembly; and therefore, the elected representatives. I think that was his point last night when he spoke was that it's – Whether or not, what he said, politicians will always get the blame, so therefore it's the politicians.

**Chair:** Jordan Brown.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Certainly I recognize this.

I'll give you the example. I've obviously met the group at St. Jean in my district. I have other groups at West Kent and Spring Park that kind of all hover around that same spot. In our district, we have schools that are significantly overcapacity, in fact, couldn't take the students that they're supposed to take next year.

I do recognize what you're saying and part of what I'm concerned about is that there is a process there. As I've said to other people, I take what you're saying – it is in some way a political process. But what I've said to other people is: The process becomes political when recommendations go from the Public Schools Branch to Cabinet. We're not there yet and we need to allow that process to take shape and to allow those recommendations to happen. All of the information that would be wrapped up in that and obtained by people who are more expert in how we run our schools than Jordan Brown, certainly – to shape the recommendations that might go forward.

I have a concern with having another process come outside that and having people putting ultimatums to politicians, or whoever it might be, before that process has a chance to shape up and to do a fair job of making sure that the people that do know what they're talking about, at least to a greater extent than I do, to have time to consider what has been put before them.

That's what my concern would be with having a bunch in now.

**Chair:** Chair recognizes Sonny Gallant next.

**Mr. Gallant:** I'm a firm believer that people need to have their say on whatever issue, and this is an important issue. There is a process right now in place. I don't think it would be good for us to start bringing people into our committee when they have an avenue right now to go and talk to this board. That's what these meetings are for.

Now, there may be a time down the road that possibly we may entertain this, but I think that's what this exercise is for, to get input from the community and people's

thoughts on the recommendations, but there hasn't been a decision made yet.

With that, I think maybe it's best that we not bring these people in at this time.

**Chair:** Matt MacKay and then Chris Palmer.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm kind of the opposite. I think these people are just frustrated with possibly how the process went down. One thing that I've heard in the very first meeting I was at, one of the very first statements that came out of Bob Andrews' mouth was: The minister said status quo was not an option. So when he came with that first statement it kind of got off on the wrong track right from day one.

I realize that we're a busy committee here too, but I do think that all of these five schools that are in jeopardy of closing right now, I think if they want to come in and speak to the education committee I certainly have no problem with them coming in over here. We're here to listen and listen to their ideas. I don't think we need to comment on anything. We just need to give them an ear to talk to on it, so I would be fine with it.

**Chair:** Chris Palmer and then Jordan Brown.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Chair.

I think to have folks follow the existing process, they would be far better served I think to spend their time to make presentations to the decision makers and I'm not one of them. I'm not on the school board; I'm not in Cabinet. So for them to come here and try to give us a message to take along to somebody else – I think they'd be better served – and I think they have been doing a tremendous job at the meetings that they're having now. I think there has been some wonderful presentations made to the folks that are actually making the recommendations, which is the school board. I think they'd be better served to do that and if they wanted to come back to us after the 60-day window, or whatever the existing process is, then maybe that's something that we could entertain at that time. But, I don't know that – we don't have

any influence over it, so I don't know where we would be bringing any value to that.

My recommendation is to keep doing what they're doing, which is great presentations to the school board and just to keep doing that to make sure that they get their message out and they'll come up with options and they're actually talking to the folks that are making the decisions.

**Chair:** Thank you, Chris.

Jordan Brown.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Chris and Sonny have kind of said a bit of what I was going to say to the further (Indistinct). But I guess part of what I think we need to understand here or envisualize is what would we have to add to this as a body that would be outside the normal process? I think at best we could make recommendations and I'm not – I think recommendations in relation to the specific substance of the work that's going on right now would be, frankly for me, dangerous to make.

To give you the example, I was at our community of schools meeting at Colonel Gray there last week and there were some great presentations on the zoning breakdowns, as an example, but I wouldn't have the expertise to be able to figure out: Okay, if you move one around a little bit, what impact does that have on the other one and the next one and so on.

I think we'd be putting ourselves in a dangerous position as a group of politicians to be kind of interfering with the work of those that are doing that work right now and have the actual resources to do it when we don't have either the resources or the time to do – If we're here inviting these groups in, I think the problem that we get into is we're inferring that we have some ability to shape that process and I don't think that really we do.

The process is there for them to participate in. We have the ability to do something different if at the end of that process we thought there might be a need to do it then. I have a significant issue with calling in groups now and I think we need to think about that.

**An Hon. Member:** Somebody make a motion?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Do you want me to make a motion and you vote it down or do you want to make a motion to vote for it?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Who did it come from? Where did the request come from?

**Chair:** It came from Charlie McGeoghegan.

**Mr. MacKay:** You make a motion, Steven.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) ask for the 60 days (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, can I make a motion then?

**Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Myers:** I make a motion that we accept the request from Charlie McGeoghegan and invite whoever it is in this group to come in and present and also send a letter to the other four school groups to ask them if they'd like to present in a similar fashion.

**Chair:** Okay, discussion? Any other discussion on the motion?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'd just throw this out as a friendly amendment to the motion if the member does agree with it, and I'd say that would be that we wait until after the Public Schools Branch makes recommendations or any recommendation before we get into that process.

**Mr. Myers:** Can we get clarification from the Public Schools Branch then on the exact date on that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Again, I can't answer the question because I don't know –

**Mr. Myers:** No, we could ask as a committee.

**Chair:** I just want to let Chris in there for a minute.

**Mr. Palmer:** Yeah, so maybe to kind of further both of those points is after the – I don't know what the term is – but after the

60-day window when folks can make a contribution to it, we don't necessarily, I think, need to wait until the recommendation is made by the school board, which I don't know how long that is after the 60 days. It could be the 61<sup>st</sup> day or it could be 200 days away. But, as soon as that public process is completed, then we could have the folks in and not necessarily wait until the recommendations come back.

**Chair:** Okay, we'll go back to Jordan Brown.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I don't even know about that. I guess this is why I say that. In Charlie McGeoghegan's note he is saying that they want to come in and they have different solutions to address the issues. Well with the greatest respect to Charlie, they don't know what the issue is yet because there has not been a decision as to what this is going to look like, a final decision as to what it is going to look like. I think that's the problem that we have in trying to delve into something at this point in time, is that you can't really recommend different policy avenues when you don't know what the policy avenue is going to be right now.

I think until we get the recommendations from the Public Schools Branch, we are in a position where we're not going to have a lot to add to the process that's been going on. I don't think it makes sense to be involved in it.

But, Steve, to your point, I don't have an issue with getting clarification as to when those dates might be. I think that's something that –

**Mr. Myers:** I think everybody would like to know.

**Chair:** You have a motion on the floor. We discussed an amendment but we didn't make the amendment yet so where are we now?

**Mr. Myers:** If the amendment could include that we would request an exact date or timeframe from the board, then that's fine.

**Chair:** Do you want to specify the amendment to the –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, so what I was proposing was a friendly amendment that we

– I can't remember what the wording was, but the basic essence of it is that we would look at having these groups in or entertain requests to have groups in after the initial recommendations from the Public Schools Branch are made.

**Chair:** You get that?

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, and I'd like –

**Chair:** We will have the clerk read it back.

**Mr. Myers:** I'd like to include that we seek clarification from the Public Schools Branch on a timeframe.

**An Hon. Member:** Can we do that as a separate one?

**Clerk Assistant:** You could do an amendment to the amendment.

**An Hon. Member:** Please.

**Mr. Myers:** I'll make an amendment to the amendment then and include that we seek, through a letter from our Chair of this committee, for clarification on the timeframe for a decision to be made with the Public Schools Branch after the 60-day period. I think you can also make another amendment, too (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** No, that's as far as I should take it.

The amendment to the amendment is: That we seek, through a letter to the Public Schools Branch, some clarification on the timeline of the 60-day period and recommendations from the Public Schools Branch. Or just the 60-day period –

**Mr. Myers:** We're looking for clarification on when the decision will be made, the timeframe.

**Ms. Casey:** Yeah, when the recommendations – after the 60-day period, when will the recommendations be public.

**Clerk Assistant:** Sub amendment: That we seek, through a letter to the Public Schools Branch, clarification on when recommendations will be public after the 60-day period. So you would discuss that

further and then you would vote on the amendment to the amendment.

**Chair:** Amendment, any discussion?

I'll call for the vote on the amendment of the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment of the amendment, please vote now –

**Mr. Palmer:** For clarity, we're voting to send a letter to find out when this process is going through?

**Mr. Myers:** Along with all of the other –

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Well wait now, what we are saying along with all what?

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** It's going to be an amendment but then we have to vote on your amendment and then we have to vote on the main motion, so it will all be together in one motion.

**Clerk Assistant:** You can pass an amendment to an amendment, but reject the amendment and pass or reject the main motion.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay, got you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So what's the full –

**Ms. Casey:** Why would you have two amendments?

**Clerk Assistant:** The full thing, if you pass the amendment to the amendment, the amendment and the main motion – give me a moment – it would be that the committee consider having the Belfast action committee appear as they have requested after the initial recommendations from the Public Schools Branch are made and that the committee seek, now through a letter to the Public Schools Branch, clarification on when those recommendations will be made after the 60-day period. Does that make sense?

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Basically, three things if we can, Chair just to – we consider after the recommendations come out we seek clarification on the recommendation – I guess it's only two things – seek clarification on the recommendation release date. Is that everybody's –

**Chair:** Everybody on board?

**An Hon. Member:** I think so.

**Chair:** Matt?

**Mr. MacKay:** My only concern is that something takes place and these people don't get in to present to committee. For the sake of a couple of hours, I'm not opposed to anybody ever presenting to us. At the end of the day, the people elect us and I think we should listen to the people but regardless, I just want to make sure at some point these people do get in before any decisions are made.

**Chair:** Well that's what it's saying.

**Mr. MacKay:** Yeah, and I just want to verify that.

**Chair:** That's what it's saying.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay.

**Chair:** Okay clerk, help me out with the vote.

**Clerk Assistant:** Okay, you should vote on the amendment to the amendment. So the amendment to the amendment, again, is: That the committee seek, through a letter to the Public Schools Branch, clarification on when recommendations will be made public after the 60-day consultation period. That's what you'd vote on right now.

**Chair:** All right. All in favour, raise your hands.

Carried.

Thank you, and it was unanimous.

**Clerk Assistant:** Now would be further discussion of the amendment as amended or if there is no further discussion on the amended amendment. The amendment is that: The committee consider having this

group in after initial recommendations from the Public Schools Branch are made. And as the committee has already decided, it's going to seek clarification on when that will be.

**Chair:** All in favour, raise your hands.

Motion carried as amended and it was unanimous.

**Clerk Assistant:** Okay, so the main motion essentially is –

**Chair:** It has been amended.

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes. So the committee will consider having the Belfast Community Action Committee in as per their request after initial recommendations from the Public Schools Branch are made and the committee will seek clarification on when that will be.

**Chair:** We don't have to vote on it.

**Clerk Assistant:** No.

**Chair:** Because it has been voted on as amended, right?

**Clerk Assistant:** Well, you should just for formality.

**Chair:** Okay, all in favour of the original?

**Mr. J. Brown:** As amended.

**Chair:** - as amended. Thank you, Jordan.

Carried and it is unanimous.

Thank you. I didn't know if I would get out of that one or not.

All right, new business, number (5).

**Mr. Myers:** Chair?

**Chair:** Steven Myers.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

I don't know, for those of you that have been following with the school meetings and some of the stuff that's going on in the media, and I think it was in today. CBC had it – it was in the *Eastern Graphic* from



Allan Rankin today, and it has to do with Susan Willis and the perceived conflict of interest that she may have herself in by being the deputy of education, the chair of the school board and sitting on the top level advisory council, the Premier's (Indistinct) advisory council.

As to whether or not she has an ability perceived – the perception of the conflict is whether or not she has the ability to act independently and with the best interest of the Public Schools Branch while she answers to the Premier, basically.

What I'm wondering is if the committee would agree to send a letter to the Premier asking him to clarify whether or not he believes she is in conflict and why. Right now it has become a major thing in the school review process, whether or not there's any independence by the board, in particular Susan Willis. I think it's something that we really need to clear up if we expect Islanders to have any faith and trust in this process as it moves on. Not asking for any action other than a letter to the Premier clarifying his position so that it either goes away or he has to deal with it, one or the other, I guess is why.

**Chair:** The Chair recognizes Chris Palmer and then Jordan Brown.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you, Chair.

I was doing some research on this one and I see that in Bill No. 26 which was passed May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, before I arrived, section 13.1 says: The public affairs of the Public Schools Branch shall be conducted by a board of directors consisting of the deputy minister of the department who shall be the chair person and two persons qualified in accordance with the regulations appointed by the minister.

That was already passed so I think the answer would be, yes it is the deputy minister because that's the bill that you passed in May.

**Mr. Myers:** The question, Chris, was whether or not she's in conflict and you can't legislate your way out of conflict of interest. There's a perception of conflict of interest whether or not – regardless of legislation, and Jordan would be able to

back me up on this being a lawyer, that regardless of legislation a perceived conflict of interest is a perceived conflict of interest.

I'm not saying that she doesn't have the protection of the law or that the legislation passed doesn't grant her the right to be there. I'm just saying that during this period of time it may be in the best interest of all Islanders to know clearly whether or not the Premier believes that the process is tainted by this perceived conflict.

I'm not even saying she's in conflict. I'm saying that there is a big perception out there and it's getting really hard for her in particular, and it was repetitive last night. She got it over and over again. I suspect that it will also come up in the Westisle meeting and it would have probably come up the night of the rural meeting. I think it's really important that it's cleared up; if he doesn't think so and he can explain why, then great.

**Chair:** I guess you have a rebuttal, then Jordan Brown.

**Mr. Palmer:** Sure, yeah, and I agree with that; but the Legislature voted on this in May and it was unanimous that it was okay to have the deputy minister as the chair and two persons qualified in accordance with the regulations. All the folks here with the exception of me, I wasn't here yet, but everybody in the Legislature voted unanimously that that is what the makeup of it should look like.

**Mr. Myers:** It doesn't matter. Perceived conflict of interest still exists. That's not the point of it.

**Chair:** Jordan Brown.

**Mr. J. Brown:** There are a few things that I would like to say about this and I guess just to give everybody the context or to leave it for the record – being a lawyer and practicing every day in a private sector law practice, this is something that we're constantly having to turn our minds to. I guess the first thing that I would say in kind of a response to Steve's comments, a couple of things (1), it doesn't really matter what the Premier thinks one way or the other. There's either a conflict of interest or there's not a conflict of interest.

My understanding is there's a lady from your area, I believe, that had referred a question onto the –

**An Hon. Member:** Ethics –

**Mr. J. Brown:** - Ethics and Integrity Commissioner and we'll, I gather, get her response to that in one way or another. I think there's a process there for that, one way or another, to unfold. But I think the big piece of this that we kind of need to turn our minds to: Is there a conflict or is there not a conflict?

I think what Chris is saying does inform this. The legislation being there at least means that 27 people plus the department and the minister and all his staff –

**Mr. Myers:** Only one of whom was a lawyer.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Well –

**Mr. Myers:** The Premier.

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, but there would have been –

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not a lawyer.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – departmental staff, presumably, that would have –

**Ms. Casey:** They would have written (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – prepared the legislation (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Myers:** Well, I would have asked questions on the legislation but I wouldn't have thought at the time: Are you going to use the deputy minister to close schools while she chairs the school board? Like, how would I have – I'd have to be pretty, you know –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Myers:** If I could think that far ahead I'd be doing something else.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The point being there's a process there that's put in place, and I think there are two sides to that process. One is that my understanding of the intent of the

legislation was that, basically, the structure be flattened out and that there be kind of less distance between children getting educated and the people that are charged with being accountable for that education, and it's for that reason that things were set up the way that they were.

I think we all understood that when the legislation was going through, and certainly the minister, I know at the time, gave a number of different speeches that indicated that that was going to be the case and I know that the different learning councils had addressed those kinds of issues back at the time. I think that's very important.

I think the other thing to note is that she's the chair, so just like we have here – unless there's a division amongst the other two directors – she's not going to be voting on anything. She would be the tiebreaking piece.

I don't pretend to be in Susan Willis' mind. I can say she was the principal of my high school and I know her a little bit. She's a constituent, actually, and there wouldn't be many people I could think of with more integrity than Ms. Willis, I always call her. From a personal level I'd add that.

I think it's important for this process and anytime you go through this analysis that consideration be given to whether there's an actual conflict – not a perceived conflict, because it's easy to throw stones. But I think you need to look at whether there's an actual conflict or not. I think there's a process that's there if there is, and to my mind there's a lady from your district that's engaged that process already, so –

**Mr. Myers:** Several of them have.

**Ms. Casey:** Several of them have?

**Mr. J. Brown:** There's nothing to be gained in us sending a letter off to the Premier to get a further view from the Premier who's not ultimately the decision-maker on that point – at this point in time, in any event. In other words, the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner will render a decision and the Premier's views on things don't matter one way or the other in relation to that.

**Mr. Myers:** Can I just clarify something? – I'm not attacking Susan Willis; it's a move to protect her integrity, not to further hurt it, because I think it's hurt. I think her integrity is actually in tatters, and I think we could protect it if we could have some sort of a clarity placed around this. That's all I'm saying.

That's why I bring it forward, is not to attack Susan Willis; I actually really like her. It's that her integrity – because yeah, I agree, in law there's the real conflict, in politics there's perceived conflict, and she has it. She has the perceived part and that's what she's suffering from, unfortunately.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I guess all I'm saying is the Premier's not going to help that at all one way or another. We need to go to the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner and have her rule on the matter one way or another. There's the mechanism there for Miss Willis to remove herself if she thinks she's in a conflict as well, so –

**Mr. Myers:** Agreed.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – one way or another, that process has been engaged and I think that's the only way that we're going to get the clarity and confirmation that, as you say, she needs in relation to it. I don't think us doing anything is going to improve or change that landscape one way or another.

**Chair:** Sonny Gallant.

**Mr. Gallant:** Well, that was my point. If the requests have gone to the commissioner, the conflict commissioner, that's who deals with these issues, not us as a committee. So I see the process is unfolding and there'll be an answer, I'm sure.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Any other speakers?

**Mr. Myers:** I didn't make a motion. I was hoping that we could agree on it, but there's no motion.

**Chair:** I appreciate that. So you're okay with what Jordan said?

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not okay with it, but I know if I make a motion we're just going to waste a bunch of time to get a vote, so it's not – I won't.

**Chair:** All right.

**Mr. Myers:** I have another piece of new business.

**Chair:** Sure, yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** Again on the process of the school. Here's something that didn't just bother me, it bothered a number of people last night: it was the conduct of Bob Andrews. Bob – to my understanding, and I wasn't there but I was told – was very aggressive and abrasive at the District Advisory Council meeting which are the parents who represent each of the schools, in this case the Montague family of schools, who volunteer to kind of represent those schools.

During the presentations he was interrupting people, trying to correct them. There's a number of people over where I was, were upset because it appeared that he was sleeping in the front row. There are pictures of him on Twitter today that shows that it looks like his eyes are closed and his head's down in the front row.

Something's got to be done. I'm going to ask, and you can turn it down if you want, but I'm going to ask that this committee send a letter to the minister and ask him to look into the conduct of Bob Andrews in relation to the Montague meeting and the way he acted.

**Chair:** Discussion? Go ahead.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Not to be kind of disrespectful to your ask, but I think you're the only one in the committee that's in any position to indicate that he's done anything wrong.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, well I can show you the Twitter pictures. I can't –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Well, I guess what I'm saying is if you have that kind of stuff, then why don't you send it to the minister as opposed to – frankly, it sounds to me like –

**Mr. Myers:** I just thought I'd use the power of the education committee, that's all.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, I know, and it's kind of unfair to the committee, though –

**Ms. Casey:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – to come in and make that kind of ask that we all sign off on something that we don't have any knowledge of and send it over to –

**Mr. Myers:** That's what I'm doing. That's why I'm trying to bring you up to speed. I wasn't – it's not a snow job. I tried to explain it to my knowledge.

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct) Excuse me, Mr. Chair.

**Chair:** No, go ahead.

**Mr. Gallant:** But did you not first say you were not there? Then you said you were there? (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Myers:** I wasn't at the District Advisory Council meeting, Sonny. I was at the public meeting where he was shouting down people who were presenting. I saw the pictures where he was falling asleep and I had people coming up to me in the audience saying: Is that man asleep? And I said: I don't know, go shake him.

**Mr. Gallant:** For me, that kind of reiterates that maybe you should do this on your own if you're aware of that. We'll (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I'll gladly do it on my own, Sonny. I just thought that you guys may help with the teeth of the committee. I have no problem shouldering that burden myself.

**Chair:** Was it a security issue? Like –

**Mr. Myers:** No, no, but he –

**Chair:** Like I mean, the meeting being interrupted and not fair to all, like a lot of times –

**Mr. Myers:** No, it was more to do with the fact that when you ask people to present publicly to you, and then you're the person that's supposed to be listening and you're interrupting them, it's kind of a – you know,

for people it gives them the – it's hard to present, and you guys wouldn't have this because you do it a lot. You spend a lot of time in front of crowds and in public spaces; but for people who aren't necessarily, it's intimidating. He's sitting right in front of the podium.

Anyways, that's fine, I'll write the letter myself if there's no – I have no issue. I just thought that through this committee we would have a little more power, but that's fine.

I have another one if you'd like. Only one more, I promise.

**Chair:** All right, go ahead.

**Mr. Myers:** It came up last night, the mayor of Georgetown brought it up and he talked about the size of some of the schools in the French school board. It got me thinking: I wonder if the committee would be interested to have – I know the French school board's been in here in the past. We could have somebody from the French school board come in and talk to the committee about how they do manage running some of the small schools.

I think that one of the numbers that was thrown around was 35, and I'm not sure which school that is, but I'm wondering if the committee would be interested in having somebody from the French school board come in and explain to us: Do they see the challenges that we hear in the English schools with their small schools on the French side, and what are some of the mechanisms they've put in place to have small classroom sizes and small schools operational?

I think it would be beneficial to this committee and maybe to the tail end of this process, like the Charlie McGeoghegan letter.

**Chair:** Discussion?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I think as long as we do it after the process, it's not a bad idea.

**Mr. Gallant:** That's what I was thinking, after the process.

**An Hon. Member:** Yep.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm okay with after the process. I'd just like to hear, because it wasn't really top of mind to me, but when it come up last night I'm like: They would have the challenges that we're hearing are the challenges, so how are they dealing with them? It may be enlightening for us all.

**Chair:** I'm hearing consensus from the committee that –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** – we'll do that after the process.

**Mr. Myers:** That's all I have.

**An Hon. Member:** I'm good.

**Chair:** All right. I'll call for an adjournment.

**Mr. Palmer:** (Indistinct)

Thank you very much, Chris Palmer.

Adjourned.

The Committee adjourned