

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS.....	3751
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS.....	3754
VERNON RIVER-STRATFORD (Canadian Cheese Awards)	3754
MONTAGUE-KILMUIR (Senator Brian Francis)	3755
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Long-time Tourism Businesses).....	3755
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AS NOTICE	3756
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY (Increases to licenses and drivers fees).....	3756
ORAL QUESTIONS	3756
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Land ownership limits on PEI).....	3756
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Evading of land ownership limits)	3757
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Disclosure of meetings re: land ownership limits).....	3757
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Secret proposal from Irvings to government)	3757
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Government money to avoid carbon tax)	3758
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Meetings with Cavendish Farms and Irvings)	3758
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Irvings and water usage on PEI)	3759
MORELL-MERMAID (Safety of students on bus routes)	3760
MORELL-MERMAID (Staffing issues in rural schools)	3760
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Completion date for North Lake bridge)	3761
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Issues of split classes in school system)	3761
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Open access WiFi in classrooms)	3762
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (New residence for UPEI).....	3762
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (Funding agreement for new residence at UPEI)	3762
CHARLOTTETOWN-PARKDALE (New residence re: athletes' village for Canada Winter Games)	3763
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Tackling poverty in the province).....	3763
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Poverty reduction strategy)	3764
MONTAGUE-KILMUIR (Replacement for Montague Consolidated)	3765
MONTAGUE-KILMUIR (Structural assessment of Montague Consolidated)	3765
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Best practices amongst Island schools)	3766
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Receiving textbooks on time)	3766
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Recruitment of French teachers).....	3767
MORELL-MERMAID (Training for teachers on bullying)	3767

MORELL-MERMAID (Programs for protection of young children).....	3768
MORELL-MERMAID (Rental fees from school fundraisers)	3768
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS	3769
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (World Diabetes Day)	3769
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY (Road Safety)	3771
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM (Bioscience Industry in PEI).....	3773
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	3774
INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS.....	3774
BILL 46 – Act to Amend the Public Departments Act	3775
BILL 45 – An Act to Amend the Police Act	3775
ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT	3775
SECOND READING AND COMMITTEE	3775
BILL 42 – Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)	3775
BILL 41 – Post-secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act.....	3780
THIRD READING AND PASS	3783
BILL 40 – Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)	3783
SECOND READING AND COMMITTEE	3783
BILL 40 – An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3)	3783
BILL 32 – An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)	3788
BILL 44 – An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)	3793
ADJOURNED.....	3795

The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker (Watts): The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, as we know, is Take Your Kid to Work Day and we have grade 9 students from throughout the province with us in the gallery and had an opportunity in my office to meet with approximately 30 students from a number of junior high schools throughout the province. I'm sure other members will recognize people from their areas, but let me mention that there are three in the gallery from my district: Emma Cowans from Gulf Shore school and Logan MacDonald and Danica Vessey from York. They are students at Stone Park.

Welcome everyone who is here, parents and kids who are – grade 9 students who are getting what was referred to in the description of Take Your Kid to Work Day: A glimpse of your future. So, we certainly welcome you to be here and consider a future in this Chamber.

This is World Diabetes Day and I and others are wearing blue in support of this global cause promoting diabetes care, prevention, and a cure worldwide.

Tonight will be the annual, the 2018 Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce President's Excellence Awards. It's always a great evening. There are many deserving nominees who are being put forward for their business achievements, entrepreneurial leadership and contributions to community. We congratulate everyone who has been nominated.

With better travelling, I must say I think everyone had to take their time last night on the roads with a surprising amount of wet snow that came down. Tonight there will be a number of us on this side travelling to Pooles Corner for a nomination in District 2 at the Kaylee Hall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise as well in the Legislative Assembly today and bring greetings on behalf of the official Opposition. I'd like to start out by mentioning some of the students that came in as well with some of our opposition members today for the Take Your Kids to Work Day.

We have Matthew Murphy from Kinkora High School; Jackson Skrynskey from Montague Intermediate; Bradley Gordon from Montague Intermediate; Tonisha Antunes from Montague Intermediate; Nathan Bailey from Souris High School; Jonah Manning from Souris High School; Connor MacInnis from Souris High School; and Emma Cowans from Gulf Shore.

I'm very happy to see that the Premier brought in little Rob Vessey as well today for Bring Your Kid to Work Day.

Also, I'd like to recognize – I see that we have some journalism students here. It's great to see you and working alongside your peers in the gallery, welcome.

I'd also like to recognize today being World Diabetes Day. It's a very important day to acknowledge because as we all know, diabetes diagnosis is on the rise and we need to ensure that we're looking after ourselves because this is a very serious disease and it not only affects our health, but it certainly affects our economy as well. So, I just ask you if you're visiting your family doctor and he gives you some kind of instruction, or she gives you some kind of instruction, take it to heed because the last thing you want is to get that diagnosis.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise today to recognize some special guests in the gallery as part of the career day.

I'd like to extend greeting to Lily Reaman of the PEI Literacy Alliance, and Nevaeh Murray who is a student at Queen Charlottetown. Nevaeh is a remarkable young woman who I've had the opportunity to work with. In fact, I've worked with both of these lovely ladies before – but through the Young Millionaires program, but now is interested in law and community advocacy. She's been visiting many great organizations today, including the Coalition for Women in Government, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Women's Network PEI, CLIA, the PEI Business Women's Association and now here in the gallery. So, a great learning experience and a really great example of opportunity for young people. It's super to see you here today.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today, especially Eddie Lund, Joe Byrne and my good friend, Robert Vessey.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Dumville: He is. We've had a lot of great times together – and especially the students, the grade 9 students that are here for career day.

But, I'd also like to congratulate all of the municipal leaders across the province, and especially Philip Brown and the Charlottetown councillors. The City of Charlottetown is going to be in great hands. I've got to know Philip. He joined our Rotary club and he's been deeply involved in community work, and he's going to be a great ambassador and mayor for this city.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to all of our visitors and students that are here today. I'm glad that everyone made it home and safe last night.

I want to make note of my constituents from Tyne Valley. Matt McGuire and his

daughter are here in the gallery today. The McGuires are no strangers to politics, so I want to welcome them. I want to welcome a former constituent of Bideford, Lily Reaman, who is here with her daughter. I hope you enjoy the proceedings and have a great afternoon.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see such a full gallery here today and in particular, young faces. I know it's Take Your Kid to Work Day. We've been actively involved. We had a group of eight up through our office today. They came from various members' districts here across Prince Edward Island. We had some from Montague, some from Gulf Shore, some from Souris and some from Kinkora.

I just want to give a shout out and a thanks to some of the people that helped to make our day good. We had the chair of the Public Accounts committee who invited us over before the Liberal members kicked us all out of the Chamber room, but at least we got to see that happen.

Wayne Thibodeau over at *The Guardian*, he gave us a tour of the newsroom. That was very entertaining. CBC, we were out to see CBC and they toured us through the studio and the entire newsroom over there, which was pretty interesting to see; the Speaker, who met us over here and talked about the proceedings of the Legislature and toured this area; and the Premier who came down to meet with the students just prior to the House opening.

I want to thank everybody who took the time to make it a great day for the eight that are with us today.

I want to say a shout out, too, to Matt McGuire. Matt is a very smart political mind here on Prince Edward Island. I'm not sure if he's on the right side of politics, but he's smart. He's smart with his politics, nonetheless.

Speaking of being on the wrong side of politics, I'll give a shout out to Rob Vessey who is here with his daughter.

Those of you who remember, prior to the last election, he was the minister of transportation. Some would say he's been the best minister of transportation under Liberal rule. It's definitely arguable, but if you look at the results down home, the Seven Mile Road is paved and there are roundabouts and turning lanes in places you Liberals ignored for years. So it's great to have a good transportation minister, even if it was for a short period of time. So I want to welcome him here today. I know you're stuck in the Premier's office right now, but there's always hope that you can come to the good side. We're always here. It's a big tent and our arms are always open.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Help is on its way.

Mr. Myers: Help is on its way.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone in the gallery; specifically Audrey MacPhee is here with her dad, Peter, from my riding; grade 9 student and a former East Wiltshire School. And I'm a former alumni of that school, obviously. Big sports fans likely coming from Toronto, eventually caused her to cheer for the Blue Jay and the Raptors. Also, Logan and Danica, who we met earlier, the journalism students and all the other students from all across the Island; the diabetes organization; Joe Byrne of course and Matt McGuire and his daughter, welcome here today.

It's great to see a full House and the participation and the interest that you show in democracy and this is where it takes place and I'm sure you'll be entertained.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A pleasure to rise and welcome everybody watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, especially Eileen Peters who likes to watch

and sometimes she refers to herself as a (Indistinct); a great lady.

I wanted to welcome everyone to the gallery, but especially Emma Cowan, whose here from Gulf Shore Consolidated School. I swung by Down by the Bay Back Yard Poultry, which is Emma's place and they have heritage breed chickens there that they sell if you want to have some chickens in your back yard; another great Island business. Emma's also a great and involved youth who commands a unit in the Blue Heron Sea Cadets, so it's great to have you here to share my work day with you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome all those to the gallery here today. I want to single out a couple of people, Lily Reaman. Actually, Lily is from up in the area of O'Leary-Inverness and Tyne Valley, Sherbrook. But also, Lily has been working on a program there called, The Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries Project. I had the opportunity to meet with her and she's doing that in conjunction with the PEI Literacy Alliance. I'm wishing here well as she embarks upon getting that project up and operational.

All those that are here from, Take Your Kid to Work Day; it's kind of great to sort of see this program back. In my former career as an employment councilor in the western end of the province, I brought that program to western PEI and lots of people have benefitted from that program.

But I want to comment a little bit about Matt McGuire and his daughter, and same with Rob Vessey and his daughter Danica.

I know I took both my daughters to work with me during that period of time when they were in grade 9. My youngest daughter emphatically stated that: Count me out of following the family tradition of being an elected representative. When I was out in the area, the foyer there, I had mentioned that to Danica: Do you have any interest in politics? And she said: Not a chance. I said: Well, my only comment to that is – and it'll

be the same to Matt McGuire – my father was a politician and I said the very same thing in about grade 9, so you just never know where it may lead, so don't dismiss it out right just yet.

Welcome to the gallery everybody.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody that's home watching on EastLink and I'd like to give a big shout out to Linda Peters. She listens to the proceedings every day. I spoke to her about two weeks ago and she said she doesn't miss a day of listening to the proceedings. It's Linda Peters, thank you for listening.

I'd like to give a shout out to three young gentlemen from the Souris Regional High School; they would be Jonah Manning, Nathan Bailey and Connor MacInnis. And Connor has a little bit of a connection to the House. His great uncle, Albert Fogarty, sat in this seat right here. So, hopefully Connor, when he gets through his high school years and his university, he'll be sitting in this exact same seat on that side of the House, in the Premier's seat. Connor is a bright, young boy and I'm sure he's heading for politics.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

It's my pleasure to rise today in my capacity as minister of education to welcome all the students to the gallery. As other members have lamented, today is good evidence that being a politician is at least interesting and I would like to add to that, that I think anyway, it's an honourable calling and hopefully you'll agree by the time we leave here today. It's perhaps a reminder to the rest of the members to be on their best behaviour. I think each time we've said that, it's not necessarily been followed so we'll try again today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Canadian Cheese Awards

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

In June this past summer in Toronto, two great Island companies took home some impressive distinctions at the Canadian Cheese Awards. They were ADL and Cow's Creamery.

Amalgamated Dairies Limited was able to take home top prize, for both Dairy-Isle Medium and Dairy-Isle Old cheeses.

This competition featured many cheese producers from across the country and were judged prior to the awards ceremony.

Cow's Creamery raised the bar by winning a total of four categories: Best Aged Cheddar; Best Cow's Milk Cheese; and Best Atlantic Cheese were won all by their three-year-old aged cheddar. Their Appletree Smoked Cheddar claimed Best Smoked Cheese.

In 2016, Cow's also won Cheese of the Year for the whole country with their delicious Avonlea Clothbound Cheddar.

In total, there were 378 different cheeses being judged with 33 different category prizes at stake.

ADL and Cow's superiority and satisfaction ratings just go to show the quality of our Island milk and our farms. The commitment to the industry from our farmers all across PEI is evident and surely will be for years to come.

Our government investment is very prudent as we watch these companies expand and flourish. The economic development of both ADL and Cow's Creamery has been booming and creates more jobs with every expansion.

I want to congratulate these fine cheese makers on their continued success and wish them all the best as they grow and prosper.

I also want to congratulate our Island dairy farmers who produce very high-quality milk for our processors, and may all our farmers and processors focus on growing our sales in light of the recent trade agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Senator Brian Francis

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise in the House to send congratulations to Prince Edward Island's newest Senator, Brian Francis.

Brian Francis is no stranger to anyone in this House, nor a stranger to Islanders. He is finishing his 12th year as Chief of the Abegweit Mi'kmaq Nation where he has helped advance social and economic development for his community; new infrastructure development work, which includes a biodiversity enhancement hatchery; a water tower to secure safe drinking water; paving projects; and housing developments. He has made a very positive impact on his community.

Senator Francis was born in Lennox Island. After receiving his early education there and in Summerside, he completed four years of apprenticeship training and became a journeyman carpenter.

On top of his many accomplishments, he was the first Aboriginal person in Prince Edward Island to receive his inter-provincial Red Seal trade certificate.

Mr. Francis' dedication to Prince Edward Islanders cannot be denied and we thank him for all his past service, and look forward to what he has planned next to better PEI and Canada.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Brian Francis on his appointment to the Senate of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Long-time Tourism Businesses

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to recognize the long-time tourism businesses in District 18 that contribute so much to the Island economy and the coffers of government.

Tourism, of course, is one of the driving forces behind the Island economy as one of our key industries. It employs thousands of Islanders from North Cape to East Point.

I want to point out just a few of those in Rustico-Emerald whose hard work has helped build the Island economy through perseverance and entrepreneurial foresight.

First let me mention some individuals that were recognized at the Tourism Industry Association of P.E.I. annual excellence awards gala.

Carl Nicholson of New Glasgow Lobster Suppers won the Lieutenant Governor's Tourism Award; Faye Brown of Anne's Windy Poplars Cottage Resort won the Tourism Ambassador Award; and Derrick Hoare of the Table Culinary Studio won Canada's Food Island Leadership Award.

Congratulations to them all.

Now, onto businesses that are celebrating major milestones; the New Glasgow Lobster Suppers just celebrated their 60th anniversary. Congratulations to all the hard working staff and owners, the Nicholson and MacRae families. Chez Yvonne's restaurant celebrated their 50th anniversary. Congratulations to owners Paul and Linda Larkin and their staff, and of course Yvonne Larkin who founded it with her husband, Roy.

Lastly, I wanted to recognize Fairway Cottages who celebrated their 20th anniversary. Congratulations to owners Sandy and Scott Lowther and their staff.

These are just a few examples of tourism businesses that have worked for decades to build up the industry with really little help from government and more often than not,

wading through government red tape. Their contribution to tax revenue to the Island government, through the tourism industry, is really substantial.

The minister, of course, can't get to his feet quick enough to take credit when the industry is booming, but turns his back on the industry when they need it the most.

This is a government that has increased the small business tax by 450% and offers reductions and drips to give the impression they are here to help.

Mr. LaVie: Shame.

Mr. Trivers: What our tourism industry needs is for government to reduce the tax burden and regulations on the industry and provide the support in the key areas it needs the most.

Thank you to all the long time tourism operators in District 18 Rustico-Emerald for your persistence to make our tourism industry the success that it is today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Question Period yesterday the Member from Borden-Kinkora asked a number of questions in regard to increases to things like driver's licenses and he cited that there had been increases since 2012. He might want to go back and get some new staff up there to check his facts because I'll give you the fact –

Mr. R. Brown: Fake facts.

Ms. Biggar: – is there's been no increases to fees, registrations et cetera since 2012.

I can tell you what we have given Islanders, is a \$10 million rebate on our electricity, and what the Greens want to do and the PCs want to do, is –

Mr. R. Brown: Shame.

Ms. Biggar: – increase taxes –

Mr. LaVie: We didn't ask for a statement.

Ms. Biggar: – by \$47 million with their carbon plan.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I thought she was going to apologize again.

Ms. Biggar: Check your facts.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Two weeks ago, one of the largest private landowners in the province appeared before a legislative committee to argue for increased land ownership limits.

Land ownership limits on PEI

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, do you agree with Robert Irving that land ownership limits need to be loosened here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that that question was raised before the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment and that the committee has taken that matter under consideration.

But, I have to say it's the first that I had heard of it when I read about Mr. Irving's presentation to the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's unfortunate that the Premier just couldn't simply answer the question, yes or no.

That legislative committee also heard from several farm groups concerned that our current land ownership limits are being evaded by large corporate interests.

Evading of land ownership limits

Question, again, to the Premier: Premier, do you support increasing land ownership limits beyond what presently exists?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

The *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* was brought in in 1982. It was Prince Edward Island's answer to the debate at the time of the Charter of Rights being established here in Canada and we, as a province, wanted to protect land for all Islanders, and we will honour the spirit and the legal texts of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The *Lobbyists Registration Act* passed last year by this House and has yet to come into effect.

Disclosure of meetings re: land ownership limits

Question to the Premier: Will you proactively disclose all meetings you or Cabinet have held with Cavendish Farms or its representatives about loosening land ownership limits here on PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the *Lobbyists Registration Act* is in the process of being brought into effect and that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General is taking steps for that to be the case

and that there are various measures involved in that being implemented. I expect that we will all be learning as we go forward what's involved in complying with that act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A couple weeks ago the Irvings had presented to a committee and they weren't very forthcoming to MLAs. As a matter of fact, Robert Irving ran off before he could be asked any questions.

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment; however, did reveal that Irvings had made a secret proposal to this government.

Secret proposal from Irvings to government

Question to the minister: What is this proposal and what exactly is the secret that you don't want to disclose to Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I think the secret proposal was outlined by the Irvings in their presentation. They want land limits to increase, and I think they want – the presentation itself was around deep-water wells and they want the Government of Prince Edward Island to override that legislation and that's not going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, another big secret that this government has is the actual regulations that go along with the *Water Act*. As you recall, the Leader of the Opposition asked for an all-parties committee who would take care of the regulations to make sure that it was done in a very fair and open, transparent manner

and that's something that this government has refused to do.

Question to the minister: Why is it that people like Robert Irving get to make secret proposals to your government?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

First of all, the Cavendish Farms plant is a major plant here on Prince Edward Island. Agriculture is the number one industry here on Prince Edward Island and that's why this government has initiated studies and want public input and public comments on farmland here on Prince Edward Island.

Other countries are losing farmland, losing vital production. We have to protect our farmland and that's why we are going out to consultation with our agriculture community and with Islanders across Prince Edward Island to see what Islanders want and demand of us, their government, in terms of land ownership.

We need this land for agriculture uses. If we don't have agriculture, a major part of our economy would be destroyed.

Thank you.

Speaker: The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems funny to hear anything from this government talking about protecting agriculture when an entire part of Kings County is completely swallowed up by the Monks and the member from Montague won't even let them come to committee to let them explain what it is that they're doing with the land, and you guys are all letting it happen. It seems really funny that you won't stand up for agriculture. It seems really funny that you won't leave hands in the hands of young farmers who could actually farm the land for many other generations, and doing it all in secret and being blocked by one of your members.

Question, then, on the *Water Act*: Why are you so eager to rig the process against all

Islanders and allow big interests like the Irvings to have a seat at your table and no one else?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

Again, I want to say that the Irving company is a major company here on Prince Edward Island. One of the reasons we were able to meet our environmental targets in 2010 was the Irvings' commitment to the environment and especially in terms of when they brought compressed gas to Prince Edward Island to replace Bunker C oil, when they had the bio-digester put in place that saved millions of litres of oil.

The Irvings have stood up and protected the environment here on Prince Edward Island, and they are a major employer here.

As for the *Water Act* and the *Water Act* regulations, they're being developed now. They will be sent to the committee. The committee will review them before Cabinet reviews them and make a recommendation to the public.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we all know that the Irvings have a really powerful lobby when it comes to being able to lobby this government. The minister gets up and he talks about the fact that the Irvings have saved us from needing the carbon tax because of all of the things they did.

Government money to avoid carbon tax

Question to the minister: How much government money went into these things that Irvings have implemented to save us from a carbon tax?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I must say that I meet with people all across Prince Edward Island, one of the groups I've been meeting with most regularly right now is the NFU. They have an opinion, and we sit down basically, once a month or every second month, to go over the progress of what we're doing here on Prince Edward Island.

We are meeting with the PEI Federation of Agriculture, and I'm proud to announce that we are signing a deal with the PEI Federation of Agriculture to study farm practices here on Prince Edward Island and how they become more sustainable and environmentally and fix climate change.

We are working with anybody that wants to work with government that has the interest of the environment first. We will continue to meet with each and every person in order to make our environment great.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So there you have it folks. The Irving's who saved us from needing the carbon tax was actually done with your tax dollars, and not even a thanks. The minister had a chance to actually thank taxpayers for putting the money forward and he chose not to.

Irving's get to have a special seat at the Liberal table when it comes to making policy in Prince Edward Island, especially when it comes to dealing with our water, it's something that we all should be worried about.

While people from Miscouche or Martinvale don't get that same ability to sit at the table and have their concerns heard by this minister.

Meetings with Cavendish Farms and Irving's

Question to the minister: How many meetings has government had with the Irving's and Cavendish Farms to discuss their secret proposal?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

The member asked earlier about how much Irving's were given for their plants. I'll tell you right now every dollar that was loaned to the Irving's was paid back in full – was paid back in full interest. The Georgetown Shipyards – I think the Province of Prince Edward Island has made millions of dollars in interest on that alone. That money went into schools and health care.

Irving's pay their debts, and they pay their interest also.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny you should bring up the Georgetown Shipyard – that's something that you and the Irving's both abandoned and left the people in King's County without work when it was something that they have relied on for years and years and years.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You want to talk about the shipyard; you should be embarrassed to bring up the shipyard because of what's happened under your watch to the shipbuilding industry here in Prince Edward Island.

Robert Irving told the media after the committee meeting that his company is now in talks with government trying to find a way to make sure we can have a collaborative plan to manage water use on Prince Edward Island.

Irvings and water usage on PEI

Question to the minister: Will the government answer exactly what Robert Irving and his company are doing dictating government policy on water usage here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: I want to thank the member for the question. It's a great debate we're having here in the Legislature.

You have to understand, we want to grow the economy here on Prince Edward Island and we want to do it environmentally sustainably. A company comes in here and wants to create jobs here on Prince Edward Island, wants to create economic development here on Prince Edward Island, and they also want to talk about how they can do it in the best sustainable, environmentally friendly way.

What's wrong with companies coming forward with proposals in order to grow the economy, grow jobs here on Prince Edward Island and do it in an environmentally sustainable way? Why should we not sit at the table with these companies as we sit with any farmer or any company that wants to come here to Prince Edward Island?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, it's 'Take Your Kids to Work Day' today, and we were delighted to have a large group of students in our office this morning and around lunchtime. We thought what better chance to tap into the young minds of our future, and maybe get them to help us out today.

So with your indulgence – I know this isn't convention – but we're going to bring up – we asked them what issues they thought should be brought forward and we're going to have a few lines of questioning with that.

Safety of students on bus routes

So with that, a question to the minister of education: Matthew goes to Kinkora Regional High School and he's got concerns with the safety of students getting off – on and off the bus. We know that's been a hot topic. Matthew wants to know if your department is trying to change bus routes to make sure students get on and off the bus on the side of the highway that their home is on.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

The short answer to that is yes. The further answer is there are actually a couple of bus routes where that change has been made by the Public Schools Branch already this year.

Certainly, I know that I have worked with the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, and I know that the Public Schools Branch has, to have busing routing issues sorted out. We have even made an investment – or I should say the Public Schools Branch has with our help – in new software to best enable them to plan for bus routes this year.

I thank you for that question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Minister.

I hope you follow-up especially in that area as well, because it seems to be a problem and I know they're working hard at it.

Tonisha from Montague is in a class of 30 students, and there's other classes in that school that have 35 and approaching 40 different people in their classes.

Now we know when this government came to power in 2015, one of the first acts was to try and cut teachers. We stopped it, we were able to get that done, and now since we've seen some new teacher investment. I'm not sure if it's going to all the schools.

Staffing issues in rural schools

Question to the minister of education: Tonisha wants to know what our government is doing to help staffing issues, especially in rural schools.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

Another great question.

I'm proud to be here on my feet today to say that over the last 12 months we've added 150 frontline staff to the staffing compliment across Prince Edward Island.

We have a large number of staff going into student well-being teams. We have a large number of staff that are dealing with class composition issues. We have a large number of EAs that have been hired. We have a very in-depth psychology plan that we have rolled out to help get caught up in an area where there was tremendous need.

I would recognize that classroom composition is a tremendously complex issue. It's not an issue that pertains just to numbers, but really how those break down in the classroom. We're working everyday to do what we can to make the lives of teachers and students better.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Nathan from Souris is with us here today, and his father is a lobster fisherman in North Lake.

Completion date for North Lake bridge

A question to the transportation minister: Nathan would like to know when the new bridge in North Lake is going to be complete?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a great question – one that I've heard many times in this Legislature.

We've had discussion with the community in that area, and we are looking at all options on how we can make improvements to North Lake bridge.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well Nathan, that's the same answer I got for the last seven years now.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. LaVie: Going on seven years now.

Issues of split classes in school system

Question to the education minister: Connor from Souris told us about the issue of being in a split class. Connor talked about it being hard for the teachers, because they have to make two lesson plans and teach two lessons. What are the current rules around split classes and what's being done to reduce the number of split classes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

This is a great question, because educationally, split classes actually can be beneficial depending on the circumstances.

I will say, actually, my son is in a split class this year – Kindergarten – one French Immersion Class and his teacher is, just after finishing her Master's, in split class education. My wife's taught split classes as well.

Basically, if there's support for a split class and it's appropriate in terms of class composition and in terms of the age and stage, then a split class can be a great thing. So, we're not trying to eliminate them or reduce them.

It is kind of a new area in education and certainly we're doing what we can to ensure that the teachers are supported where they're needed.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question is from Jonah from Souris Regional School: Most students have cell

phones and devices and they're often used to communicate with friends, family, and members by text, Snapchat and Instagram.

Most teachers ask them not to have their devices out during class time, but on breaks and lunchtime they would like to be able to use their phones.

Open access WiFi in classrooms

Question to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Jonah wants to know, does your department have any plans to install open access WIFI for students and staff?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

The answer in short is yes to that question.

We have spoken about this in this Chamber before, we expect that there will actually be a program that will be up and running for teachers probably in January of this year, at least in select sites with a fuller roll-out as the year progresses.

This as we are all aware, required the installation of a firewall which is nearing completion at this point in time and will be ready to test after that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On November 8th, 2018, the province announced a new 260-bed residence would be built at UPEI.

This is great news given that there were no action items to specifically support students in the recently launched housing action plan.

New residence for UPEI

A question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What changed between the

launch of the housing action plan in late August and the announcement of the new residence in October?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've been dealing with housing issues here for some time and we've been working diligently at it to come to some conclusions, make some decisions on housing.

There is a whole complex issue of housing and it wasn't born over night, it is something that has transpired for a number of years and our investments recently announced will ensure that we free up some housing on the 260 units at the university.

It supplements, hopefully, some of these students that are sitting in here today, but also supplements some of the students that want to stay and work and play in the Charlottetown and surrounding areas across Prince Edward Island when their school is finished.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your first supplementary.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the new residence was not in the action plan, I wonder where the funding will come from, what the provinces share of funding will be and when the funding will be committed.

Funding agreement for new residence at UPEI

Can you table the funding agreement for this project?

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Basically what we're going to do, and you'll see it hopefully by the end of this week and some of it – it'll be \$12 million in capital budget over two years for construction.

Of government seniors and affordable housing units across PEI, \$4.7 million in capital budget for Summerside new construction of seniors and \$2.1 millions of

family violence, short-term housing and 20 units of Beach Grove provincially owned.

Over the course, we are working on the funding resource right now with the University of Prince Edward Island, but it would be operational funding, because it's a partnership and there will be a three tier funding partnership from the federal, provincial and the university.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Speaker: The hon. from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your second supplementary.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What's curious about this project is that the day before it was revealed that the province would be hosting the 2023 Canada Winter Games.

New residence re: athletes' village for Canada Winter Games

Considering the haste in which the announcement was made and the lack of inclusion in the housing action plan, would it be fair to describe this residence as having less to do with meeting the needs of students and more to do with providing an athletes village for the Canada Games?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Well considering that I believe they announced that hopefully they're going to have it built by 2020 and the Canada Games are not until 2023, there's a variance in that.

Also we have a 24% increase in international – or 24% of total enrollment of the university is now international students who want to stay and work here and develop themselves into the culture and the fabric of Prince Edward Island, so that's very important I think the president Aziz came out and said that with enrollment continuing to grow and if you listen to Maclean's Magazine when they say we're bucking the trend in our universities and our post-secondary continue to grow because of the good programs that they offer here on Prince

Edward Island – I think a new residence and expanding residence is only appropriate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Minister, you and I have had many discussions around the subject of tackling poverty and there is quite a buzz on the street about your recently announced poverty reduction action plan.

Tackling poverty in the province

Can you explain some of the steps your department is taking to help those Islanders who need it most?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for that question and we have had many great conversations.

Poverty is a pervasive issue and it is not unique to Prince Edward Island. Right out of the gate we knew that we were going to have to change the approach and discussion around poverty and we were going to need to mobilize Islanders – those including lived experiences, our community partners, community as well as government to tackle the issue of poverty.

A year ago we formed a poverty reduction advisory council who are made up of just such people and on November 2nd of this year we released our poverty reduction action plan with 67 action items.

Poverty reduction council worked side-by-side with this government and engaged with over 400 Islanders and I'd like to take this opportunity if I may, to thank the poverty reduction advisory council and the 1,400 plus Islanders that lent their voices to this action plan and worked with government to develop it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, how does the poverty reduction action plan work with other government departments and initiatives?

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, poverty cannot fall on the shoulders of one department; we need government to be working collaboratively across government as well as with our community partners.

The poverty reduction action plan build on the great work that we undertook with the housing action plan.

It builds on the great work of the transformation of the disabilities support program to the new accessibilities support program. It builds on the senior's health and wellness action plan as well as the many initiatives my colleague and the minister of education has made through the early learning and childcare investments.

In my department alone we have made increases to both the wage exemptions and the asset exemptions for social assistance client – excuse me – who can now earn more money at the end of every month and keep more money in their pockets without any reduction in their benefits.

We also have provided them with \$750 transitional to work allowance as well as job coaching and life skills.

An Hon. Member: Great job.

Ms. Mundy: They can also keep their benefits, their medical, their dental and their optical benefits for up to two years post work. So we are well aware of the changes that we are making to our social assistance program so that we can allow Islanders to live with more dignity.

Mr. Myers: Put it in your blog, put it in your blog.

Speaker: You just went about two minutes over.

Ms. Mundy: Did I? I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I get carried away when I talk about the investments.

Speaker: Obviously you do.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your second supplementary.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday in this house, the member from Charlottetown-Parkdale and I quote: We need to wait until fall 2019 and even 2020 before we will see these poverty reduction strategies money actually spent – end quote.

Poverty reduction strategy

Minister: Can you tell us the facts?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services – 25 seconds.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike what the Third Party is leading Islanders is to believe, government is well positioned to invest – reinvest in Islanders and we have taken immediate action in doubling the number of rent supplements that we are providing to Islanders from 275 to 550 in addition to our fifth year of food increases in seven weeks we will be increasing our food allowances by an additional 10%.

In three weeks we will be increasing the shelter rates by an additional 6% and that's on top of the three percent that we increased them in June.

In seven weeks we will have a new child inclusion allowance of \$250 which will allow children of families on social assistance to partake in extra-curricular activities so that they can be with their peers, Mr. Speaker.

I'll sit down.

An Hon. Member: So much to do she can't even get it out.

Ms. Mundy: Can't get it out.

Ms. Compton: No more cutting us off, sorry.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Last spring, I asked you a question about the Montague Consolidated School. The school is a very important institution to all residents by area. The school is one of the oldest on Prince Edward Island. Given recent requests for new schools in other areas, it is acknowledged that this school is out of date and that this school needs to be replaced.

Replacement for Montague Consolidated

Can the minister tell us here today if his department or the school board have plans for replacement for the Montague Consolidated School, and does he have the dollars budgeted in his management plan this year?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

By way of update, I can advise the House that I did go down with the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir and we took a tour of the school last spring –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – and met with Mr. Carpenter and I believe it was the head of the home and school, Mrs. Myers.

Mr. LaVie: Seven and a half years, he finally asked –

Mr. J. Brown: We certainly are aware of the state of the school, which was built in 1971; the usage of the school and the issues that are there. The Public Schools Branch has recommended that there be some work done with that school, and through the capital budgeting process, we will be looking at that and other infrastructure.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your first supplementary.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister advise the House that during that visit and the visit of other wards that went through that school, what your impressions were of the dated layout of that school? And your impressions for the need of replacement and what were your findings?

Mr. LaVie: He's not an architect.

Mr. Myers: He's hardly a lawyer.

Speaker: Can you do that in 25 seconds?

Mr. R. Brown: He's a Brighton lawyer.

An Hon. Member: Aw, no. That's not nice.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I do know my place, and I can say that I'm not an architect or any of those other things.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: But what I can say is that our department has gone forward on the recommendations of the Public Schools Branch and we will work with the French Language School Board, as well. We have sought to get money made available to look at schools that are felt to need a look, such as Montague Consolidated School; we will hope to ensure that the infrastructure is in the best possible shape we can make it in and to reinvest our money in our school infrastructure.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your second supplementary.

Structural assessment of Montague Consolidated

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Part of my question last year had to do with the structural assessment of the school. I had asked that the minister collaborate with whom he felt necessary to do that structural assessment and I want to find out what the accommodations are currently and for future students needs, and when you can confirm that this replacement is included and funded for the fall budget of 2018.

Mr. Myers: You used to tell us we'd have to wait and see the budget.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: I think I heard the hon. member say 'touché'.

In any event, as I indicated, first thing is first – we are looking to have money made available to actually have experts look at Montague Consolidated School. It's not only to see when something would be done, but what would be done, whether that might be a renovation, or whether that might be a complete school. Those are the kinds of things that have to happen through a process that is set out in legislation right now, that we have seen take place, recently in Charlottetown and in Stratford. I expect we will see that as the Public Schools Branch has already identified Montague Consolidated School as one of the schools it is looking at.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) of information.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also have some student questions. These students also talked about all of the positive

things happening in their schools; Tonisha from Montague talked about the strong band program that Montague Intermediate School, led by Jonathan McInnis, their program is one of the best across the province.

Best practices amongst Island schools

Question to the education minister: how do you ensure that schools have an opportunity to share ideas and best practices with other schools in the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

This is a great question. This is a question that I have been waiting for somebody to ask.

Through the new structure, we a relation to education in this province, there's a perfect opportunity for information to be shared between schools, between areas of the province, and between different educational authorities, such as the Public Schools Branch, the department, and the French Language School Board. That happens through District Advisory Councils, through the Principal Advisory Council, through the Learning Partners Advisory Council, through the home and school – who all share information through the different levels of government.

The Learning Partners Advisory Council that essentially is a public body that reports the public's recommendations. We have really seen this come to fruition and is really starting to pay dividends.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also learned today that some math classes in the province are still waiting for new textbooks for classes that started in September.

Receiving textbooks on time

Question to the minister of education: Will you commit today to getting someone from your department to work with these schools to make sure that these students get their textbooks as soon as possible?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

There is no question that curriculum renewal is one of the most important parts of our education system. We have found that time and time again, and through our assessment program, we have been able to focus on areas of the greatest need. Our math programming has been one of those areas. This year is yet another example of great investments that we have made in our math curriculum, particularly at the intermediate level. Certainly, we will be working to update the curriculum materials that we have at that level.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also heard that some French schools are having troubles recruiting qualified Francophone teachers to fill positions at our French language schools.

Recruitment of French teachers

Question to the minister of education: What recruitment efforts were being made to ensure qualified French-speaking teachers are filling vacancies at our French schools?

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

As I have indicated previously, we work closely with the different education authorities, such as in this case, the French Language School Board.

I can tell you that UPEI has a great French language education program that we have worked with them in relation to Ron MacDonald, the Dean of Education, is

actually on our Learning Partners Advisory Council. It is certainly an issue that we are well aware of, and it is one where we are going our utmost to try and sort out and it is an issue that the teacher's federation, who we have been working with, has made important, as well. That's all to say that its work that takes a concerted effort on behalf of everyone, to try and get there with.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another topic that we talked about with the students was bullying. It was a pleasure to hear that some of the students were saying: You know what, it seems to be pretty good in amongst the classrooms and the schools, but it definitely spills out into after class and outside of school, especially with technology, with the phones and all that kind of thing.

Training for teachers on bullying

One thing we talked about and I would like to ask the minister of education is: What are we doing for our teachers when they know things are happening outside of school, but then it boils over into school, with the bullying. Do we have any training, or any advice, or are we helping the teachers deal with those situations where they know that it's happening, whether it's in the communities or the rinks – wherever it is – and then when it boils into their classrooms. Is the minister aware of anything that is going on?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

This is another great question.

We should bring students to work every day –

Mr. LaVie: You do, we talk to you here every day.

Mr. J. Brown: One of the primary reasons why we have taken an initiative such as the

student well-being teams. We have seen the great impact that they've had.

We've also invested very heavily, between my two departments, in youth outreach workers, who are actually embedded in the schools, who are working elbow to elbow with the teachers, the students, and the guidance councilors to be able to determine where those issues are. They help to support the students, the teachers, and the families, to learn what's right.

We are doing that through handle with care programming and different family-oriented programming that we have that is being delivered by community partners as well. We value those partnerships, and believe that is the real way to get to the root of the issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also talked about – we mentioned earlier about technology in the classrooms and whatnot. We talked about some of the dangers that are out there, as well, in the online world, whether you are playing Fortnite, or just with the bullying on the phone, or anybody can access it or reach out now; grade 9 are pretty responsible. We know in our younger years that you're not always – you're probably excited to engage with people online and that kind of thing.

Programs for protection of young children

Is there any programs in our school system that helps teach our kids at a young age the dangers, because every day there is something new that's coming out and it's hard to keep up with whatever it is – is there programs in school to teach the kids to protect themselves against any of the dangers in the online world?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

Yes, there are numerous programs that do this. We've invested tremendously in technology over the last number of years, to the point where we now have a great number of Chromebooks in the classrooms that the students work on just about every day and through that there becomes a digital citizenry expectation. Working with our digital committee, the teachers have gone through programming – or starting to go through programming that is related to understanding just those difficulties. It's not just in that, but it's in research and understanding what a reliable source is and what you need to watch out for in today's day and age.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question today is something that has been brought forward to me by some of the community groups in our area. I understand that when some of these community groups host fundraisers or enter into the school they have to pay a rental fee. Now, we know you pay your janitorial staff for their time but there's a separate fee, I think it's about \$50 an hour or there's varying rates depending on what it is. I understand it's a pretty small amount in the scheme of things and I understand it goes back to the school board.

Rental fees from school fundraisers

Has the minister ever thought about that fee going to the actual school, maybe to go to a breakfast program or – it's only a few hundred bucks a year. Maybe you could top up something minor rather than going into the bigger system.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

This is also a great question.

Just to be clear, it's the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board that administers those and makes those decisions. My understanding, from my

last conversation with Mr. Grimmer, which was actually only about two weeks ago in this regard; was that they try not to charge the fee.

So, particularly weeknights where there would be janitorial staff, as an example, in the schools they'll often forego the fee. But, if it's on a weekend where they have to pay somebody to come in to open and close the doors and to ensure that the classrooms are left in a state that'll leave it ready for good education to take place on Monday morning, then they do charge the fee.

I think, actually, the fee for a weekend is \$108, which is pretty reasonable in my mind. I know they try to be as judicious as they possibly can be, but there are certain requirements written into our collective agreements with the unions, where if somebody's got to come in they do have to charge that time out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

World Diabetes Day

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, today is World Diabetes Day.

On average, 860 Islanders are diagnosed with diabetes each year and right now there are more than 15,000 Islanders living with diabetes.

The Department of Health and Wellness has a renewed focus on diabetes ensuring best practice, critical services are available for a proper assessment, intervention and management of this disease.

In 2014, we released a diabetes strategy with 21 recommendations. We are successfully implementing almost all of the goals of that strategy, and we are now looking ahead at what's next.

Over the summer, Health PEI reached out to over 340 Islanders, including those living with diabetes and their caregivers, to help inform their priorities for diabetes going

forward. Our renewed diabetes strategy is in the works and will be released in early 2019.

This new strategy will map out where we need to focus our efforts over the next four years.

I want to take a moment to recognize some of the people who have joined us in the gallery today; three individuals who know firsthand what diabetes looks like in this province.

With us today is Martha St. Pierre, registered nurse, certified diabetes educator and clinical lead for our provincial diabetes program, welcome. As well, Michelle Hogan, Registered Nurse and certified diabetes educator with our Provincial Diabetes Program, as well. Welcome. Kyla O'Keefe, registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator with our Provincial Diabetes Program. Welcome to you all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you all for being here with us today and for the work you do to lead our Provincial Diabetes Program.

Through the work of these three individuals, and many other staff and professionals, we provide leadership and expertise through education, programming and support for Islanders throughout their diabetic journey.

Early assessment and intervention are important for maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle. Our chief public health office also reminds us that in many cases, diabetes can be prevented, delayed, or even reversed by making healthy lifestyle choices, including a healthy diet, regular exercise, and losing excess weight.

I'm pleased to advise that throughout the month of November, Health PEI is offering free diabetes screening and risk assessment clinics throughout the province.

I encourage Islanders to visit these clinics, so that they better understand their risk factors for diabetes and what steps they can be taking to prevent or manage the disease.

Details on those clinics can be found online at healthpei.ca/diabetes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to you the minister for the announcement and thank you for all the representatives that are here today in the gallery. We appreciate the hard work that you do.

It's good to hear that there is a renewed diabetes strategy coming first of the year, sounds interesting, but hopefully that comes sooner than later. I know that there'll a lot of people putting a lot of hard work into it.

I think I might have read in the media too, that the diabetes association has a brand new advocate. I wouldn't raise it other than, I think, the minister has addressed it publicly as well. I'm sorry to hear of the minister now has the diabetes, but I would have to think for people that are struggling with diabetes in our province, there's no better health advocate than the minister leading the charge in that.

I have no doubt that your experience in the wonderful health care that our system has and I wish the minister well. I think that's reassuring for the people in our province that are struggling with it or that could be diagnosed, because they know they have a strong advocate at the helm now with the minister. So minister I encourage you to keep going.

I can't let this go past without my good buddy Maxwell in Morell, I always mention with juvenile diabetes. His team, Super Max, they do the walk every year, and they raise money.

Whether it's ball or hockey, we make sure we tell all the kids about his pump and all the safety things around that. Max is an awesome little kid, and he's just like the rest of them – just a little bit of an addition with him.

I thank the minister again for the statement, and again, for all the people that do such great work in our province.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks so much, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome the announcement. I look forward to seeing the new strategy in the first of the year.

A world class active transportation system, a local universal free school food program, a more progressive anti-smoking plan across the province – these are all things which do not assess or intervene or manage diabetes, but they prevent diabetes. I appreciate you did – there was a small portion of the announcement that you made, minister, where you talk about prevention.

Type 2 diabetes is a one of those diseases which is largely, if not entirely preventable. Again, it's a lifestyle – it's created by choices in lifestyle. We're all to a large extent responsible for our own health, but government can do things, and I believe has a responsibility to do things, to encourage Islanders to develop the sorts of lifestyles that will not only prevent debilitating diseases like diabetes from occurring and all of the personal tribulations and problems that come along with that, but save this province millions and millions of dollars.

The costs of diabetes are estimated to be \$80 million here on Prince Edward Island. It's an enormous sum. If we were to put a fraction of that into expanding, as I said earlier, the other things that we could do to improve the – or encourage Islanders to adopt healthier lifestyles, we could avoid so much of that cost.

Yes, we need to expand the access of diabetes strips to those with type 2 diabetes, we need to do more to support people with pumps and the costs associated with that, but 10% of those with – 10% of your income of those with diabetes goes to treating the disease. It's an economic problem for the individuals, but it's also an economic problem for this province.

We introduced, in this corner of the House, a motion: Health in all Policies, which was designed to recognize that all the choices that we make, whether it be in

transportation, infrastructure, whether it be in education and early learning or any other of the departments in our government, that if we make those choices with health in mind, then we can save this province money and we can improve the health of individuals.

I welcome the announcement, but I really hope that's also shift towards a balance between better prevention and assessment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Road Safety

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the key pillars of the department of transportation, infrastructure is road safety. Amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* will improve safety on our Island roads.

PEI already has some of the strongest impaired driving legislation in Canada, which includes amendments from last spring. New changes that will be coming forward will bring the *Highway Traffic Act* in line with changes to the federal Criminal Code of Canada that will come into affect this December.

New amendments will also designate tow trucks and recovery vehicles as emergency vehicles. If Islanders see emergency vehicles parked at the side of the road with their lights flashing, including tow trucks, they must move over a lane – if it's safe to do so – and slow down to half the speed limit. It's our responsibility to protect the lives of the emergency responders who are putting themselves out there to protect us.

Our *Highway Traffic Act* contains strong rules designed to keep our roads safe. Our law enforcement work diligently to enforce those rules, but we also need to remind ourselves – and all Islanders – that these rules are only as effective as the drivers who respect the laws. We all need to slow down and pay attention. Slowing down and paying attention are key factors in keeping our children safe, keeping first responders safe, and keeping pedestrians and other drivers safe.

We are working with our government and police partners to set up a public awareness effort to get this message out and reduce dangerous driving.

If I might deliver one more reminder, very relevant I would say considering our unexpected snowfall yesterday. From November to April, please ensure your car has four matching winter tires in good condition. Lack of suitable winter tires can be a factor in serious collisions. Winter tires provide almost twice the traction of all-season tires on snow or ice.

Police and highway safety officers will be out on Island roads this week doing check stops giving away free air pressure gauges, pamphlets, and reminded Islanders of this lifesaving message.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome the minister's announcement there and statement. I think that we all can agree that impaired driving on our Island roads is a top priority of the government and also the law enforcement community and the community at large. Anything we can do to reduce impaired driving, whether it be by drug or by an alcohol, we should be taking those steps forward.

Emergency vehicles is a big concern because we all see them on the side of the road and whether it be a tow truck, a fire truck or an ambulance or a police car, we must slow down, pull over to the side and pass when safe.

I'm glad to see that we're also bringing in the tow trucks in this matter. That's a big concern. A lot of time these guys are out there by themselves, late at night with no assistance besides a tow truck operator themselves. They're in a bad situation.

I think it's also very important to mention about school buses, and flashing lights. Yellow on a school bus means prepare to stop and stop now, it doesn't mean keep on going. The same as we see yellow lights at intersections. When you see a yellow light at

an intersection, it doesn't just mean that: better hit the gas and go through it. But, we also must consider our school buses and the lives that are in danger. When these little kids are getting on and off the school buses – everything we can do to improve that safety, we must do.

I remember last week, the minister mentioned about the trial of putting the revolving light on the back of a school bus. That's a good step. We talked about maybe putting flashing lights at the very front of the bus down by the grill. Anything we can do to improve road safety when it comes to school buses, we should be moving forward.

Law enforcement plays a big part in this and we need to support our law enforcement community; we need to have all agencies working together, whether it be the Conservation Officer with Highway Safety Officers, into the RCMP and into our city police departments. It's a collaborative approach and these individuals do work very strongly.

One thing I suggested last week in standing committee was – we talked about education. I think that government really needs to take a step up and look at advertising our safety programs on social media. We see paid announcements on Twitter and we see them on Facebook; maybe that's another step that the government would consider, that we start seeing safety advertisements when it comes to road safety, also on social media.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also welcome the minister's statement as I did welcome the minister's statement last evening, just as we were ready to go home. I chose to stay here in town, and indeed my wife, who drove into town this morning from Crapaud, said that there were several cars off the road between here. So, I thank you for your warning last night; I always listen to what you say, minister, and I appreciate that.

I also – it's kind of relevant to the response I just gave to the Minister of Health and

Wellness, that to a large extent, the safety on our roads is our personal responsibility, absolutely. Government can do many things to improve that, from enforcement to good road design, to making sure that the roads are well cleared – all of the things that make the conditions as good as they possibly can, but ultimately, it's the responsibility of each of us who gets behind the wheel of a car, to recognize that we are driving, potentially, a lethal weapon. We need to take that responsibility. I appreciate the minister's recommendation of winter tires. Absolutely, that's something that we should all do, and I hope by now, most Islanders have them on there.

One thing that I'd like to talk about before I sit down, is that we're continuing to build more roads. We are adding more kilometers of roads to our Island system, here. All of those kilometers need to be cleared; they need to be up kept. That puts increasing strain on the resources of the plow drivers, the sanders and the grader – everybody who looks after the roads. We have to remember that, that when add new kilometers of highway, unless we increase the budget for that, then we are taking away the safety potential or the potential for safe roads on those that already exist. We are a province already with the largest number of kilometers per person. I believe that we should be looking after the roads we have, not adding more roads. The future of driving is not necessarily more cars and more people; we have driverless automobiles coming our way, we have apps which will allow really fine public transit and I believe, and many studies are suggesting, that we're not going to need more roads in the future because there is not going to be that increased traffic.

So yes, I welcome the announcement, but let's look to the future and make sure that we look after the roads that are currently here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Bioscience Industry in PEI

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to have all the students here today because I want to talk about some of the strategic investments that we're making, and we're making them for you.

The bioscience industry did not even exist when I was in grade 9, so I think that's a very important invest that we are making. The bioscience industry in Prince Edward Island is quickly becoming one of the most important and growing sectors of the provincial economy.

Over the past three years, more than a dozen new companies have entered the sector and five companies have expanded their options. More than 1,700 Islanders are employed by the companies represented in this sector.

One of those companies is BioVectra, which is widely considered to be the anchor of the bioscience industry, here on Prince Edward Island. BioVectra employs 300 people in its three Charlottetown facilities. The company recently completed a 21,000 square foot expansion to those facilities, and today, BioVectra will receive the Gold Leaf Award, as the company of the year from Biotec-Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: This award recognizes a Canadian biotech company that has distinguished itself from its peers, with strong overall performance as a company, demonstrated leadership, and shown significant achievement. It will have reached milestones in terms of financing, product introduction, and partnerships during the year that has allowed the company to be recognized as a leader.

The company will have established a solid foundation of strong and diverse pipeline, and impressive potential for sales and earnings. This award shows that BioVectra is a strong company, with a strong future here on PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: It also shows that our small but mighty province can compete with much larger jurisdictions, and our companies are best in class. I congratulate president, Oliver Techno, and the staff at BioVectra for the recognition it is receiving today. The award

is well-deserved, and we look forward to seeing even more growth in this vital sector of the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were a couple of different messages in the minister's statement, so I'll start with the first message, which was: government patting itself on the back for all of the work it's doing in the bioscience – Michael Mayne's prosperity plan, remember that one? Michael Mayne wrote a prosperity plan and it was so good, he didn't even need the minister's name or picture on it, he put his own name and picture on it. And then, because he wasn't able to actually do any work, he wasn't able to make it move at all, and it became a bumbling failure out there at the BioCommons for a number of years.

That has nothing to do with BioVectra. And BioVectra had nothing to do with government. BioVectra is a good Island company, grown out of great workmanship, out of great planning, out of great business people. I'm sure that, Regis Duffy, when he first began out there, had this view for the company to end up where they are. I want to congratulate BioVectra for the great work that they've done, contributing to our Island economy – it's a great Island business.

I always say that good, strong business here on Prince Edward Island, makes for a good, strong economy. When government tries to take credit for the great work that business' like BioVectra does, it certainly takes away from the 300-400 employees out there, who show up and work hard every day to make their company a great company. We should celebrate success stories, whether or not government had anything to do with them, whether or not government put any money into them. Success is success. We don't all need to have a share of it for PEI to be a successful place to do business.

I'd hate for people who are thinking about coming here to do business on Prince Edward Island, to think that the only way to have your success celebrated is if you jump into bed with government. That couldn't be

further from the truth. Over here on this side, we recognize great success stories like BioVectra, whether or not they had any inputs from government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A key pillar in the biotech sector here is the BioAlliance, which is a private sector led non-profit organization dedicated to building the bioscience industry on PEI.

Since 2005, the BioAlliance has facilitated the work of businesses academic and research institutions, and federal and provincial government agencies, in establishing the bioscience sector, as a key pillar in the economic foundation of the province. By working collaboratively with partners, they have created a unique environment that promotes and supports excellence in research, and provides strong leadership and business support to companies at all stages. The value of this leadership is evident, where the world deserved recognition now achieved by BioVectra.

The BioAlliance receives core funding and programming support from both the provincial and federal government and biotech has been identified as a primary strategic sector in our innovation and economic development legislation plans and activities for many years.

Imagine what our economy would look like today if we had made the same strategic commitment 20 years ago to clean technology, renewable energy and innovative solutions to climate change.

The BioAlliance and the success of BioVectra show that a long-term exciting vision of the future is not only possible, but profitable.

Congratulations to the teams at both organizations on their continued success.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday during Question Period the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road asked me to table the Adoption Action Review final report, so I do have that today.

I moved seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road that the document be received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: No secrets in that?

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a report of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs Science and Technology entitled *The Shame is Ours, Forced Adoptions of the Babies of Unmarried Mothers in Post-War Canada* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, Justice and Public Safety.

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

That's probably apt, that's the department in under which I'll be tabling this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intitled an *Act to Amend the Public Departments Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and

Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Public Departments Act* Bill No. 46, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: This bill amends the *Public Departments Act* to replace current requirements that all public officers and provincial officers retake their oaths of allegiance upon the demise of the Crown.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Police Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Police Act*, Bill No. 45, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. J. Brown: This bill amends the *Police Act* to provide for the appointment of conservation officers as police officers for the purposes of the act, to enlarge the minister's authority to address circumstances where an investigation has determined that a police service, chief officer or police officer is not in compliance with the act.

To modernize the complaint process and to require the ministers' authorization for any significant changes in municipal police services.

These amendments address in part, recommendations that were made in a crime prevention and policing services model review.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day Government

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the 3rd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carry.

Clerk: Order No. 3, *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)*, Bill No. 42, ordered for second reading

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Carry.

Clerk: *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)*, Bill No. 42, read a second time.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will now ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to come and Chair this bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled, *Eric*

Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act). Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill now be read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Thank you.

We'll invite the stranger to the floor and have them introduce themselves.

Hon. members, friendly reminder, if you'd like to be added to the speakers' list just signal to me and I'll add you there.

Good afternoon, I'd like to welcome you to the table and could you please introduce yourself and your title for the record.

Danny Miller: My name is Danny Miller; I'm the director of Occupational Health and Safety with the Workers Compensation Board.

Chair: Welcome.

Minister do you have an opening statement?

Mr. Gallant: Yes, I'd like to say a few words if I could.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Back in the spring, the occupational health and safety council approved the content for draft regulations for consultation on workforce harassment. The information was put out for comment received – excuse me – the information that was put out for comment received significant feedback from labour groups, as well as members of the business community.

While this was happening, we were contacted by Lisa Donovan who has championed this issue for some time. She brought together a group of labour leaders, councillors, and invited the Leader of the Opposition and myself.

Conversations with this group helped shape this act as it is presented today. In this act, we aim to accomplish a few things. First, the act's purposes to broaden, to secure

employees from the risk of their psychological well-being, not just physical well-being, something that is increasingly important in today's workforce.

Secondly, it requires employers to establish and implement a policy to prevent and investigate occurrences in harassment in the workplace. Lastly, throughout this amendment there are exceptions that are made so that the affected employee does not need to follow the standard protocol if it could in any way affect their privacy.

It was felt that this was necessary to ensure the employee would feel comfortable bringing forward concerns without fear their privacy could be compromised.

This act is a first step. After passed we will begin finalizing regulations which will reach out to partners to assist in completing. The details of what needs to be done in the employer's policy and the definition of what constitutes harassment are to be defined in the regulations. When discussing with our partners it was felt that this was best given how this issue is relatively new and there is increasingly research surrounding it.

Additional resources and efforts will be spent in educating employers and providing them with the tools to make the workplace harassment free. We do not see this act as an additional burden on employers. Rather, it is intended to help provide clarity on what is acceptable behavior at work.

Finally, in our last meeting Lisa asked both the Leader of the Opposition and myself if this amendment to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* could be named after her late husband, Eric. We happily honoured this request.

Thank you, Chair.

[Applause]

Chair: Thank you, everyone.

I'm going to go to Georgetown-St. Peters for a question off the top.

I know how important this act is to this House, and to the family, and to everybody involved, and I know that you're enthusiastic about it being here on the floor,

but I'm going to have to ask you to not clap. I know off the hand I've allowed you to do that off the top, it's very important and I know that. But from here on in, let's refrain from the clapping although it's appreciated.

Thank you.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So, like I said yesterday, I support the bill and I do have some questions about the implementation and its timeline. Once the act passes, which I believe it will, then how do you go about implementing? What's your timeline for this to be in full force?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, there would need to be approximately three months for the regulations to be formed and then another approximately three months to roll it out. So probably the first of July would be the date.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So I know one of the clauses has to do with putting the onus on the employer to come up with a policy in accordance with the regulations. We don't have the regulations yet so they obviously can't start that work.

I'm wondering while you are putting together the regulations if you could put together a sample policy, because a lot of small businesses don't have the staff or the resources available to come up with something like that. They don't have to follow it, but I mean if you gave the businesses a basis that they could follow for the policies. Is that something that you would be able to do?

Danny Miller: Yeah, I mean certainly it's kind of the: What comes first?

We want to go out and present certain information to help those employers with templates and materials, but we have to kind of know the end result of the regulations as well because it's going to dictate what they

put in their policy. So, it's kind of the chicken and the egg. Hopefully, we can do both in a timely fashion.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I think it is important because I think that it's okay for government, it's okay for big businesses and they'll have the resources to be able to do this. But, for small businesses, they won't. We want everybody to comply, obviously, with this act because I think it's important.

The regulations – I don't really see how the regulations are going to be created. Is that something that's going to be created 100% internally or who are you going to consult with in order to come up with the regulations that go along with this act?

Mr. Gallant: Well a lot of the stakeholders that were consulted to make the legislation will be consulted as well. We'll go back to them like employers and the organizations and the labour representatives. We'll consult with them on what should be in the regulations.

Mr. Myers: Okay, and that's going to be in the three-month window –

Mr. Gallant: Approximately.

Mr. Myers: – following this session.

Danny Miller: Well, a substantial amount of the work of the regulations has been done based on consultations that have already been conducted.

So we've done quite a bit of research, and we've sent draft regulations back in April out for public consultation. Then we took that as a basis and we added the comments from stakeholders and we had legal people look at it. We've got a fairly good basis already.

My understanding is once the act is passed that we'll go back out again with those regulations because there have been some changes to those as a result of (Indistinct) consultations.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I just have one more question for now.

I'm just wondering can you give us kind of an overview of your vision of how it would work?

So if there's an employee who felt that they were being harassed in the workplace, what would they do and what would happen in your vision, without having all the regs in place?

Danny Miller: Our vision is to create a process basically for employers to eliminate workplace harassment, or at least reduce it. If those situations actually occur, so if there's a complaint made that we have a structure or a process in place so that the worker knows how to file a complaint and the employer has something in place to actually address those complaints; investigate those.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

Just first off, I'd like to welcome Lisa and her daughter, Emma Donovan here, along with many friends and family. It's been a long time coming. I know the fifth anniversary of Eric's passing was just a few days ago. Again, my thoughts and condolences go to you.

I didn't know Eric. I've known Lisa for many, many years and I've gotten to know you quite well over the last couple of years as we met and discussed this and the – I reviewed all of the material that you brought forward to my office, including all of the affidavits and did broach the subject here in the Legislature before. I'm very happy that we're at this stage today.

Minister, I thank you and, particularly as well your Deputy Minister, Brad Colwill, for the leadership on this working alongside union groups and leaders in the community and everybody that got involved in this.

I also had my own piece of legislation prepared in the event that government

wasn't able to keep up the speed on this, but I'm very thankful that I didn't have to bring it forward. Government is doing the right thing here.

As the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters was alluding to, the regulations are really where we're going to get into the teeth of Eric Donovan act and how we can move forward with this.

So you're saying approximately three months to write the regs and then another three months to roll it out. I would think that the education component is going to be a very significant piece of this act as well. I know I've been contacted by other individuals over the last year or so with similar circumstances – some similar, some maybe not so similar to what Eric endured at his place of employment.

I know there was a letter sent to the premier on October the 23rd and it was copied to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the Minister of Finance and also the MLA for District 16 Cornwall-Meadowbank, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Shauna Sullivan-Curley who, of course, is the PEI Ethics and Integrity Commissioner, PEI Union of Public Sector Employees, the PEI Workers Compensation Board, the PEI Human Rights Commission.

I trust that everybody that received this letter, this document, has read it from front to back and took pause to consider what this individual has gone through over the last couple years.

This individual didn't work for a small private business, this individual actually worked for one of the Crown corporations here on PEI.

If I could have your indulgence just for a quick moment – I'm not going to get in all the details and I'm not going to disclose any private or personal or confidential names or information or anything like that, but I think it's very important that this is read into record.

This is how serious of an issue that we have out there:

The employer puts forth that I should not be entitled to compensation as they consider it the stressors that are considered to be part of everyday workplace and may be associated with necessary and unavoidable aspects of doing business.

I sincerely hope that this Crown corp. is not in any way suggesting that employees in the course of their business should be accepted to be regularly solicited for sex, threatened with suicide, stalked, bullied and systematically harassed, especially from a high ranking supervisor.

I am not, and have never been, employed as a prostitute and I am not a mental health professional, I'm not equipped to deal with being solicited for sex or threatened with suicide.

The *Human Rights Act, Employment Standards Act* and Criminal Code of Canada are in agreement that this sort of treatment in the workplace is intolerable.

That's just one small excerpt of what an individual has had to deal with over the last couple of years while they've been refused and denied the rights they should be.

I'm happy to say that it's moving forward very slowly. There seems to be a sense – a very small sense – of cooperation from the employer but still there's no acknowledgement of negligence here. There's no acceptance of lost wages by this individual who had to go out on stress leave, understandably. Who unfortunately was then cut from her employment and lost income.

This is completely unacceptable that anybody should have to deal with something like this. So I bring this forward again because, the Premier – many ministers in this House have been copied on this and if you haven't read it already, I implore you to find it on your desk and read it and get involved, because this kind of action and treatment of employees on PEI has got to stop.

Chair: Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Minister, first of all, for bringing this forward to honour the memory of Mr. Donovan and to move

forward on the protection of employees in the private sector, certainly. We know under our provincial government there are certainly a lot of pieces in place there, procedures in place – steps to be followed.

I guess my question is a little bit like the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters in regard to maybe looking at some of those pieces as to what the check marks should be if an incident is occurring and if the employer is not addressing that, then will there be an assurance that that employee will have another avenue to go to?

Is that something that this will also include – whether it's in your regulations or in the procedure that the employer needs to know, but the employees in that workplace needs to know, that if the employer does not take their complaint seriously or address it, that then that they are informed whether it's through education in the workplace – making sure that employers also have to inform employees of the fact that if they don't feel that their complaints are being addressed, what is the other recourse?

I know with my discussions with many people who come to me that they may not know where else they can go for help, which is kind of why they come to me.

Is that something minister, maybe your technical advisor can respond to?

Danny Miller: Yes so as I said earlier, we're trying to build a framework for workers and employers and within the policy, we anticipate – the policy that the employers have to have. They'll set out a definition of what harassment is, the procedure that workers can follow, who they should report it to and those kinds of things.

We're hoping that employers follow those but to your point: when it doesn't happen, when it's not following the process or the employer's not taking it serious, there's going to be provisions in the regulations where there are OHS officers who can step in and enforce the employer to do that.

Ms. Biggar: Okay great, thank you.

Chair: Hon. members do you wish me to continue to read it clause by clause? Or are we carrying the bill?

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Some Hon. Members: Carry the bill.

Chair: Carry the bill. Thank you.

The *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)*. Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carry.

Mr. Gallant: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the Chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

Can I ask the House for the unanimous consent to move right on to third reading and get this done today, for the bill?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Ms. Biggar: Agreed.

Mr. Aylward: That's a good idea.

Speaker: Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: So hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, we need somebody to move – to make a motion to do that.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that we move to third reading on this bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)*, Bill No. 42, read a third time.

Speaker: This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do pass.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the 4th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No.4, *Post-secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act*, Bill No.41, ordered for second reading.

Ms. Biggar: Point of order.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *Post-secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act*, Bill No. 41, read a second time.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House do

now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to come and Chair the bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *Post-secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) Chair.

Chair: Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just –

Chair: Are you starting to ask questions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, I –

Chair: Oh sorry, could we wait until we bring a stranger to the floor?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Absolutely.

Chair: I've got you at the top of the list.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

An Hon. Member: Agreed.

Chair: Thank you.

Good afternoon.

Anne Patridge: Good afternoon.

Chair: Could you introduce yourself and your title for the record.

Anne Patridge: Good afternoon, I'm Anne Patridge. I'm the Executive Director of Post Secondary Education with the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Chair: Welcome.

Minister, I'm going to give you a brief explanation.

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

In the fall of 2017, the UPEI Student Union published its priorities for the year. In it, they recommended that the province implement legislation requiring public post-secondary institutions to have sexual violence policies with ministerial oversight. This was presented to, and approved by, the Standing Committee on Education, Economic Development, as well.

At this point, the department began its plans to examine this. In the spring of 2018, the advocacy group, Our Turn, met with our department and made a similar request – that the province legislate a requirement for institutions to have a stand-alone sexual violence policy.

Over the summer, our department reached out to stakeholders to obtain their feedback on this important issue and consider potential next steps. These stakeholders included: the administration at UPEI, Holland College and Collège de l'Île, student services UPEI and Holland College, UPEI and Holland College Student Unions, PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, PEI Women's network, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Catholic Family Service Bureau, Human Rights Commission and representatives from government including; Family and Human Services, Justice and Public Safety, and the Interministerial Women's Secretariat and others.

Approximately 50 individuals participated with our sessions from the various organizations noted above. The one thing that was consistent was a common belief that there should be legislation requiring post-secondary institutions to have a sexual violence policy.

There were a few other important things we heard during our consultations – every student advisory group made it clear that having student input is important in development of a sexual violence policy. This would be a requirement in this legislation.

We also heard that the implementation and review of the policy was just as important as its development. These components are also included in the regulation. Further, while the legislation respects the self-governance of our institution, it also includes the ability for the minister of the department to direct a review of the policy, if necessary. Many stakeholders help with developing this framework, and we will continue to use their help, as we draft regulations to accompany this act.

This act ensures that the students are protected and establishes a set of expectations for our post-secondary institutions. At its highest level, the legislation requires a development implementation and review of its sexual violence policy, as well as a report on its implementation each year to its governing body.

I would like to personally thank Taya Nabuurs, the former VP Academic and External at UPEI Student Union, Emma Drake, for continuing Taya's work, and Paxton Caseley and the other members of our team. They have pushed this forward and should be commended for it. I would also like to thank our post-secondary institutions, for their willingness to provide input, cooperate and help move this forward.

We are the first province in Atlantic Canada to have this legislation, and we are proud to bring awareness and provide leadership on this important issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, I have a question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Not yet, but maybe one day.

Mr. Gallant: Third party.

Chair: Oh, sorry.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Firstly, I'm grateful minister, for you bringing forward this really important piece of work. I know an enormous amount of energy, time and effort has gone into getting to where we are today.

This matters an awful lot to a great deal of – particularly young people.

We received the bill yesterday, and our office has done a lot of work on this, and we currently have about six amendments before – that we would like to present. They are currently with Legislative Council, but because of the immediacy of us debating it, considering it was just tabled yesterday, I'm asking that we defer debate on this until we get our amendments back from Legislative Council, so we can do it in a proper manner.

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, we would be willing to take it off the floor then, for (Indistinct).

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I really appreciate that minister and Chair.

Ms. Biggar: Madam Chair.

Chair: Sorry, hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Before we go out of committee, I'd like to be assured that this won't be held up when it comes again to the floor. It's a very important piece of legislation, for protection of women, violence against women on campus, and I would hope that when it comes back to this floor, that there will be no other kind of delays that occur with it.

I just felt very strongly that I needed to say that.

Chair: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: I respect the fact that there are amendments that may be needed to be made, but I'm very determined as Minister of Status of Women, that we do not play any kind of political games with this legislation.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacEwen: Seriously?

Ms. Biggar: Yes, seriously.

Mr. Gallant: I move that the Speaker take the Chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intituled *Post-Secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the Bill No. 42 *Eric Donovan Act (An Act to Amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act)*, do now pass.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

This is a bill introduced by leave of the House, read a first time, read a second time, committed to a Committee of the Whole House, reported agreed to without amendment, read a third time and it is now moved that the bill do now pass.

All those in favour say 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Speaker: Contrary, 'nay'.

The bill is carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the 5th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No. 5, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 40, ordered for second reading.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 40, read a second time.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will once again ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to come and chair this bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill now be read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Can I have an overview?

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

An Hon. Member: Granted.

Chair: We'll allow the stranger to come to the floor.

Good afternoon.

Could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Kate Marshall: My name is Kate Marshall and I am the director of Workplace Services at the Workers Compensation Board.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Minister, would you care to give an overview?

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I guess I would, thank you.

The amendments proposed in this act will provide enhanced coverage for firefighters, injured workers, families of injured workers and Worker Compensation Board clients in general – and will bring PEI more in line with benefits provided in other jurisdictions.

The presumptive coverage for firefighters is introduced and will make it easier for firefighters who develop primary site cancer or heart injuries in the workplace to access Worker Compensation Board benefits.

That will reduce the burden on them to prove it came from the worksite. This will put PEI in line with the majority of the country in preparation of this legislation we have reached out to the firefighter community and will continue to do so as the regulations associated with this legislation are finalized.

This act also ensures all workers have equal entitlement to pension benefits. All workers who transfer to extended wage loss benefits will meet the criteria and will have 5% put aside for a future annuity. Workers will also have the option of matching this contribution if they wish to do so.

This new fund will help those on extended wage loss benefits when they turn 65. In this act, the definition of ‘impairment’ is also amended and is more expanded and equitable. The current definition is outdated and restrictive and does not recognize the current reality of physiological impairments for ongoing symptoms, like chronic pain. The new definition aims to make the impairment definition more inclusive.

Lastly, there is an amendment to increase the current lump sum death benefit amount from \$10,000 to 40% of the maximum earnings available, more than doubling the amount provided to the family of a deceased worker. This is in addition to existing benefits such as burial expenses and survivor independent benefits.

Lastly, the annual report deadline is changed to June 30th, aligning Workers Compensation Board with other Crown and agencies listed in schedule B under the *Financial Administration Act*.

Public consultations were undertaken prior to all proposed changes to this legislation, and I would like to thank all those involved in a preparation of this legislation and the firefighter community and all that they do to help us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill now be read clause by clause?

Ms. Biggar: An overview.

Mr. Fox: I have a question, Chair.

(Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

I read through the act and I’m interested in a couple of things.

I’m happy with the bill, to be honest with you, but I’m wondering whether jurisdictions have similar legislation in place like this.

Kate Marshall: Are you speaking specifically about the firefighters?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Kate Marshall: Yes.

The majority of other jurisdictions have specific legislation for firefighter presumption.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: I’m curious about the 24 hours responding to an emergency call or dispatch. Are we specifically saying that his pager goes off and the clock starts ticking at that point?

Kate Marshall: The clock starts ticking from, either the call or the dispatch, to the emergency and 24 hours after that, and that is consistent with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Fox: To be honest with you, I'm happy with the bill.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Chair: The Leader of the Third Party has a question.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I have some questions and yes, I won't say anymore, Chair.

Thank you.

Regarding section 2.1 of this new act, are we okay if we just go through – I don't know if anybody else has questions, but if I go through the questions, my questions, clause by clause here, Chair?

Chair: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Section 2.1 sub 2(a) exempts employers from various sections of the act.

I'm wondering if you can give us a detail – because without the other act we can't (Indistinct) – can you give us a run through of what those provisions employees are being exempt from and the reasons why they're being exempted?

Kate Marshall: Volunteer firefighters are a little bit different because they're not actually, technically, employees. They're not paid, so they are the only volunteers that are actually covered under the *Workers Compensation Act*.

We are saying in the amendment that the volunteer firefighter shall be considered an employee of the fire department that they're affiliated with for many purposes, but excluding things like their right to return to work. So, that would be section 86 and 86.1(2).

Employers have an obligation to return injured workers to work, but obviously many volunteer firefighters have employment in excess of their volunteer firefighter.

We can't expect the fire department to be responsible to return the injured worker to work in their regular employment. So that's that piece.

Section 61 refers to the classification of employers, and that basically is related to the rates that employers pay and actually, fire departments, unless they're municipal fire departments, don't pay assessments and don't have a rate. So that exempts them from that piece.

Then section 79 refers to liability of directors.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I appreciate – I had a question on the on the right to return –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party, sorry.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, that's fine –

Chair: Sorry.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – the right to return to work and you've just preempted that with your explanation, so I appreciate that.

Section 5, which is section 34 of the act, I think this clause is unrelated to the volunteer firefighters, actually, but it moves back to the deadline for the WCB to submit its annual report to the minister by two months and I'm just wondering why that is the case.

Kate Marshall: It's really around the limitations of us being able to get all of our financial information back in time to produce the annual report and get it to the minister in time. So, it's just giving us a little bit of time to collate all the financial information, get it in the format we need it in for the annual report.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Moving to section 6 – and I should have said right off the top that I absolutely support the intent of this bill. I think it's a wonderful

think and past due, and I'm glad that we are leading the way in Atlantic Canada, so I should have said that.

Section 6, which is 37 sub 1 of the act, it changes the calculation of the lump sum and you mentioned this in your opening remarks, minister, compensation for families of the deceased worker. The new formula, 40% of annual earnings, means that the families of workers earning under \$24,000 would actually receive less.

Can you explain – most families would receive more, but I'm wondering if you could expand on that a little bit.

Kate Marshall: Yeah.

Right now the benefit is \$10,000. The 40% of the maximum annual earnings – so if we had a fatality next year, the maximum annual earnings is \$55,000 and so the death benefit would be \$22,000, 40% of that. So it would increase for everybody. It's not based on what the worker's earnings are, it's based on the maximum annual earnings for the year of the fatality.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But if that individual had maximum annual earnings of \$24,000 or less – so is it a minimum of \$10,000?

Kate Marshall: The lump sum right now is \$10,000 regardless of your earnings.

The change is to make it 40% of the maximum annual earnings, whatever they might be. We set the maximum annual earnings every year and so this next year, they're \$55,000. Last year it was \$53,500, so it's always going to be more than \$10,000.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I think I understand. So it's not the actual earnings of the individual firefighters, it's the max –

Kate Marshall: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Got it.

Thank you very much.

Moving on –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair.

Moving onto section 8, which is section 43 of the old act – of the act, rather.

It changes the way that benefits are provided to the injured workers when they reach 65-years-of-age. Will these changes ensure that the injured workers and their families don't have their benefits clawed back when they turn 65?

Kate Marshall: They won't have any benefits clawed back when they turn 65.

What happens right now is we have a pension replacement benefit and the onus is on the injured worker to show us that they'd lost pension income throughout their period of time off work.

This removes that onus completely and the annuity benefit, or the new pension benefit, will apply to everyone who is on extended wage loss benefits, or moves to extended wage loss benefits, after the change is made.

For whatever period of time, so if someone is 35 when they move to extended wage loss benefits, we will contribute 5%. They can contribute an additional 5%, and then when they turn 65, we give them that and they can purchase an annuity.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Section 43.1 sub 2(a) requires that injured workers be collecting benefits for two years before they turn 65 in order to qualify for the extended coverage.

I'm wondering why there's a time limit there at all. Why two years, why a time limit at all?

Kate Marshall: Usually when someone is injured, that is a reasonable amount of time before we would consider transferring a claim to extended wage loss benefits unless it's a catastrophic injury.

We make every effort to return an injured worker back to work, but if they have a loss of earning capacity – and some people move to extended wage loss benefits and have a partial loss of earning capacity, so they can work, but they have some loss of earning capacity. Their annuity would be based on that amount; 24 months was consistent with the majority of other jurisdictions and so that's why we chose that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I know that the WCB fund has been running large surpluses recently.

Kate Marshall: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Not to assume that it will always be that way in the future.

Now, of course most employees pay into the fund and it balances out, but these are not, as you've pointed out earlier, they're not really employees because they're volunteers and I'm just wondering if you've done any estimate on how much this may cost the fund? How many workers you anticipate each year will come into this? Just to make sure that the continuity and the sustainability of the WCB fund is there.

Kate Marshall: Yeah, the annuity piece relates to all workers, not just firefighters, and we did have some actuarial estimations done and they predict a two-cent increase in assessment rates.

But I will say that – and this is not going to always be the case – but changes that we've made to legislation in the past, such as the elimination of the wait period and the increase in benefits from 80% to 85%. We also predicted a two cent increase and we've seen reductions in the assessment rate for the last number of years.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So just to be clear on that – and again, I am fully supportive of volunteer firefighters being brought in as this bill allows it. The funding of the estimated cost of that will be borne by other businesses and individuals who pay into the

plan; and you're estimating an increase of two cents?

Kate Marshall: The two cent increase relates to the annuity.

So volunteer firefighters are what we call 'self insured'. There is no employer who pays assessments and so we can't put that cost on all employers.

Volunteer firefighters are covered under the Department of Justice and Public Safety, and they pay claim costs dollar for dollar. It's a different funding method for volunteers.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I appreciate all the explanations for the questions I just had there.

Obviously, this is a portion of the workforce who are particularly vulnerable to workforce injuries because of the nature of their work, not to mention the PTSD element of their work.

Again, I'm really glad this bill is before the House and I'm happy to support it.

Thank you.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 3).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No.3)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the Order No. 6 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No. 6, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No.4)*, Bill No.32, ordered for second reading.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No.4)*, Bill No. 32, read a second time.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House, to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to once again come and chair the bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No.4)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll allow her to come and get set up.

Good afternoon.

Will you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Patricia McPhail: I am Patricia McPhail. I'm the Director of Labour and Industrial Relations with workforce and advanced learning.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Minister, do you have an overview of the bill?

Mr. Gallant: Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

Okay, this legislation aims to align the current parental leave with the benefits provided through Employment Insurance. This will put PEI in line with the amendments made by most other provinces in recent months. If this amendment is approved, new parents could potentially take 18 months of leave if they choose to.

Further to increases, the amount of compassionate care leave that is available to those who have a family member that has a serious medical condition from eight weeks to 28 weeks. This aligns with the Employment Insurance benefits available for such a leave.

Lastly, it reduces the qualifying period before sick leave can be granted from six months to three months.

These amendments are put out – were put out for consultation over the summer and yielded nearly 200 responses. The department recognizes that the *Employment Standards Act* needs updating. This is why, as noted in the recently launched Poverty Reduction Action Plan, we have committed to doing comprehensive review of the act.

The workplace is evolving and the legislation needs to evolve with it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So this bill deals with additional leave – a protection for additional leave under compassionate circumstances and parental?

Mr. Gallant: Correct.

It's to get us in line with the federal and for job security.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Who did you consult with in the business community?

Patricia McPhail: So there were a number of organizations, both business related and not-for-profit sector related, who were consulted.

Some of the entities would have included: Rodd Hotels & Resorts, the Tourism Industry Association of PEI, Restaurants Canada, Victim Services, CUPE, the Retail Council of Canada, and the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention.

Now, some of these were consulted in relation to the domestic violence regulations that are set to come into force at a later date, and that's just a partial list. I could continue if you wanted a full list.

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

Mr. Myers: No, not really do I need a whole list. I guess what I'm trying to figure out is who you consulted with from the business community.

My follow-up question is: What did they say?

Patricia McPhail: The majority of responses on these proposed amendments were positive there were a few positive with comments and then very few negative responses. I don't have exact statistics on that, but I can tell you – I would say it was approximately 80% were positive about these amendments.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So out of the 20% that weren't, what were their major concerns?

Patricia McPhail: For the most part – honestly, for the most part, I think there was a bit of a misunderstanding about some of the provisions. So the comments that were received in the 'no' tended to be ones related to other provisions or misunderstandings about definitions.

There wasn't anyone who was wholly against what we're proposing here.

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

Mr. Myers: So you feel like you have like 100% support?

Patricia McPhail: I wouldn't say that it was 100% support.

With any amendments to employment standards legislation, it's really difficult to get 100% support. Be it because this was – comments came from both the employer and worker community. You're not likely to get 100% support when it comes from both.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So what types of things did they disagree on then?

Patricia McPhail: Give me a moment.

For an example, under the proposal to align the 18 months of employment insurance leave and the protection of the workplace leave, under our legislation. Some of the comments related to limited child care options, that employees should receive the same EI benefits during the full 18 months, not just 12 weeks – which is again, outside of what our legislation covers. So, a lot of the comments didn't directly pertain to what the legislative amendments we're dealing with here.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I do understand that's outside the legislation, but I would have a tendency to agree. People who are most likely to be able to take and advantage of this would be employees who have an employer who is able to top it up – like federal government. I don't know if they are doing it for the 18 months or not, but I know they do it quite well for 12 months, or, people who have a spousal unit. So a single parent may not necessarily be able to do this because they'd have zero income for that time.

Only in the spousal unit, a family that had the other spouse or one of the two spouses who was still able to earn an income, had to be a high enough level that they were able to float the entire family during that period. So, it's unfortunately going to limit people who are on the lower pay scale, and it's some of the probably lower paying jobs and people who are already struggling.

I do understand that it's not the nature of the bill, and it's not anything to do with what you fellows have done, but I'm wondering, what can be done through discussions with the federal government to maybe help alleviate that.

What I believe, and my family value is conservative, so I believe that if parents can spend time with their children and raise them, then it's fantastic. I also understand that there is finical limitations that's going

to keep that from happening. That's just the unfortunate circumstances of the world we live in.

If 18 months was available, and we could get the federal government to come to the table to cover all 18 months under EI, which is only six months more than they are covering anyway, that everybody would have that choice. Not everybody is going to choose that choice, people are going to say: no, I want to go back to work in 12 months. Some go back to work at nine months. It's all up to an individual how they want to handle that.

But if we gave everybody that level footing – and again, understanding that I know you guys don't control that – but what could we do or what could government do to lobby Ottawa to see if we could get those six months covered, maybe even as a pilot project because we're a small province.

Mr. Gallant: From my understanding, you could get the additional six months, but you have to take your 12 months over that 18 months so you have a reduced benefit.

Mr. Myers: Right.

Mr. Gallant: You could do that. I hear what you're saying, though. And maybe that's something, when this gets looked at again, I'm sure they'll have a look at this in the further to see how it's working, and that's the time (Indistinct) more input into it.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

And so, I guess my only comment to that would be, still – it's the same metric supplies, so if you're the only income or if all of your insurable earnings were based on a minimum wage job or – you going to make a lot of money to make that math work on EI, no matter who you are.

Mr. Gallant: It's not going to work for everybody.

Mr. Myers: No, it's not going to work for everybody.

I guess all I'm suggesting is, anything we could do to make this so that it benefitted most people, then I think it could be good for us.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, we had this discussion when I came back from the FPT for Status of Women, and this was just a federally – changes that had occurred, so I appreciate that you are bringing it forward. It is recognized that it is a reduction in the overall benefits for those who are able to take advantage of the 18 months.

Comparing that too, with child care costs of an infant as well, that has also been a part of the discussion as well, that when you go back to work, and the cost of infant care is certainly quite higher than when you're a two-year-old.

But the other thing, I think we can have discussions with the federal government on that around the FPT table to continue to make changes that will benefit those who are able to take advantage of the 18 month leave. I realize you are tying you bill in with what the federal regulations are.

I have a question though, and I've encountered this as minister. How are, under the *Employment Standards Act*, how are employees positions protected? Because I have encountered individuals who had taken the 12 months off for leave, for a child, and when they came back, were told: well, your job is not here anymore, or your job description changed, so they no longer were able to go back to that position.

So what has been done under the *Employment Standards Act* – and even more so now – if someone does take the option of an 18 month leave, that their position – someone has maybe been back filling them for 18 months; it's different if you're in a provincial government position or something under a union. But, within the private sector, what's there to protect that individual who opts-in to take that 18 month leave or even the 12 months? I've encountered it with 12 months.

Could you respond to that?

Patricia McPhail: So, the legislation – oh sorry, did you want to take –

Mr. Gallant: Well, I was just going to say from my knowledge; this is to protect their position. It's a part of this legislation. So we have to take the 12 month to 18 months –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Gallant: – so they can choose to do that. But in the legislation, it will also protect them for their job to be there when they go back to work in 18 months.

Ms. Biggar: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: So, just addressing the fact that – and I think you and I know a person, who had this happen when they went back to their position – the employer said: well, we changed your position, there was a loophole that they didn't have to take that individual back after that 12 months.

So, do we have a mechanism there to ensure that that's not going to be a loophole, just by changing the name of the job, or something like that, that that individual –

Mr. Gallant: I'll let Patricia answer that.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Patricia McPhail: Yes. So, if the employer were to change the position, the requirements of the legislation do provide that the employer is to put the worker returning from maternity or parental leave into a comparable position with not less than the same wages and benefits that the employee would have received, had they not been granted the leave. So we do have that protection. If they are not returning to the original position, then it ought to be a comparable position.

If an employee comes back to the workplace and they're finding – having difficulties with the employer, we would invite them to come

to the Employment Standards Office and discuss that matter with us.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, so that's – Chair.

Chair: Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: I guess I just want to have this discussion so people do realize that if that is something they're encountering, that they can go to the Employment Standards Board.

Patricia McPhail: Yes we would welcome them to come.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, thank you.

And thank you, minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

I just curious on how you come up with all of the different numbers and weeks, and the increase side, like from the 52 to the 62 or the 52 to 78, and the six months to the –

Patricia McPhail: The weeks that the amendments are (Indistinct) – the new weeks are the ones that align with the employment insurance benefits. They do take into account, where necessary, the one week wait period for EI benefits to kick in. That is kind of how we calculated all of those.

Mr. Fox: Okay, yeah.

Patricia McPhail: They do also match with what other jurisdictions have done as well.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: One question.

You had said that when an employee comes back that they would be guaranteed a similar job. Would they be guaranteed a location?

Patricia McPhail: That is a question I can't answer. I can't answer that off hand.

Mr. Roach: That's my only question.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Gallant: Madam Speaker, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendments.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled to *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 4)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that Order No. 8 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No. 8, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 44, ordered for second reading.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 44, read a second time.

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

Mr. Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to also come and chair this bill.

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Aylward: Chair, I don't need it clause by clause and I think the minister already gave us an overview earlier, but I just want to get on the list because I do have a questions.

Chair: Okay.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll allow him to come up to the floor and set up.

Good afternoon.

Could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Graham Miner: Graham Miner, Director of PEI's Highway Safety division.

Chair: Welcome to the table. Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Ms. Biggar: Just a brief statement. I had made a minister statement earlier about the changes coming forward to realign with the Criminal Code in regard to impairment so I think we all agree that whatever we can do to increase road safety is important and this does tie in with what, again, is coming into place on December 18th, 2018.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

So, to the best of my understanding right now, emergency vehicles such as fire trucks

—

Ms. Biggar: That's not this bill.

Mr. Aylward: — fire trucks, police cars and various others.

Ms. Biggar: That's not —

Mr. Aylward: Sorry, am I on the wrong one? Bill 43?

Ms. Biggar: No, 44.

Mr. Aylward: Oh sorry, my mistake.

Ms. Biggar: That's okay.

Chair: Do you still want to be on the question list?

Mr. Aylward: No. I'm okay right now.

Ms. Biggar: This is about —

Chair: He doesn't have a question.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, that's fine.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So this bill, is this the one that has to do with the impairment from cannabis?

Ms. Biggar: It includes that.

Mr. Myers: Okay

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you Chair.

I know that I read right after the legalization of cannabis situations where people were caught.

Now, some of the ones I think on Prince Edward Island were caught with cannabis. I don't know if they were actually proven to be impaired.

What is the test for proving impairment? Is it only blood?

Ms. Biggar: I'm going to get our director to take those technical questions and to perhaps add a further explanation to the other changes that are in the bill.

Mr. Myers: Sure.

Ms. Biggar: Go ahead.

Graham Miner: For impairment by drug it starts with a standard field sobriety test that is administered by a trained police officer. It could then follow thereafter the possibility of a saliva test and if it's moving up into the range of the Criminal Code through a drug recognition expert, there may be a taking of blood to further prove impairment.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

So what specifically in this act changes to help test for impairment from cannabis?

Graham Miner: In this bill?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: This is alcohol related.

Graham Miner: This bill is specifically alcohol related to changes coming to the Criminal Code on the 18th of December of this year and it's align –

Mr. Myers: This is the .08 one?

Graham Miner: Yeah. This is where two things would happen.

Ms. Biggar: Or less.

Graham Miner: The numbering system in the code has changed so we have to recognize those new section numbers and for impaired which was over .08 is now being written as .08 or more.

So the *Highway Traffic Act* is being amended to match up with all those corresponding changes from the Criminal Code.

Mr. Myers: Okay, got you.

Ms. Biggar: And then we have to change numbering in ours.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: I move the title.

Chair: An act to amend the *Highway Traffic Act (No.4)*.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: I move the enacted clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair, and that the Chair make report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, members.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No.4)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and

has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, November 15th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned