

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Thursday, 22 November 2018

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

### Speaker's Ruling

**Speaker:** Hon. members, I have reviewed the Point of Privilege raised by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

The minister objected to comments made by the hon. Member for Georgetown-St. Peters during Oral Question Period on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Specifically the use of the words 'broke the law' and 'illegally' in reference to actions taken by the minister.

The hon. Member for Georgetown-St. Peters addressed the point of privilege and asserted that his comments were correct.

To begin, I refer hon. members to *Beauchesne* (6th edition), Citation 31, which states: "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege."

The minister and member may have differing opinions to the allegations of facts, but this does not constitute a matter of privilege or a Point of Order.

Regarding the use of the words 'broke the law' and 'illegally' in reference to actions taken by the minister, hon. members, I draw your attention to Rule 34(2) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*, which states: "No member shall use language or words offensive toward the House or any member."

I also refer you to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice (Second Edition)*, page 614, which provides as follows:

Remarks directed specifically at another member which question the member's integrity, honesty or character, are not in order. A member will be requested to withdraw offensive remarks, allegations, or accusations of impropriety directed towards another member.

Hon. members, I have reviewed the comments and I do find the use of the words 'broke the law' and 'illegally' to be out of order. I remind all members that language

during the debate must be temperate and worthy of this House; and, as I requested during my ruling earlier this week, I trust that all hon. members will respect each other during future debates in the Legislature.

I now ask the hon. Member for Georgetown –

**Ms. Biggar:** He's not here.

**Speaker:** He's – I guess we can't talk about that.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** When the hon. member returns, I will be asking him to withdraw the words used during Oral Question Period on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you, hon. members.

### Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, welcome everyone joining us in the gallery today. There is a number of familiar faces who will be introduced in due course, but welcome everyone.

I congratulate those who have come from any distance on getting here in winterish conditions considering it's still only the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November.

Early this morning, I joined the group Advancing Island Connections and it was quite impressive there to see several hundred Islanders who have come together on the whole question of building new business opportunities, welcoming people who are new to our province and indeed a program led by the Chamber of Commerce and the Island connectors to extend that mutual seeking of opportunities throughout the province – a very impressive program.

The keynote speaker there Nav Bhatia who was known as the super fan of the Toronto Raptors, gave a very moving keynote address, about the experience that he's had since coming to Canada in 1984 and

encouraging all of us to respond when presented with incidents or actions that we think might be offensive or might even be discriminatory to find a way to turn it into the best advantage for the community as a whole and to come out to the other side of it – still doing our own good work and I thought it was a good message for us here in this House.

We heard this morning in the news and have known about the recognition that Basil will receive in January as one of only six young people to be recognized by the Young Citizens of Canada award for their work in history.

Basil's work was at the Provincial Heritage Fair and his project was on the Mi'kmaq treaties and I saw that project and was very impressed at the time, I said: it was like something you get from a first year law student.

What made it all the more impressive is that Basil arrived here barely three years ago with his family as part of the people who came as refugees from Syria – was here as a 10-year-old, fresh out of refugee camps in Lebanon and here he is, three years later, one of six students in Canada recognized for doing this very, very high quality work about his new province and his new country and I congratulate him and his family.

Tomorrow, Dr. Margaret MacMillan will deliver the Symons Lecture and be recognized with the Symons Medal for her very important and sizeable body of work about world history, notably early 20<sup>th</sup> Century around conflict and peace and indeed, her lecture will be on the question of Canada's growth and development and experience through the First World War.

We welcome Dr. MacMillan to the province; congratulate her on for being the recipient of the Symons Medal and look forward to her lecture tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** 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 and bring greetings on behalf of the opposition and to welcome any of those who may be viewing today via the Internet or EastLink.

I'd also like to welcome all of our visitors to the gallery today, including some members from the NDP party and of course, the media as well.

I just want to bring to everyone's attention a great concert series that – it's an annual concert series now that will be kicking off its winter series this coming Sunday November 25<sup>th</sup> and all of the proceeds of course go towards the QEH Foundation. The concert series is actually put on by a wonderful group called Treble With Girls, so the first concert will be this Sunday November 25<sup>th</sup> at Our Lady of Assumption Parish Hall. I welcome anyone who is the mood for some great entertainment and a nice snack as well, to come over to Stratford at 2:00 p.m. for a fantastic concert.

I'd also like to just reiterate with regards to a tweet that I saw earlier this morning from the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora and I think it's very timely.

Essentially, he's reminding all pet owners with regards to the cold temperatures that we're experiencing right now, to not leave your pets out in the cold temperatures for an extended period of time, because they are very susceptible to injury if they're exposed to these cold frigid temperatures for an extended period of time.

So I'd like to thank the hon. member for that public reminder and I'll take heed as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery. I want to pinpoint a couple of people: Bethany Collicutt-McNab is here, Leah-Jane Hayward, and Joe Byrne from the NDP, and I see Eddie Lund, of course, sitting in his familiar place in the corner. It's nice to see you all amongst the other

people who are less familiar to me, but welcome here nonetheless.

Tonight at the University of Prince Edward Island, the Institute of Island Studies is holding its first Harry Baglole Memorial Public Symposium. The topic tonight is on how we measure true well-being and progress in our society through genuine progress indicators, rather than just using GDP as measure of whether we're getting better. In simpler terms, is bigger better? It's a wonderful topic, and something I'm sure Harry would be very delighted is being discussed and I'm sure it will be a fascinating talk tonight at UPEI at 7:00 p.m.

I also, before I sit down, want to wish my son, Daniel in Toronto a very happy 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Happy Birthday, Dan.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today.

A special welcome to Joe Byrne of the NDP. I congratulate him on being here daily, keeping up with proceedings in the Legislature for his party. It's good to see.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today, and welcome all to the public gallery.

I would like to draw some special attention to some of the guests that we have seated with us today though. With us today in the gallery is Dr. Brett Belchetz and with him as well is Shelly-Ann Rampersad. These fine folks are visiting us from Toronto today and I will further recognize them a little further. I do want to point out that Dr. Belchetz looks surprisingly refreshed for a gentleman that had a delayed plane and only got to

Prince Edward Island sometime after 1:00 a.m. this morning. So I welcome him.

I'd also like to recognize some of our Health PEI representatives that are also in the gallery today. We have visiting Dr. Wassim Salamoun, Paul Young is with us, Susanne LaPierre, and Arlene Bernard.

I will take some time a little later on to recognize them all in a little more fuller context.

I do also want to say thank you to a group of young nurses that I had the opportunity to visit with this morning at UPEI. Some of the Accelerated Nursing Program students are getting ready to graduate really soon, as well as the fourth years, that will be wrapping up in the early spring. We had a great conversation today, and I have tried my absolute best to ensure that all of those bright, young minds stay, work, and play on Prince Edward Island and grow their families here. They all seem very receptive of that. So I'm going to take good solace in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to welcome everyone that is visiting us here and great to see the gallery full today.

To send out greetings to the district of Tyne Valley-Sherbrook, all the residents there.

Last night, I had the great opportunity to represent government at the Kensington and Area Chamber of Commerce Business of Excellence Awards. I would like to congratulate O'Neil's Home Gallery and Café, Monaghan Farms, Camp Triumph, Montgomery Inn at Ingleside, and Bonnie Woodside for receiving awards.

Finally, to send out hello out to my mother, Pauline Diamond, who lives at Stewart Memorial Manor.

Thank you.

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

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

I rise to offer my congratulations to Roxanne Carter-Thompson who won the Liberal nomination in Charlottetown-Belvedere last night. There was a packed house, and as everybody in this House knows, I'm a big advocate for attracting women – more women to this House. Roxanne was a 25-year executive director at the Adventure Group. She's a great advocate for the underdog.

What's more formidable is, just prior to the nomination, Roxanne severely broke her wrist. She was at the hospital, they wanted to do surgery. She said: can you hold that? She came to the nomination, no painkillers, delivered a bang-up speech. After the nomination, went back to the hospital to have surgery. She is going to be a formidable member of this Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today. I want to welcome everyone here in the gallery. Hello to everyone watching from District 4 Belfast- Murray River.

I'd just like to just send a shout out to all of the plow operators – they are doing a great job. Its early winter and the last few nights we've driven home from here, it has been snowy; this morning, it was a white-out from our place to Eldon, and I didn't know, but then the sun broke. I just appreciate the work that they're doing.

Last night there was an arousing political rally in Georgetown –

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Ms. Compton:** – there was a good old time rally, and everyone there left with great enthusiasm. We have the second of a number of candidates that will be running

for the Progressive Conservative Party Leadership, in Denny King. Denny really stoked the fire, there, and we all left there feeling pretty great. I want to congratulate him and Allan Dale, who has also put his name forward and congratulate the other people who are considering that.

I'd like to say hello to Lowell Large, he lives down in Point Prim and he is fighting Cancer for the fourth time. A great community, gentlemen, and I just want to say hello and wish him my best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

It's my pleasure today to rise and congratulate Carolyn Simpson of my department; she is the director of Early Childhood Development. She was awarded the Early Childhood Development Association Award of Excellence, two Friday's ago at their meeting.

Carolyn is the type of person – it was a big surprise to her – but she would be, I would say, a natural choice for that award; we've all seen the great work that she's done. I would also like to welcome Emma Fugate and Renee Laprise to the gallery. They are both constituents of mine, they are both involved with Film PEI; Emma on the board and Renee as the executive director. Emma is also a very involved person in the school community with West Kent Home and School.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to welcome all my colleagues back. Welcome those who are viewing at home on EastLink. Mike, I just got a message from one of our viewers who was quite disappointed that he lost the live feed,

but it's back on – he sent me it's back on and he is happy. So, hey Mike, I'm glad to see you watching today.

I'd also like to draw attention to – as the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness acknowledged and recognized, Dr. Wassim Salamoun, but late in coming was also his wife, Marie. So I'd like to welcome Marie, they are both District 22 residents and I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A pleasure to rise and welcome to all of those in the public gallery, as well as all of the good people who are watching at home, computer or TV. I'd like to especially mention a couple of my constituents that are in the public gallery: Susanne LaPierre, and Arlene Bernard and Paul Young – he's not really my constituent but he spends enough time in my district, maybe he might be able to vote, I'm not sure.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. Murphy:** But I'd like congratulate all of these folks and all the work they do on providing rural health care and moving rural health care ahead in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I have some special guests in the gallery today. With us is Renee Laprise, executive director of Film PEI and with her are two recipients of the Film 4Ward funding for this year. They are Emma Fugate, who was funded for her project, Song of Forgiveness and Farewell, and Ryan McCarvill is here today, along with Kate Mac, John Ross Fitzpatrick, and Matt Shermin, were founded for their project, Hot or Not.

Other winners were Harmony Wagner and Jason Rogerson for their film Fur Ball and Jenna MacMillian, Blaine Waters and

Jayson Arsenault for their project, The Weekend.

These were peer reviewed and awarded to these very deserving filmmakers here on PEI. And I really look forward to being able to support FilmPEI further so we can continue to grow this important industry here on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think everybody is having a turn today to give greetings.

So quickly –

**Mr. LaVie:** Not everybody.

**Ms. Bell:** – it's really great – almost.

I'd like to give a special recognition to Paul Young who was in my cohort at UPEI for the MBA program back in 2009, which was a very long time ago. I think we both got more grey hair, but it's really great to see you today as well with your colleagues, Brett and Shelly – or visiting colleagues, Brett and Shelly.

I'd also like to recognize the colleagues I mentioned in the House yesterday, Emma and Renee, from FilmPEI. It's really lovely to see you here in person.

Bethany Collicut-McNab, volunteer extraordinaire, and a great thanks to the incredible organizing committee for the D11 fundraiser that was held last night. Anne Sherman, Janice and Heather MacWilliam, Ann Putman, and my mom, Judith Bayless, who managed to pull together an absolutely amazing event; incredibly well attended; so much fun; enormous amount of cake, and really what couldn't have happened without them.

The final shout out is to residents of Parkdale who are suffering on with a very challenging water situation. There was an important meeting in the community last

night and we look forward to seeing action from the city to resolve that as quickly as possible before Christmas.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Captain Nichola Goddard**

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

On Saturday November 17<sup>th</sup> the 10<sup>th</sup> and final Captain Nichola Goddard Foundation dinner took place with Peter Mansbridge as the guest speaker.

For over 10 years, the foundation has raised over \$500,000 for scholarships at the University of Prince Edward Island, the University of Calgary and for 1.5 million solar lights in birthing centres in Papua New Guinea, the birthplace of Captain Goddard.

The foundation will now move forward with the True Patriot Love Foundation and will provide national funding to directly benefit community programs that support service women, female veterans and their families, which helps address the unique challenges related to military life. The fund will be managed by Nichola's sisters, Victoria Goddard, Kate Rusk, and brother-in-law, Andrew Rusk.

Sometimes a person gets to experience a once in a lifetime moment. The sold out crowd was treated to World War II veteran Joyce Paynter, who was joined on stage by a choir made up of CTV News Anchor Lisa La Flamme, Peter Mansbridge, and retired CTV personality and favourite meteorologist Jeff Hutcheson, and Michael Cook, former editor of the *Toronto Star* and the *Chicago Sun*. Two thousand dollars was raised by their rendition of White Cliffs of Dover.

Joyce Paynter, a well known and appreciated World War II Veteran, stole the show. It was a great evening to celebrate the legacy of a true Canadian hero, Captain Nichola Goddard.

For those listening today who would like to continue the legacy of Captain Nicola

Goddard, I would encourage them to go to [truepatriotlove.com/captain-nichola-goddard-fund](http://truepatriotlove.com/captain-nichola-goddard-fund).

Mr. Speaker, Lest We Forget.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

#### **Copper Bottom Brewery**

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased today to stand in the House and recognize a great company in my district, the Copper Bottom Brewery.

The Copper Bottom Brewery is a craft brewery owned by husband and wife team, Ashley Condon and Ken Spears, both of whom share a passion for craft beer and music that spans more than a decade.

Their passion for craft beer started in 2003 when Ken was hired to sell six packs out of the backdoor of a propeller brewing company in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Over the next 14 years, Ken would spend his time developing recipes and turning his brewing obsession into a plan to open a craft brewery in Montague, known as Copper Bottom Brewery.

During the past year, they have doubled their brewing capacity to meet the demand across Prince Edward Island. Together, the husband and wife do firmly remain rooted in the belief that building the brewery is just as important as building a community gathering spot.

They describe their brewery as somewhere locals can gather, meet new friends, and experience world class entertainment all while enjoying a good, honest beer.

The Copper Bottom Brewery is located in the heart of Montague. The historic building at 567 Main Street has been home to so many important fixtures in Montague. It started as the first town hall in 1938, to the local fire hall, jail, library, Handy Andy's hardware store and on to serving in the town as *The Eastern Graphic* newspaper for over 39 years.

I want to thank Ashley and Ken for moving back to PEI, and investing in the local economic growth in our area and offering hospitality service that is second to none. I encourage all members, if they haven't yet, to make their way down and enjoy this staple in our great community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

### *The Northern Star Newspaper*

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sad to say that on August 1<sup>st</sup>, *The Northern Star Newspaper* ceased publication after 24 years. Paul Blacquiere, the founder, brought local news to much of central PEI with the help of many dedicated volunteer writers.

The paper had a devoted readership who eagerly anticipated the arrival of the monthly publication. It was a way to tie the community together. Birthdays, anniversaries, and local events were all remembered and celebrated. It was a great way for local businesses to advertise their wares as well.

For this reason, Paul fondly referred to the paper as: "the original Facebook."

During its lifetime, *The Northern Star* had contributors from many North Shore communities including North Rustico, Mayfield, New Glasgow, Rustico, Millvale, Hopevale, Oyster Bed Bridge, Wheatley River, Ebenezer, Stanhope, Covehead, Brackley Beach, Cavendish, Grand Tracadie, Stanley Bridge, French River, New London, Hunter River, Emerald Junction, Breadalbane, North Granville, and North Milton.

There were even columns written from out west by former Islanders who shared about life on the west coast. *The Northern Star* travelled often as readers took it with them all over the world marking the occasion with photos that were in turn published back in *The Northern Star*.

As *The Northern Star Newspaper* has reached its end, I would like to give special

recognition to the man who started it all – Paul Blacquiere. Paul was often seen with his camera in hand interviewing locals, and making sure all communities were represented ensuring *The Northern Star* lived up to its slogan: It's like a letter from home."

To Paul Blacquiere and to all contributors, I'd like to extend my gratitude for your years of hard work in strengthening our community.

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 Rustico-Emerald asked about rebate applications to low-income Islanders.

As I noted yesterday, rebate applications have grown over 300% over last year with over 2,400 Islanders participating. The wait times have been eight to 10 weeks, and that is decreasing. If an Islander applies today with proper certificates and information in hand, they can expect the process to take about six to eight weeks in most cases.

Over 130 low-income clients have received their rebates already. There are 150 more low-income applications currently being processed. Low-income clients are being given priority. Fifty are waiting also to have on-sight inspection.

We're on track to help over 600 low-income Islanders with energy upgrades to their home this year. That's 25% of the overall applications received. Clients can have their rebate paid directly to the contractor, which lowers their upfront costs.

We are continuing to roll out additional programs in the future, which will help meet the needs of efficiency for low-income Islanders.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday during Question Period, members were asking about visiting neurology services.

As I informed the House, we have a full complement of three neurologists practicing in the province. Additionally, we have three locum neurologists who have been providing services regularly in PEI since 2015. One locum holds a two-day clinic every month in Summerside, and that clinic is ongoing. Additionally, two locum neurologists from Nova Scotia have provided service at the QEH, each working an average of three to five days every month.

One of those neurologists notified Health PEI over the summer that due to her increasing workload in Nova Scotia, she had decided not to continue with clinics in PEI after July of 2018. This was not a discontinuation of services by Health PEI – it was a neurologist who decided to step away from that particular clinic.

As well as a system, we fully support these locum clinics, recruitment continues for a local neurologist and if specialists are willing to come, we welcome all of them. We currently have our complement of neurologists, plus two neurologists who come from out-of-province on a regular basis to provide additional supports to Islanders.

While I'm on my feet, as well yesterday during Question Period the Leader of the Third Party asked about our staffing complement for community mental health and children's services.

There are 42 FTE positions in total, of those 42, 18 FTEs represent RNs and Master of Social Workers who contribute to our student well-being teams. All 18 of these positions are fully staffed with no vacancies. Our child and youth community mental health and addictions division has a staffing complement of 24 FTEs. We do have two temporary vacancies for social workers, as well as four permanent positions – we are currently recruiting for two social workers and two psychologists.

Recruitment is ongoing, and we do have an offer out to psychologists to fill one of these positions, and we are just waiting for them to sign on.

Thank you very much.

#### Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Just before I start my first question, I just had a quick response to the health minister's referral to yesterday's questions.

I look forward to coming back with more factual information because I've been inundated with phone calls and emails about neurology services here on PEI. In fact, one neurologist was actually considering hiring a lawyer to sue this government.

My first question today: for many years students, parents, and staff have urged government to move ahead on the development of a great seven to 12 school in Stratford to address school overcrowding issues in Charlottetown schools. I was pleased to see funds committed towards new school infrastructure in Stratford in the capital budget.

#### **Factors considered for new Stratford school**

Question to the education minister: Were benefits like lower fuel costs, lower carbon emissions, and lower traffic congestion factored in when government decided not to proceed with a grade seven to 12 in Stratford?

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

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

As I advised the House here on a number of different occasions previously, it's the Public Schools Branch that undertakes the considerations as to what capital investments would be made, when and where. The Public Schools Branch has

looked at this issue, and they have determined that the most appropriate and most immediate need in Stratford is for a high school.

They will be looking further at a need in the intermediate area, and they are also monitoring needs in the elementary area in Stratford. I would suspect, and they have indicated, that they will have further input on that in the next couple months.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Over 1,000 students cross the Hillsborough Bridge daily, to and from junior and senior high schools in Charlottetown. This, of course, leads to more traffic congestion, higher fuel costs, and higher carbon emissions.

People, again, are pleased to see progress made on the new school after years of hard work by the town, and especially the residents, such as Lindy McQuillan on this very important issue. Many have called it a half step forward.

Question to the education minister: Can you explain the logic behind students attending K-6 in Stratford, then having to travel to Charlottetown for seven to nine, and then once again back to Stratford for their high school years?

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

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

Again, I had indicated in the response to the last question that it's the Public Schools Branch that makes those determinations.

Let me just say this and I have said this before, but I'll reiterate it again for the purposes of this discussion – the students from Stratford that go across the bridge go to Birchwood School. Birchwood School is a great school. It's literally about four

minutes from Stratford Elementary and Glen Stewart School.

It's the school that I went to as my intermediate school. It's a school I'm very proud to have graduated from. It was a great school then, it remains a great school now.

As I indicated before, we need to get our priorities straight in this province –

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh, priorities?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – in terms of where we put our education dollars and whether we want to put them in bricks and mortar or whether we want to put them in our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) kid's name on a diploma (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) look what happened.

**Leader of the Opposition:** I've noticed that the minister keeps referring back to the recommendations of the Public Schools Branch. In fact, the deputy minister of education chairs the Public Schools Branch Board and the minister appoints the remaining board members.

**Public Schools Branch and new Stratford school**

Question to the education minister: Isn't it a bit of a smoke screen to use the Public Schools Branch to justify your government's actions, when you control the outcome?

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

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

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

No, is the simple answer to that. That's been the subject of a lot of debate here, the act

that sets out the appointments was passed unanimously by this Legislature

So, I would say the hon. member that we're a day late and a dollar short if that's his feeling at this point in time. But, he is free to propose an amendment should he wish to.

I met with Paul Connolly this morning –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – he's on the record as saying: he'd rather have his name on a diploma rather than a corner stone any day. And I have to agree with that. That should be the philosophy of every minister of education as far as I'm concerned.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last spring we had a wonderful debate here in the Legislature about breaking down the barriers to expanded scope of practice for many of our health officials in the province.

### **Expanding scope of practice re: health officials**

Could the minister of health update us on how breaking down those barriers to expand our scope of practice is going?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, as I've referenced many times on the floor of the Legislature over the past 10 or 11 months, I've had numerous amounts of conversations with many, many health professionals, whether it be physicians, whether it be NPS, whether it be RNs, or LPNs; or any other allied health professional about working to their full scope of practice.

As health professionals, they all want to be working to their full scope of practice. But there are discussions and conversations that need to take place within unions, within areas of work to determine, is that

occurring? And, how can we best achieve that?

We are continuing to work on that. I meet continuously with all of those in the health profession to listen to their concerns and see where we can get to.

**Speaker:** Thank you, minister.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't hear too many specifics, then. It's been seven months since I asked those questions.

### **Meeting with Pharmacy Association**

Could the minister— we talked a lot about pharmacist and how they can help reduce the workload and some of the pressure points, especially in rural areas, about expanding their scope of practice. Could the minister update me on his meetings with the Pharmacy Association here in PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recently had an opportunity to talk to some pharmacists. I won't say a full representation, but we did have a good discussion on that. As a result of that conversation, as minister and as our department – we've been working with a group called CADTH, which is The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, to take a look at and examine what kind of evidence-based good decision practices of expanding scope of pharmacists on Prince Edward Island. We're very fortunate because our representative on CADTH from Prince Edward Island is indeed a licensed pharmacist.

We are looking at things like UTIs (urinary tract infection), as well as pink eye, or impetigo or things of that nature that pharmacists would be able to prescribe and help families who are suffering from any of those illnesses. We think that's a very worthy cause and CADTH will bring back that information back to us.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That was an awfully long, drawn out way to say – he hasn't met with them. I talk to pharmacists all the time too, but guess what? Talking to them at the pharmacy or out on the street doesn't count for negotiation, doesn't count for getting things done. This was seven months ago.

Minister, let me quote, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the minister said: obviously, things of this nature, they are negotiation. You sit down at a table, you talk about what you're doing today, you talk about what you're seeing into the future and what services should be rooted to whom and where.

#### **Expanding scope of practice re: health officials (further)**

That sounds like a minister that was going to get things done. It's seven months later. He hasn't even had the conversation about expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists here on PEI. When is that conversation going to happen?

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, as minister of health on Prince Edward Island, I support fully, all medical professionals on Prince Edward Island working to their full scope. But that does take conversations, it does take process. We are well on that process.

I have met with pharmacists, I have met with others in the health profession, and good advancement is being made. We hope to have some result back from our CADTH – experience really soon. But it's important that it needs to be evidence-based, it needs to be the proper type of work that is within the scope of that individual. We're making great progress and we'll continue to work hard on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Good job.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me read you something else, here, from our debate last spring. This is the minister, again: we're willing to sit down and talk about that. I've had some conversations with pharmacists individually; I've had some conversations with the governing body. I've indicated that we will continue this and I sent a letter recently. A letter.

I'll give you another quote, again from the minister: I've stated in here, that I'm willing to sit down and talk to pharmacists. I understand this scope of practice; maybe we'll be able to do something there.

There has been negotiations; there has been no negotiations. We haven't had any updates. Time is ticking, we have pressure points in rural PEI, we have pressure points here in urban PEI. When will these changes happen so that the scope of practice can actually occur and these health professionals can start practicing so that we can relieve these pressures?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously the hon. member is a great quoter of Hansard. We can see that.

**An Hon. Member:** He can read.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Don't say them if you don't mean them.

**Mr. Mitchell:** All across Prince Edward Island, we have physicians working to their full scope of practice; we have recently increased our number of nurse practitioners to 31 on Prince Edward Island, working to their full scope of practice.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Couple that with 1,152 RNs on Prince Edward Island –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Ah, great.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** – working to their full scope of practice.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** Add that with discussions of LPNs –

**Mr. LaVie:** Tell ‘em the fine point.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – who come to work every day, work diligently, covering all our health care needs on Prince Edward Island working to their full scope of practice. We are there on Prince Edward Island, but will continue to work with all allied health professions to ensure they are all working to their full scope of practice.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. LaVie:** You said that about the last health minister.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have fantastic nurse practitioners in this province and we have fantastic RNs in this province. But I can tell, that to say that they are working to their full scope of practice is ridiculous. They are not. They are doing fantastic work, but there is not a chance that they’re working to their full scope of practice because they have come and told you – the Nurse’s Union told you that they can do more – we have used examples in this Legislature before about people that travel north and they run whole clinics. I can’t even understand how you could say that.

Yes, it’s a slow process when you keep working at it, but if you’re not willing to sit down and have these conversations – and to move this stuff forward – you came in, I remember, as a new minister and you said: you were gonna do this; we’re going to push this stuff forward –

**Mr. Roach:** Question.

**Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Myers:** At least he’s got a job over there in the corner.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It’s good to know that the former Minister of Finance is paying attention because he could have funded this stuff at Cabinet table, he could have made these changes happen. If it’s legislative changes, we need to start working on this.

**Mr. LaVie:** That’s why he’s sitting back in the corner.

**Mr. Roach:** What are you doing?

### **Impact of recruitment and retention to health professionals**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Is the minister concerned that these delays on expanding the scope of practice could impact our recruitment and retention of health professionals?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, as minister of health in Prince Edward Island, I am not as critical of our health professionals as the hon. member across the street. I work with health professionals every day to ensure that they are doing the work that they need to be doing. I just came from a meeting about an hour and a half ago with a room full of young RN graduates, who will be graduating in the next month, and the rest of them will be graduating in April that are very excited about their new career path. They are very excited to take what they have learned at the University of Prince Edward Island and implement that into our health care system.

I will continue to work with those young professionals and all health professionals across PEI to ensure that they are working to their full scope. That is what they want to do, and we want to encourage that strongly. I will continue to work with them on that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When the minister starts talking about being critical, or of us being critical of our health care professionals here in the province – you know, they might be starting to be around too long. I've heard ministers say that before, and it's not long before they have to retire or move on because that is completely untrue.

**Mr. Myers:** Ronnie MacKinley.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker.

What we're doing is wanting these awesome health professionals in this province to do even more to solve the problems that are happening to solve the problems that are happening in rural PEI. They can do a lot more and we need to push them.

We can't just keep talking about it, we've been talking about it for 11 years, we need to start action and someone to put their shoulder behind this and get it done.

### **Expanding scope of practice for health professionals (further)**

Question to the health minister: Has the department ever done – and we've asked this before – if they've ever done an actual cost benefit analysis to look at the potential savings that expanding the scope of practice could bring?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I try to stress the point about supporting full scope of practice and to the hon. member's point, when it comes to looking at pharmacists and their full scope of practice: is there more that they could be doing? I think there is.

That is why we go out and ask CADTH we go out and ask our Island representative on CADTH of pharmacists: Is there some evidence based research that you can provide to us that tells us concisely what kind of prescribing pharmacists should be doing?

We're in that process and I expect to have some results back from that very soon. That will put another whole group of our health professionals on PEI doing more work for the health care of Islanders and doing it very effectively.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great Job.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I was driving in today and I talked about the winter conditions, I felt compelled to ask some housing questions.

Access to affordable housing is an issue that continues to plague Islanders of all walks of life from all communities. It's an issue we've brought up in this House, we've studied it in standing committee, there have been numerous strategies and announcements and planning long term is great but currently, people are in crisis, right now.

### **Immediate assistance re: housing needs**

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What immediate assistance is available to help Islanders struggling with housing needs?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would agree with the hon. member. When we hear these stories of Islanders struggling to find housing, it is very impactful and I know that I hear it from the members of her caucus when they call me and I hear it from the members on this side of the House as well when they call me and they tell me the stories of their constituents.

But I will say that as of August of this past year, we have rolled out over 300 rent supplements.

Now rent supplements are very important to Islanders who want to remain in their home. They're in safe, appropriate housing but they are paying more than 30% of their income on housing. A rent supplement would immediately lower the rent that they're paying to 25% and that's in addition to all the other programs that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've talked about it before in committee and here in the house about the large waiting list we have for affordable housing, there's more than 1,000 people waiting for affordable housing in this province. Meanwhile, we're hearing from people who are forced by circumstance to live in substandard housing or be homeless or couch surf.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: If someone is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, what emergency assistance is available to that person?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As of today, less than 1% of our social housing applicant list is people that are in urgent need.

We do have supports and services that we can roll out the door right away; we just need to know who they are.

The people that are struggling – the MLA's when you hear it, Islanders when you hear it, please let us know because we do have short-term emergency services that we can offer while we wrap other services around those Islanders to make sure that they will be successful once we are able to find them long-term placement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is National Housing Day and there's growing public awareness around the housing issue and the prices that we have here, not just in Charlottetown but rural communities as well through the great journalism we've got through CBC's local and this week doing a no-fixed address series and through *The Guardian's* previous investigative series on poverty, it shed a light on how many people are really in crisis.

I commend the media for doing that because I think a lot of us are just used to our day-to-day living and we don't think about it but it really did shine a light on those that are in emergency need.

#### **Advice to homeless Islanders**

Another question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: What advice do you have for Islanders who have been forced by circumstance to live sub-standard housing through a lack of an alternative?

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does pain me to hear stories such as the ones we have been hearing through the CBC report and I do acknowledge and commend the CBC for making this a priority and to make Islanders aware of the challenges we are facing.

This is something that community and government together have been working on to solve.

We've heard the stories during the housing action plan procedures and actually there was something I heard the other night when I was watching the CBC article, when the member from Charlottetown-Parkdale spoke about their office being flooded with calls from Islanders, but I've yet to receive one phone call from the Office of The Third

Party, the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale or the Leader of the Third Party.

So again, as I stand in this House today, I'm telling Islanders that if you are hearing people struggling, please call my office. We have supports and services there that we can wrap around these Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Last year while we were discussing the rural growth initiative, I asked the Minister of Rural and Regional Development to define rural and the minister very astutely replied that rural is not urban. It was a great answer, but actually it's very relevant.

The program criteria for RGI say that funds can only be awarded to projects that target rural areas; however, money from the program has since been awarded to groups in Cornwall and in Charlottetown.

Now, they were for good causes and I have no argument there, there's no doubt about that, but towns and cities have a far greater ability to gather funds together than do rural areas.

There are all kinds of worthy groups in rural communities both in my district and in the rural districts of my colleagues that do great work but have real difficulty in accessing funds for their projects.

### **Rural development money spent on urban projects**

Question to the minister: Why is rural development money being spent on projects in urban areas?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess we're just trying to be fair with the funding and any programs that we do contribute funding to that are in urban parts of the province, they have a connection to rural PEI. They're programs that all

Islanders are able to use, urban as well as rural.

**Mr. LaVie:** Parking lots. Parking lots and tents.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your first supplementary.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I'd encourage the minister to go back to the department and review their definition of rural; the one they're using because nonetheless, I think the RGA program is a great program.

It looks like a good program, but unfortunately as we discussed earlier this year, it's only a one-year commitment, it's a one year program, when what we really need is long-term stable commitment across our Island.

### **Long-term commitment to rural growth initiative**

Will this government be making a long-term commitment to this program and to PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Ms. Biggar:** Regional. Regional.

**Mr. LaVie:** Election year.

**Mr. Murphy:** Extremely well uptake in this rural growth initiative, we're getting real good uptake and it's my hope and my belief and my ask of Treasury Board and the fellow Cabinet that yes we do make a long-term commitment to that program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your second supplementary question.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** That's great, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure there are many MLAs sitting around this House who represent rural areas who will be delighted when that news becomes official.

Back when the Department of Rural and Regional Development was first created, I asked the minister if the new department would engage with Islanders on rural issues, to which the minister replied a simple: Yes.

### **Public engagement re: rural issues**

Could the minister share what his department has learned from public engagement so far?

**Mr. R. Brown:** We're doing a great job.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must say, I'm glad to get these questions from the Leader of the Third Party because I noticed the other day when somebody pointed out to me, they don't actually have a critic for my department so I don't know how much credence the Green Party gives to rural Prince Edward Island, but I don't know if that was an oversight or – but yes we do consult.

We have four regional advisory committees right across the province and we meet with them on a regular basis, and they meet three to four times a year.

**Mr. R. Brown:** There'll be a critic tomorrow morning.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

So let's take a closer look at these regional economic advisory councils because the purpose of these councils, at least according to the province's website, is to, and I quote: Guide, develop, and help drive economic growth across Prince Edward Island.

Further, their only mandate is to provide advice to the Premier and to the Cabinet. There's no public reporting. There's no accountability, no mention at all of engaging with a broader public or representing the views of rural Islanders. They are, in effect, another advisory reward appointed by Cabinet to give advice to Cabinet, and I

think that's a real missed opportunity, minister.

I think to have these boards present; they should serve as a conduit for rural Islanders to share their voice and to have greater influence.

### **Rural advisory councils re: public engagement**

A question for the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Why isn't public engagement part of the mandate for these councils?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Well, although it might not be written into their mandate I think it goes without saying that's what their job is, to engage with the public. That's why across of every sector of the province that we have local people, we have professional people, we have (Indistinct) people on these committees.

That's why, because they are out there talking to people every day. They know what's going on in their community and they relay what's needed back to us.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your first supplementary.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Another issue I have with these councils is that their mandate is purely and narrowly economic, as if Islanders were to care about nothing other than the economy.

### **Balanced decisions re: advisory councils**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** A question to the minister: How can this government expect to make well-balanced decisions when the advice that they solicit is only in the narrow scope of economic concerns?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Of course these boards are just one of the many tools that we use in making our decisions at our department. We have many other programs such as the

community develop program, the Jobs for Youth Program, the rural job initiative program, and we rely on many different aspects other than just the councils alone, to direct our department in what direction to go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your second supplementary.

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

To me, good, sustainable community and regional development is about addressing economic, social, and environmental opportunities and challenges in a holistic and a collaborative manner.

A question to the minister: Will you expand the scope of the regional economic advisory boards to reflect a more sustainable development approach?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

**Mr. Murphy:** Of course.

I don't really think they need my blessing to expand their scope. We get all kinds of advice from them, but more than just economic. For instance, we have advice on how important health care is to rural Prince Edward Island.

I might read a note here from Hansard back on June 12<sup>th</sup> when you, hon. member, were responding to a ministerial statement from the minister of health: Maybe we need to think of emergency services as being provided in two main hospitals with a vastly improved and expanded ambulance service in order to take care of those Islanders.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Shame.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh.

**Mr. Murphy:** So what exactly does that mean? Does that mean you're going to close the hospitals in Alberton – or the emergency rooms in Alberton and Montague?

We're definitely more concerned about rural PEI, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

My question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Minister, there is a campaign going on across the country to have doctors inform women about their breast density. The concern is that if a woman has breast density over 75%, their breast tissue is not easily read on a mammogram and could hide some cancers.

As someone who lost her mom to breast cancer two weeks into her 51<sup>st</sup> year, I am in a high-risk category due to my family history. I am grateful to my family doctor, the staff at mammography, and the radiologists for their ongoing care and timely screening over the years.

**Doctors informing patients re: breast density**

Minister, do Prince Edward Island doctors currently inform women about their breast density following a mammogram?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member is absolutely correct.

In recent months, there has been a heavy focus right across the nation put on breast density. On Prince Edward Island, each year alone we screen about 10,500 Islanders, both women and men, in regards to cancer screenings.

The process that's in place right now after an individual is screened, the results are then sent to their primary care professional or their physician and a letter is sent to the patient as well, which encourages the patient to talk to their physician about the results of the test. I would assume that those conversations occur and physicians have the opportunity to talk to the patients about what the results are.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your first supplementary.

### Screening process for dense breasts

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

Minister, can you explain the steps your department is taking to review the screening process for women who are told they have dense breasts so they can be confident with their mammogram results?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, the data that I have indicates that there are about 1,000 Islanders currently that have breast density over 75%. We are looking at reviewing or doing a comprehensive review on the screening process of all aspects.

As minister, I have asked Health PEI to look at putting on that letter that is sent to the patient, a line of information that is both informative and is appropriate, telling the patient their breast density is greater than this level and that they should have an immediate conversation. So, we've asked Health PEI to look at getting that done, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Casey:** I'm good, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks.

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Minister, I have learned that the federal government is in favour of allowing bonafide students to collect EI while attending classes.

### EI payments to deserving students

Minister, does your government support paying EI to deserving students?

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is a program called Career Connect and yes, we are very supportive of it. With the high cost of tuition and getting post-secondary education, anything we can do as a department and a government to help students get an education, we'll certainly support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your first supplementary.

**Mr. Dumville:** Minister, is this program funded through Skills PEI?

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's part of what our department does. It's in collaboration with the federal government and people have to have the appropriate, insurable hours to be able to draw if they're going to post-secondary education. It's a collaborative effort between two departments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second supplementary.

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Qualified codes and student funding

Minister, if Skills PEI is partly funded by the federal government, who seems to be in support of this method of funding, would you not change the qualifying codes to allow student funding?

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May I inform this House this program brought between \$8 million and \$9 million into pockets of Island students last year?

Any rules as far as pertaining to what are done by the federal government and our department work collaboratively with the federal government to help Island students with this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

I was pleased to hear yesterday that more accessibility mats are being added to provincial parks and beaches.

Thunder Cove beach is a very popular beach destination in my area. It draws thousands of Islanders and tourists to its shores every summer, but it's not a provincial park or beach.

#### **Government support for non-provincial park beaches**

Question to the tourism minister: How does your department support public beaches that aren't part of the provincial park system?

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

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

Beaches are really important to our tourism product here in PEI, along with culinary and golf and the Island hospitality. We know those are all very critical components to our tourism industry that attracted 1.56 million visitors here last year.

We're happy to support beaches in communities right across the Island with anything we can do to continue to help grow the tourism industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great job.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Thunder Cove is so popular that it's featured for its natural beauty in tourism advertising.

Question to the tourism minister: Do you think Island beaches not part of all provincial or federal parks adds overall value to our tourism product?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker –

**Mr. LaVie:** Be careful.

**Mr. Palmer:** – I think we have 11,000 kilometres of beaches here on PEI and it's really important to the economy of PEI.

I think tourism generates \$480 million, if I'm not correct. We know that each one of those beaches are as important as our culinary experience, as our good old hospitality, and all of that combined makes a wonderful product here in PEI, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

One website describes the beach this way: Thunder Cove beach is one of those hidden gems that locals try to keep for themselves. It's off the beaten path in Darnley, just outside of Kensington. This is an unsupervised beach. Thunder Cove is outside of federal and provincial parks, so dogs are permitted off-leash.

#### **Waste carts and signage for Thunder Cove beach**

Question to the tourism minister: Would it be possible to have waste carts and information signage placed at Thunder Cove beach next summer?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, Thunder Cove is a tremendous beach. I've been there lots myself; very close to Summerside.

I know that it's well used by locals and visitors alike, so there are lots of people that are in the area and it's one of the important pieces of our tourism product right here in PEI, and we're happy to work with all communities and anyone who's in interest of getting some help with their beaches.

I know we helped one of the members across the way last year –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Morell.

**Mr. Palmer:** – putting some –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Crow Bush.

**Mr. Palmer:** – garbage cans in the area to help make sure the beaches are clean.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Beach users and area residents want to preserve it and have asked for help. Right now, we have area residents collecting garbage without any garbage cans for the public to use or signage to direct them.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Question to the tourism minister: We have beautiful beaches and a world class waste watch system, shouldn't we be trying to make residents and visitors aware of that?

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, we do have tremendous beaches here and we also have a world class recycling program here in PEI and we're going to continue to support all of those things because we know that's very important to the product that we have here in PEI and we'll continue to grow our tourism industry by making sure that we do have clean beaches here in PEI.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

Question to the tourism minister: You just mentioned government does provide waste carts to some private beaches, which I'm certainly glad to hear, so will you commit today to provide those waste carts at Thunder Cove beach so the residents no longer have to pick the garbage off the beach themselves?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Palmer:** Mr. Speaker, our beaches are very clean. Our residents pick up garbage. Our tourists pick up garbage. I've seen it happen lots because there is sometimes garbage on the beach and everybody is able to make a contribution to that, and if there are communities – if there are beaches that have some concerns and if there are things that we can do to help, we certainly welcome their call to our department so we can continue to grow this important industry here in PEI.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great job.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

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

My final question.

Constituents have reached out to me, Mr. minister, and I was told on two occasions they have called your department and have asked for these waste carts to be provided, without little or any response.

I'm hoping today you can commit to them residents and provide waste carts at Thunder Cove beach for them for next summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Palmer:** I invite the member to give me a call, make sure we understand who's looking for what and see what we can do to help. We know that tourism is very important here in PEI. It generates \$480 million to our economy. We want to make sure that all of our visitors have a wonderful experience when they're here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great. That's cooperation.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the health minister.

Minister, when you were up in Souris when you first became health minister, you did a tour of the Souris hospital, and I thank you for asking me to go along with your tour. When we sat down at the round table talking to the frontline staff, one of the issues was therapists in Souris and there were none. There was only one that comes in one day a week.

### **Physiotherapists in Souris**

Minister: Are you working on – since then, are you working on getting a physiotherapist up in Souris?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Myers:** Make Souris great again.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do welcome that question from the hon. member. That day, we did have a great experience walking around Souris hospital talking to frontline staff. I drew some very valuable information from that discussion.

I did see that the physiotherapy part was a gap at the Souris hospital, and since that time we have went out and developed an incentive program to bring physiotherapists back to PEI. That program is being worked through recruitment and retention. I believe

– I'd have to verify this – that we do have some identified candidates. In the interim, to cover some of the areas there, we have been working with out-of-government companies that do have physiotherapists on staff to help us fill needs there.

It was a great conversation that day with the hon. member. He knows his members of the community very well and does very good work to bring their attention forward.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, this is the final question.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While we were on that tour, we did a tour of the clinic downstairs below the hospital. At the roundtable down in the clinic, we heard from the frontline workers, nurse practitioners. The nurse practitioner was talking about the load she had on her, and she was by herself. She was looking for a second nurse practitioner down in the clinic.

### **Additional nurse practitioners in Souris clinic**

Minister: Do you know if the second nurse practitioner is been looked at for the clinic in Souris?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we are recruiting any health professional to any area it's based on the amount of work, the amount of patients that would be seen. I don't have the exact information from the Souris area or what that means, but I do know that there was recently another nurse practitioner who has gone to the Kings County area that may be at the KCMH – I'd have to verify that.

There's also a nurse practitioner in the western end of Prince Edward Island and in the very near future there will be several more nurse practitioners hired.

Our complement is at 31 now, and it will be soon at – I believe the number is 38 that's projected to be over the next year. We're doing great work in recruiting, retaining nurse practitioners who love to be here, and love to help Islanders meet their health needs in a very professional manner.

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

Statements by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**In-Patient Tele-Rounding Pilot at Western Hospital**

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to inform the House of an innovative, first in Canada approach to delivering in-patient care, which is underway right here in PEI.

Health PEI and the Medical Society collaborated with Canadian telemedicine provider, Maple, to pilot a tele-rounding model to support in-patient care at Western Hospital.

Maple's tele-rounding platform allows Canadian physicians who are licensed in PEI but located in other areas of the province or country to remotely deliver care for in-patients.

There are currently nine physicians participating in the tele-rounding pilot, including three loyal physicians from Prince Edward Island.

I'd like to recognize some of the guests we have in the gallery today, who were integral in establishing this pilot: Dr. Brett Belchetz, emergency department physician and CEO of Maple; Shelly-Ann Rampersad, Director of Virtual Hospital Services with Maple; Dr. Wassim Salamoun, Health PEI's Medical Director for Prince County; Paul Young, Administrator of Hospitals West; Susanne LaPierre, Director of Nursing Hospitals West; and Arlene Bernard, Health PEI Leadership team.

Thank you all for being here today.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring residents of West

Prince, and all Islanders, have local access to safe and sustainable health care.

By integrating new innovations and modern technology, we are enhancing collaboration, reinforcing the creativity of entrepreneurs, making better use of existing resources, and building an environment where innovation can thrive. These new innovations do not replace physicians, but are an added resource to support our health professionals and our patients.

Since the pilot began, more than 1,200 tele-rounding consults have been performed on nearly 60 patients over the course of their hospital stay. The six month pilot began as a result of hard to fill vacancies within West Prince. Since then, we have recruited two new physicians to the region, as well as nurse practitioners. We have seen great success with this initiative. Research on similar tele-rounding models has shown patient outcomes to be equal in quality to those seen in traditional in-person care.

Health PEI, in collaboration with the Medical Society of Prince Edward Island and Maple, will carry out a robust evaluation following the completion of the pilot project in February.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank all of the representatives for being in the gallery today.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for the statement and welcome all the guests here today. It's exciting news, I know when we first hear of these types of services, the first thing people go to is: are we going to lose that one-on-one care, we are kind of worried about it. But it is really good to see that the minister is engaging people to look outside the box.

We've talked about this a lot of times, I know we are debating scope of practice in the Legislature, but that's the kind of stuff we need to start look at, especially for rural parts of PEI. Western Hospital is near and dear to my heart – it's the very first place I worked in PEI, I did a co-op work term there

in industrial engineering and I think they're very innovative up there, and I'm glad they're taking this on.

I'll be quite interested to see how it all works and get more information on it, but you know, we can never replace that direct one-on-one care, but I know the nurses up there are doing a great job with it as well. So I'd be interested to learn a lot more about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Innovative, creative and responsive solutions like this are critical for us being able to address our current and future health care challenges, both in delivery and in being responsive to our changing population and changing health care needs.

I am really looking forward to the report on the evaluation of the pilot and would ask the minister to consider as soon as that evaluation is complete, that it's presented to the House, perhaps via the committee on health and wellness so that we have been fully informed as to the outcomes from that and look forward to them being able to make recommendations back to the House from the pilot for next steps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **National Housing Day**

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise to mark National Housing Day, a day to recognize that housing needs exist across Canada. There are Islanders and Canadians living this experience and perhaps we may know someone in our own lives or community who is facing housing challenges.

We want Islanders to know that we hear and we see. And together we are doing. We know that Islanders experiencing housing challenges need help now, so government, since August, have offered 300

rent supplements to off-set rent expenses. And have doubled the number of housing officers to offer support, and continue prioritizing social housing vacancies for Islanders in urgent need.

Through Housing Services, Islanders are accessing our Seniors Safe at Home and Home Renovations programs which make it possible for more seniors to stay in their homes and in their communities longer.

We've invested \$16.8 million in the latest capital budget to build new affordable housing. More than 175 new affordable housing units will increase the affordable housing supply, including 20 transitional units to support Islanders experiencing Family Violence or Aging out of Child Protection Care.

Citizens, various levels of government, community organizations, and private sector partners, in a spirit of collaboration, are facing housing challenges head-on. Through the collaborative leadership of the Housing Council, Housing Hub, and Poverty Reduction Council – concrete and streamlined actions are moving affordable housing needs on Prince Edward Island forward.

The new Housing Council are busy rolling up their sleeves and getting down to work today – otherwise I would have asked them to be here in the House.

If you are an Islander facing housing difficulties, reach out and stay connected to our housing services, to discuss your needs and the range of available services – especially if your circumstances change.

On National Housing Day, I urge all Islanders to become aware and get involved. Participate in meetings and meeting the goal of the Housing Action Plan by volunteering with community housing groups. And if you see someone you think might be in need, help them to find their way to housing services. Islanders can connect with them through the local office or online through the government of PEI website.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise and recognize National Housing Day, as well, and I thank the minister for her comments. We know there are great needs; we talked about it in Question Period. Long-term planning is wonderful, but we do have an emergency crisis right now. I would ask that the minister continue the work that she's doing.

But, I had someone reach out to me and her name is Tammy MacKinnon, and she is the manager of the soup kitchen. I think she would have a wonderful insight, into, both the housing strategy and the poverty strategy and how it relates to every day Islanders that she would see on a regular basis.

I ask the minister to continue the work she's doing, but also to reach out to those people who are on the front lines dealing with the homeless that we have here on the Island on a daily basis, to ensure that they are looked after and treated with respect and dignity which they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Affordable housing is one of the most pressing issues that we are seeing, both provincially and on the national stage. Affordable housing is the foundation of a safe and prosperous and healthy community, and one that is essential for strong families, for healthy children and for a healthy economy.

On National Housing Day, we have many people who we need to think of, including those who are homeless – even the invisible homeless in PEI – and those who are in critical need of housing and are not in appropriate housing.

We also, as my colleague just mentioned, need to recognize that there are significant investments being made and the housing strategy had good long-term actions to address specific areas on a long-term basis. But this crisis is now. It is minus 15 degrees

today – there are people sleeping in tents. When people do contact the housing office and are told that they are not able to be assisted –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct).

**Ms. Bell:** – because there are not any vacancies available. When people do have to contact the housing office and then have to come back to us because they hear that there are no options available for them, then we are really truly challenged on how we can help.

We cannot ignore the numbers of people in need, despite the opportunity that we have, or the work that is happening to address the housing crisis on a longer-term basis.

On National Housing Day, we need to rise above, and we need to recognize that people genuinely need help right now. That may mean very creative solutions, it may mean new investment of funds. Whatever it may need to be, though, this has to be more than a political football, it has to be about actually helping people who are genuinely in crisis.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** National Housing Day is a day to recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

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

### **Environmental Stewardship**

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

Prince Edward Island is leading the way in environmental stewardship, through our Climate Change Action Plan and other initiatives. We will meet our target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030.

30% is 600,000 tonnes of pollution, or better put, 30,000 tandem loads of pollution. We will meet those targets by 2030.

One of the challenges we face in reducing emissions is the transportation sector. Transportation accounts for 48% of the

provincial greenhouse gas emissions. That is why government, together with Islanders, and the transportation sector, is working to develop innovative, sustainable transportation solutions to reduce emissions.

Sustainable transportation is a system that meets the needs of individuals, a system that is both affordable and efficient.

As the most rural province in Canada, we don't have the option to have an Island-wide public transit system.

Our actions will be focusing on providing Islanders to access to options that will identify how to move people and products across the province. This strategy will include a cleaner and a more efficient vehicle technology, walking, biking, car-pooling and public transit and community planning and design.

We're already moving in that direction with the establishment of new electric charging stations across Prince Edward Island in the coming year. We are now seeking input from Islanders to develop an action plan that will shape our future transportation needs.

Already, more than 130 people have responded to the online questionnaire about actions we can take to lower our greenhouse gas emissions.

We will also be meeting with transportation sector partners and discussing these ideas. We will also be working with the federal government on fuel standards. We will meet our targets while protecting the pocketbooks of Islanders; that is our commitment.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear the minister stand and rise and talk to this subject here in the House. To me, of course, it's just common sense that the minister would be addressing these issues.

It's not much of an announcement really that they're going to – again, have a lot talk and

they're going to develop another action plan, we're not sure when but that's good.

This minister, like all the other ministers, they like to go and talk and talk and talk and talk.

Hopefully we'll see some action soon sometime soon. I mean the electric charging stations are something that, again, it's a no brainer to put them in, so thank goodness you're acting there and you're putting them in.

I should mention that this 30% lower by 2030, that goal is a good goal and I certainly hope that we reach it as a province, we should. But it's 17% lower than the previous goal, so you've actually lowered the bar on the GHG emissions.

We're going in the wrong direction here, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad that this government finally listened to the official opposition, with our plan for reducing GHG emissions right from the very beginning, right from the very minute that the Premier stood up in this House and talked about signing the Pan-Canadian Framework.

We've been saying all along that Islanders have been leaders for a long, long time. Leaders in the country, leaders in the world and we need to build on that legacy which is a Progressive Conservative legacy.

You can just go back and look – there's some fantastic information on [bradtrivers.com](http://bradtrivers.com) if you want to go there, if you want to see all the details.

I do applaud the actions that this government takes and I hope that we do see more action and not necessarily as much talk, but let's all work together and reduce those greenhouse gasses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I appreciate the statement from the minister and I appreciate the fact that consultation

process is underway and that Islanders are already actively engaged in that, so that's great, that's one part of doing this right.

The way that we get around is changing and it's going to change dramatically.

When you try and predict incremental change, that's hard enough but we're looking at far-reaching and dramatic, profound change here when it comes to the way that we get around.

So it's very hard to predict what the future holds but there are a number of things that are changing. I agree with the minister, it's the biggest challenge in terms of our GHG emissions here are transportation. It's almost half of the emissions of this province and in that respect; it's the place where we have to make the greatest improvements.

Technology is on our side here.

There is several things coming together, the electrification of vehicles and in some jurisdictions they predict, in fact they're mandating, that all vehicles, new vehicles that go on the road by 2040 will be electric vehicles. That's just around the corner.

Things are changing very fast, the electrification of vehicles is one thing, autonomous vehicles are another and the various apps that go along with that which allow for public transportation systems.

I was a little disappointed to hear from the minister when he sort of gave up on the idea of public transportation across this province, we did have an entry report from 2008 which laid out an incremental approach to how we could actually achieve that. Not all at once, of course, but by adding little bits here and there.

That was before all of these new technologies came around and with autonomous vehicles and electrification and the apps that are available, the Uber type apps, it's entirely possible that we could have a province-wide public transit system here. Not in the immediate future, but in the foreseeable future. So let's not give up on the vision of Prince Edward Island being an entirely carbon neutral province.

In fact, a study at UPEI told us that we can do that. We're in the perfect position here, we're a small jurisdiction, our transportation needs are perfectly suited to an electrified system, particularly with a distributed energy system.

Cars can be the storage batteries of that energy system and allow energy management across the system. So let's not be timid here, let's be bold and let's continue with the vision for PEI to be the first Canadian province to be carbon neutral.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to table a list of programs and initiatives provided by efficiencyPEI and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Rural and Regional Development, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a list of contractors and sub-contractors who have obtained tenders on the TCH extension and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House I beg leave to table eight written questions to the minister responsible for IRAC and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-

Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a written question to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Essentially, I'm requesting the information that he spoke about this afternoon with regards to neurologists here on PEI. Essentially looking for the name of the neurologists, the amount of hours and days that they actually practice here on PEI and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table written questions to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, 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

Motions Other than Government

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Autism Secretariat Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Reddin):** *Autism Secretariat Act*, Bill No. 127, read a first time.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker, would you like a brief explanation?

**Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. MacEwen:** This bill aims to facilitate better coordination and dialogue in the delivery of services for Islanders living with autism spectrum disorder. Islanders of all ages and backgrounds are impacted by autism spectrum disorders and there are a range of supports delivered from a variety of government departments and good ones, I might add.

This bill aims to build upon the good work of government's 2009 autism action plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Audio Malfunction]

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 35<sup>th</sup> order of the day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** Order No. 35, *An Act to Amend the Conflict of Interest Act (No. 3)*, Bill No.118, ordered for second reading.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that the said bill be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk:** *An Act to Amend the Conflict of Interest Act (No. 3)*, Bill No.118, read a second time.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, 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?

**Ms. Biggar:** Nay.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) I'm on the floor.

**Ms. Biggar:** Why does he think he can come on the floor without an apology?

**Speaker:** Before you do come to the floor hon. member, did you get a chance to read the –

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, I did, yeah. I was just (Indistinct) now.

**Speaker:** I was just wondering before you come to the floor do you want to withdraw the remark?

**Mr. Myers:** Sure, sure.

Just a quick address to the situation that I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity – I know that at the moment that it happened, I was still kind of scuttling to come down here. I appreciate the opportunity to address the situation.

I do accept your report and I do understand that there are times in the House when you know people get carried away, and I'd be one that would also get carried away as well as other members.

During the first couple of weeks at the Legislature here, so far, there's been a lot of questioning of everyone's facts and I come to the floor with my back pretty tight by the time I get here. It's certainly disheartening sometimes when a minister starts questioning your facts when you know that you're right, which I did find out later that day that I was right with what I was asserting had happened.

I certainly do withdraw the remark that she – 'broke the law' and 'illegally'. I think those were the two things as outlined there. I certainly hope in the future a lot more

respect is given to the people who put a lot of research into the work that we do here, like our staff and the people who come to us from different organizations, because it is their House and it's important to that.

I do withdraw, and I thank you for the opportunity to allow me to deal with it at this time.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Real respectful apology.

**Mr. Roach:** Hardly.

**Leader of the Opposition:** He wasn't asked to apologize. He was asked to withdraw those remarks.

**Speaker:** Thank you for withdrawing those remarks.

**An Hon. Member:** You're the leader of the party, what do you think?

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, if you wouldn't chairing this bill?

**Chair (Fox):** 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 Conflict of Interest Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 118. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yes.

**Chair:** Can we have an overview?

**Mr. Myers:** Absolutely, and thank you for the opportunity to bring this to the floor.

I know over the course of the last year or so there's been a lot of talk about the *Conflict of Interest Act*, and I know there's been dueling versions of it on the floor. What I did, is I picked something that is a relatively simple part of the act, and it deals with senior employees, in particular, the deputy ministers but it covers senior employees.

Basically what we're moving to do is giving them the same six month cooling off period that currently a Cabinet minister would have when it comes to finding employment with – it would treat them exactly the same as a cabinet minister after they leave government. So where they can find

employment, who they can do contracts with, and how government can help them attain those contracts.

We think it's important, because obviously if you look at the benches here it's clear that the deputy ministers would do the majority of the work for the current government. We know that if they're doing the work for government, then they're the ones that have all of the connections in the business world and the connections in the industries in those sectors.

So, we think it's probably more important that deputy ministers and high-ranking senior officials have this type of legislation applied to them, because I would feel like they would have a larger role even (Indistinct) a lot of the ministers would have.

**Chair:** Hon. member, Point of Order?

**Mr. Myers:** No, he can't. He has to wait until the Speaker's back. He has to call the Speaker back.

**Ms. Biggar:** No, no.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The Chair presides over the committee; he can hear my Point of Order.

**Chair:** Point of Order by the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Point of Order

**Mr. J. Brown:** So I heard, I think I heard – I wouldn't mind having the hon. member clarify it, but I think I did and I'm not totally sure what he meant by this reference, but I heard him to say that all the deputy ministers – we know they do all the work for the departments and by the looks of the benches here – I'm sure really what he meant by this? But by the looks of the benches here, that's very obvious.

**Mr. Myers:** I would clarify that if you like.

It's become pretty common knowledge that the deputy ministers carry a large share of the load within government, and the purpose of the act is to make sure that they're treated the same as the minister who brings a lot of the stuff forward to the Legislative Assembly.

They are the branch that answers directly to the Premier, and they're the top civil servants in the entire province. They are the ones who direct the staff. The deputy ministers are the ones who direct the staff, as you would know. They were the ones that would have a lot of the introductory meetings, and the high level meetings with a lot of the businesses that both do government – business with government and who government is trying to entertain contracts with them.

I think that's why it's important, because with that level of responsibility that they would have –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Are you addressing the Point of Order?

**Mr. Myers:** I am addressing the Point of Order – I'm addressing the Point of Order.

Would you like to continue to interrupt me?

**Chair:** Chair –

**Mr. Murphy:** You're the Chair.

**Chair:** If the minister would let the Chair continue? –

**Mr. Myers:** – with them; and I think that's why it's important, because with that level of –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Chair?

**Mr. Myers:** – responsibility that they would have –

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) addressing the Point of Order or (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Myers:** I am addressing the Point of Order. I'm addressing the Point of Order.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Would you like to continue to interrupt me?

**Chair:** If the minister –

**An Hon. Member:** You're the chair.

**Chair:** If the minister would let the Chair continue his response, then I will give the minister a chance to respond.

**Some Hon. Members:** You're the Chair.

**Chair:** Or – the promoter of the bill.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not sure if the minister is offended by that. If he is, I apologize; but at the same time, I've worked in government so I've known that it – when the deputy came, it was a big deal and the deputy came with orders.

The thought inside of government is that the deputy basically runs the department and the minister does the legislative branch of it here; and if I'm wrong, then feel free to correct me, but either way, it's hard to argue that they don't have a large level of responsibility in the department and that they don't have the same types of contacts as the minister would have. So I'm not sure why anybody could argue why they wouldn't have to be covered under a similar type of legislation.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Minister of justice?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not arguing that the deputies have a strong role in the departments; in fact, they run the operational end of the departments. I'm not arguing with that.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** My quibble is with the comment 'by the looks of the bench here', and I took from that that the hon. member meant – and I'd certainly, I heard him do apologize, maybe I'm wrong in this – that there's some issue with the strength of the group of Cabinet ministers that we have over here, that he's got.

And I will say, Mr. Chair, that based on the way the hon. member has conducted himself in Question Period over the last number of days, he may in fact have that issue, and particularly when he gets to on the one hand saying that it's deputies that are doing the work and awarding the contracts and then on the other hand he's here in Question Period

accusing direct linkages between ministers and contracts being awarded. I really wonder which it is, but in any event, he's here to explain it, so let's have him explain it.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you, Minister. I will take that under advisement and –

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

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not quite sure that I had any involvement with the direct linkage of – that was somebody else who asked those questions; but either way, for me, this is the legislative branch. This is where the questions (Indistinct) I can't bring a deputy on and actually – you know, you've blocked deputy ministers from coming to Public Accounts when you were the co-chair.

So there's no opportunity for us to ever ask deputy ministers questions. Unfortunately, whether you're happy with it or not, you have to answer the questions here, because you're the legislative branch. Regardless, the point of the bill has to do with that they are the highest level of –

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

**Mr. Myers:** He said he'd take it under advisement. They are the highest level of senior staff in government, and because of that, this bill deals with precisely that.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I'm just wondering if – have you consulted with the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner or the CEO of the public service in regard to this motion?

**Mr. Myers:** No, I haven't. I actually took it directly out of your executive division conflict of interest policy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Oh.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** So I've taken it out of – this is your own policy. The purpose of this policy is: to set out the conflict of interest provision for persons described in the definition of employee below, which differ from, or are supplementary to, those in a place for other employees of the government of Prince Edward Island. So it's directly out of your own policy.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** What my intention is, is to take policy and make it law, to give it more teeth, that's all. So it's something you have, but it's in the form of policy.

**Mr. MacDonald:** So you're saying it's in the civil act?

**Mr. Myers:** It's the Executive Division Conflict of Interest Policy, is the name of it.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Which falls under the civil act.

**Mr. Myers:** Well, I can only assume. I don't have the answer to that question. Would you like a copy of it?

**Mr. MacDonald:** No, I'm fine.

**Mr. Myers:** I can provide a copy if you'd like.

**Chair:** Minister of justice.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much.

And the answer to that is, it does fall under the *Civil Service Act*, so I am curious as to the hon. member's view of how this would work, and there are a bunch of questions that come to light.

Is the person that runs your office going to fall under this policy? If we're having senior level folks fall under the same conflict of interest legislation that falls under the legislative branch of government, are we going to start to have staff from the opposition office all fall under that same policy and backbench MLAs? Where do we stop when we get into that? And how are we mixing now the legislative and the executive branch of the government in that way?

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

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

I guess the way I feel about it is that, as I've stated already, the deputy ministers are front and centre in a lot of the conversations that would have, in a lot of the development of policies. I know there have been complaints in the past. I know there's been complaints about employees that left and went to work for employers, that they were directly involved in. I'm not going to name names, because I don't think it's fair at this juncture but I will if you want me to.

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Myers:** But, I think that it's a great way to clear up that this wouldn't happen.

You know, when you talk to former Cabinet ministers, I know that some of them have found it frustrating that they have a period that they can't work and they want to get going and opportunities are passing them by. But, when you talk to them they do understand that the role that they're coming out of put them directly in close – it's given them close relationships with a lot of high-end people, both in this province and outside of this province and they understand that because of that, there's good reason why they would have to have a cooling-off period.

It's really just the same thing. So if you had a deputy minister who, say, negotiated a large contract with someone and then left and went to work for that company, we would have an issue and a policy wouldn't be enough to cover it. I think the legislation is going to better protect the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.

In the case of who knows whether or not sometimes the deals are being made in the best interest of – it opens up that – that's what the conflict of interest is. Did you make the decision in the best interests of the department, in the best interests of taxpayers, or did you bring it forward because it was in the best interests of you, because you already knew that there was an opportunity going to open up for you because of that? That's all.

We're just trying to take that away so that no one has to work under that perception or under that microscope, just like a Cabinet minister wouldn't have to.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. MacDonald:** So you're aware the conflict of interest does reflect those individuals that you're actually talking about already under the executive level?

**Mr. Myers:** Under the *Conflict of Interest Act*?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah. The conflict of interest provisions currently affect the executive level of employees.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

Hold on here now.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Chair?

If someone was hired for two months and then released, would your opinion state that they basically would have to wait six months to go to work anywhere?

**Mr. Myers:** Not anywhere.

It's not going to work anywhere; that they have to clear it with the conflict commissioner. So if they – say they were your deputy and they left, and then they were going to work for a tire manufacturer somewhere in some other province, or even here for that matter, they have to go to the conflict commissioner to get it cleared and that's my understanding of what other people have done when they were trying to find work – other former Cabinet ministers had to do after they left because they took it to the conflict commissioner and said: Here is an opportunity that I have, am I in conflict in your opinion? And get a ruling, once they have a ruling that it's not, then they are cleared to go.

So, yeah. To answer your question, yes.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thanks, Chair.

I have a few questions that kind of string together, if you might indulge me.

I don't think I got an answer to my last question, but I want to be clear about this. So we have three different branches of government. We have the courts and we have the executive and the legislative branch of government.

So my question was to you – the *Conflict of Interest Act* falls under the legislative branch of government. The Ethics and Integrity Commissioner is now set up through a policy to look at the executive branch of government and how that policy applies to them.

So my question is: Why would we be looking to do this under the *Conflict of Interest Act* which puts it under the legislative branch of government as opposed to, say, the *Civil Service Act* which falls under the executive branch of government?

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

**Mr. Myers:** I think it's because it's the only conflict commissioner that we have, is under the legislative branch.

I mean, what I'm trying to do is make things better for Islanders. Certainly not trying to insinuate that there's any deputy minister who I don't trust is doing their job or who is going to do something untoward.

But I think that – my exact point on your last question was that it takes away that perception that it could happen. So, you want to know whether or not the staff in the opposition office should have to file – I mean, not based on this, but if you think that's important – I'm not sure who you think walks through our doors up there on a daily basis that our staff would have contact with that would give them some major role, but I guess if that's the way you feel maybe it is something that needs to be looked at.

I don't know. I wouldn't want anybody to think that the staff in any of the offices in the building here from the three parties are being influenced by a private entity in a way that they would make or suggest things that weren't for the betterment of Prince Edward Island in hopes of making their way to the –

so to answer your question, I have no issue putting them under, but that's not what this covers.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I might as well say, I mean, I've seen staff of yours that have – been relating with and members over there who have been relating with members that have been involved in the CMT litigation, so I'm not sure if that's in the best interest in government, clearly.

I'll point that out directly and I would take issue with the fact that you're saying you're not trying to cast any aspersions. You have done that here today.

My direct question is: Are you saying the Ethics and Integrity Commissioner is not capable of doing the work that she's been appointed to do?

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

**Mr. Myers:** I actually have the greatest amount of respect for the ethics commissioner.

This is a whole different kettle of fish, though. This is something that we think (Indistinct) for the protection of Islanders.

The ethic commissioner answers directly to the Premier, and this is an independent body. We're just making it independent and trying to make it better.

To address the CMT thing; I'm not sure if anybody has been hired by a defunct company out of our office. I'm not sure that they're operational. If they are, I don't know what their operation is. I've had no involvement with any of that and I'm not sure who in our staff you've seen with them. I don't know how that would be a conflict of interest.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, did you have one more question?

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) yes, I do have more questions.

The Ethics and Integrity Commissioner, as I recall anyway – I'm not certain of this – I believe she's appointed by the Legislature and the Public Service Commission as well is also an independent body that administers the *Civil Service Act*.

I'm not saying one way or another that we should, or we should not, have some cooling off period for deputies. I do think if you're going to do that, there needs to be appropriate severance paid to them which be related to the cooling off period and that's an issue that's, I don't think, appropriately addressed in the legislation the way it's set out.

But, what I am saying, to be absolutely clear, is that in my view, where you have set this legislation out – or the bill that you're looking to pass through here to amend the *Conflict of Interest Act* perhaps should have been looked at in relation to the *Civil Service Act* or an equivalent act in relation to the executive branch of government as opposed to the legislative branch of government, in which the *Conflict of Interest Act* presides over.

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

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

I appreciate your comments on the issue.

We brought it through our legislative council and they didn't raise those concerns so that's – we are where we are with it right now.

And I'm not – like, I'm with you. I'm not opposed to adequate severance board because I understand that if you lop off a whole bunch of industries from somebody where they can work or places that they can go for six months, you can't expect them to do it with no money.

I would be in a situation similar to you. You're younger than me, but that assumedly both of us are going to have to find work after this. You're a lawyer and you will have to – but you're also the justice minister, so is that going to impact? I don't know. If I were ever in a – I've an IT background – if I was ever in a position and I had a minister's role

that had to do with that, then would it impact me coming back to the workforce?

That's a legitimate concern for me as well. So I'm not trying to make it so people can't work. I'm just trying to give them the same expectations as would you and I would bear.

**Chair:** One more, or two more?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Are you making it one question? Or you can come back to me, it doesn't matter.

**Chair:** Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

It's my understanding – and you can correct me if I'm wrong, and I'm sure you will – this bill only deals with executive division employees, as designated by Cabinet under the *Civil Service Act*, is that correct?

**Mr. Myers:** Could you repeat the question?

**Mr. LaVie:** He's gonna correct me.

This bill only deals with executive division employees –

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**Mr. LaVie:** – as designated by the Cabinet under the *Civil Service Act*. Is that correct?

**Mr. Myers:** Yes. It is correct.

Like I had said, our intentions are that we want to put the same level of protection that would be in that a Cabinet minister – or any member, really, for that matter – has reports to the conflict commissioner, here. So, yeah. You're right. I think it's an important move for Islanders. It sounds like government isn't necessarily supportive – that's fine too.

**Chair:** Member from Souris-Elmira.

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

No, I just wanted to make sure it was out there, that this bill is only dealing with executive division employees.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

So, if I have this right, the original purpose of the PEI's *Conflict of Interest Act*, was to govern elected members of government members and forward members of the Legislative Assembly. So, are you suggesting that deputy minister's now become members of the Legislative Assembly?

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not even sure if – if you're serious, I'll answer.

**Chair:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** No I'm asking a question.

**Mr. Myers:** If you're trying to be funny, or –

**Mr. Roach:** No, I'm asking a question. I'm dead serious.

**Mr. Myers:** I can't imagine that you actually believe that. But if that's the case, I'll answer the question; no.

**Mr. Roach:** Okay, so that level of government, the executive employees fall underneath the *Civil Service Act*. Is that correct?

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

I know you must be copying the notes from the justice minister, because he's already said that and we've already had this discussion.

**Mr. Roach:** Okay, thank you. Appreciate that answer.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Google apps (Indistinct) crossed off.

**Mr. Roach:** Chair, do I still have a question or is it gone over to the Member from Morell-Mermaid?

**Chair:** Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

So, if the –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir has the floor.

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

So, my question is not that difficult and I don't know why you're getting so angry about it, I'm just trying to clarify something.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not angry at all, I just think you're (Indistinct) making light of the situation and –

**Mr. Roach:** – so my question –

**Mr. Myers:** – (Indistinct) wouldn't be appreciative of that, that's all.

**Chair:** Montague-Kilmuir, do you have a question?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes, he does.

**Mr. Roach:** I'm trying, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Roach:** For the third time.

If those executive level employees fall underneath the *Civil Service Act* and the *Civil Service Act* is a separate body in government. My question is: why would you not talk to that branch to see if there was a way to achieve the same thing under the *Civil Service Act*? And I'm not trying to be smart – I'm just trying to clarify.

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

What we did was we – what I had said in my opening remarks – was there was dueling conflict of interest acts and we took something that we thought was relatively simple and that we thought that the House would agree on. I'm surprised – I'll be quite honest – I'm surprised that there would be so much push back on it, particularly when there is a policy that already covers it within government.

I assume because there is a policy in government already, that they're supportive of it, because they laid out – to the best of their ability – that how it would work from the government perspective.

The reason we went this direction was because, as I had said to the minister of justice, there is no other conflict of interest commissioner. There is the ethics commissioner, I do understand that. I have the greatest amount of respect for Shauna she is fantastic and honest – I have absolutely no issue with her at all – she does answer to the Premier; I'm not even suggesting that's an issue.

The conflict of interest commissioner is independent on to themselves to the Legislative Assembly. So I do understand that they answer to the Legislative Assembly, and I do understand the issues that could arise from that, but I wasn't trying to slight anybody by not going to them first. I was trying to take something that was really simple and in policy anyways, and make it law, so it was very clear to everyone and to give it more teeth, that's all.

**Chair:** Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

Again, I'll go back, I'm not trying to be smart – I'm just trying to clarify. That's the premise on which I asked those questions was, I find it hard if we're going to take somebody from the Civil Service, and then bring them over into the Legislative Assembly for one piece of it, when they're already governed under the *Civil Service Act* and under the – and that the *Civil Service Act* applies to employees of the executive branch already and there is a stream on that side for it. I guess the part was just bringing it over to the Legislative Assembly side.

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

So I guess it had mostly to do with what I had talked about at the start and the minister took some exception to it, is that the deputy and the minister have a lot of the same function and power, particularly inside their departments. So the minister does the

legislative branch of it, and does some of the internal part; but, as we all know, the deputy carries a heavy load internally in the staff, having been a staff, view the deputy often as the boss, because the deputy often doesn't change where Cabinet shuffles happen and the minister would change.

The one constant sometimes in the department is the deputy and a lot of - the buck would often stop at the deputy. So, because of that, the close proximity of that amount of - I'll call it power - I'm not sure power is the right word for it - but responsibility and access to files and information, and people and businesses that they may interact with over the course of that period. They are a couple of the only people who have that issue, and one of them is dually dealt with because you're members; so because you're members, and you are members of the Legislative Assembly, it is dealt with there properly, and the others really are those senior.

So, I guess in my opinion, there's really is not that many more of them. There is probably an equivalent number to deputies, and maybe a handful more. We're trying to streamline it, without having to have an internal conflict of interest commissioner hired to do the identical work that we have.

I have a lot of confidence in the conflict commissioner, as I'm sure you all do - we meet him on a yearly basis and have a discussion and gives good advice on anything that you need to know or clarify in that situation.

That's really the only reason why it came out like that, is that I'm not really sure that it deals with a large group of people who would in that situation, that's all.

**Chair:** Minister of justice.

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

A minute ago the hon. member indicated he's a lot of respect for the conflict of interest commissioner, I'm wondering if he's consulted with the conflict of interest commissioner on this bill?

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** No, I haven't.

**Mr. J. Brown:** No.

**Chair:** Minister of justice.

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

I think I know the answer to this, but I'm not certain - but, this suggested change was not in any of his reports since he took that office, was it?

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** No, it wasn't, no.

**Chair:** Minister of justice.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I already asked - he didn't.

And, so, are you aware that there's a Treasury Board policy already on the executive division employees?

**Mr. Myers:** That's different than the one that I have?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I don't know what one you have, in fairness, but that there is a Treasury Board policy.

**Mr. Myers:** Executive Division Conflict of Interest policy, it's called.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** Is that the same one that you're talking about?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, probably.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay. Then I am aware, because I have it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, in relation to that, and I think the Minister of Finance asked this question already, or a similar question - and I think he said two months, so we'll use that same example - maybe I'll use the theoretical example of somebody who'd be in a situation like my deputy in justice came from a career in a law firm, and came to work. If she had worked for two months - and so they get for every month - every year

that they work they get one month's severance.

So if she had come to worked for two months, so she's going to get one sixth of a month's severance. Do you think that would be fair?

**Chair:** Georgetown-St. Peter's.

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

Well I think you're asking me if – you're basically warping what the conflict of interest commissioner would actually do.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not warping anything.

**Mr. Myers:** Because what I had already earlier, when the Minister of Finance asked me that, is that you would go to the conflict of interest commissioner and get cleared whether or not you were in conflict.

So it doesn't limit you from working. It may limit where you work or it may limit the number of opportunities if you're dealing with somebody who was directly involved with government during your time there who had been awarded a contract.

I don't know exactly how he does his job because people that I've talked to – the current conflict of interest commissioner wasn't the commissioner – when some of the people went through it. I know people, who were Cabinet ministers, when they went to work they would bring something up and they'd say: I have an opportunity to work here, and it would be reviewed. The commissioner would say: No, that you're in conflict of interest for that one. They might come back with a different one and not be.

I don't know if it's necessarily a fair question, and when you talk about the compensation as the Minister of Finance has said – or perhaps it was you, I think it was the Minister of Finance – that the compensation isn't really laid out there. You're only assuming that it would be the compensation that you said.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, still I'm not assuming. That is what the formula is. What I'm asking you, and it's a very specific question, it's not set up right now that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner would have the ability to

wave a conflict for an MLA. There is a six month cooling off period. There just is.

**Mr. Myers:** For every job? You can't work at all.

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, it has to be if there's a conflict.

**Mr. Myers:** That's what I just said.

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, but you said it would be up to them to waive it. So I gave you –

**Mr. Myers:** No, I didn't say waive it. No, hold now. I didn't say waive it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Myers:** What I said was, if you brought a job to them, an opportunity, that it's up to the conflict of interest commissioner to decide whether or not you're in conflict, is what I said.

**Chair:** Minister of justice.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay so you said –

**Mr. Myers:** I didn't say waive.

**Mr. J. Brown:** My point is this: private sector law firm, coming from a private sector law firm to this position and I can tell you, because I know the answer to this I'm in the same situation – you can't go back there and work.

So the question gets to be: do you think that's fair? Basically, four days severance and you can't work for six months.

**Chair:** Georgetown-St. Peter's.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

I do think it's fair that you fall under it, which is the example you gave me.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Because I chose to, but I said – No I didn't. I said somebody like my deputy who worked at a private sector law firm –

**Mr. Myers:** The last one you said was you yourself. You used you yourself as an example and I do think that you need to fall under the *Conflict of Interest Act*.

**Chair:** Minister of justice.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay, I'll be clear then.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Employee X, who is under the senior compensation plan, comes from a private sector law firm or a private sector accounting firm or a private sector IT firm, works for two months and then is dismissed from their employment. They would get four days severance and not be able to work again for another six months less those four days.

Do you think that's fair?

**Chair:** Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

I'm not sure that that's adequate compensation. But if that same employee X in two months, if they handed out a contract or been involved in a negotiation that resulted in company Y receiving a large government contract and they left their position to go there, then I have an issue with that.

So while I still have an issue, you're saying is four days pay fair? No, I don't. I think what I said right from the start was that they needed to be adequately compensated. If that's something that needs to be changed in order to make sure that they're under, then I said to the Minister of Finance I would support making any of those changes. Because I don't want to see anybody without work, but I also don't want to see somebody being in a perceived conflict even if that wasn't the intention of what they did.

I think that's, as you know, what the perception would end up being here when it came to the floor of the Legislature as an issue. That the perception would be that employee X came and worked here two months, gave away a big contract and left and went to work for the company. It would look terrible for government and it would look terrible for the employee even though there may not be any situation where anybody did anything untoward.

I think that the *Conflict of Interest Act*, in my opinion, protects you as well as a

taxpayer. So for you, in your example of you yourself, it does protect you from any perception that you did anything that might line your own pockets. It's protection for you, as well as protection for the taxpayers. I think that's important for you and your own personal reputation in your industry after the fact. I think by the same – using the exact same metric, it's also fair to a deputy that their reputation is given the same amount of shield from that type of perception. I think that's fair. I think it's fair to say that it protects you, as well as a taxpayer.

**Chair:** Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

The first question is what other jurisdictions have these sorts of limitations on civil servants.

**Chair:** Georgetown-St. Peter's.

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

I don't have a list of them, but I think there are a number of them that do. I mean, for us –

The problem with bringing a bill like this to the floor is, you would know is that it makes it look like you're looking for a boogeyman where there's not.

That said, we have here on Prince Edward Island over the years had numerous types of scandals that could be prevented and I'm not saying there's one in this area or that there will be, but it is an added protection to us as legislators and government, in particular, of the executive branch and to the public and to the person that is involved it.

So, I can't answer your question.

**Chair:** Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks.

I know the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, when he presented his report a year or so ago, had a recommendation of the cooling period for Executive Council members be expanded to 12 months. I see in the bill you have it here at six months in the line with what it is now.

Do you have any feelings on whether six months is adequate, or whether 12 months, as the commissioner recommended, is a better period? By the way, compared to other jurisdictions, 12 months is actually at the low end. There's several of them have them at 24 months.

**Chair:** Georgetown-St. Peters

**Mr. Myers:** Well, it's a good question.

I totally – I struggle with it to be honest with you on both sides of it, because depending on where you are in your life or your career, it's not having adequate compensation to hold you while you cool off. Sometimes, in a small jurisdiction like PEI you watch opportunities go by and that might be your one opportunity to have work.

At the same time, and as what I've been saying here all along, is you want a certain amount of protection for your own reputation that it doesn't look like you did something and end up with a big job and you left that lasting perception that that's the way an Assembly would run or should run, or that you thought so little of the taxpayers that you would do something to that degree. So, you know, I'm not against the longer cooling off period.

At this point, I'd like to see it at least legislated in some fashion, and it sounds like the justice minister thinks I have it in the wrong place, which is fine. In some fashion, to start that process on a legislative type level – my own personal opinion, I think 12 months is a long time, but if that's the recommendation of the conflict commissioner, then I probably wouldn't argue with it.

**Chair:** Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks.

Just to be clear, the period – the cooling off period doesn't prevent you from going into another job. It prevents you from going into a very narrow spectrum of jobs that would be considered to be in conflict.

In some other jurisdictions they have a provision for a waiver, if the conflict of interest – for example, if you find yourself in a position you're unelected or if this bill

were to go through, you're a civil servant, you're out of your job.

The Conflict of Interest Commissioner would have the ability, the provision to make a waiver and under certain circumstances if you were applying for a job and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner would make a decision as to whether or not, you were in conflict and then your reputation would be preserved essentially and the 12-month or six-month period would be waived.

How do you feel about that, having that provision?

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

I think that's great because that should be the role of the conflict commissioners to – sometimes you think you're not in conflict and you probably aren't but when you have a third party validate that for you that you are in fact not in conflict then yeah, it does preserve your reputation because if anybody asks, you have clear from the conflict commissioner to move forward so I think it's wonderful, actually.

**Chair:** Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I think it's a great discussion. My issue is, it's a little different between the elected members I think and the deputy ministers for example.

We put our names on the line and we know up front that we have a certain term that comes in an allotment of four years likely and we live with that part of it.

When we look at the deputy minister, deputy ministers are a pleasure appointment, we go out in to the general population and we try to find someone with expertise, in say, health or education or something like that and we tell them: you really know your stuff in this area, come and help us to align our department or align our policies on education, on health, or whatever it might be.

We are very blessed when we get someone with the expertise that comes forward and says: yes, I'm really looking forward to working with government – but if we put this legislation through, then we're going to tell them: you know what, if you come and you want to return to your own area of expertise well, you're going to have to sit it out for awhile.

I think this legislation might actually disallow or make some people think: you know what, maybe I'm not going to take that job and maybe we won't get the best people that we could have gotten if this little cooling off period wasn't there.

We really need to get experts in the field, in the different areas and I don't think we need to limit them to any degree and I think this bill would do that.

I think it's a great big chance to have a discussion, but I would not like to see us limited on who we can bring into the highest part of the civil service, because we've turned them off a little bit because they can't come from the job they were in, still work in their field, but be eliminated to go back into their field to continue their job because we have this cooling off period.

So I have that problem with this bill.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** I do agree with you, we do want the best people and the experts in the area and it is really important and what I had said earlier is that often they do carry a really heavy load of what's going on inside the department. So, it's important that they are our experts.

We bring in, as you know, politicians from all over Prince Edward Island who could be farmers or fishers or in my case, a computer programmer and on election day, you don't know how it's all going to work out and suddenly you wake up the next morning and you're in government and then a few days later you're in Cabinet and weeks before that you were banging away a code on a computer and you have the responsibility of something that is way outside of your

expertise. So, I do think it's really important to have those (Indistinct). I agree with you 100%.

I think that we have a policy – the executive division conflict policy deals with a number of those things already about who you can interact with and stuff like that, so there's already a cooling off period that's limited by policy.

My attempts here today were only to bring forward and kind of put it in a formal legislative setting so that we knew – I don't know how the policy gets enforced and I don't know – there's the ethics commissioner which is the person you report to when you are working with the day that you leave – you really don't report to anybody in that branch of government anymore, so I don't know how it gets enforced after you leave.

I don't want to see those high end people not take those opportunities, especially when government and the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island would benefit so greatly from having that expertise.

At the same time, the only thing I'd want to limit is that something didn't happen, that they ended up with a better opportunity because of a decision they made and then it cast a shadow of doubt over them or what they did in their time there and that's really all.

**Chair:** Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

I think it's a great discussion but again, I think this bill may discourage us or government, whatever side might be in, from attracting the best people for – in an area of expertise to come and work as a deputy minister. So, for that reason, I'm going to have trouble supporting it.

**Chair:** Minister of Justice.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm fine Chair, I think the Premier –

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I just want to pursue some of the points that were made but essentially to point out again that what

we're talking about here is the public service – indeed the senior public service and the policy that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters is talking about was brought forward early in our mandate after we had appointed an Ethics and Integrity Commissioner to work with the public service after we brought in 2015 that position requirements of disclosure and so on.

Later on, once that policy was in place we brought in lobbyist registration legislation, we brought in whistle blower protection legislation and this was all done in the name of good public administration. It's not because anybody has got any sort of suspicion or anything other than just wanting to do a good job.

This has been all done with respect to, and out of respect for, the public service and I appreciated that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters said that you're not raising this today because of any concern of any scandal.

I do note that on Tuesday, the Leader of the Opposition asked me three questions, two of which about this very matter were prefaced by references to scandal, scandal, scandal in the public service.

I want to know, do you agree with the premise of those questions?

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Well thank you I would love this opportunity.

Clearly, there has been a lot of scandals inside of your government.

If you look at the e-gaming thing and you promised to clean it up and then you didn't. When you look at some of the things that have happened over the years, there's a lot.

You know what, you talk to a lot of people, I talk to a lot of people, I don't know if they're as honest with you as they are with me, but they don't have trust in us anymore it's not you anymore than it is me.

They look at politicians that no matter who is in, there's going to be some chaos of

crookedness going on and I think that – my attempt was only to – we're out of time I'm told.

I'll just finish quickly with – my attempt in this case was only to do the things that you had said yourself (Indistinct) good public policy forward and it's for the taxpayers, it wasn't for me and it was to do the best I could do for Islanders and really nothing more.

**Chair:** Thank you hon. members.

**Mr. Myers:** 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, *An Act to Amend the Conflict of Interest Act No.3*, Bill No. 118, 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. from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, we ask that Order No. 29 be now called.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk Assistant:** Order No. 29, *An Act to Amend the Innovation PEI Act*, Bill No. 123, in committee.

**Speaker:** The hon. from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I request 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 to come 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 Innovation PEI Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** An overview, please.

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

You realize this is (Indistinct)

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** All right, we don't need the overview.

**Ms. Bell:** I can do it again.

**Chair:** I'm going to give the floor to the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale as this is her third time on the floor.

Thank you.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

At our last discussion on this, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism had been asking about clean technology and I just brought a couple of additional pieces of information from the tabled documentation to the floor to bring into record some clarity on that piece and the reason for including it in this proposed amendment, is because, like I say, we have done this a number of times.

The clean technology refers to any process, product or service that reduces environmental impacts. A couple of examples that can bring some clarity to that is in addition to renewable energy, which we already have in the clause –

**Chair:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** I'll be very brief – is other key areas in terms of the Canadian approach to clean technology is water and wastewater technologies and industrial processes.

There is a global demand for clean tech and for Canada's clean tech activity to grow and play an active role in global markets and allow PEI to access this global market

identifying this it is a strategic industrial sector is critical.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you.

Just to pick up on where we were last time, I think I was – if I recall from my notes here – was trying to identify what kind of research you did to see if there are other sectors that should be included in this.

I do know that you had referenced a report that you had that identified of a couple of those. But, were there things outside of that report that you looked at or what kind of jurisdictional scan you did to see what other sectors we would potentially include in this?

**Ms. Bell:** Chair?

Thank you, minister, for the question.

The existing *Innovation PEI Act* already has sectors indentified which have been in place for a number of years. As we had spoken about earlier, the cultural and creative industries was to be added because of the recommendations from your government's Cultural Action Plan.

The justification and background work for adding renewable energy and clean technology was, I think, something I'd raised in the first overview on the bill, which is that this is a priority that's been identified in both the Atlantic Growth Strategy and the national innovation science and economic development sectors.

Obviously, it's not in scope for this set of amendments to look at doing a review or an overview of all strategic sectors that PEI has. It was to try and address the two areas that we potentially are missing out on opportunities in. In terms of clean technology, this is not only one that has significant investment of \$2.3 billion on a federal basis just in the most recent budget, but also has a number of other key things associated. For instance, funding through the business development Bank of Canada and EDC – and which is linked to a requirement to demonstrate strategic partnerships and also workforce and advanced learning and skills and training programming dollars,

which would open up the potential to increase job development and activity in PEI that we would not be able to access otherwise if this was not identified as a strategic sector.

I certainly would welcome a review of Innovation PEI on a broader basis but, as Third Party and as looking to sort of achieve something with expediency, this was felt to be the best route to address.

But, in terms of the scan and the research that was done on that, it was done through interview with those experts in both the federal and regional partners also, again, looking at what the trends are in terms of strategic direction and potential growth areas for economic development and job development, and specifically what would be a best fit for the potential strength that PEI brings in terms of the existing workforce and economic activity that's already here with light industrial manufacturing, IT expertise and a potential workforce that really wants to find things that they can do that allow them to work here.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you.

I wasn't suggesting really the things that could be outside of scope would be looking at the current sectors that we have, to eliminate any of those.

But, it was: What are those future pieces we can be building our economy around? Like, quantum computing or whatever those various sectors are that could really take off, and as we have identified on page 15 there of our Cultural Action Plan, we were going to – I think I mentioned this last time – identify creative industries as a strategic sector in Prince Edward Island. So that was something that – so I do understand where the research came from that one, which was our cultural plan.

Are there other sectors for us to look at? I know we're doing that inside of our department as we continue to work with companies to help them grow the – the companies that are here on PEI and also attract new companies that are looking for

the really dedicated workforce that we have here on PEI.

So a lot of companies have really commented to us about how dedicated our workforce is here on PEI and I think that's one of the success factors of Standard Arrow in Summerside, as an example; is the skilled workforce and really, the attention to detail and the commitment that they show to the company.

And I think those core attributes of Island employees, Island workforce, is transferable across a number of sectors. Those are the things that we are born with that we transfer generationally here in PEI and then the skill set that goes with it, whether it's through aerospace or IT or through the cultural sectors, I think those are things that industries – or that other companies are seeing here in PEI.

I was just trying to get my head around – as you were making changes to the act, what other sectors that we looked at down the horizon – trying to leverage the skill set that we have here on PEI and how we can grow that.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, minister.

I agree with all of your points.

I think something that's important to note in there, that Standard Arrow is a success story and the associated jobs and training and growth programs with that are a success story because it is identified as a strategic sector, and has been for many, many years.

It's a great example of what happens when you make that investment that can come because it has been identified as such.

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Chair, first to say I'm in favour of these changes and indeed, they were signaled as the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale has said, in the five-year Cultural Action Plan and are consistent with the growth and, you might say, diversification of our economy in the new economy and in the more traditional sectors.

I just wanted to pick up on, in particular, the culture and creative industry's piece and

building on the recognition we had earlier today of the recipients of the grants for film development.

I attended the opening evening of the Charlottetown Film Festival at – There were three Prince Edward Island films: two shorts – Pam Gallant’s *Athena’s Lost Twin*. Anyone who hasn’t seen it – must. It’s just a complete lift. Harmony Wagner’s *O Kanata*, and all of the elements that brings in, including the – starting with the promotion of the Mi’kmaq language and the community and cooperation. Then there was Mille Clarke’s *The Song and the Sorrow*, and all that that brings to us in terms of our story and the awareness and destigmatization, I might say, of mental health. It was such an inspiring evening.

The reason I point to that – I could have point small halls, even pointed to other things, ceilidhs, and so on – that in particular gets you to make a point, and it’s one that I believe the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale shares in bringing this forward. I think sometimes in this House or other places, we tend to, I might say, circumscribe the economy and say oh it’s all about the economy or you can’t eat the GDP and so on.

Here we are now talking about creative and cultural industries, which bring in mental health, diversity in all kinds of ways, and a lot of what we know about culture starts with writing and our story. It’s really to endorse that broader view of what it means to, not only tie culture to economic development, but embrace how we grow together. In fact, being the title of the five-year culture strategy, how we grow together in its fullness as what we really mean when we talk about how well we’re doing as a province.

I endorse the inclusion of this in the legislation, and that commitment broadly and in terms of inclusion and diversification as we go forward with our development of our economy.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Mr. Premier.

**Chair:** Shall the bill carry? Carried.

**Ms. Bell:** I move the title.

**Chair:** *An Act to Amend the Innovation PEI Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

**Ms. Bell:** 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.

**Ms. Bell:** Madam 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 Innovation PEI 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. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that we recall Motion No. 74.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

I will call on the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the seconder of the motion who was speaking to the motion to continue speaking to the motion.

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will start by saying again, I want to state how happy I am to stand up and second this motion, which was brought forward by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir. I fully do support this motion.

As mentioned earlier, I do come from a small community and when a tragic event happens we all come together to show our

support and help out in whatever way we can and we try to deal with it together.

That same sense of compassion can be found in our schools whenever a traumatic event happens. But students are sometimes more susceptible to negative effects of tragic events, because they don't have those skills learned yet – the coping skills that they need, as adults have with maturity. So, when dealing with school age children there is an extra layer of complexity when you're trying to guide them through their emotions.

As an adult, I sometimes find it very difficult and very hard to grasp a situation, let alone – I think about these children who have to deal with these situations and haven't yet developed those skills. What goes through their mind? I can only imagine what goes through their mind at that age whenever a death or an illness happens, either within in their family or their community.

Teachers have my respect. They do great work to educate the next generation. The teachers on the frontlines are not immune to traumatic events, and our teachers also need supports, too. When teachers and school staff are struggling to manage pain or grief, they too, get support provided by mental health providers and by grief counsellors.

This motion is rightfully titled: Recognizing those who help students and staff through traumatic events.

But more than just recognizing, I would like to thank all the frontline staff who work in my community, and right across Prince Edward Island, to ensure that our students and in many cases, staff that are also involved, that they get the best care when they're dealing through tough times.

I want to thank again the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir for putting this motion forward, and I ask that all members of this House join me in supporting this motion.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** Next speaking to this motion will be the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more traumatic events every time we turn on the news, from major motor vehicle accidents like the Humboldt Broncos last spring, to natural disasters like the hurricanes in Florida, to the mass shooting at the Pittsburgh Synagogue just a few weeks ago.

There are varying degrees of tragedy and we all handle trauma differently. This past year we've had several traumatic events happen right here on PEI and some which have touches on our children and on our education system.

In May, students and staff at Montague Regional High School grieved the loss of Brodie McCarthy. A student athlete who died from a head injury suffered during a school rugby game.

In September, a nine year old boy died suddenly at Belfast School while participating in the Terry Fox Run.

Students, parents, staff, and entire communities mourned the loss of these two boys and the other young people who died suddenly and way too early in life. These were tragedies and certainly traumatic events, for both their classmates and friends.

We know that students who are exposed to traumatic events are at risk for increased levels of PTSD, depression, and other forms of mental distress. Student responses and coping strategies to tragedies can vary gravely. Recognizing the signs of distress, acute distress disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder and helping students to successfully navigate their thoughts and feelings is essential for them to process, to mourn, and to move forward.

I want to thank the members who put this motion forward. In health care, we have so many unsung heroes. People everyday quietly come alongside people who are hurting, people who are struggling, and provide them with the care and the support they so importantly need.

In times of tragedy their work is vital. Sometimes we don't know what to say, but thankfully we have teams of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and occupational therapists who all work

together to offer a variety of programming and supports for such traumatic distress.

We have professionals who took the time to go to Montague, to go to Belfast and to talk with the staff and the students; to not only listen and to be a shoulder to cry on, but to offer support and guidance and when necessary referrals were added mental health supports, were to become available.

Health PEI invest in training staff in mental health and addiction services. They offer evidence-based programs such as Seeking Safety and Trauma Inform Reproach, just to name a few. Health PEI has developed an internal critical incident stress management team and about 25 staff across the mental health system have been trained in this approach and are ready to step up when a critical incident occurs.

I want to thank our student well-being teams, our mental health professionals – counselors, physiologists, our nurses and social workers – and all of those who come alongside Islanders in support when involved in traumatic events.

Thank you again for putting this motion forward, to the two members; and recognizing the outstanding work of all of these Island professionals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Next speaking to this motion, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the member from Montague for bringing this issue forward, it's a pretty touching subject, especially when you are on both sides of it. When you are a member of the community and you lose a young one in your community – especially when your community is really small and everybody knows everybody.

I don't say this to brag, but I was at lots of car accidents, or lots of collisions or fires or suicides with kids involved. When you are a first responder and have to deal with that in your own community, it's a tough situation. I was in the fire services now for 38 years, and I don't think there is one collision or incident that I can't name; whether it be a

child or an adult or multiple people. When you're on scene it's tough because small communities, especially with social media, news travels fast. Family gets on the scene, and rightfully so – you know, that's the first people that are going to arrive on the scene – the loved ones.

You are trying to do your job, and trying to calm families down. When you get family members and you have to go and break the news to them, and they fall to their knees in front of you – you have to deal with that. My heart and sympathy goes out to any family that lost a family member; not only today, but in the past. And to all first responders who have to deal with these situations, my sympathy goes out to them and their family. What these first responders see, we can't imagine – and gratefully that we have them – grateful that we have them.

It's like the old saying goes is when, as me in the fire service when people are running out of the house, we're running in. You do what you can, with what you got – you do the best you can.

One thing about living in a small province like Prince Edward Island, is everybody comes together to help a family, a loved one. They get those great resources today, to help; even firefighters, there is resources there to help the firefighter through a situation; trauma.

The schools are great to deal with these situations. They'll shut a school down, or multiple schools shut down to help the grieving family, or to help the grieving students. There is great help in our schools, also.

So –

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, the hour has been called.

This House will reconvene this evening at 7:00 p.m.

**The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** You may be seated.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the fourth 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, in Committee.

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

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

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

And I'll ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the deputy speaker to come and share this 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:** Thank you.

Permission to being strangers on the floor? We'll allow them to come in and get set up.

Good evening, could you both introduce yourselves and your titles for the record.

**Anne Partridge:** Good evening, I'm Anne Partridge; I'm the Executive Director of Post-Secondary Education with the Department of Workforce and Advance Learning.

**Dr. Wendy Verhoek- Oftedahl:** I'm Wendy Verhoek- Oftedahl, the Family Violence Prevention and Community Development Coordinator, based in the Department of Family and Human Services.

**Chair:** Welcome to the table.

Minister, do you have an opening statement?

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yes, I'd just like to say a few things if I could. Last week, the Third Party made a request to make some amendments to the bill and they were willing to share these amendments with us. We were able to consult with the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, Family Violence and Protection Victim Services, as well as our institutions.

We had a few changes we felt were necessary for administering the act and we are happy to see them accepted. I thank them for sharing these in advance, as it helped us move this bill forward overall, and I'm proud of how many people were willing to work together on this bill to get to where we are today.

Again, I would like to personally thank Taya Nabuurs, the VP academic and external at UPEI Student Union, Emma Drake for continuing Taya's work, and Paxton Caseley and 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 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 demonstrate leadership on this important issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Chair:** I have a question from Member from Georgetown-St. Peters off the top.

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

I'm just wondering how soon after this bill comes into force will post-secondary institutes be required to have a policy in place?

**Mr. Gallant:** How soon?

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**Mr. Gallant:** We have to do the regulations after we pass the bill, so it could be to get the groups together again and go through it – and the students and have their input. It could be probably six months.

**Anne Partridge:** Yeah, we were aiming to have that for the academic year beginning (Indistinct)

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

**Chair:** Okay, good.

Hon. members, is it the wish that I read clause by clause?

**Ms. Biggar:** No.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I'd just like to respond to what the minister said before we get going here. I so appreciate the time that was taken after our request the other day to come back and give us an opportunity to fully look at this bill to bring forward some amendments, and for that discussion to be very collaborative, very positive.

I particularly want to thank a couple of people. I know Emma Drake is here with us in the gallery today, thank you Emma for your work on this and your input. And through Emma and others – past and present students at the University of PEI – Nathan Hood in our office was the one who did the real leg work here in preparing these amendments; I really appreciate that. Also in your own department, minister, Brad Colwill, the acting deputy minister who spent a lot of time going back and forth with our office on these amendments.

It was a process, as it should be, and I really appreciate your openness to our suggestions and the fact that we're here tonight with what I imagine will be a very strong bill that will get the support of all corners of this House.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Hon. member's –

Oh, the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy has a question.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, and Leader of the Third Party, and the opposition, I'm glad to see that we could come upon agreement with amendments that would ensure this has its rightful meaningful legislation in place.

Madam Chair, I was just thinking since each section has some amendments in it, perhaps we could read it section by section, if I might suggest.

**Chair:** That's exactly what we were going to do.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Gallant:** Let's have recognition of guest.

**Chair:** Sure, minister.

#### Recognition of Guests (II)

**Mr. Gallant:** I didn't see Emma Drake come in and I'd certainly like to welcome you here this evening. Thank you for all your hard work on this.

I'd also like to thank the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and Status of Women and the Minister of Family and Human Services for their input, we'd met a couple of times this week on this and it was a good collaborative effort

Thank you, everyone.

**Chair:** All right now that we've got – Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct) before that, do we have any plan for education as soon as this bill is passed?

Do we have an education plan to roll it out?

**Mr. Gallant:** Well all the stakeholders that were part of the bill will get together again to discuss the regulations, to form the regulations.

**Mr. Fox:** That's fine, that's great, but can we also – is there an education part of it that we're working on?

**Mr. Gallant:** When it's all rolled out there will be yes.

**Anne Partridge:** Yes, and there's provision for that in the legislation and the regulations around the training for folks on the actual policy.

**Chair:** All right, we'll set the stage.

I think what I'm going to do is I'll read a section and we'll carry that section. I know there is a number of amendments so if I come to a section that there is an amendment could somebody just indicate that and whoever is making that amendment will look after the amendment and then we will deal with it then.

Section 1

Definitions

Shall this section carry?

We have a question from the Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** This is the first section in which we have an amendment, Chair. I believe that the clerks have copies for all members of the House of all the amendments.

I don't know if you want to –

**An Hon. Member:** I don't have it on me.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah we can hand them all out.

All of the amendments now is that–

**Chair:** Would it be more organized to just do them one at a time –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay.

**Chair:** – or do you want to have them all at once? –

**An Hon. Member:** All at once.

**Ms. Casey:** I've been advised that the first set of amendments will go around and then they'll follow with the second set. They'll all get to you, they'll all get to you but – perfect.

The Leader of the Third Party would you like to speak to the amendment to section 1?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Sure absolutely, thank you Chair.

The amendment that we have brought forward expands the – sorry, I've got too many bits of paper here – it's an amendment to section 1 sub (b), clause (1) (b) and it's an addition basically but as it is currently written and 1(b) ends: and sexual exploitation.

So, we would delete those three words and it would become:

“sexual exploitation and the distribution of a sexually explicit photograph or video of a person to one or more person other than the person in the photograph or video without the consent of the person in the photograph or video, that caused distress to the person in the photograph or video”.

So, it's making very explicit that that is one form of sexual violence and I think we're all familiar with the case in Nova Scotia last year where a young woman took her life exactly because of that.

We wanted that to be explicitly in there as a form of sexual violence.

**Chair:** Minister.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Existing definitions in subsection 1(b) is not intended to be an exhaustive list and your proposed changes to the definition would be included given our current language and it

includes – but is not limited to. We are however, agreeable to include a distribution of a sexually exploitive photograph or video as an example of sexual violence. So we're prepared to –

**Chair:** Would anyone else like to speak to the amendment?

Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Do we limit ourselves when we say just a photograph or video? Should we be communicating other forms of communication as far as text or?

**Mr. Gallant:** Our guest could answer that, hon. member.

**Anne Partridge:** I can speak to that.

I think we would refer back to our original definition. We were ensured that it wasn't an exhaustive list and we have and is not limited to, I think we're just adding some more clarity around that.

But if there's something else to come forward that would be considered.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Okay thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

My question may be very similar but does the new definition change the old definition that we had of 'and sexual exploitation' or does it just kind of put a finer point on it?

**Anne Partridge:** It just adds to it. It just puts a finer point on it.

**Chair:** Before I go back to you Minister of Economic Development and Tourism if I could request that Anne and Dr. Wendy, if you could just say your name before you speak just until we can figure out – for the sound people who's doing this, thanks.

Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Yeah, I'm good, thanks.

**Chair:** Would anyone else like to speak to the amendment?

Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thanks, Chair.

I think that any clarity that can be given in the legislation of sexual violence and that that definition is good, as long as we keep in there: 'that includes but is not limited to'. If we add to that, I don't have a problem with that and I'd support the amendment.

**Chair:** Would anyone else like to speak to the amendment?

Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**Chair:** All those in favour of the amendment signify by saying 'aye'.

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye"

**Chair:** Contrary minded, 'nay'.

The amendment is carried.

Shall the section carry as amended?

Carried.

Section 2

I don't see any amendments to section 2, is there?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** No, but I just have a –

**Chair:** You'd like questions, sure.

Section 2 application.

Hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

This is where the act specifies the post-secondary institutions that it would cover and I see that we have UPEI in there and Holland College and L'Île-du-Prince-Édouard and Collège de l'Île. but I don't see Maritime Christian College specifically mentioned there.

I know the last sub is a post-secondary institution designated in the regulations, but I was wondering since Maritime Christian College is one of only two degree conferring institutions on the Island, why that's not there.

**Mr. Gallant:** So these three post-secondary institutions are publicly funded, that one that you mentioned is not so that's why they weren't included in this. That's not to say they couldn't be included down the road in the regulations but for this part of the legislation, these are the three publicly funded post-secondary institutions.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I'm assuming though that you imagine that people who go to a privately funded institution are just as worthy of protection from sexual violence as others, so is there a reason why we wouldn't include them at this stage?

**Anne Partridge:** At this stage we did include just the publicly funded institutions for the reason that the minister has indicated. We can include them at a later time; we recently made changes to the freedom of information act and just included the publicly funded institutions as well, so we're trying to be consistent in terms of the application and how it works.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks and just on the FOIPP that you just brought up then, will the inclusion of PSE institutions under FOIPP affect the execution of this legislation in any way?

**Anne Partridge:** No, it should follow in line with that as well.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** That's fine.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Shall section 2 carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

I guess a question or intervention from the Leader of the Third Party on the

amendments. I guess just a clarification on how they're reviewed.

I know we passed the first amendment but I still keep going back to it and the specifics of it and I don't know the legalities of it and I'm certainly not a lawyer, but even exploiting someone sexually – even if you give them permission to say: share a video, or share a photo, they still can be sexually exploited even with permission and I know this one says: as long as you've given consent it's okay but you could still be exploited even given consent.

I'm just wondering the process of how they were vetted and is the legislative office okay with this stuff?

To me, that adding (Indistinct), these specific words I wouldn't want to be able to get away with something.

**Chair:** Leader of the Third Party, did you have an intervention or Anne did you have an intervention?

Who were you directing the question to?

**Mr. MacEwen:** I was looking for an intervention from the Leader of the Third Party.

**Chair:** Thanks, Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Sure, the process by which we came to this amendment was we looked at equivalent legislation and there were a number of jurisdictions in Canada with equivalent legislation and this actually is adapted from the Manitoba legislation almost word for word.

BC is also very similar if I remember, oh no this is the BC –

**Anne Partridge:** It's the British Columbia –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Right, I'm sorry hon. member, it was BC, not Manitoba.

So it's almost verbatim, I think, out of the BC. There's no novel legislative work here, it's mostly adaptations from other jurisdictions.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** So to what the Leader of the Third Party just said; did PEI Legislative Counsel draft these and make these up when they signed off on it?

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah, and indeed that was the reason for my original call for a delay and debate here because the amendments that we had suggested through our review of our jurisdictional scan of other legislation were actually on the desk of Legislative Counsel at the time. They just hadn't had time to print them.

Yeah, these have all gone through Legislative Counsel, and with approval, and the minister's department I should say.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, we're at Section 3, and I do understand that there is an amendment to Section 3.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

Yes, there's a fairly substantial amendment to Section 3. Again, the clerks will have a copy of this.

**Chair:** I think everybody – it's been circulated.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Do you want me to read it or do you want to read it?

**Chair:** I can read it, thanks.

Hon. member, I've been advised that it's up to you to read it.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Okay, I'll be delighted to do so.

**Chair:** Thanks.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I move that in Section 3(1) of Bill 41 is amended by the deletion of clauses (b) to (d), and the substitution of the following:

(b) raises awareness of sexual violence, including sexual violence through the use of

social media or other forms of digital communications;

(c) addresses issues related to consent with respect to persons engaging in sexual activities;

(d) includes provisions respecting the prevention and reporting of incidents of sexual violence;

(e) addresses training on the issues of sexual violence;

(f) establishes complaint procedures and response protocols for incidents and complaints of sexual violence and includes the elements specified in the regulations relating to the process;

(g) addresses any other topics, and includes any other elements required by the regulations, and

(h) otherwise complies with the requirements set out in the regulations.

(2) Section 3 of the bill is amended by addition of the following after subsection (2): culturally sensitive.

(3) A post-secondary institution shall ensure that its sexual violence policy is culturally sensitive and reflects the perspectives of those most vulnerable to sexual violence.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Minister?

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There's kind of like two amendments here in a row. So, the first one we had intended that these additional requirements like awareness, activities, and training would be addressed in our regulations, and we do see the merit in including our requirements in the legislation. So we're okay with that.

Then on the cultural part of it, this is important commitment and we do agree that it should be included in the legislation so we're okay with that.

**Chair:** Okay, would anybody else like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

Specifically to the section on cultural sensitivity and some of the comments from colleagues, we have seen firsthand the challenges of people who have not been given cultural sensitivity training and how that can impact the treatment of those victims of sexual violence in terms in the way that they're handled or treated and the comments that may come out that demonstrate that insensitivity.

And it's something that relates to our motion that we had earlier this week, sexual violence is an issue that specifically and disproportionately affects people from vulnerable populations, particularly those from the LGBT2SQT – if I can remember all of these – community and those with disabilities. So, the cultural sensitivity aspect of this is really critical.

It's not only sort in terms of where we are now, but also looking forward as more and more we need to be mindful of different choices that people are making. With the opportunity to open the legislation in this space and make that amendment now, is we're future-proofing this legislation to sort of adapt as our cultural norms change and adapt as well, and not leave people behind to have to advocate for themselves later on. It's showing that that responsibility is there.

We're really appreciative that this has been recognized as being important, but also reflect that that sensitivity training has to be part of the training programs and the awareness programs that are delivered in the first section of this clause about the education and delivery because, again, we can't assume. That's the key piece in that.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** First a comment which is to recognize the importance of the initiative, and the complex work, the sensitive work that's involved in putting together this bill and the amendments, and in

due course policies and the programs to ensure that those policies have effect. That is where this ultimately leads.

I link that comment to an observation – a favourable one – about the amended clause 3, which now has paragraphs or subclauses (b), (c), (d), and (e). All of which are about learning and proactive initiative that is alert to all of the sensitivities and the, I'll say, biases or the hidden issues that come with dealing with this. This is ultimately changing culture.

I really am endorsing and appreciate the way the bill includes, with this clause being prime evidence, recognizes that we're dealing with learning institutions, we're dealing with young people or with people of all ages who recognize that there's lots more to learn. And then the complaint aspect arrives after we get through these several layers of learning and I say the hope, but it's more than the hope I think, it's a well-known that the complaint part will be minor, will be the exception the learning must be universal.

So I congratulate everybody who's had a hand in this. We had a go at it in, I think it might have been 2007, and if you went back and looked at that policy compared to what people are doing today you would realize this is a moving process. It's evolving and it's all about learning.

I have one minor comment about the amendment, and it's about the heading of subclause 3. Those typically come out as nouns, and indeed the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale used the language of cultural sensitivity. I'm wondering if 'cultural sensitivity' might be better in the place of 'culturally sensitive' in that heading of that subclause when we sort of look at how we generally try to use a noun? If you're okay with that for the amendment?

**Chair:** Thank you, Premier.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Premier.

That's a very helpful observation in term of the norms of constructing. Leg council might want to pick that up, but it makes sense that if that would be more in keeping with the norms, then we would be comfortable with a friendly amendment to make that amendment.

**Chair:** Sure, and do you want to make that friendly amendment.

**Ms. Bell:** Chair, I so move that that friendly amendment be accepted as presented by the Premier.

**Chair:** Everybody understands that, and is everybody okay with the friendly amendment?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Thank you.

Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**Chair:** All those in favour of the amendment, signified by saying 'aye'.

**An Hon. Member:** Aye!

**Chair:** Contrary minded, 'nay'.

Shall the section carry as amended? Carried.

Thank you.

We'll move on to Section 4, implementation of policy.

I do understand that there is an amendment to this section, as well. Are there two amendments – Two amendments to this section.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

Chair, I would like to move the first amendment which is Section 4.1 on accommodations.

**Chair:** Can you read it please?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I can.

I move that Bill 41, amended by the addition of the following after Section 4.1 accommodation:

Every post-secondary institution shall appropriately accommodate the needs of students enrolled at the post-secondary institution who are affected by sexual violence.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Minister?

**Mr. Gallant:** We're okay with the first part of that, and then the second part I'd just like to make a comment that we had intended that this issue of appropriate accommodation for the students affected by sexual violence would be addressed in our regulations and we do see the narrative of including this important statement principle in the legislation.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I appreciate that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Chair.

I'm just wondering about the definition of 'accommodate'.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Chair, maybe the best way to answer that is by using a couple of examples.

Let's imagine there's an incident the night before an exam at the university and an accommodation in that respect would be for that particular student to have their exams moved to another date.

Another example might be a person who is the victim of a sexual assault who lives in residence and the accused or the perpetrator also lives in that residence, and so moving one or others – it would typically be the perpetrator, of course, from that building in order to – that's the sort of accommodation we're talking about here.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

I'm just wondering – and I understand what you're saying and I agree with that. But, I'm wondering about the broad sense of the word 'accommodate' and could that be taken in any other way?

**Anne Partridge:** I think – a couple of things.

I see this really as a statement or a commitment about that accommodation is paramount and something that would be considered. There is language, as well, further on in the regulation-making powers under section seven. We do talk about appropriate support services and accommodation, meaning through the regulation-making process there would be some further discussion about some of these particular examples, and more detail would be flushed out at that time.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct)

**Anne Partridge:** Yes.

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

**Chair:** Any further questions on the amendment?

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Minister, I think I'm correct that you and the Third Party had discussed these amendments prior to coming in and reviewed them together. As the minister, with the number of consultations you had throughout the spring, summer, fall leading up to this, are you comfortable with the amendments that they, I guess so to speak, signing off on them here without having to go back to consultation with those groups again?

**Mr. Gallant:** We are going to go back with these groups once the legislation is passed for the regulation part of it, but some of these amendments we're making, we thought they would be in the regulations, that that's where they would come. This is the framework and the legislation comes second.

But, we saw no problem with putting them in now once they made the amendments and we discussed it.

**Anne Partridge:** If I could just make an additional comment, a lot of the amendments that have come forward were actual things that we heard during the consultations during the summer, so we just feel it further enhances what the legislation – the final piece of legislation.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Yeah, I guess that's – even my previous question was kind of what I was going on – I'm not privy to seeing them ahead of time, but that's what it feels like too. We're getting down into the details, hence regulations, and when we started talking about the institution shall appropriately accommodate, normally you would think: Okay, we better run this by the institutions to make sure we're okay with it and all that kind of stuff too.

If you guys are okay with it, I am too. And you say (Indistinct) ready to address them in the regulations anyway.

Thank you, Chair.

**Anne Partridge:** Thank you.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Are you ready for the question on the first amendment to section four?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**Chair:** All those in favour of the amendment, signify by saying 'aye'.

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Chair:** Contrary minded, 'nay'.

Shall the section carry as amended? Carried.

We have another – maybe I was premature in saying that because there is now a second one so we'll withdraw that.

We have a second amendment to section four.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

This amendment to section 4 subsection 2.

I move that subsection 4(2) of Bill No. 41 is amended by the addition of the words ‘and shall provide a copy of the policy to a person upon request’ after the words ‘of the post-secondary institution’.

That’s a very simple request that, as it states, that anybody who goes into the office and would like to have a copy of the policy, that it be available to them. It just wasn’t specified.

**Mr. Gallant:** We were okay with that as well.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Ready for the question on the second amendment to section 4?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**Chair:** All those in favour of the second amendment to section 4, signify by saying ‘aye’.

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Chair:** Contrary minded, ‘nay’.

Now, shall the section 4 carry as amended?

Carried.

We’ll move on to section 5.

I’m not seeing any amendments to section 5.

Shall the section carry?

**Mr. Myers:** Question.

**Chair:** You have a question on section 5?

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Just wondering, who will be on the review committee?

**Anne Partridge:** Member, I just want to confirm, do you mean in reference to 5(a) 1(b) ‘when directed to do so by the minister’?

**Mr. Myers:** Yes.

**Anne Partridge:** Yes, that has not been determined yet.

What we would need to do is finish with drafting the regulation-making policy and look at what would be included there and that would be a decision that would be made at the department level with advice to the minister on what would be appropriate.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

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

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

Seeing as we’re foregoing a lot of the regulations tonight by putting it right in the act, I’m wondering if we shouldn’t be making an amendment here to make sure there’s an equal representation of the student body on that committee.

**Mr. Gallant:** We had a strong indication that they wanted to be involved more and we had anticipated that that would happen on that committee. Would that be correct, on that committee?

**Anne Partridge:** I think, if I’m understanding the question, this really relates to the minister being asked to review a determination made by the minister at the departmental level.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

There’s no collective? It’s just you?

**Anne Partridge:** It would be the minister, like other legislation that says it’s to be set to be reviewed by the minister that we would look at what would be appropriate and what that would look like.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

**Chair:** Are you good, hon. member?

The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Chair, on the question of student participation or, for that matter, the makeup of the group that would undertake the review, we have already adopted 3(2), which through the bill, it not only endorses, but requires student input.

Then when you step out, I think that response to the question that's being raised more generally, I think we should bear in mind that – and I'm not raising this as a constitutional issue, more as a comment about how things get done – in, whether it's the universities or the college, they as independent institutions have a long record of collaborative governance, I'll call it, with it being long past the day when students, faculty, staff, experts from outside, if appropriate, would be in the normal course included in whatever review would take place, but the student input one in particular is indeed addressed here.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Picking up on what the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters said: the post-secondary institutions shall review its sexual violence policy, which I have no great concern on the face of it.

However, I'm wondering if there shouldn't be a friendly amendment in there saying that: a post-secondary institution shall review the sexual violence policy in consultation with the student body or a member of the student body, or a member of the –

**Ms. Biggar:** Chair?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) asked a question and I could be wrong; is that not already covered in 3(2)? It says they have to –

**Mr. Fox:** We're talking about (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** I understand what the – I understand.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** It does say every time the policy is reviewed.

**Ms. Biggar:** It says every time the policy is reviewed.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** I would like to make a friendly amendment that para 5, sub-para (1), is amended: A post-secondary institution shall review its sexual violence policy in consultation with the student body of the institution.

**Mr. Gallant:** It's already there, though, hon. member.

**Anne Partridge:** I think to the minister's point, if I could just comment, that it is there under the 3(2) which talks about the student input not only in the development of the policy but also every time the policy is reviewed or amended so they would be part of that process at the post-secondary institution, would be expected to go through every three years as a minimum requirement as set out in the legislation in this section.

**Chair:** You okay?

**Mr. Fox:** I'm okay.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** So now that section 4 has been amended to include 4.1 about accommodation – which, because it's in a separate section, 4.1, it's not really part of sexual violence policy – I was wondering if there needs to be any review done as well about whether the needs of students who are affected by sexual violence is being appropriately accommodated or is that covered under the sexual violence policy?

The way that amendment was made in 4.1 makes me think that's outside of the policy now; and it seems to me that that means that should be reviewed as well. I share some of the same concerns that were echoed when this amendment was adopted, that the term

'shall appropriately accommodate' is very wide open.

So hopefully, there would be policy underneath that that would be giving direction or there would be regulations giving direction. Maybe you can speak to that.

**Anne Partridge:** I would refer you specifically to section 7, subsection (e).

I know we haven't got there yet, but that speaks to exactly what your concern is, is that there would be regulations that would be looking at appropriate support services and accommodations. So some of those details around what that could look like would be part of the regulation-making process. It wouldn't be left as broad.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Sorry, what subsection in 7?

**Anne Partridge:** Sorry, subsection (e).

**Mr. Trivers:** E?

**Ms. Biggar:** Seven (e) (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Keep getting help from her (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, I see. So accommodation is referenced there specifically?

**Anne Partridge:** Yes, we had that initially. Yes.

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

**Anne Partridge:** You're welcome.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall section 5 carry? Carried.

Section 6, and I do understand there is an amendment to this section.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that subsection 6(2) of Bill No. 41 is deleted and the following substituted:

Report to governing body – a noun, nice.

(2) Each year, the president of a post-secondary institution shall report to the governing body on the implementation of the post-secondary institution's sexual violence policy and the report shall include

(a) the number of time supports, services and accommodation relating to sexual violence are requested and obtained by students enrolled at the post-secondary institution and information about the support services and accommodation;

(b) any initiatives and programs established by the post-secondary institution to promote awareness of the supports and services available to students;

(c) the number of incidents and complaints of sexual violence reported by students and information about such incidents and complaints; and

(d) the implementation and effectiveness of the policy.

Chair, the amendment does two things. It gives greater clarity to what the institutions have to report to their governing bodies, and it also provides a level of consistency in reporting across institutions.

**Chair:** Minister?

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We did have some concerns on this, too, about the level of detail that could be provided. Unintentionally when language is used, like information about the supports and the services and accommodations as well. It could potentially self-identify individuals. So, as a result, we will bring forward an amendment to add a new clause under section 7 below. Okay?

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

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

So with this amendment it seems that again it puts more of a finer point on that particular section. Is that correct?

**Mr. Gallant:** Yes.

**Mr. Palmer:** So with this example, again, would those things be things that are normally covered in regulations? So it's things that were already going to happen but just happened to get put into legislation instead of regulations?

**Anne Partridge:** If you look at the jurisdiction across the country on the issue, it is divided. Some other provinces do actually have this specifically in the legislation. Others do have it in regulation. Initially when we drafted the legislation, we made it about the report and that the report was to the governing body. We didn't get into the specific detail.

What the amendment really does is just provide some direction around what that report should include, and to the minister's point, we're just going to kind of tighten that up a little bit when we talk about the new amendment in section 7; but overall we think it's fine.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. Palmer:** Thank you for that.

Either way, whether it's in legislation or regulations, it still would be the same at the end as far as how it's applied?

**Anne Partridge:** How it's applied and enforced, exactly.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay, all right.

Thanks, Chair.

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

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

I still have concerns with this section that weren't necessarily addressed with this amendment. I'm wondering who is being reported to? Now we have a report that has

more detail, which I think is fantastic, but who is seeing it?

**Anne Partridge:** The report is actually going to the applicable governing body which is identified in section 6(1). For example, the University of Prince Edward Island does have a board of governors so it would go to that governing body. Holland College has a board of governors as well, so it would go to that governing body.

So this is very specific as to who that report goes to, and just as a point of reference, the department, through our division, actually myself as the executive director, is on two of those three governing bodies, so would be sitting in and listening to what the actual update is, but it is to go to the institution.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm wondering why there's no provision for this to be made public, or even the student union doesn't have access to this. I would think, if nothing else, the student union would have a direct concern about what would be in this report, particularly if it wasn't a good report towards the institution. Even the public at large, because they are publicly-funded institutions.

**Anne Partridge:** A couple of points: The first one I would make is that in all three of those governing bodies there is student representation. In effect, the student union would have representatives on those particular bodies if there were any issues of concern so they would be made aware.

In terms of the second comment, I think it goes back to the piece that we've included around identifying information and it being a very small province and around this not being something that necessarily should be made public; that it should be kept with the governing body, and that was the discussion that we did have around that report.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

Well, I'm definitely not an expert on the topic but I know it's something that needs to be addressed and we should be trying to make it not happen or happen less anymore. I think that we need a lot more public engagement to ensure – if we're tracking information, there should be some sort of public report so that the public knows.

Maybe it doesn't have to be a detailed report, it goes to the board of governors, but there should be some public report to the people. If there's a lot, people should be outraged and they should be demanding that there are changes or they should be demanding more from their publicly-funded education institutions. There has to be a way that we can ensure that the public is also informed and protect the identity of people that are involved.

**Chair:** Dr. Wendy has an intervention.

**Mr. Myers:** Sure.

**Dr. Wendy Verhoek-Oftedahl:** Thank you.

One of the discussions that we had around reporting of the use of services is that it's for a public reporting purpose. The intent is for the survivor of sexual violence to be really empowered to be making decisions. So we provide a range of supports to the student, and it's up to the student to decide which supports they feel that would meet their needs.

In addition to campus supports, we provide information on community supports as well. The measures of the supports that students are accessing at a campus, that isn't necessarily a reflection of – it's partly the choice of the student in terms of the types of accommodations or other services they choose to access and whether or not they choose to access them on the campus or off.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

I do appreciate the work that's being done, so it's by no way discounting – you're at the micro-level and I think I'm at the macro-level; we're different. What I'm saying is that this is a problem that we have in society and these are publicly funded institutes, and if we're going to properly address them, we have to have open conversation about them. We can't be scared to say that stuff is happening and it needs to be fixed; we can't be scared to have outrage from the public because these things happen – maybe that's the way to fix it.

Like I say, I'm not an expert on it, so with all due respect the things that you do on the individual level is fantastic, and continue doing that. But, we need everyone on our side; we need everyone trying to stop this, so it's almost like a public campaign. You have an opportunity once a year when these reports come out to say: we're hopefully getting better year after year, and hopefully the public is saying: this isn't acceptable and we don't want this to happen.

All I'm saying is that there is a chance here to take this as a broader (Indistinct) at the end of it.

**Dr. Wendy Verhoek- Oftedahl:** The intent wasn't to bring it to a micro-level as much as develop an understanding that whether there's an increase or decrease in any given year, isn't necessarily reflective of how well we're doing.

We know that according to Statistics Canada, only about one in 10 sexual assaults are reported. So, if we have an increase in the numbers of persons coming forward, it's very difficult to tell whether that would be an increase or a decrease and we know, as an example, the most recent Statics Canada report on police reporting, literally looked at reports prior to the Me Too Movement and after. It is a larger caution in terms of what these statistics actually mean and what they are informing.

**Mr. Myers:** Just one more.

**Chair:** Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thanks, Chair.

I just want to say one more, because I definitely support the bill and I'm not here to argue about it, but I do think you're making my point for me, and if we can make it more normal to report these things, then we help.

**Dr. Wendy Verhoek- Oftedahl:** Yes.

**Mr. Myers:** If we keep demonizing the victim, or making them hide, or making them feel ashamed that they did something wrong, we are as guilty as anyone in this whole process. So, if we have an opportunity to open the doors on the data

and show – you know, it's okay if this happens, it's not your fault that this happened to you, and you should report it.

We should be extremely supportive and I know you are. Society as a whole should have a chance to say: this is wrong and we're against it – and they are against it, but I just think that we need to do as much as we can to open everyone's eyes to this issue. And that's all I'll say; I support what you're doing, I support the bill, but I'm also supportive of bringing this to zero, which I know it may sound like its possible, but maybe it's not.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Myers:** I'll leave it at that.

**Chair:** Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

My question is about the definition of Governing body, which is in 6(1). Do you want me to hold that until we're done debating the amendment, or?

**Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Trivers:** Because I can do that.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Premier, you had a comment?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Really to pick up on the comment by the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters and to agree with the spirit that this annual reporting should be done in a way that adds to both public awareness and institutional accountability. To make the comment that when, in the world of the post-secondary institutions, there is a report to the Governing body, in each case to the respective Board of Governors; that would be more or less the equivalent of us having a report that's to the Legislature, for example, if the Auditor General give a report to the Speaker, and we well understand that it's going to keep going in a much more public way. In the world of those institutions when it's said: shall report to the Governing body, it's really meant that it's a report that's to be public.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thanks.

I appreciate the comments from the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and I just wanted to say that I think it was the second amendment that we brought forward on subsection three was designed to exactly deal with that about raising awareness.

The word prevention was not actually included in the bill in its original form. The amendment we brought forward about raising awareness, issues related to consent, prevention, and training on issues of sexual violence. That was all in an effort to do exactly what you're saying, that we need to do more than just report what happens, but we need to be proactive and prevent this in the first place. I appreciate you bringing that up.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just following up on the conversation about reports that come in while you're a student; the report itself may not have happened on campus but the student, because they're in that institution, may be in a position where they finally, as was mentioned, are comfortable to come forward. It may have been a childhood, it may have been off-campus, but within the institution itself, because the supports are in place or the policy is in place. It may be if you all of a sudden have an influx of reports, could look as if the institution is all of a sudden rampant with sexual violence, if you know what I mean.

The fact that you may have a spike in reports may be not always reflected of a larger issue at the institution, but with these insuring that when a student on campus does come forward, that those pieces are in place. I guess I'm just adding to the conversation that this is why this piece is here. In terms of reporting, when you look at that report in the public eye, it may seem, as was noted, it could be at controlling. I don't know if Dr.

Wendy or Anne, if you want to – or perhaps, comment on that?

**Anne Partridge:** I think the legislation is a really good first step and there will be regulations developed and folks are going to have to develop a policy and that will generate an awareness around all of this, and it will set up a framework that will hopefully help bring forward some of the other issues that we've been talking about. Reviewing it and implementing it can only lead to good things, hopefully going forward.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes, okay.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, I know you had a question outside the amendments, so we're going to deal with the amendments and then I will go to you, before we carry this section.

Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes, Chair.

**Chair:** All those in favour of the amendment, signify by saying 'aye'.

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Chair:** Contrary minded, 'nay'.

Then the amendment is carried.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, you had a question on this section as amended.

**Mr. Trivers:** So, in section 6(1), where it defines the 'governing body', of course, it talks about just the three institutions that were name in section 2(1), so it's consistent that way.

And then in section 6(2), it says: if there is another secondary institution, they shall report to the governing body, but it doesn't provide an avenue for defining who the governing body is of any additional post-secondary institutions. It's kind of like it does in section 2(1) (b), a post-secondary institution designated in the regulations.

But, because you've chosen to define the governing bodies here, maybe we need a section 1(d) that says: for a post-secondary institution governing body designated for other governing body at a different post-secondary institution as designated in the regulations.

Because right now, if there's other post-secondary institutions that are added, then there is no place that the governing body is defined. So either you move everything to the regulations, or you have to put that in as well, I would think.

**Anne Partridge:** I'm sorry, I'm just looking for a number of pages because I know there have been a numbers of versions of this but I believe your concern is addressed in section seven, with the regulations, because we do speak in section seven about the situation you spoke of, and that is if we add another institution to be applicable to this from section two.

So to your point, if another institution was added, to be included, we would have to make sure that they then fall in line with the rest of what's here – like the governing body.

I apologize, I'm just looking through – I think it was the very last subsection. Oh, subsection (f), 7(f).

**Ms. Biggar:** Oh, yeah. (Indistinct)

**Anne Partridge:** So what that's essentially saying is that if we do add someone else as we're permitted to do in the actual – in section 2 under the application, then we would need to, if there's anything else we need to do as a result of that, the regulation-making authority gives us the ability to do that. We would ensure that if someone else was at it we wouldn't know what that governing body was until that happens, but that they would then fall into suit with what the legislation requires.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm reading section 7(f) and it seems to be designating other post-secondary institutions to which this act applies. So it's just designating the –

**Anne Partridge:** Yeah, yeah.

**Mr. Trivers:** – post-secondary institutions, not necessarily the governing body. I don't know, it seems to me that there – I think there should be a specific reference to defining the governing body in the regulations, but if you feel comfortable, I'll let it go. I just wanted to raise that. That is concern of mine.

**Anne Partridge:** Okay, thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, shall the section 6 carry as amended? Carried.

We'll now move on to section 7 and I do understand that there is an amendment. Minister, you have an amendment to this section. Could you please read it?

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

This motion amends section 7 of Bill No. 41 by adding a new clause, (e)(1), that provides a specific regulation-making authority related to the report of a governing body under subsection 6(2) and clarifies that the information to be provided in the report shall consist of statistical and other general information.

And the amendment is – I'm sorry – section 7 of Bill No. 41 is amended by the addition of the following after clause (e):

(e)(1) respecting the contents of the report to be provided to the governing body pursuant to subsection 6(2) including but not limited to a requirement that the information to be provided in the report shall consist of statistical and other general information.

**Chair:** Any questions on the amendment?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** So when it comes to regulations, just looking through here, I was wondering what sort of consultation process has to happen. For example, copies of the regulations circulated to members and interest groups, that sort of thing.

**Anne Partridge:** What we envision for the regulation-making process is we would reach out to the same stakeholders that we reached out to in the summer, which were a number of different student groups, obviously, the post-secondary institutions, the community groups, and we would actually speak to them.

We would refer back to the regulation-making authority in the legislation and look to them around the drafting of what the regulations would look like and having them involved in the front-end, if you will. The regulations would then be drafted and then they would be shared so that folks could comment; but our plan is to actually include those groups to go back out and to get their feedback on some of these pieces so that we can have that when we actually draft the regulations.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** So what I'm hearing is you're going to go back to the stakeholder groups, you're going to consult with them, you're going to prepare a draft copy and then you're going to send that out again for people to review and then make final changes and bring it through?

Another question – oh, sorry, did you want to reply to that?

**Anne Partridge:** Yes.

What I was just going to say, just the last part of your comment there, that I think we have to finalize once they go back out whether we would change them again or whether we would just then get the comment based on the feedback and get the feedback then.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I know in other acts we've debated here in the House we wanted to make sure that there was legislation that meant people had to be involved when the regulations were changed as well. Now, I may have missed it, but I wanted to find out if that's something that's legislated here, that when regulations change there are certain groups that have to be notified or

involved, or if that's just expected to be part of just hopefully the due diligence of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

**Anne Partridge:** Yes, you're right, it's not legislated; but it would be our hope that they would be included and be part of the process. That's our plan.

**Mr. Trivers:** And once again there are other acts, for example the *Water Act*, where we were debating here, where we felt the need to legislate that. So you feel comfortable that regulation changes probably wouldn't be made without proper consultation with the stakeholders and you don't need that in the legislation?

**Anne Partridge:** We feel comfortable with that, because this is the process we followed so far and we did indicate that we'd be going back to folks, so we will follow through on that.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

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

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

Earlier when the Leader of the Third Party was making amendments, he made comments that this was going to be in the regulations or that was going to be in the regulations.

Do you have a draft of the regulations already?

**Anne Partridge:** I can answer – no, we don't yet have a draft.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

**Anne Partridge:** We'd need to have the legislation passed first, which speaks to a lot of what the regulations would include in section 7.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay. No, I just – on the basis of the discussion I had heard earlier in the evening it sounded like you knew what was going to, what the regulations were already going to be. So that's all I was really wondering.

When this is all done, are you looking for an agreement from all your consultation groups on the regulations before you move forward with them?

**Anne Partridge:** Yeah, I think that would be our plan.

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

**Chair:** Thank you.

Are you ready for the question on the amendment to section 7?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**Chair:** All those in favor of the amendment, signify by saying 'aye'.

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye.

**Chair:** Contrary minded, 'nay'.

Shall section 7 carry as amended? Carried.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Number 8 – I don't see any amendments to the next two sections, 8 or 9.

Shall section 8 carry? Carried.

Shall section 9 –

**Mr. MacEwen:** Chair.

**Chair:** Oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Chair:** Section 8, yes?

**Mr. MacEwen:** I'm just wondering about consequences for those that break – that don't follow the act.

**Mr. Gallant:** You mean the post-secondary institutions?

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's correct.

**Anne Partridge:** That's a really good question.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you.

**Anne Partridge:** I mean, in terms of us being funders; but again, this is set up in the sense that they would be developed, they would be implemented and they would be reviewed and if there was an issue with that, there's an ability to get the minister review. So if there were issues that things weren't being followed through on, we would definitely be following up directly with the post-secondary institutions.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Is there any other legislation that's out there that would be similar where you would have some sort of a consequence, like with – this isn't like an individual obviously, it's a major partner?

**Anne Partridge:** So the other legislation that exists across the country doesn't – I don't want to say it's punitive, but doesn't specify what would happen if the post-secondary institution didn't follow what was in the legislation. There's no kind of benchmark out there on that.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Guess we'll just have to trust you.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall section 8 carry? Carried.

Section 9

Commencement

Shall section 9 carry? Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

**Ms. Biggar:** Carry the bill.

**Mr. Gallant:** I move the title.

**Chair:** *Post-Secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policies Act.*

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:** Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to with 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 *Post-Secondary Institutions Sexual Violence Policy Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same with 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 the 15<sup>th</sup> order of the day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk Assistant:** Order No. 15, *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 57, ordered for second reading.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by 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 Income Tax Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 57, read a second time.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

] 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.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

[audio malfunction]

**Speaker:** – Jeopardy, Jonathan Greenan, is with us tonight.

[Applause]

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair (McIsaac):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) an overview (Indistinct)

**Chair:** An overview?

Do you want to bring someone on –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah, sure. Yeah, bring someone on.

**Chair:** Can we bring a stranger on the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Share the good news.

Nigel, will you introduce yourself and your title, please?

**Nigel Burns:** Yes.

My name is Nigel Burns, director with the Department of Finance.

**Chair:** Okay, an overview, Mr. minister.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Basically, our budget 2018 basic amount, we raised the basic amount to 500 bringing the total to 8,660. Now we're again raising it by another 500 bringing the total to 9,160 and also raising the business corporation tax – or lowering it by 0.5%.

**Chair:** Okay.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Minister, where did you come up with the number 9,160?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, the previous one was 8,660 and we added 500 to it.

**Mr. Fox:** I'm just wondering why wouldn't you just make it \$9,200 or \$9,300, or why 9,160? I understand you added \$500 to it, but –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think it goes back to I guess – goes back basically for a number of years that we just added by 500 at a time.

**Mr. Fox:** So there's no formula or anything like that?

**Mr. MacDonald:** There's no magic to it.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Any other questions or comments on the bill?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

I do think it is really good to see that you are raising the basic personal tax amount. That's something that we really need to have happen. So thank you for doing that. I know that Islanders will really enjoy that.

But, I wanted to find out, with these changes, how much in the course of a year does that actually amount to for people who are in the, let's say the lowest marginal – or lowest marginal tax bracket? Or even take if you want – take an average tax paid on PEI – the average tax rate. How much would that actually amount in real dollars giving back in the course of a year?

**Mr. Myers:** That's on my blog, Brad.

**Mr. Trivers:** Is it? I don't believe you.

**Nigel Burns:** So, the \$49?

**Mr. Trivers:** So \$49 over the course of a year?

**Nigel Burns:** For the \$500 increase being proposed here, it's another \$49 for the previous –

**Mr. Myers:** Brad, you don't need to do that (Indistinct) you can do that in your head.

**Nigel Burns:** – \$500 that was passed in the spring.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, another question?

**Mr. MacEwen:** He's just doing a little bit of math. Just one second, please, Chair.

**Chair:** Okay.

I'll go – okay, go ahead.

**Mr. Trivers:** I was just going to quickly do the calculations for how much that is a day, and I mean, it is great you raised it, but that's not a huge amount of money on an individual basis.

Did you consider raising it more to get it more in line with the average amounts across Canada? And maybe I should ask: How does it compare with the average amounts across Canada?

**Chair:** Mr. Burns.

**Nigel Burns:** PEI has one of the lower values, but it is rising, so it's catching up.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** What would it take to bring it up to the national average? What is the national average?

**Ms. Biggar:** Chair?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Just to add to your further question too; in 2007 it was at \$7,560 and then it moved to \$7,708 in 2008 and then it was stagnant for three years or until – I should say that – it's stagnant until 2015, where it jumped to \$7,708. \$8,160, and then again what we're into now is \$9,160.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, do you have another question?

**Mr. Trivers:** I didn't get an answer to my question yet, Chair.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We don't have the average. If you have the list there in front of you, you can –

**Mr. Trivers:** I don't have the list, but I wanted to know if you considered moving it up to make us in line with the national average or perhaps even the average in our region of the country and if you did, how much would that actually take out of the government coffers? For example, for every \$1,000 you raised the basic personal tax exemption, how much revenue does the government lose?

**Mr. MacDonald:** \$8.2 million.

**Mr. Trivers:** \$8.2 million? Okay.

So, I'm trying to do the calculation. I would like to know, to bring it in line with the national average, how much money would come out of the government coffers?

**Mr. MacDonald:** We can figure that out. If we knew the national average we would be able to tell you relatively quickly, but it's \$8.2 million that we're saving Islanders.

**Mr. Trivers:** \$8.2 million? Okay.

Thank you.

That's enough for now.

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** (Indistinct) comment, Chair, on – I think we had a discussion along these lines about national averages last week when we had our first motion on the economy.

And we're not trying to do anything average in Prince Edward Island. We're trying to get ahead. And we're trying to get ahead relative to where we've been and Prince Edward Islanders can appreciate it. And they do have money in their pockets. And we've changed – I'm going to ask the finance minister to confirm this – whether this is the fourth or the fifth time that we've moved the basic personal amount in the past three years. It's at least four and it may be now the fifth.

This is, to me, where we need to appreciate what we're doing here. Relative to where that basic personal amount was in 2015, it has changed by 23% or 24%. That's a big change in a short period of time for those of us who are responsible for the revenue side of things in this Legislature and for the Prince Edward Islanders who get to be the beneficiaries of that change in the allowance.

So, I have two questions for the minister or Nigel.

One, if you could confirm if I'm wrong on that 23 or 24% – I think I'm probably not too far off.

Then second, I want to come about to the question about the \$49, because that has to depend on the rate that the taxpayer in question is paying. But my recollection is that when we were talking about moving it \$500 in the spring – and this may not have been correct – but we were saying that was on the order of \$120 for the, I'll say, typical taxpayer.

Can you comment on that?

It seems to me that you're changing the allowance, in effect, changing the taxable income. For the range of taxpayers, you'd be thinking that \$49 doesn't reflect the typical picture.

**Chair:** Mr. Burns.

**Nigel Burns:** The \$120, that might be the amount saved on the energy rebate for a typical family. That was \$120, that's for –

When you have the basic personal exemption for yourself, plus the spousal amount, it does raise it almost – not quite – but almost doubles that value. That might be what you're thinking at the time.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** We're not here filling out tax forms.

I think the big number, most important number for us to focus on here is the amount of revenue that we, in this Legislature, will be leaving with the taxpayers, and the answer is about \$4.1 million for each \$500 for 8.2 is what the minister mentioned the –

Do we have an estimate of the number of taxpayers who, as a result of moving this a further \$500, would end up paying no income tax as a result of that change or the number of people – the second part – the number of people who, as a result of various changes that have been made, no longer pay income tax relative to, say three years ago?

**Nigel Burns:** From the material from the spring, the spring budget, I believe the number is 5,200 Islanders would be no longer paying income tax as a result of those – the accumulative effects of those tax changes.

**Chair:** A question from Borden-Kinkora.

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

I'm wondering, going back to that number of 9,160, and I understand that you raised it to 500 last year. I'm wondering did you consult with anybody if that number was appropriate – what was needed by low-income Islanders or senior citizens, or did you have any consultations on that number?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think everything that we're (Indistinct) in the right direction. We've had great response from the general public, relevant to all the different types of tax relief that we've provided including the electricity.

So I think as far as that goes, I think we have to live within our means, and we have to continue to ensure – and, if we're doing well as an economy and as a province as a whole and we can provide relief in the form of taxes, which I think everybody in this House and right across Prince Edward Island would like to see us to continue, and if we can, we're going to certainly try.

**Chair:** Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** I thought I heard the Premier say something, but I'm not quite sure if I did or not. Did the Premier – or can you clarify – I thought you made a statement that said it was around 8:17 that Islanders have more money in their pockets now.

**Chair:** Premier, do you want to comment on that?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** I'd be glad to.

Starting with the fact that the economy has grown from \$6 billion to \$7 billion, that are 7,000 more fulltime jobs, and then when you get to the individual taxpayer we've moved the basic personal exemption or the basic personal amount four times, if not five, since 2015.

That's very clear that people are earning more and keeping more.

**Chair:** Borden- Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** So you believe then, Mr. Premier, that Islanders have more money in their pocket right now than they did in the spring of 2015?

**Chair:** Mr. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** There are various ways to calculate that, and the best number – I don't have it right in front of me, I do have it in another file – is the regular calculation – and Nigel may have the answer – of what is called total labour income. That number is now about 3.4 billion, I think, on a \$7 billion economy, but maybe Nigel knows what that is. We know that it has increased by – and I can come back tomorrow and give you the precise number – but it has increased by something on the order of \$400 million in the period we're talking about.

**Mr. Fox:** I understand all that Premier, but I want to be clear on this one question. Are you saying that Islanders have more money in their pocket right now today than they did in 2015?

**Chair:** Mr. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** We are – insofar as we are here talking about the basic personal amount when they fill out their income tax form, I have no problem whatsoever in saying that that's the case. The basic personal amount has increased from about \$7,500 to 9,160.

If we pass this – there's no question whatsoever that that's a lot of money left in people's pockets that in earlier days, even going back to when the PCs were in government under Pat Binns, there's a lot more money being left in taxpayers' pockets than was the case then.

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) bit more money.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) filling their pockets.

**Chair:** Order!

Borden-Kinkora has the floor.

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

Mr. Premier, I don't understand how you can say that, because we had a 2.3% raise in Maritime Electric for three years in a row. We had an increase in the HST and then we had another increase in the HST.

I don't understand how you can say that Islanders have more money in their pocket today than they did in 2015 just looking at the increases in Maritime Electric, on the HST, and anything else.

**An Hon. Member:** [Laughter]

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Order!

The minister has a comment. The minister has the floor. I'll put you on the list if you want?

**Mr. R. Brown:** No.

**Chair:** Okay. Minister has the floor then.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Don't put him on the list; he's got nothing to say. He's got nothing to say.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Put you on the list, too.

**Chair:** Minister.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think even if you look at the money that's in circulation, hon. member, right across the province, whether it be retail sales, whether it be housing, whether it be car sales, personal income tax is up 8.2 million over the last year. –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** HST's up.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – I think if you continue to see that, there's obviously more money and you know the 7,000 jobs that the Premier mentioned. I mean those people are working, they're spending money.

The province is doing very well. I think part of this is trying to give it back. I think if we do it and traject in the appropriate direction, hopefully we can do more.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Nigel, how far out do we typically forecast from the provincial treasury as far as budget years?

**Chair:** Mr. Burns.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Actually, I'll answer that if you don't mind.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Sorry.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We'll actually be doing, hopefully, an update tomorrow on our second quarter.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No sorry, minister. I asked how many years we forecast out with our budget.

**Nigel Burns:** In the budget in the spring, there was a three-year plan.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No I – Chair?

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I know what we should see in the budget but what do we actually do in the treasury, how far out do we forecast?

**Nigel Burns:** Three years.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Three years?

So minister why aren't we seeing a multi-year increase schedule or an indexing schedule if we know that far out? What are

we doing on the inside as far as the basic personal exemption and committing to a set schedule rather than what we're doing now?

I'm not saying you're doing it in a potential election year, but just so that future governments wouldn't do something like that.

**Mr. Myers:** Good point.

**Chair:** Nigel, do you want to answer that?

**Nigel Burns:** The revenue forecast would be based on a status-quo policy as understood, where if there were – whatever the tax system is currently or whatever has been committed to, to change it in the future, we would be attempting to build that in to the forecast to the extent that we know that there's changes in the policy, we would.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Thank you, Nigel. I know that's what you would do because you're directed by policy so I'm going to ask the minister.

Is the minister considering policy that would start indexing this or would start saying: We're on a five year plan on this or we'll index it to inflation or we'll do something?

So is there any kind of a move from Executive Council to say: This is going to be our policy going forward, rather than cherry picking the years that we will do this.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think when we had the discussion on the floor I think is relevant to CPI and we looked at what increases, I think it was the Leader of the Opposition –

**Mr. MacEwen:** No don't go back to the former numbers; I know what you're going to do. I'm talking about going forward.

**Mr. MacDonald:** You brought it up –

**Mr. MacEwen:** No you were going to go back a few years and say we had less money and try to use that as a buzz (Indistinct) I'm talking about going forward.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) calm down.

**Mr. MacDonald:** To make it simple, it would be 4.9% where we'd be at today if we used –

**Mr. Myers:** It's okay.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – CPI but we're at 18.8%.

Further to your question –

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's hard to do that, hon. member, the fact is if you saw what Bill Morneau did yesterday, there's going to be another \$24 million coming out of this province based on those tax incentives that the federal government did so it's hard to predict from year to year to year or for three years or four years out, where our economy is going to be.

If we look at what just happened with our potato industry, there's going to be another expense out of this economy so if we had mining and if we had oil and things like that we might be in a position to better predict.

When you have a small diverse economy like we do, it is hard to go out beyond two to three years, at least that's what the economists are telling me.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

So we increased the HST, a consumer tax, to the tune of \$22 million a year or so, between \$20 million to \$25 million to the treasury. We know that's basically going to be each year.

Why can't we base the index, this, going forward off something like that?

We know it's something that your government brought in, we know it's a revenue generator, we know it's going to be there every year, it's a consumer tax so that means the more stuff we buy, the more that we have to pay for it – but we can get that

back as a basic persons exemption so would that not be sound policy?

That's something your government of policy decision you guys did, to bring in that extra \$20 million to \$25 million a year and that could go back as part of this?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think that's why we're here tonight; we're actually giving back so we're giving back so –

**Mr. Trivers:** Giving back \$8.2 million.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

You were saying it's hard to predict going forward in the future and I'm saying that as a government you've made a policy decision to have predictable income, a consumer tax – HST, you've increased it, that's your decision so what we're talking about here is the difficulty to predict the economy going forward.

We know that basic is going to be theirs, so why can't we use that to index future increases to the basic personal tax exemption?

**Nigel Burns:** Each year the government does table a budget and the model that we have is ad hoc inflation. So, as part of the budget, the government will make a decision on what amount if any these parameters will be adjusted.

It could either do something ad hoc or automatic, being automatic it kind of ties her hands, being ad hoc it gets considered every year and an active decision is made.

**Chair:** Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Thank you Nigel, but I'm more interested in the policy decisions so I'm going to ask the minister.

Minister, you know that your government put in this increase in the consumer tax; you know you've got that funding coming every year.

As a policy, will the Executive Council consider indexing the basic personal tax exemption going forward or at least some sort of an increase because you know that you're bringing in that revenue that you created yourself – it's not based on anything else, would you consider a policy decision to start indexing?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think any revenue you take in, you have to look at the big picture as far as what we spend on health care, what we spend on education, what we spend in family and human services and obviously there are more priorities in those areas and certain areas.

We just discussed on infrastructure in schools, we just discussed on a \$32 million increase on the budget in healthcare, there are priorities that we need so predicting or putting in a policy that ties our hands as Nigel said, I don't think we'd be a very sound government in trying to do that.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Just a couple of questions, one of them the Premier had already asked about how many people no longer pay tax because of the change.

Following up on the CPI, there's been times, recently years, that we've had negative so if we tied ourselves to something like that and we are in a negative part of the increases, it wouldn't allow us to do anything else, would it?

I think, I guess I wanted to make that point but further to the consultations, I recall having met with the PEI Senior Citizens Federation back as 2007, I believe it is, have been calling for these exemptions to begin.

Have you had any discussions or any feedback from them on this exemption, minister?

**Mr. MacDonald:** On the senior citizens?

**Ms. Biggar:** I think any time you do – it doesn't matter what part of society you're in, any time you do tax breaks you're looked upon pretty favourably.

I don't think we've heard any negativity whatsoever in reducing the personal income tax or reducing the small business corporation tax and I think it's a good thing to do and when you can do it, you do it.

It gets analyzed on an annual basis and there are priorities in our society that we have to look at. Education is the largest budget we've ever had in education so.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** I know, having recalled seeing recommendations from that group several times so I just wanted to point out the work they've done in lobbying for this as well.

Minister, we have done a number of rebates that being electricity; with our new carbon pricing mechanism that we put in, we have ensured that oil is not going to be taxed; propane; wood. Have you got an overall calculation anywhere of what that actually puts back into Islanders pockets?

**Chair:** Minister?

**Mr. MacDonald:** The reduction in electricity, wood and propane is approximately \$10 million.

**Ms. Biggar:** I think it's more than that.

**Mr. R. Brown:** \$10 million (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** About 20.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** I think I'm okay for now.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

You mentioned that because of this increase there are 5,200 people that are no longer paying income tax.

That means there are 5,200 people that are no longer paying income tax, so that means there are 5,200 people that have that an income that's \$9,160 or less.

That's not a lot of money, of course. I would assume this must cover students and part-timers and all the rest of it, but this is why the basic personal tax amount increase is so important.

I was looking at this and you said it's \$8.2 million for every \$1,000 that you raise out of the government coffers. So if you raise it say \$3,000 to \$12,160, which would be better. We're talking \$24.6 million; everyone can do the math, just to get it out there, though.

So right now, last year, you ran a surplus of – what was it? It was a lot; \$75 million? \$600,000 – was it \$600,000? No, it's \$75 million, that's right; \$75 million.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** So you would think that, either you are trying to raise money to pay down the debt or taxes are too high.

So I wanted to ask you: Do you feel that taxes are too high and we need to give more back? Like, say, by raising the basic personal tax amount to say \$12,160?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think I've heard you say several times about paying down the debt was the most important thing and I think it might have been even on your blog and I've also heard –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** See, he reads it.

**Mr. Trivers:** Actually, that's not on the blog.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I've also heard you say on CBC Radio that paying down the personal exemption would be the appropriate thing to do with any carbon rebates that we get back.

**Mr. Trivers:** Correct.

**Mr. MacDonald:** So, here we are doing it twice in one year and you're still questioning the process.

**Mr. Trivers:** Well (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacDonald:** I agree with you, actually

–

**Mr. Myers:** 50 cents a day – twice in one year is 50 cents a day.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think if we're doing well and we can reduce taxes for Islanders, I'm all for it.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** You almost answered the question.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) parking ticket.

**Mr. Trivers:** In my mind, either you've increased taxes to the point where we've got a \$75 million surplus, right? And either, you're raising that money to pay down the debt, which was a good thing too. We should save \$3 million a year in interest because that money had to go to the debt, pay down the debt, which was good. No one was able to get their hands on it, right, and spend it somewhere else.

But you know you're going to have that money potentially on an ongoing basis, similar to the line of question from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, right?

Raising it an extra \$3,000 a year, the basic personal tax amount, only amounts to \$24.6 million; you've still got a lot of surplus to work with. You can continue to pay down the debt and you can really make a big difference to a huge number of people's lives by meaning they don't have to pay tax, potentially. If 5,200 people are paying less than – or making less than \$9,160, imagine the people are making less than \$12,160.

So my question to you is: Do you think it's better to take the \$24.6 million I'm talking about here and use that to pay down the debt, or is it better to give that back and pay personal tax exemption increase?

**Mr. MacDonald:** What was the question again, sorry?

**Mr. Trivers:** Would you like to – do you think it's better to use money that's, say this \$24.6 million, to increase the basic personal tax amount by an additional \$3,000, or to pay down the debt?

I suppose a third option would be to spend it on services.

**Chair:** Minister?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Minister, do you have an answer?

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think my choice was to provide some relief to taxpayers on PEI –

**Mr. Myers:** Bait, but no nibbles.

**Mr. MacDonald:** – and –

**Mr. Trivers:** 27 cents a day.

**Mr. MacEwen:** What are we putting on it now?

**Mr. Trivers:** 27 cents a day.

**Chair:** Let the minister answer the question.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Mr. MacDonald:** If you don't want the tax break that's fine, but you've already stated that you'd like tax breaks, publicly.

**Mr. Trivers:** Yeah, we need more of it.

**Mr. MacDonald:** And you think you might have even said \$500, so we're doubling it.

**Mr. Trivers:** No, it was way (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Do you have another question?

**Mr. Trivers:** No. He didn't answer my question, Chair.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Is it better to raise basic personal tax amount, pay off the debt or spend the money on services? Because the money is there and I'm just curious to know what your policy is.

**Chair:** Order!

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald has the floor.

Minister, do you have an answer?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think, again, on an annual basis, we did the poverty reduction. We're doing a housing strategy, we've got all kinds of things going on that we have to analyze prior to doing our budgets each and every year.

We seen right through the middle of the year that we're doing very well so we've brought another personal tax exemption to the floor of the Legislature today that we're trying to get passed for Islanders to give them some tax relief and we'll continue to do that. That's our focus.

If we can do that and still provide the services that are required on Prince Edward Island, whether that be mental health, which we have \$100 million facility over five years, these are the types of things that you have to analyze when you're putting your budget together.

So if we can provide tax relief along with providing all those services, then that's what we're going to do.

**Chair:** One more question from the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald and then we're going to the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thanks, Chair.

As I stated before, I just want to make sure for the record that I think it's best to let people decide how they want to spend their money and leave the money in their pocket instead of increasing taxes.

I think taxes are too high. I think that the \$75 million surplus shows that, and unless the strategy is actually to use that and pay down the debt, you should give the money back to the people.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

Earlier this week I had asked about the opportunity to do something like that's been done in Nova Scotia where we see sort of a more structured approach to allocating out exemptions.

I'm a big fan of spread sheets and doing some number crunching and looking at – which my spread sheet has just turned itself off – there are over 60,000 Islanders who are in an income bracket of less than \$35,000, which is pretty much the – depending on how you measure it – low income.

When we have across the board a basic personal tax exemption, those who have really relatively low incomes in that kind of \$15,000 a year or \$20,000 a year are paying effectively a really significant amount of their income in taxes even with the basic tax exemption. And if you earn \$20,000 a year paying out \$800 in taxes, this is an enormous amount of money.

So for those Islanders who are in that kind of really challenging bracket space, has there been any consideration to thinking about a targeted tax exemption and have you ever done any of the math around that to look at how that could work to specifically address the challenges that are faced by those with low income in PEI?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Actually, we have had these discussions.

**Nigel Burns:** Yes.

PEI does have a targeted tax relief program for low-income people.

**Ms. Bell:** Yes.

**Nigel Burns:** It's called the Low Income Tax Reduction Program.

It was enhanced a number of budgets ago, which has the effect similar to you described for Nova Scotia. But, it's a little more narrower scope to very low income, but it does raise the point when you'd be paying provincial income tax, much higher than what the basic personal exemption would otherwise lead you to believe.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you.

Can you advise, please, Chair, what the level of income that that applies to? Because I have it as at for up to \$12,500 as an average

income rate, is that the rate that that's applied to?

**Nigel Burns:** I'd be happy to come back with some analysis to show you for different family types when they would be starting to pay provincial personal income tax.

**Ms. Bell:** Provincial personal income tax.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you.

And absolutely, we know that at the very lowest brackets up to a certain point that it comes out to (Indistinct) with the application of the program.

So what we have is a number of Islanders who are in that sort of very low income where they're still earning and they do have taxable income after the application of the basic personal exemption.

So for example, somebody who has an average income bracket of \$22,500, of whom there is over 10,000 people on PEI in that tax bracket, so this is not a few individuals. It's a significant number of taxpayers. Their average taxable income is \$13,340 after the BP and they pay \$1,300 – just over \$1,300 in tax at the 9.8% in the first tax bracket.

That's a lot of money out of your pocket. So we're talking about putting money back in the pocket of Islanders – people who are most going to notice \$1,300 out of their pockets are the ones only earning \$22,000 in the first place.

**Mr. R. Brown:** That's before the credit.

**Ms. Bell:** No.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. Bell:** Well, that's what I'm asking to find out, Mr. Chair.

Obviously we don't know right now exactly where the bracket fits. My numbers were that that tax credit that our witness was speaking to does not apply to people who have an average income of \$22,500 so it would be great to get that information back,

Chair, and then I can update my spreadsheet accordingly.

**Chair:** You'll bring that back?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Nigel Burns:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah?

**Chair:** Okay, great.

**Ms. Bell:** Chair, so my last point is –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you.

In comparison to the total tax income that comes into the provincial government, those thousands of Islanders that are sitting in those lower income brackets are responsible for around \$60 million of tax revenue out of a total tax revenue of \$420 million, so it would be also interesting if we could see what those comparable costs are just to target that piece given that the impact on the tax revenue would be proportional to the total tax revenue that's being brought in, where the bulk of the revenue comes from those who are earning over \$50,000 a year.

**Chair:** Do you have that or can you bring that back?

**Nigel Burns:** We can bring back a distribution of where the tax reductions will accrue to taxpayers.

**Ms. Bell:** That would be most helpful.

Thank you very much, Chair.

**Chair:** Good, thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Actually, you know what? I was on the list because I was going to take questions from Charlottetown-Parkdale so I'm good.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Any further questions on the bill?

**Ms. Biggar:** Carry the bill.

**Chair:** Carry the bill, okay.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** You were calling for it 20 years ago.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yes, I was.

**Chair:** Shall the bill carry? Carried.

**Mr. MacEwen:** You finally got it.

**Mr. R. Brown:** I finally got it.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I move the title.

**Chair:** *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 2).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

**Mr. MacDonald:** 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.

**Ms. Biggar:** Show of hands, Mr. Speaker.

**Chair:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Ms. Biggar:** Show of hands.

**Chair:** You want a show of hands?

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Chair:** Okay. Let's have a show of hands. A show of hands has been asked for.

All those in favour, raise their hand.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm in favour of tax breaks, sure. Bring it on.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, hands down.

**Chair:** Those against?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** It's carried. Good.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. 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 *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (No. 2)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Some Hon. Members:** Standing vote.

**Speaker:** Standing vote?

**An Hon. Member:** Sure thing.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, a recorded division has been requested. You can ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

**Ms. Bell:** The Third Party is ready for the vote.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** No fourth dimension.

**Ms. Bell:** No fourth dimension.

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is ready for the vote.

**Speaker:** All those voting in favour of –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Lowering taxes.

**Speaker:** – supporting the report of the committee, signify by –

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

**Speaker:** You want a standing vote? Yes.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** No, it should be – I'm sorry, it's got to be the other way. Sorry.

[Laughter]

**An Hon. Member:** He doesn't want to raise taxes.

**Speaker:** Okay, sorry about that. It's getting late here.

All those not supporting, please stand.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame!

**Clerk Assistant (Doiron):** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, and the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** All those in favour of or supporting the – please stand.

**Mr. Myers:** Hop up, Chester.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Okay, Trump.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) Fred and Barney.

**Clerk Assistant:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment;

**An Hon. Member:** Fred and Barney headed off to the new (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** – the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism;

**Mr. Myers:** What show are you watching, *The Flash*?

**Clerk Assistant:** – the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy;

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

**Clerk Assistant:** – the hon. Premier; the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services; the hon. Minister of

Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Speaker:** Okay, thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The decision of the committee is –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) your own people.

**Mr. Myers:** No whipped votes over here.

**An Hon. Member:** Fred and Barney  
(Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Mr. Myers:** No whipped votes over here.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** You called the hour?

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** I wonder which one of you are going for Denny and which one is for Dale?

**Mr. Myers:** Free will, free will.

**Ms. Biggar:** Voting against low-income Islanders.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, the hour has been called.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** No, no, we want to stay.

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

**An Hon. Member:** I'll stay.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I'll stay with Chester if he'll stay.

**Mr. Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that this House adjourn until November 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 a.m.

**Ms. Biggar:** Drive careful, everyone.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned