

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to everyone in the gallery and those viewing by television or Internet.

I'll open by recognizing four Prince Edward Island women who were recognized, and appropriately, last night with awards at the East Coast Music Awards: Rose Cousins, who had two awards for Album of the Year and Song of the Year – great achievement for Rose; KINLEY, who was recognized for the Fan's Choice Video and Rising Star. I said four because Jenna MacMillan was also part of making that video and Jenn Grant for Pop Recording of the Year. That's a pretty good start and through one that bodes well for how Island music is really advancing all of our lives here on the Island and well beyond.

Later today we'll have four Prince Edward Island women who make up four of the famous five that will be recognized by a statement. I might say that it's a major event to look back on the 25th anniversary of when the hon. Marion Reid was speaker; the hon. Libbe Hubley, who was deputy speaker; Nancy Guptill served as the speaker and, of course, Marion Reid at the time was the lieutenant governor; and Pat Mella was at the time leader of the official opposition; and of course the hon. Catherine Callbeck was at the time the Premier. They all continue to make important contributions to our province, including through this celebration.

In the gallery today we have a delegation of Prince Edward Island nurses who – further instance of, in this case women, who are doing great work great and great service to our province. We have a young woman who's doing great things: Roisin Mullen and who is in the gallery on a fairly regular basis in fact. This morning, Roisin gave an invitation to a Mi'kmaq art and culture night at Mt. Stewart School on May 10th, that I'm

sure she's had a big hand in organizing and, in fact, the invitation is written on the back of her award-winning poster that was through the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. So Roisin, you're on a good path and we're very happy to see you here and all the good work that you're doing.

One more recognition in the gallery: (Indistinct) was with us earlier this week, Cheryl MacLean – an all woman roster this week this morning and it's a good sign.

I want to make one more mention and that is, of course, tomorrow the open house at the Masjid Dar As-Salam mosque that will be a major achievement for our Muslim community. Muslim Society of PEI will be hosting that open house at the mosque on MacAler Drive tomorrow from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and I'm sure it'll be something that'll be celebrated and in which many Islanders will be taking part.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today. I want to welcome everyone here in the gallery – to the nurses that are here and for all the work you do for all Islanders. It's something I've always appreciated, especially with my former career as administrator at the Gillis lodge and you could always call on any of the nurses to really do anything for a community.

I'd like to just welcome everyone watching from District 4. Roisin, it's great to have you here again and keep up the good work.

I'd also like to recognize all of the award winners at the ECMAs. KINLEY, who I've known since she was just a little girl and all the great work she's doing – her Rising Star Recording of the Year and her Fan Choice Video of the Year. I also want to congratulate Jenna MacMillan. I've known Jenna for a long time and she really is a wonderful director and film producer. Rose Cousins for Album of the Year and Song of the Year and Jenn Grant for Pop Recording of the Year; all wonderful performers.

It's also International Firefighters' Day. I want to recognize the work of all the firefighters across our community and how they preserve property and life, and give countless hours, volunteer hours, for every one of us.

I'd also like to mention that on Sunday, there is a meeting at the Farm Centre at 2:00 p.m. and Joan Baxter, who has written the book, *The Mill: Fifty Years of Pulp and Protest* will be addressing the crowd. I'm hoping there will be a good turnout. We can't let that issue die down. It's very important that we preserve the fish that we have in the Strait and to ensure that they're still the best quality anywhere in the world.

I'd just like to take a minute to recognize Bert Honkoop. Bert passed away this week. His funeral was yesterday. He was a great community member; a great supporter of myself and the party and he was a horseman. We will miss him greatly at the Pinette Raceway and at the CDP. I just want to send out condolences to his wife, Diane, and all the family.

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; the nurses, who are here. Roisin Mullen, so nice to see you, and thank you, also for your kind invitation. And, also to Cheryl MacLean. Nice to see you back again, Cheryl.

I would also like to pass on my congratulations to KINLEY, formally known as Kinley Dowling, and to Jenna MacMillan, I believe, who made the video, which won their award, one of two awards, of course, that KINLEY won. And Rose Cousins, and Jenn Grant, all, as members before me have stated, fantastic Island musicians and just doing us proud in Halifax this weekend at the ECMAs.

In KINLEY's interview, on the radio, this morning, she described last evening as PEI's evening. That wasn't her description that was the description of those, who were

there. I think they're absolutely killing it over there and we should be very proud of them all.

Today, of course, is also the third anniversary of 25 of the 27 members of this House of our election on May 4th, 2015. I will be celebrating that tonight with my friends in the Cornwall Civic Centre.

I'm sure many of us around this House will be remembering what it was like three years ago, today and all of the excitement and anxiety surrounding any election day.

I want to make special note, this morning, of one of our Pages, Jacob MacDonald from Morell. Jacob, along with his friend Ben MacMillan just won the fan-favourite award for a Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Safety Matters. They did a fantastic video. Jacob is a very talented young man in many areas, but particularly when it comes to videography.

This was a national competition and voted on, online and they were in a very tight race with a group from Saskatchewan, but I understand that they headed them off at the finish line. Good for you, Jacob. Congratulations.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

International Day of the Midwife

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today and say thank you to Joyce England, Susana Rutherford, Megan Burnside, members of the PEI midwife advocacy groups and all, who have been advocating for midwifery services on Prince Edward Island.

On May 11th, 2017, long-time advocate Joyce England sat in the gallery to witness the passing of the *Registered Health Professions Act*. The Minister of Health and Wellness, on May 2nd, 2018 confirmed in this House that the department is working on

the regulations and would be ready to proclaim the act this summer, thus paving the way for midwifery services for Island women.

One of my colleagues asked me recently why I am so passionate about midwifery and asked if my children were delivered by a midwife. They were not. I met Joyce England many years ago when I was a city councillor. She is a constituent of Charlottetown-Lewis Point and it is in this role and as the voice of people of Charlottetown-Lewis Point that I knew that I could do something about midwifery services.

I'm proud to say we are finally seeing some results. One goal, when I was elected was to ensure I left the place better than I found it. I hope this is true for midwifery services on the Island.

This week, there have been many activities planned to celebrate International Day of Midwife. I would encourage hon. members to go to the BORN PEI's Midwife Advocacy Group Facebook page to see the stories of many women, who talk about their experiences with a midwife and the birth of their children.

Also, I would like to invite all members to a rally at this building, the Coles Building, tomorrow, May 5th at 11:00 a.m. to celebrate International Day of the Midwife.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Gulf Shore Consolidated School

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm honoured to rise in the Legislature and recognize the outstanding achievements of students and staff at Gulf Shore Consolidated School in North Rustico.

Ironically, a school that this Liberal government's school review criteria put on the chopping block in 2009.

A full half of the Island provincial science fair team are from Gulf Shore Consolidated School. Joe Moak and Davis Nicholson,

who were Junior Best in Fair, Neleah Lavoie, who was there for her 4-H finalist project.

On May 12th, they will be travelling to Ottawa to represent PEI at the Canada-Wide Science Fair.

Je tiens également à remercier Ethan Lowther, élève du district 18 de l'École François-Buote, qui a eu un des meilleurs projets de quatrième année.

I would also like to thank Ethan Lowther, a student of District 18 from École François-Buote, who had one of the best projects of Grade 4.

I also wanted to recognize Gulf Shore teacher, Sandra Skeffington and her students, who have taken their learning out to the community with projects they have created. Their projects are part of the annual Gulf Shore Gives Back campaign and include workshops on healthy breakfasts, packing boxes to send to soldiers overseas, peer-to-peer help in elementary grades, building a raised garden bed for a local seniors' home and two free mini libraries.

This is a prime example of how a dedicated and creative teacher and students, flexible administration and community engagement makes for hands-on education at its best. It didn't require a special, new government program or lots of money or redevelopment of provincial curriculum; just letting teachers do what teachers do what they do best: teach.

I'd like to invite all to come out to their open house on May 23rd from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Finally, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Principal Mary Jane Ready, who is retiring from Gulf Shore Consolidated this year. Mary Jane's leadership has created an environment where all students thrive. Bullying is virtually non-existent. Children are encouraged to play in the hedgerow behind the school, school yard, and build forts and climb trees. In a school that includes kindergarten right through grade 9, the older students regularly engage with and help the young students.

Mary Jane inspires her staff and students and has created a school environment that is truly a part of the local community. The proof is in the great achievements and success of the many, many students she has touched during her career. I salute Mary Jane and her leadership as a true community leader. Thank you, Mary Jane Ready.

Gulf Shore Consolidated is just one of the great schools in District 18, and on our Island and the next time you see a teacher, thank them for their work with our most precious resource; our children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Hambly's PEI Home and RV Centre

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is a day for good news and recognition of community. I would like to congratulate Matthew Hambly and the team at Hambly's PEI Home & RV Centre RV division on Kensington Road, celebrating their 50th year in business in Parkdale.

They're holding an open house, as we heard yesterday, starting today until Sunday, with a barbeque on Saturday, though I will not be held responsible for anybody thinking that, only if the Leader of the Opposition is paying for it, and I'm looking forward to attending and celebrating this great family business in my district.

I would also like to take today, the opportunity, to extend my congratulations to the new Executive Director of the PEI Women's Business Association. Margaret Magner, who was introduced to the membership at the recent Women in Business Symposium.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank my friend, and former colleague Shannon Pratt, who has not only kept the association running for the past six months, but has also, at the same time, been working at the fulltime executive director of the Startup Zone. In fact, she can't be with us today because she's hosting an event at 10:30 a.m. that happens every Friday called

coffee chat and is continuing to be exemplary in all things that she does.

Finally, I cannot let this day go by without recognizing the importance of May 4th. On this day, three days ago the citizens of Kellys Cross-Cumberland elected PEI's first Green MLA. The Leader of the Third Party made history that day and has continued to do so ever since. I am grateful to be here in the House with him and extend my congratulations today to Matthew, Margaret, Shannon and the hon. Member from Kellys Cross-Cumberland.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

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

I'd like to respond to a few questions asked of me yesterday by the Leader of the Third Party about UPEI.

There are no provincial fundings provided to the UPEI program in Egypt. To the question on human rights, while I am not in a position to debate the human rights record of any country, I will share one comment from the UPEI president: Education is the best tool to enhance human rights. Canada has a great tradition in teaching and demonstrating the values of a civil and just society. Teaching our curriculum in Egypt or Dubai, or anywhere else, will see graduating students gain an appreciation for Canadian values and what Canadians stand for. I would also add that I have the upmost faith in UPEI's ability and passion for protecting the rights and interests of their students and faculty.

With that, I would to table some information in response to these questions in a form of a letter from the UPEI president.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Questions by Members

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, I asked the Premier why the report on the Wood Islands ferry taskforce had never been publicly released. Shortly after Question Period copies of the report were delivered, hand delivered to the media and myself.

The date on that report is June 5th, 2017. The report made six recommendations about the future of the ferry service.

Wood Islands ferry taskforce report

Question to the Premier: What action has your government taken on these recommendations that sat on a desk for almost a year?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the first action that we took was to create a Regional Economic Advisory Council for regions of our province; one serving and being focused on the prosperity and the well-being of the eastern part of the province with several of the members of that regional council being also members of the Wood Islands ferry taskforce.

They are identifying the ferry service as one of the priorities for the work of that advisory council.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do appreciate that taskforce moving forward. The recommendations that actually came from the ferry taskforce was an independent economic impact study on the regional importance of the ferry service now, and for the next five to 10 years.

Economic impact study on ferry service

When will that specific study be commissioned – has it been commissioned, and has it been completed, yet?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, will be well aware, on, I'm pretty sure it was May 5th of last year, a year ago

tomorrow, there was a public announcement by the federal government with, and indeed, the Member from Belfast-Murray River was present, as were many others; hon. Lawrence MacAulay, MP for Pictou County, were there to indicate a commitment by the federal government for a couple of decades and the plan of action to secure commitments for ferry service in response to an RFP.

We've stayed, very actively, interested in that, and actively encouraging the federal government along those lines.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, I was at that announcement. It was a great announcement, but we're not there, yet. We still do not have an RFP. We still do not know what the ferry service model will look like.

The taskforce recommended that when considering replacement ferries, emphasis should be placed on green technologies to address emission targets and develop opportunities.

Replacement ferry-green technology

Question to the Premier: What work has your government done to advance this recommendation that any replacement ferry incorporate more environmentally-friendly technologies?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that particular recommendation, and to the purpose behind it, is one that our government heartily endorses and has in our discussions with and representations to the federal government.

I met, in early November of 2017, with the hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport for Canada, who has the primary responsibility for that ferry service and the RFP going forward. Certainly, we have been

in regular contact with our own MPs, notably the hon. Lawrence MacAulay.

I can assure the House that the possibility that the ferry service could be one that could model green technology in the marine environment is one that we heartily endorse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another recommendation was that research should be done into the feasibility of winter crossings. It's a failsafe effort in an event of a catastrophic incident with the Confederation Bridge.

The taskforce flagged the need to maintain year-round link with the mainland as imperative.

Year-round service with Wood Islands ferry

Premier: How has your government acted on this recommendation to further explore the idea of winter crossings and have you put that forward with the federal government in Ottawa?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what we have certainly done is to make sure that the federal government, as it moves forward with its RFP, would consider and encourage proponents, because that's the nature of an RFP, proponents to take a look at that aspect. For the same reason that we're interested in green technology, we can be mindful of how, you know, our climate is changing and there may, indeed, be some merit in moving forward in a way that could give year-round service.

If there is to be year-round service what our government is doing is growing the economy in all parts of the province. I'm very proud to say that we can go to all of the communities throughout the eastern part of the province and see the kind of prosperity that might, indeed, warrant a year-round service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you the economic impact to eastern PEI when there was one ferry; it was pretty grave that summer. To say you're growing the economy, the ferry service is imperative to make that happen.

The taskforce also looked at the role the ferry plays in trade and exports and recognized that a mitigation strategy be created to make sure our exports, through the ferry service, aren't negatively impacted by carbon tax.

Impact of trade and exports through ferry service re: carbon tax

Question to the Premier: What work has your government done on a mitigation strategy to make sure that trade and exports through our ferry service aren't negatively impacted by this carbon tax?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me come to the larger question of what our government is doing to encourage trade and export, which is really the question that's being asked.

We've grown trade and our exports from this province, and, indeed, from the eastern part of the province. You can go to the Montague Bay fisheries; you can go to North Lake, you can go to Souris, you can go to Pooles Corner, and find, and in other parts of our great province, in the eastern part of the province; go to Belfast Mini Mills, there are lots of things going on in all parts of our province, and notably in the eastern part, that warrant getting our goods and services to the larger world and to doing it on terms that are profitable.

We are very proud of that, and proud of what the private sector is doing. I might say, on the point about that season, when the ferry was – it wasn't operating anywhere close to the level we wanted it, the operators, in the eastern part of the province, did, indeed, see that they gave good service

to their customers. And their customers did come and we saw growth in the eastern part of the province in that season and we're proud of the work that they're doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That very fact has been brought to my attention. A number of people did do very well that year, but it left a bad taste in the mouth of a number of tourists, who did not have the ferry service there.

We had a motion to take the ferry issue to committee. The committee recommended a taskforce. The taskforce came back with good recommendations that really collected dust for a year.

Wood Islands ferry taskforce report (further)

Premier: I want your commitment that you, and your government, are not going to sit idly by with a wait-and-see-attitude instead of standing up for Islanders about this issue.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, within weeks of the taskforce presenting its report, we had the commitment. The commitment, historic commitment, unprecedented commitment, from the federal government to pursue the path, that, in fact, we've just been discussing.

There's never been a time, in terms of that ferry service, when the outlook and the opportunity have been more positive. That's something that of course we support, and of course we encourage, and of course we want our regional economic council to encourage, and the municipalities, and the members of the Legislature, and the businesses throughout our province to recognize how important that ferry service is to our continued growth, and prosperity, and wellbeing. I believe that everybody that I can see understands that and is working successfully toward that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When government tried to close schools across the Island last year, the government released information about the physical condition of schools. Bloomfield Elementary was one of the schools government tried to close. Government said the school needed to replace the boiler and oil tank, upgrade gym lighting, and the HV system was just fair.

Repairs needed at Bloomfield school

Question to the Premier: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues at Bloomfield Elementary in the last 13 months?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: That's something, of course, that I have to take under advisement. As we've heard earlier in this House, the infrastructure of our school system is something that is the responsibility of the Public Schools Branch, who work according to their priority list of issues that they're addressing and on capital questions, or maintenance and repair questions and Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to see what I can bring back to the House on this question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, while you're going back, I'll give you some more to take back. When will government get around to fixing these issues at the Bloomfield Elementary School?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'll be happy to bring that back, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At St. Louis Elementary the government said the boiler and oil tank needed

replacement, a partial roof replacement, the HV system – plumbing and electrical was just fair.

Repairs needed at St. Louis school

Question to the Premier: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues at St. Louis Elementary in the last 13 months?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to the first question and this is something that we've heard about on the floor of this House and I believe it does reflect the proper functioning of government for the Public Schools Branch to have the autonomy, and the responsibility, and the resources to look after existing facilities, or expansions, or what work is required as we have a growing student population and as we have added investments in the front line resources in our schools. We have confidence in our schools; we have confidence in the performance of our students and we recognize that the Public Schools Branch has a job to do and I'll be happy to come back with an answer to that question.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, 13 months ago this report was issued. 13 months is a long time. When will this government get around to fixing these issues at St. Louis Elementary?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there was a decision made to keep the school at St. Louis Elementary open and that was something that we stand behind. We have brought forward last fall a capital budget, which was our second highest in the province's history that included a very significant commitment to work in our schools and it is combined with successive operating budgets that have made very significant commitments, historic commitments, to the operating success of

our schools. I'm sure that the Public Schools Branch is well aware, through its prioritization, of areas where there's work to be done and as I said, I'll be happy to bring that back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At Belfast Consolidate, government said the school needed brick work, a new roof, a new fuel tank, and resurfacing of the parking lot. The plumbing and electrical rated just fair and the HV system needs work.

Repairs needed to Belfast school

Let's try the minister of transportation to see if maybe she can have a little more info than the Premier right now: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues at Belfast Consolidated in the last 13 months?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we previously mentioned, we made commitments in our capital budget last fall to schools right across Prince Edward Island. We are presently doing a \$22 million retrofit of the Three Oaks in Summerside, new schools right across the province –

Mr. Myers: Not in Belfast.

Ms. Biggar: – down in Rollo Bay, just opened.

Mr. Speaker, the priorities that go into making a list of what work needs to be done on schools right across PEI lies with the school boards. They need to do their priority list, submit it, and then it will be taken under consideration in terms of what the capital budget and the budget for renovations within the school board are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of transportation – you didn't answer my question: When will government get around to fixing these issues at Belfast Consolidated?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I can only surmise that as soon as that reaches the top priority of the school board that that will be taken under consideration.

Mr. Fox: When it reaches top priority (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, they should be top priorities. In Georgetown Elementary, we've got government saying we need a roof replacement, boiler replacement, school siding replacement; parking lot resurfacing, new bathroom stalls and fixtures needed, plumbing and electrical rated as just fair, wheelchair access.

Repairs needed to Georgetown school

Question to the transportation minister: Why has no work happened to fix any of these issues in Georgetown Elementary in the last 13 months?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, again, we'll take that under advisement and take that information back.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister of transportation: This is your department – there's Cabinet ministers (Indistinct) – TIE. Do you not look after the schools? You don't look after renos of schools?

Mr. Myers: Ask Vessey.

Mr. MacKay: When will government get around to fixing these issues at Georgetown Elementary?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me take this into the larger frame of what we're really talking about here and it's about the success of our province, the success of our students, the performance of our students. We had a big week. It didn't get very well received on the opposition side. They didn't seem to be too pleased that our students did as well as they did in the PCAP.

Mr. Myers: Actually, no one talked about it.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something else because the opposition wants to go back always to this Chicken Little, and this is falling apart, and this needs something – we are having a baby boom. Let that be the news today. In the most recent account of our population in this province, we have more young people between the ages of zero to 14, as a percentage of our population, then is the case for the province of Ontario – and that is the case for the City of Toronto. And for the last three years, we have had more births than deaths, which has not been the case in the other Atlantic Provinces.

That, Mr. Speaker, the performance of our students, the fact that we have young people who are looking for a bright future and they've got great teachers who are giving them the opportunity through education to do well, that's what we're committed to and that's what we're supporting and we're proud of it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, if you were so proud of your students and the jobs they're doing, you would put the money and effort into fixing these schools for these children. When government tried to close those schools, the

students, parents and staff, they all felt ignored, disrespected by this government.

Confidence in schools' future

Question to the Premier: Do you think that your government's lack of attention to these issues is giving people in those communities confidence about their schools' future?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the opposition is disappointed that we didn't close the schools. We kept those schools open and in the intervening years and budgets, we have invested in 161 additional frontline positions in our schools throughout this province and we are investing in the capital, and in the upkeep of our schools, and our students, and our teachers, and our province are all performing at the top of the rank and we're proud of that.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, I will congratulate you on the floor of this House today for keeping those schools open. You did listen to opposition. You listened to parents and teachers, and you did keep the schools open. For one of the first times in ages you kept good to your word on something.

Given what's happened to date, it would be hard to fault people for feeling like those schools are being slowly starved of resources. We've got roofs leaking here every day.

Repairs of structural issues in schools

Question to the Premier: Will these issues be fixed at these schools before your government takes another run at school closures?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we've heard about other schools here on the floor of this House and there is a matter of setting priorities, knowing what the situation is, and addressing those with the resources, very considerable resources, that are made available for school repairs, for school expansions, for school improvements, and for investing in the operating success and the continued learning and the instruction in our schools.

That's where we have put our priorities right across the board and if you look at our most recent budget and the one before, education has been the very top priority and we are seeing the results and we're proud of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

We recently learned during debate in this House that there are almost 1,000 Islanders enrolled in the methadone and Suboxone programs here on Prince Edward Island and that number, of course, only represents those Islanders with addiction issues who have sought treatment. Nobody knows how many Islanders are currently using street drugs. What we do know, however, is that Fentanyl has arrived here on Prince Edward Island.

Yesterday, the Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Heather Morrison, informed us that Fentanyl has been discovered in a seizure of cocaine.

A question to the Minister of Health and Wellness; naloxone kits, which are the emergency treatment for a Fentanyl overdose, costs \$50 and although they are indeed readily available without a prescription, they are not available without the funds to buy them.

Availability of naloxone kits

What is government doing to make naloxone available to all Islanders that risk of overdose from Fentanyl?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The events of yesterday where the Chief Public Health Officer spoke about the alert for Fentanyl that has been discovered in a recent drug, I'll call it a bust, that the Charlottetown Police had last week, and Fentanyl being part of that cocaine – it's important for us as a department to put that information out for Islanders that may indeed be using street drugs so that they are aware of this and this is a caution to them.

Today, naloxone is available at all needle exchange sites. It's available at the provincial addiction treatment centre as well at the Queen Street Recovery Clinic, Montague and Souris community mental health and addiction sites, and at the Provincial Correction Centre and also all the all the Island EMS would have naloxone kits, as well all police forces on Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Dr. Heather Morrison told media, and I quote: There have been no Fentanyl deaths related to this seizure.

Which is different from there have been no Fentanyl deaths on Prince Edward Island.

Deaths related to Fentanyl in province

Minister: Are you aware of any deaths on Prince Edward Island related to Fentanyl?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't have that type of data at my fingertips. As what was related to last week's incident, they are still investigating that.

I do know that naloxone kits have been used, I believe, on a couple of occasions on Prince Edward Island and police showed up to particular investigations they were doing, but I don't have the number of what the hon.

member asked for and I don't even know if there is indeed a number. But, I'll have to take that under advisement and do some investigating.

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

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

Protection for addicted Islanders

Considering how deadly Fentanyl can be, and having watched thousands of Canadians die in other jurisdictions from accidental overdoses, what lessons have been learned and what can we do proactively here on Prince Edward Island to protect the lives of addicted Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Although we pride ourselves in Prince Edward Island of not being the same as every other jurisdiction, jurisdictions all across Canada are at various levels of what I will call opioid crises.

Prince Edward Island is not immune to opioid use on our wonderful province, but our occurrences are significantly less than other jurisdictions. This is in part because of our methadone program that we recently put in in the past number of years. Family involvement in Prince Edward Island is great when somebody is struggling with addictions. As a department, we are working diligently with the addictions facilities all across Prince Edward Island to provide that wonderful service for people who want to get clean and to help them with that process.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question this morning is for the Minister of Family and Human Services.

Minister, during capital estimates your department announced \$750,000 in capital improvements for infrastructure.

Capital improvements for housing infrastructure

Can you tell me where this money will be allocated and if any of this money will be allocated to improving housing infrastructure?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government continues to invest in housing across Prince Edward Island and I think that was quite evident in our budget that we announced \$17 million over the next two years to invest in affordable housing options across Prince Edward Island.

But an answer to your question, hon. member, that money is going to be used for renovations to seniors' units across Prince Edward Island. These renovations will include things such as improvements to sidewalks, parking areas; improvements to roofs, sidewalks, basements, windows, many improvements to make sure that our seniors across Prince Edward Island are living comfortably, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, two buildings in my district that are in desperate need of repair and renovation are Spring Park Court, which is locally known as 501 Queen Street, and the Hunt Court Complex; windows not opening, common rooms on the second floor not accessible to all, no elevators for the seniors' population.

Renovations to Hunt Court and Spring Park Court

Can you tell me if any work has been done on these two locations recently?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, actually, for this year we have \$68,000 that we have allocated for Hunt Court for walkways and structural basement repairs, as well as \$27,000 for basement repairs at Spring Park Court. As mentioned previously, this is in addition to more than the \$150,000 in the operating budget that we have for repairs and maintenance specifically for these two buildings to make sure that they are kept updated and safe for our residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, Charlotte Court in Charlottetown-Lewis Point was the first seniors' home built on the Island in 1968. We were pleased to replace that in 2011. Spring Park Court was built in 1977 and Hunt Court was built in 1972. Due to the age of both of these locations, there are still further repairs and updating that must be done in order to provide adequate housing for these people.

Replacement of seniors' housing facilities

Can you tell me what further repairs are scheduled in the coming year and if Spring Park Court or Hunt Court are on your priority list for replacement?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I must commend the hon. member because she is a tireless advocate for the residents in her district, and I applaud your dedication to them.

Over the past several years there have been many renovations, as mentioned, to the improvement of these two buildings totalling approximately \$1.2 million. Some of those projects were new flooring, roofs, sidewalks, patio doors. Again, as mentioned earlier, that is in addition to the more than \$150,000 that we provide annually to these.

I must also mention that our housing team is in contact with our seniors' housing and our

family housing units on a regular basis to ensure that any immediate or emergency cases that will arise will be dealt with efficiently and effectively.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is also for the Minister of Family and Human Services. Our government's 2018-2019 Budget included a \$17 million investment over two years to increase and sustain affordable housing in the province.

Sustainable and affordable housing

Minister, can you tell me how this money will be allocated?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am very excited about this investment. It shows our government's commitment to investing in affordable housing needs for all Islanders.

One of the ways, actually, I'm very pleased to stand here today and say that we will be investing \$1 million into our PEI Home Renovation program this year. What that will do is that will allow any Island, who has applied for that program, and who meets the criteria, they will be awarded the funding this year. That will be, approximately, 300 more Islanders, so a total of 500 Islanders, that will receive up to \$6,000 for their home renovation projects. If they are a disabled person, they will receive up to \$8,000 for home renovations that will meet their disability needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great news to hear that that area of concern. That is something that has been brought up in the House a number of times.

It's great to see that that's being taken care of in such a great fashion.

Part of the \$17 million investment includes up to 1,000 new low-income units over the past four years.

Minister, in your motion last week, you stated that these investments would be in Charlottetown and Summerside relating to Queens and Prince Counties. I'm not sure that I heard, or that you included Kings County.

Low-income units

Can you give us more details on this and will Kings County be receiving the same investments?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my announcement, last week, I spoke about the 1,000 new units that we will be – that will be achieved through various ways.

Some will be through new construction. Some will be through upgrading existing units, and some will be through rent supplements, which help Islanders, who are currently renting in the private market afford their home a little bit more.

If I said that Queens County and Prince County were the only ones that would be receiving this, I was incorrect. We will be looking across the Island when our – and working with our housing taskforce and our co-development team in the development – with the housing action plan that will come out with recommendations that will include the entire Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that. It's great to hear that Kings County, we're still on the map –

Ms. Mundy: You're still on the map.

Affordability housing in Kings County

Mr. Roach: Minister: Will you commit today that Kings County will be receiving the same investments in affordability housing as Queens County and Prince County?

Mr. LaVie: More.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, the housing action plan is due to be complete in June of this year. It will help guide our decision on where units will be placed, and what we will, indeed, what the needs are of Islanders.

I can assure you that our co-development team and our housing taskforce, as well as the entire housing action plan will include tip-to-tip what is needed out there. Where the most need is, and I can guarantee you that, where the most need is, we will be dealing with that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, we were talking about food education and food security and how our important our farmers are right across Prince Edward Island.

Leasing land to farmers

My question is the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, why has your department changed its land-use policy for leasing land to the farmers?

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

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

It's must be Kings County day today in the Question Period.

The hon. member has communicated to me his concern about certain policies within the department.

Right now, the policy is, is that any leased land that comes up, that provincially-leased land to farmers will be looked at, and if it can be put back into forestry, it will be put back into forestry, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the government that put a dozen bulldozers in Bonshaw and took every tree down. Now, they're taking the land from the farmers for reforestation?

Consultation with farmers on land-use policies

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: When these policies were changed, did you consult with farmers?

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

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

I agree with the member from Souris, that farmland is important and agriculture on this Island is the number one industry and we must protect it.

Upon the request from the member, I did ask my department to review this policy because, quite frankly, if we can keep farmland in production, it's good for Prince Edward Island. It's good for the economy. I've asked the department to review that policy.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a farmer in District 1 that has been farming land leased from the government for the last 30 years.

He received a letter. Not a phone call, not a visit, but a letter in March that he had to be off this land in May.

Shouldn't farmers leasing government land get a little bit more of a notice than two months?

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

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

I couldn't agree with the member more. That's the reason upon the member from Souris' request to me that to review this and to review this letter.

I did go back to the department and I did ask the department to reach out to this member, or this person. I believe, this government believes, agriculture is important to this community and we must keep as much land as possible in agriculture. It provides us food. It provides us exports. It provides jobs. I couldn't agree with the member, more.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment is in Hansard saying: When farmers do well, PEI does well. It's true.

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Are there any other farmers in this situation?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is the policy. I've that the department review the policy. We will be reviewing the policy because the government couldn't agree more with it. We have to keep agriculture land in agricultural use because it's vital to the economy of Prince Edward Island.

Farmers produce a lot of good food here on Prince Edward Island and we must back the farmer.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Farmers are great stewards of the land. When they lease land that's been on the

farm for 30 years and we decide to kick them off in two months.

Consultation with other government departments

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Did you consult with the department of agriculture or any other departments across PEI?

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

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

As I said, earlier to the member, that I've asked for a review in the department over this policy because, again, I believe and everybody in this room believes that the agriculture community has stepped up to the environmental challenge here on Prince Edward Island.

We now have 15 foot buffer zones around the Morell River. I understand it's 45 metre buffer zone. We have the ALUS program. We have the 4R program going in the Kensington area.

I believe that farmers have stood up and backed the environment of Prince Edward Island and they're good stewards of the land. Number priority here; we want to work with the agricultural community, the department of environment to ensure that we do have adequate farmland, good farmland because it is good for the economy of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Policy changes to land leased to farmers

My next question is to the minister of fisheries and agriculture: Are you aware of the policy changes to the land leased to the farmers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, this is a really good line of questioning. When it comes to agriculture production in this province, I have a belief and our department has a belief that all land has a value. I think it's important to note that if there's any land owner, whether it's a government department, or whether it's an individual that our department is there to maybe look at agriculture opportunities and what are the best possible agricultural uses for any particular piece of land.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we take 12 bulldozers and put them through the forest to make our highways in Bonshaw and in Cornwall, actually – two highways – we're taking land from the farmer for reforestation. It doesn't make sense to me.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Do you agree with these policy changes?

Oh, come on.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the Bonshaw Trans-Canada Highway extension. As a result of that particular project, there is now a new protected area –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) taking the land from farmers (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: The new park that's there. We've developed 25 kilometers –

Mr. Fox: You've got big mounds of dirt still there.

Ms. Biggar: – of walking trails within a new natural park.

We're protecting the area out there.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We've been able to develop a resource that the families –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – across PEI can come – we work closely with the farmers as well when it comes to leasing land and when it comes to us to lease a piece of property, we work very closely to turn that around as part of our policy.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

[End of Question Period]

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Hon. members, it gives me great pleasure to rise and welcome in the Speaker's Gallery today – we have I believe it's three members of The Famous Five. Isn't it? We were expecting four, but there's still one missing. We have former senator and former deputy speaker, the hon. Libbe Hubley; we have former speaker, Nancy Guptill; and we have the former leader of the official opposition, Pat Mella. I certainly want to welcome you here today.

[Applause]

Hon. members, I think we are still expecting the – who is and was the first female speaker in the Legislative Assembly of PEI, Marion Reid, and she was also a former lieutenant governor of PEI. I expect Marion is on the way, maybe? Okay.

Statements by Ministers

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Nurses Week

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Great things are happening in our health care system thanks in large part to our dedicated nurses. Earlier this week I had the privilege to attend the PEI Nurses Union AGM and this weekend kicks off Nursing Week here in Prince Edward Island.

Within our health care system we have nearly 2,000 nurses, including nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses. I want to express my appreciation for all of the Islanders who work in nursing – for their tireless efforts, compassion, and the teamwork they display

on a regular basis. It takes a special person to fulfill a nurse's role. Our nurses make a real difference in the lives of our patients, their families, and communities across Prince Edward Island.

Last year we released PEI's first-ever nursing strategy. The strategy was created in true collaboration with the frontline nurses, educational institutions, nursing associations, unions, and other health care providers. It perfectly demonstrated how Prince Edward Island is the mighty Island, using our small size to our big advantage. The effort brought people together from across the province to accomplish great things for the betterment of all Islanders.

Since the release of the nursing strategy, we continue to make more nursing positions full-time, to improve continuity of care, attract more new graduates, and to retain experienced staff. In the past year we hired 91 new RN graduates as well as 28 new graduate LPNs and another 20 graduates are expected to be hired this spring. In addition, as announced in our government's balanced 2018-2019 Budget, we are now in the process of recruiting an additional seven full-time nurse practitioners for the province. This will bring us to a record level of nurse practitioners providing care throughout our system.

With your indulgence, I want to thank the nurses who are in the gallery with us today: Dawn Rix-More, LPN and Executive Director of the College of LPNs of PEI; Kimberly Jay, Registrar with the College of LPNs of PEI; Cynthia Bryanton, RN and Director of Nursing for Long-Term Care; Anita MacKenzie, RN and Primary Care Network Manager; Debbie Flood-Vickerson, RN and associate director of nurses at the QEH; Jill Anne McDowell, Acting Director Public Health & Children Developmental Services; and Roseanne McQuaid, our Principle Nursing Consultant for the province.

I want to thank each and every one of you for being present here today and thank you for the service and the work that you do for all Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: [Applause]

Mr. Mitchell: Although health care is ever changing with evolving new technologies and treatments, high quality patient care remains our priority and their priority. And this is exactly what nurses provide.

Please remember to thank a nurse during nursing week, and show your appreciation for the tremendous contribution they make to our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for his statement. I want to welcome and thank all the nurses in the gallery today. We much appreciate you being here and the service that you provide Islanders on a daily basis.

The role of nursing is changing at quite the quick pace – levels of care provided, the advancements in technology and training – have dramatically changed the way care is delivered to a patient. Nurses work at every point across the continuum of care: in public health, acute care, long-term care, home care, palliative care, mental health – it goes on. Nurses are one of our top health care providers.

Minister, I encourage you to keep expanding on the scope of practice for all of our nurses here. I think the saying: A rising tide lifts all boats, is very appropriate when we speak of scope of practice with all of our nurses.

Minister, I encourage you to keep investing in their education and I know our province's return will be immeasurable. All of our nurses often go above and beyond to ensure a patient is always cared for and receives the best treatment possible. I'm happy to take this opportunity to thank all nurses across Prince Edward Island for their contributions to our health care system. At this time, I'd like to make a special mention of my own sister, Tasha MacDonald, who is a nurse here in PEI as well. I think it's important for each of us to take the time – and if we see a nurse or if we know someone who is a nurse, to thank them for what they do and educate ourselves on the important role they play in our health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Good health care, of course, starts with caring and it starts with empathy. Making people well will always consist of scalpels, of course, and bandages, and needles, and medications, but above all else, it flows from the attention of care and love. Technology will never replace the healing power of human kindness.

I've known lots of nurses over my life – I married one. I haven't met very many who are not deeply innately, caring, loving people. They work long hours; they do difficult work; they are exposed to cumulative traumas. On that note, I'm really glad that the nurses will be specifically included in the legislation on PTSD and workers compensation that we will be deliberating later today.

So, I want to offer my thanks for everything that you do. Perhaps more than anybody else in the system, you put the care in health care.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to recognizing everyone in the gallery today, I must point out a special person who's here. District 22 resident and also former communications manager for my executive and Nancy's right hand man: Greg Guptill. Welcome, Greg.

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to rise and recognize everyone to the gallery. I'd like to make a

special welcome to Carl Pursey, President of the federation of labour for PEI and Jason Woodbury, who's a member of the CUPE. And I'd also like to welcome all the nurses and thank them for their commitment to their profession.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Everybody else looks like they're going to stand, so I thought: I'd better, too, and recognize a great constituent of mine, Libbe Hubley. I always admired Libbe for a couple of reasons, but 1) is being a great politician, but also having a great family life. How she was able to juggle two, I'll never know, but she represented PEI and Canada very well. Welcome, Libbe.

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

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

I want to recognize two individuals in the gallery there today. I sat with one on that side of the bench and I sat across from one – both Nancy Guptill – great person – and Pat Mella. If anybody wants inspiration and thinking about running for politics and scared of it, contact these two people because they're the toughest ones I've ever seen.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PEI Burger Love

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: For the past month, people across Prince Edward Island have been enjoying tasty and nutritious burgers. This has been the eighth annual PEI Burger Love campaign which highlights the high quality of our Island food products, the hard work of our cattle producers, and the creativity of our chefs, and the expanding reputation of Prince Edward Island as Canada's food Island.

The 2018 winner of PEI Burger Love is Chef Jarod Acorn's One-Eyed Jack from the Pilot House here in Charlottetown.

[Applause]

I would like to congratulate Chef Acorn and the management and staff of Pilot House on this major achievement.

During the 33 day PEI Burger Love campaign, a total of 78,000 pounds of Island beef was sold. This equates to more than \$2.6 million in burger sales alone, not to mention the side dishes such as Prince Edward Island potatoes and PEI's craft beer.

All told, Burger Love's economic impact is estimated at more than \$4 million. This comes at a time of the year when restaurants can benefit from increased sales and I should also point out that more communities than ever participated in the campaign, actually from Tignish right to Souris.

Islanders continue to support fresh, local ingredients, the creativity of our Island chefs, and the high quality of our Island beef. Burger Love has become an Island sensation and is an annual conversation starter. Our government's balanced 2018-2019 Budget includes continued support for local food promotions and the Island's beef industry, which totals farm cash receipts of a value of approximately \$40 million.

I want to congratulate all our restaurants and thank the patrons for their continued support for Burger Love. Supporting local producers means Islanders are supporting their local communities as well as the provincial economy. I would also like to recognize Fresh Media, which had a little idea about eight years ago along with the PEI Cattle Producers for seeing its ultimate potential.

Burger Love is still truly an Island success story that shows that when Islanders can work together, they can make things happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know this is the eighth year for Burger Love and this is my seventh year talking about Burger Love. I'm here for seven years now and probably three ministers later and we're still talking about Burger Love.

Burger Love, it's great. It's great for the economy on PEI and when you're talking \$2.6 million in hamburger and \$4 million in all sales, it's great for PEI; all the restaurants, right from Souris to Tignish. For my seventh year, how much it has grown and it seems to grow every year. It gets bigger and bigger numbers. I love following on social media all the comments people have on social media, the burgers they tried in the different communities, different restaurants and it's great.

Now, I see the comments where everybody gets on the scales. So, now they've got to go the other way and then you listen to it the next month of everybody trying to lose all of their Burger Love. But, it's great and it's great to get up and talk about Burger Love and it brings people in from the Maritimes, actually. It's just not only Islanders that do Burger Love. It's people that come in from the Maritimes. It's getting to be bigger and bigger.

Keep up the great work on Burger Love, and it's great marketing for PEI because everywhere you go – they even talk about it out in Alberta, about our Burger Love. It's great. Keep marketing it, and it's good for PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another aspect of Burger Love is the Island Food Security Grant Program in partnership with United Way which receives funds directly from the Burger Love campaign through participating restaurants and the give-back burger initiative.

This initiative sees the participating restaurants donate \$1 from each burger sold and those funds then are allocated as grants that support programs to increase access to local and affordable food for Islanders, with all programs focused on supporting

individuals and families experiencing or at risk of experiencing food insecurity.

This program started last year, and in 2017, it raised \$60,000 and funded 10, PEI community food programs. It's really exciting to announce, again, this year that they have, with over a third of restaurants participating, it has raised another \$60,000, which will be administered by the PEI United Way and their amazing board and staff to again provide those grants for direct community programs.

I've spoken, in the past, about the impact that just \$5,000 has had for the Charlottetown Farmers Market through this program and I'm really excited to see which programs will be funded again, this year.

Congratulations to Fresh Media, the PEI Burger Love team and all the associated restaurants that felt that this part of the program was one worthy of participating in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

PEI's Famous Five

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I would like to acknowledge a historical event that took place in our province 25 years ago.

Sometimes, history passes us by without any acknowledgement. Sometimes, momentous events happen in our own backyard or our Legislature and we aren't even aware of it.

This year, we are going to make sure that doesn't happen. This year, we are going to celebrate the 25th anniversary of PEI's famous five.

In 1993, women held five of the most influential positions in the Prince Edward Island government. Twenty-five years ago, the Lieutenant Governor was Marion Reid. The premier was Catherine Callbeck. The leader of the opposition was Pat Mella. The speaker of the House was Nancy Guptill and the deputy speaker was Elizabeth 'Libbe' Hubley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: This was the first time in Canadian history that five women held these positions at the same time in a provincial government. Unfortunately, even though this took place a quarter of a century ago, it was also the last time that that happened.

Never before or since has PEI or any other Canadian jurisdiction accomplished this feat. Due to the historical significance, it is vital to celebrate and acknowledge this anniversary.

Prince Edward Island can be proud of the achievements and progress we have made in the advancement of gender equality and empowerment. These women were pioneers and are certainly part of the reason that I got into politics.

Throughout this year, there will be a number of events held to celebrate this achievement and I look forward to sharing more of those with you as we come up to those events.

Today, though, it is my distinct privilege to acknowledge the members of the PEI famous five that are with us today: Pat Mella, Nancy Guptill, the hon. Libbe Hubley, and unfortunately the hon. Catherine Callbeck is not able to join us today. I believe, her honour Marion Reid, is somewhere en route. I know that hon. Catherine Callbeck is watching from home today.

I'd like to thank these women for their continuing contributions to our province and our communities and their trailblazing efforts that will pave the way for many other women to enter political life.

I'd also like to note, it was 25 years ago that there was an adjustment to the sitting hours in this House. Do you think that's coincidence? I think not.

Again, please join me and I would like to invite the female members of this Legislature to join me, when the House adjourns to get together to have a photo to commemorate their attendance here today, and Mr. Speaker, you also.

Please join me in, again, thanking them for

their contribution to the history of Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and recognize the famous five. It has been an inspiration to me. I have to say, when I first was elected, I received one of those black and white cards with your pictures on it. It's still in my office at home. It is an inspiration for me. I want to thank you for all the work that you did in the past and continue to do in your communities.

When I was thinking about running, I was told to go and talk to Marion Reid, the hon. Marion Reid and I did hear a story that, at the time, she had said no to running; a couple of times, I believe and J. Angus MacLean, being the forward-thinking man that he was, would not take no for an answer. I want to thank the premier for that and thank Marion Reid for all her service, as well. I'm hoping, maybe, she will show up.

Pat Mella, also has been a great inspiration to me. Whenever, I have a question or need some advice, she's always there for me. I've always admired each and every one of you. I think you've blazed the way for a number of women. I don't know whether you thought of that when you entered politics, but you certainly have done that.

Your careers and public life are a testament to the strong, and independent women that you are. Your achievements, I think, will continue to inspire women, as I know they do for each one of us here in the Legislature, male and female.

I want to thank you for your service. Welcome back to the House. I'll be looking forward to talking to you later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was told, when I was elected that I am the 27th woman ever elected as an MLA here on PEI. Which means, in the 144 years, that's just enough to fill every seat in the Legislature for women, as it stands.

We know that we need to do better with that. Having had leaders like you there reminds us of where we've been and where can get to.

I'm really excited that there has been some amazing projects this year being delivered by the PEI Coalition of Women in Government through funding from the Status of Women Canada. They're actually doing tangible projects, which are helping to encourage more women take that step, because we know it's hard.

There are two projects, in particular, under the Engaging Island Women for Political Action. One of them is a symposium coming up in May, which is free to attend, which focuses on workshops and skill building and transforming the conditions for women to enter politics.

The other one is the leadership training that's been ongoing now and is in its second year, for 100 Island women, across all parties and for non-partisan women to work directly with each other and develop skills, but also to encourage and inform the political parties themselves because sometimes the parties and the party system is the barrier for women getting elected.

We know that there are lots of hurdles, but having mentors and one of my mentors, I'm really grateful to be able to say: Hi, Catherine; is Catherine Callbeck, the retired senator, who was the patron of the Business Women's Association.

I have been lucky enough to go to many lunches where she says: Well, Hannah, what are you going to do with yourself? So Catherine, this is what I'm doing.

But the major hurdles are many, and having mentors that we can look to as well as them having that support from our community is another. Proportional representation is another. Sitting hours is another. Being able to fundraise, having fixed election dates, those are all things, but we can pick away at those one by one and eventually there may

be a day when there are more women than men in the seats in the Legislature here and I'm really excited to see that happen.

Thank you so much for being here today.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, tabled May 3rd, 2018, be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Perry: This report is an account of committee activities since last reporting to the Assembly. The committee met on four occasions since its last report and puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Your committee recommends that Department of Communities, Land and Environment review the *Agricultural Crop Rotation Act* with input from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in order to strengthen the act in ways that will encourage improvement in soil organic matter, nutrient retention and reduced soil loss.
2. As the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Agri-Food Canada continue to study PEI's soil organic matter, your committee recommends that additional data be gathered to attempt to establish causal or correlational factors in areas where soil organic matter levels are improving.
3. Regarding the Northern Pulp waste water treatment project, your committee recommends that evidence-based studies on the project's direct impacts on lobster and herring be carried out as part of the environmental assessment process.

4. Your committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries consider carrying out a study on the effects of neonicotinoid pest control products on PEI's bee population.

In conclusion, your committee thanks the individuals and groups that shared their views on agriculture and fisheries with the committee. Your committee looks forward to continuing its work on the various topics and issues remaining on its work plan.

I want to give a special thank you to clerk Ryan Reddin. We certainly do appreciate all that he did for us with his direction and professionalism. He made our committee more effective and more efficient.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: We do have some Members who would like to respond to the committee report. We'll start with the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to rise and first of all thank the Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries for the work that he does. I know I criticized him pretty heavily for canceling one of the meetings, but I do really appreciate the work he does with the committee, so thank you for that. More meetings are always better, though, so I will stand by that.

This report, I think, is a very good one, and it's really interesting to me to see how closely the recommendations in this report of agriculture and fisheries tie into the environment on Prince Edward Island. We're talking about crop rotation act, we're talking about causal effects of increase in soil organic matter, we're talking about effluent that's being dumped into the strait and how it impacts our lobster and our herring.

And of course, one of the really important insects on the Island – it's something that can't be overstated, how important they are – are bees, and the neonicotinoids that can impact them and the fact that we really need to understand what the impact could be on Prince Edward Island and make proactive action. Let's not wait until the bees are

killed off, then decide we're going to ban neonicotinoids.

I wanted to thank the committee. It was a privilege to serve on the committee, although I'm no longer on it now. Hopefully, we'll see the government act on these recommendations sooner rather than later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I want to thank the committee members for their work on this report. It is a very important report and they worked extremely hard on it. I attended a few of the meetings, especially when the department of agriculture soil expert came in and talked about the requirements for more organics in the soil.

It's important that we take these reports seriously, and I can commit to the committee and to this House that the department will review the recommendations, each and every review of the committee, and report back to this House on their recommendations.

Again, I want to thank the committee. I know I'm an MLA from downtown Charlottetown, but I know how important agriculture is to this province. As "Spy" Ready always used to say, if rural PEI's doing good; the City of Charlottetown's doing good.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was very actually pleased back in 2015 when I was appointed to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries. Then, of course, in October, I had to pull myself off for the next two years.

I was very pleased when the Leader of the Opposition put me back on the committee within the last two months, and it's a committee I believe is very much heavily entwined in everything that goes on in PEI.

With that, there's agendas I want to push forward in this committee. I think we need to look at the equipment that we're moving across the Island, and it's something that's going to be brought up later on in the committee. This infrastructure needs to fit what equipment we're dealing with today. With that, another important topic is what's happening in Nova Scotia and what possibly could be dumped into the strait and what the impact of that is on the fishery.

I'm very much in support of reforestation in the province. I don't believe we should be taking out farmers' actual crop land to plant (Indistinct) trees, but I think we need to look at all other avenues in the province –

Mr. LaVie: Did it in Bonshaw.

Mr. Fox: – that need to be reforested. Thank you for mentioning that, because actually when you look at the Bonshaw project, the department of transportation has yet failed to clean up the mess in one site with the amount of rubbish and garbage that's still there and has not been fixed.

Irrigation's a big project, and this is something there's some great studies being done on to actually find the effects of irrigation, what actually the effects are of irrigation all around, and especially when it comes to nitrates being penetrated into the water table.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Mr. Speaker, I want to close with two more points. Next thing I think is very important is our soil content and our fiber. We must put a lot more fiber back in to the ground. I actually had a conversation the other day in regards to putting fine wood chips back in the ground, to actually hold moisture in the ground along with other matters.

Lastly, something I'm very excited with is our group in our area of Borden-Kinkora, we have the East Prince environmental group which has come together, a bunch of

farmers, and they're really looking at things to help the agriculture industry: our wetlands, our soil content and the actual farming practice, and I commend them with them. I'm very much looking forward to the committee meeting with this group in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to echo the comments of the Members who preceded me about what an important committee this standing committee is, and what good work we've done and what interesting discussions, and what superlative presentations we've had from all of the witnesses who came forward.

I think, and the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald said this, that it sort of brings home the connectedness of all things. We ended up talking in the fisheries department about a pulp mill in Nova Scotia and how the connections between the effluent from a plant that makes paper can influence the fisheries, potentially, in our waters. Then we looked at how farming can affect the quality of the water, and neonicotinoids and bee health. It always brings home to me how we can't separate things off and put them in silos because everything is connected.

I appreciate all of my colleagues on this committee and it's been a pleasure to work with you. I want to put a special salute out there to the farmers of this province. One of the recommendations was regarding the soil organic matter and the fact that that's been problematic. It's been declining for almost two decades now. I think farmers are absolutely committed to turning that around and some already are.

I think we need to salute our farmers who grow, not only the crops that we all need, but I've spoken to a number of farmers who say: We don't just grow food, we grow soil. They understand that the foundation of everything and of a healthy agricultural industry here on Prince Edward Island is the health of our soil. So I want to salute them

for recognizing that and for working really hard to improve that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour. I've been on the committee now for seven years – as long as I was elected – and it's truly an honour to sit on a committee that represents two of our three major industries right here on PEI. You learn so much about your Island when you have presenters come in and present to the committee. That's fishing and agriculture. I've learned so much.

To the committee members – they were a great group. It's a great committee. Yes, there are disagreements, but that's what it's all about. You don't want to be agreeing all the time, you have disagreements and we work those disagreements out and that's fair. That's what I like. It all goes on the table. This committee, we put a lot on the table and we talk it off the table.

To the fisherman and to the farmers, the changes that I've seen over the last seven years – farmers are great stewards of the land and fishermen are great stewards of the water – environmentally, in both sectors. I'm seeing – just in the last seven years – I'm seeing a change. It's good going into the future and to the fishermen and the farmers going into the future; I wish them all the best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I think everyone in this House and everyone who sat in this House before really understands the value of agriculture and fisheries to this province. We're very fortunate over the last three budgets that we've balanced that and I've said many times: Kudos go to our farmers and our fishermen for the dollars they bring in and keeping our economy rolling.

We need to work with those. I want to give a big compliment to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries that I was very pleased and happy to have been minister for, for almost three years, they have an excellent staff there.

We saw that when they came before us and presented before the committee – work on the soil conservation, it's just unbelievable how over a three-year-period, they basically survey all the soils across the province and see how it's either maturing – getting better, or there's areas that may not be and we can focus on that – and how they brought in now technology where they can use the drones to even do it in a much quicker way – surveying our property, see where the slope of the land may be, where they may need to put in some more berms, some grass waterways, whatever that might be to bring up and hold our soils into place where they should be.

We also saw the fisheries thing as well – the pulp mill. We haven't heard from all the sides on that, but I know that's still on the agenda. We did have the pulp mill people in themselves. We (Indistinct) hear from the fisheries people from Pictou and some other areas there too, but that's an ongoing thing and we will have those people in as well. It's an absolutely fantastic committee where all sides work very well together, but again, as I say, I think we all really realize the true value of agriculture and fisheries to this province and I'm so pleased now to have the opportunity to serve on that committee and we all work together to make sure that agriculture and fisheries remains number one and number two in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to stand and thank the committee for the work that they do. The soil content is something that I keep hearing about in my district and the fact that we need a healthy soil. I commend all the farmers for the work that they do. Our own field was just planted the last couple of days

and we see lots of planting going on right now.

Just a comment about neonicotinoids: I just heard from someone that said the EU voted last week to extend and expand its ban for almost all outside uses of three neonicotinoids in the EU. That's a huge concern for all the pollinators in the province, and for the blueberry industry, and the apple industry, and all of those new industries that we're promoting.

I'd also just like, again, to remind everyone: When we talk about our fishers, about the pulp mill and the proposed pipe for effluent and about the meeting on Sunday at 2:00 p.m. at the PEI Farm Centre. You can hear Joan Baxter speak about her book and all of the issues they've had. So I just want to thank, again, the committee for the work that they do and try for everyone in this House to keep all of those issues top of mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Shall the report carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act*, Bill No. 33, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. minister, could you give us a brief explanation as to what this bill is about?

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the legislation is required to enact commitments made in our recent 2018 budget to lower the small business tax rate. And also, this bill will also increase the basic personal exemption amount so that approximately 2,200 additional Islanders will no longer

have to pay provincial income tax and it could have a positive effect up to 82,000 Islanders.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the 3rd order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 3, *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 2, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act (No. 2)*, Bill No.2, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Deputy Speaker if she wouldn't mind coming and chairing this bill in the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Casey): 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 Workers Compensation Act (No. 2)*. 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 bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: We'll allow her to come to the floor and set-up.

Good morning, could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Kate Marshall Director: My name is Kate Marshall and I'm the director of workplace services with the Workers Compensation Board.

Chair: Welcome.

Minister, before we start reading the bill, would you like to give an opening statement?

Mr. Gallant: Yes, I would.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: Can we wait until the minister gives his opening statement?

Mr. Fox: I'd like to first (Indistinct) qualifications.

Kate Marshall Director: I'm an RN. I have a bachelor of science degree in health studies and I have a master's in health and social services management.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Has the guest have any experience in the area of diagnosing to do with PTSD?

Kate Marshall Director: No, I don't have any experience PTSD.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, would you give an opening statement, please.

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

I do want to provide some opening comments before we get into the debate on the amendments. I would reiterate that these are important amendments and I thank the first responders who brought this to our attention.

As you are aware, there was another version of this bill, last fall and I think that the spirit of the bill was good. I want to thank the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora for his bringing this forward and his passion on this. I also want to thank Jason Woodbury, a member from CUPE, as well as a paramedic, for bringing this forward.

However, I sincerely feel like we have to do more for all Islanders in the workforce. This is why I worked with WCB to expand the scope of the legislation to all traumatic-related – excuse me, trauma-related conditions. This includes PTSD, but it also includes other types of stress-related illnesses incurred at work.

Just to expand: we felt it needed to be expanded. This means more Islanders can benefit.

I will add that this bill reflects the current policy at WCB, which is actively helping workers with these sorts of claims. There is to be no interruption in this coverage while we worked on this legislation.

There are three main changes to the previous bill. I already mentioned the expansion of coverage. I will add that this makes PEI only the second jurisdiction in Canada to have such an expanded coverage model and this is great news for all workers.

The other change is related to who can diagnose these types of illnesses. We surveyed medical professionals and they seem to feel strongly that the best path for patients would be to see a psychiatrist or a psychologist for a comprehensive diagnosis.

They said: patients are welcome to bring their concerns to their family doctor or walk-in clinic and these doctors can bring the process and direct them on how to get the help they need. Or the patient can call WCB and be connected to the proper medical practitioner.

The third change is merely housekeeping related to using the current diagnostic manual for the diagnosis referred to as DSM.

I will also add that this is my intention, if these amendments pass that this bill will be proclaimed as soon as it passes third reading and Royal Assent.

On a final note, I do want to, once again, recognize the work of first responders, nurses and other workers, who advocated so passionately on this topic. We thank everyone for their patience. I'm confident that these amendments do more for Island workers and we are all working towards the same goal here to do what's right for PEI workers.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, I will do as I do with other bills. I'll read the first section and then I'll open the floor for questions on that section.

Mr. Fox: Question Chair.

Chair: 1. Section 6 of the Workers Compensation Act R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. W-7.1, is amended by the addition of the following after subsection (4):

Presumption, trauma- and stressor-related disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder

(4.1) Subject to subsection (4.2), it shall be presumed that personal injury by accident arising out of and in the course of employment has been caused to a worker, unless the contrary is shown, where the worker is

(a) exposed in the course of employment to a traumatic event or events of a type specified in the DSM as a trigger for trauma- and stressor-related disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder; and

(b) diagnosed with a trauma- or stressor-related disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, in accordance with the DSM by a psychiatrist or psychologist –

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: – Application

(4.2) Subsection (4.1) –

Mr. Fox: Chair, a question.

Chair: Hon. member, as I have done in other bills, I've asked that I read the section –

Mr. Fox: You did, didn't you?

Chair: No, sorry –

Mr. Fox: You read section 1, then you dropped into 4.2 –

Chair: No, sorry. If you're following along hon. member, section 1 takes in all of these and then we go to section 2 on the next page.

Mr. Fox: That's fine, Chair, but I have questions on the original statement by the minister.

Chair: Can you hold that –

Mr. Fox: No.

Chair: – until I read the section?

Mr. Fox: No.

Chair: I'm going to ask you to hold it until I read the section.

Mr. Fox: I want to speak (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) try to shut her down (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I want to call the (Indistinct) Speaker (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) shut her down.

Chair: Hon. member, I'm just asking you to be reasonable.

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) asking the Speaker to return to the House.

Chair: What's your question?

Mr. Fox: Minister, I have actually, seven questions on the minister's statement.

Minister: What caused to you to bring this bill on the floor today?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, as you're aware, legislation is very important. We're ready to bring this on the floor before today. Today is the day we chose to bring it on, hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

You wouldn't been anything to do – would this have anything to do with the press conference scheduled for Tuesday by CUPE PEI and the other unions.

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, no, it would not. We didn't make that press conference, so no, it would not.

Mr. Fox: CUPE PEI, the Federation of Labour, the PEI Health Coalition, the PEI Nurses Union, and other groups are all coming together to pressure this government to proclaim Bill No. 102.

Why are you trying to end run the workers and the unions of PEI with Bill No. 2?

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, hon. member.

We are, in no way, disrespecting any unions, yourself or anyone. We, as a government, felt this bill needed to be taken further and diagnosed by the appropriate professionals and use the appropriate book. That is what we're hoping to do with the legislation, these amendments, hon. member.

Mr. Fox: The other day, your office received a courtesy call informing you of this press conference. Your office staff told them that Bill No. 102 is dead. That was their words and that you had Bill No.2.

Question: Why are you continuing to play games on this issue?

Chair: No games.

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, I don't appreciate your comments this is games. We are looking out for the best interest of Islanders here. You should would want to work on this. I commended you on your bill. We just felt that it should be expanded. This is to help all Islanders.

I respect, totally respect and sincerely appreciate the work of first responders, the work of our police force, our nurses; any people that are in positions that could, they could see traumatic stress.

We need to work together and make this a stronger bill. That's why this bill is here today, hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Well, in actual fact you're weakening the bill. It's been 142 days since Bill No. 102 was passed by unanimous consent on the floor of this House. With that, your bill has two major differences from Bill No. 102.

The bill widens the scope of injury by including PTSD under a broader umbrella of trauma and stressor-related disorders. I applaud that change and the unions do agree with that part of it.

However, this bill deliberately narrows the scope of diagnostic tools by excluding doctors from being allowed to diagnose a practice that has been accepted in other provinces in Canada.

This is a significant barrier for Islanders suffering with PTSD. You had 142 days, minister. You didn't consult with one, any union or any first responder on your Bill No. 2. This is not right, and for this reason, we do not support the bill.

Ms. Biggar: Vote on it.

Mr. Fox: With that, I want to bring in some attention to some points that have been brought to our attention in regards to PTSD.

In your bill, you talk about DSM and you dropped DSM5 –

Chair: Do you have a question, hon. member?

Mr. Fox: Yes, I do.

With that, with the dropping – why would you drop DSM5 and only put in DSM?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, the reason for that, as I had indicated, it's a housekeeping ordeal and what it does – it will refer to the current DSM manual. So, you wouldn't have

to change legislation or go to legislation and say: We need to deal with DSM6 or DSM4.

I would like to just kind of go back to your comment. This bill was tabled the first day this Legislature sat, so that meant we could take it to the floor any time. I would just like to point that out to you.

I'd also like to point out, hon. member, you are making it sound like we're doing a harm to people. Since your bill hit the floor last year, since December, there were three cases of PTSD that went to workman's comp. Two of them were looked after under the policy we had in place, and that's why we felt we need to look at this more.

People were still protected. There was nobody got no service, and one is still in the process, hon. member.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Well, why wasn't Bill No. 102 proclaimed and then later amendments put into it? Or that Bill No. 102 changed to deal with whatever you found out?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, we as a government have to do legislation properly. You brought yours forward. As I indicated earlier, we thought your bill was great in spirit. It just needed to be broadened.

Now, we looked out to the professionals and the people at workman's comp and did a scan across the country, and my colleague here can answer some of those questions; were trying to do what's right for all Islanders, and PTSD will be included and traumatic stress disorders will be included under this legislation.

Mr. Fox: Bill No. 102, Chair.

Chair: Hon. member, is there any way that – we're kind of getting into questions related to the bill and not on the statement. Can we finish reading the bill?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I'll let these guys go for questions for now.

Chair: Hon. members, do you have questions on the bill or the statement?

An Hon. Member: Statement.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, do you have your question on the statement?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes.

Thank you, Chair.

What exactly – can a physician diagnose PTSD?

Mr. Gallant: Some can, yes.

Mr. MacEwen: So, why are you taking them out?

Mr. Gallant: Why are we taking them out? Because we did a scan, and I'll let my colleague answer why we're taking them out.

Kate Marshall Director: There are two other jurisdictions in Canada who allow diagnoses of PTSD by physicians and we spoke to those two jurisdictions and they both reported that physicians are not overly comfortable diagnosing this type of psychological condition; not saying that they can't, but saying that they're not overly comfortable.

What tends to happen is that they maybe submit a report that's not comprehensive enough. It's not as per the DSM guide and so what happens is the worker's compensation board in that area ends up reaching out to that physician and facilitating a referral to a psychologist for that worker.

We're not saying that physicians can't send information to us. We're saying that the formal diagnosis should be done by a psychologist or a psychiatrist, and we actually surveyed physicians in PEI and they told us the same thing. They told us that – or the majority told us that they didn't feel they have the expertise to diagnose PTSD. The vast majority told us that they didn't have the time in their practice to diagnose PTSD, and over 80% told us that what they would usually do is see their patient, recognize that they are having psychological or psychiatric

symptoms and refer them to a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

Mr. MacEwen: So, we do have physicians that feel comfortable in diagnosing this?

Kate Marshall Director: Some do, yes.

Mr. MacEwen: My apologies if this has already been done; have we tabled that information you got back? That survey from the – is it from the medical society? Was it a letter sent to all physicians in PEI? Was it general practice?

Kate Marshall Director: It was a survey that we sent, the worker's compensation board sent, to all family physicians.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, did you table that survey? The data?

Mr. Gallant: No.

Mr. MacEwen: Can we have that?

Kate Marshall Director: Sure.

Chair: He'll bring it back.

Mr. MacEwen: We do have physicians that feel confident in diagnosing it, so why are we not letting those physicians diagnose PTSD? If we have physicians in our province that feel comfortable doing it, why aren't we giving them the respect to do that? Because I believe that the physician can make that decision. They could say: I feel comfortable. Or: I don't feel comfortable.

Kate Marshall Director: We want to have a consistent process for all workers, and we want to make sure that we have a full assessment based on the DSM. We don't want to create a loop where a worker is seeing their family physician, they're sending in the report and then we're having to go back and forth to make sure that we have the amount of information that we require to adjudicate the claim.

If we facilitate a referral to a psychologist or the family physician does that, we can make sure that we get that firm diagnosis as per the DSM and we can get that worker on a treatment pathway, which is the important thing.

The other thing that family physicians told us is that they don't – they rely on psychologists and psychiatrists to do that.

Mr. MacEwen: There are also physicians that do diagnose and do prescribe. Many will refer mental health patients to our centres, but many do feel comfortable and do prescribe. So, what you said makes sense for those that: No, I am not going to do that. I am going to push that on.

So, why is it okay when I go to a family physician and they can diagnose and prescribe for one mental health issue, but for the sake of this bill we're not letting them do that? To me, there's like a prejudice of some sort there. Like: Yes, you can do it for this section, but you can't do it because of this bill.

Am I –

Kate Marshall Director: We're not suggesting that family physicians can't see their patients. We're suggesting that we want the most appropriate people to provide the formal diagnosis. We also have issues with people having family physicians and so if you don't have a family physician and you're going to a walk-in clinic or your local practice has a locum, that person might be seeing you for the first time.

We want the workers to have a formal assessment, which we're told by the psychology association can take up to four hours to formally diagnose PTSD. The other issue is that PTSD can't be diagnosed quickly. The DSM states that symptoms need to be present for more than 30 days, and what we see is a very quick diagnosis of PTSD by some family physicians. We want to make sure that we get the right diagnosis by the right professional so that we can start the right treatment, and prescribing is not necessarily the right treatment for PTSD.

Mr. MacEwen: I appreciate that, but it seems to me like you're saying that we don't trust the physician that feels confident because – and then it gets back to an issue: Are we just protecting dollars? Because right now that family physician can diagnose PTSD and can put that patient on a path with a diagnosis or with a treatment, all that, and our system allows them to do that.

But yet, when it comes to benefits or worker's comp now we're saying: Whoa, no. We're not really sure if we trust you with that because now we say: We feel that we need a different path or we don't know if you're actually diagnosing this properly.

I'm trying to figure out the two streams and why the difference, because why are we okay with having a family physician treat that person if they're on their own doing that, but then the second that they're trying to get coverage we then change it all around and we say: Oh no, we're not actually comfortable with that. We definitely have to go see a psychiatrist. Why the difference?

Kate Marshall Director: The difference really is that they are the most appropriate people to diagnose and we want to make sure we get the correct diagnosis in as timely a way as possible so that we can provide benefits and that's consistent with our current policy and we are providing benefits currently.

Mr. MacEwen: Why are we letting physicians diagnose PTSD then if that's not appropriate?

Kate Marshall Director: We're not letting physicians diagnose PTSD. Our policy states that the diagnosis must come from a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

Mr. MacEwen: But earlier you said that they can.

Kate Marshall Director: I'm not saying they can't diagnose. I'm saying that the majority told us that they don't feel they have the expertise.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay, hold on. There are two different things here again. You're saying the majority say they don't have expertise, but what we're saying is: Yes, some physicians feel comfortable diagnosing it, and they can, and we allow that.

Kate Marshall Director: No.

We're not saying that we won't accept information and actually what that will do is trigger the process. So, if you saw your family physician and your family physician felt that you had a psychological or

psychiatric condition that was related to exposure to trauma, they can submit information to us, absolutely, and we welcome that. But when it comes to us accepting a firm diagnosis, we require that to come from a psychiatrist or a psychologist and that's consistent with our current policy.

Mr. MacEwen: You're saying 'we' as in Workers Compensation Board, right?

Kate Marshall Director: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: So as a province, we're okay with that physician diagnosing and prescribing and dealing with continuity of care. As a province we're okay with that, but as Workers Compensation Board, we're not?

Mr. Gallant: That's not what's being said here, hon. member.

Mr. MacEwen: Can a family physician –

Chair: Can you let the minister answer?

Mr. Gallant: At this point, no.

Mr. MacEwen: You're saying a family physician cannot diagnose PTSD in PEI?

Mr. Gallant: (Indistinct) the appropriate people. A psychologist or a psychiatrist and that's what's in the policy.

Mr. MacEwen: Can we have an intervention from the health minister on this?

Mr. Gallant: You folks wanted to add them to it.

Mr. MacEwen: What do you mean 'you folks'?

Mr. Gallant: Your member and his bill.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm Sidney. I'm not 'you folks'.

Mr. Gallant: Your side of the House (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: No, no. It's me.

Mr. Gallant: Okay.

Mr. MacEwen: Can the health minister have an intervention? Can a family physician diagnose PTSD? It's just a simple question.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: I guess when it comes to issues of that nature, family doctors, I'm sure, would make referrals to confirm whatever they're thoughts are. As far as areas of, I'll say, mental health issues, we're looking to have the person see the right professional at the right time and the right place. So, doctors are part of that process. They determine that this individual does have an issue and then quite often they will do the referrals.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm still not getting the answer to my question. Can a family physician diagnose PTSD? It's that simple. I know they can be part of the process, they can refer. I just want to know if they can.

Chair: Can we come through the Chair, hon. member.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: It is really difficult for me to determine what a family doctor would be prepared to treat. They could determine that they feel this would be a case of PTSD, but whether they would be comfortable in treating it or not, that would be up to that individual or their office, or if it's a collaborated process, they may be able to refer to within their own offices.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Is this related to the minister's opening statement?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, and a few questions just as some responses.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacKay: First off, the survey that was done to PEI physicians, how many of the physicians responded?

Kate Marshall Director: There were 35 physicians who responded.

Mr. MacKay: And how many physicians are on PEI?

Kate Marshall Director: We sent information to about 100.

Mr. MacKay: So only 35 out of 100 responded back?

Kate Marshall Director: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Out of those 35 that responded, how many felt that they could diagnose PTSD?

Kate Marshall Director: 20%

Mr. MacKay: 20% of the 35? Okay.

A question I have – the huge delays we're seeing in mental health right now. People are waiting extraordinary times to access a psychiatrist/a psychologist. Does this not concern you regarding this if we have to go that route?

Kate Marshall Director: Wait times are concerning for sure.

What we will be doing is creating a network of psychologists. We use private practice psychologists as well and we pay for that service, so we pay for that assessment that that worker has and we subsequently pay for any treatment when their claim is approved. So, yes, access is challenging, but we will be doing our best to create a network of psychologists that we can access in order to provide service in a timely way.

Mr. MacKay: So, I guess just going back in time a bit, I want to know what took place when we left last fall regarding Bill No. 102 to now. Who did you consult on changing the bill, I guess, to making these amendments. Who reached out to you, minister, or who did you consult from then to now?

Mr. Gallant: As I indicated earlier, hon. member, legislation is very important and it's important –

Mr. MacKay: Definitely.

Mr. Gallant: – to get it right and it's important for all Islanders.

So, it was collaboration with staff at workman's comp and my staff to expand this legislation, as we had mentioned earlier, on these three points.

Mr. MacKay: So minister, the only people you consulted was your staff and workers comp?

Mr. Gallant: That's correct.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Minister, why wouldn't you have felt that the first responders and the nurses, et cetera, were consulted on these changes?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, we felt, as I said earlier, this is expanding the legislation. It was making it better. It's not that we didn't respect their input. Their input was given when the hon. member was on the floor here – the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora. So we were expanding it to make it better for all Islanders.

Mr. MacKay: So if it is in sense making it better, I would like to know what the first responders and nurses – if they had seen this bill and said: You know what? Thank you, minister. Yes, you did make this better.

Have they reached out to you on this?

Mr. Gallant: No. And as we go through this bill, they'll hear it. No, they didn't reach out to me either on this. Excuse me, hon. member, there was a lot of media chatter on Twitter that I did not respond to and some of that came from one of your hon. members and some of it came from someone else.

Mr. Myers: Poor you. Really – like, poor you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, are you all done?

Mr. MacKay: No.

Mr. Gallant: I'm not saying anything about 'poor me'.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) crying: Poor me, poor me – people want this and I didn't want to respond to (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. member, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque has the floor.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

So minister, I guess this is where my concern is. These are people that live with this every day. They see things that hopefully none of us will ever have to see and I'm just amazed that you wouldn't have taken a couple hours, set up a meeting with this group, and went over this bill, right? Went over this bill, read it to them and so forth and let them have some input and some advice on it. I'm just amazed that these people haven't been listened to and I'm just wondering why you didn't consult them.

Mr. Gallant: We heard their concerns before this bill came forward and as I indicated to you earlier, we were trying to expand the bill to make it better for them because PTSD was staying in there and some more trauma-related illnesses, so we were trying to make the bill better.

Mr. MacKay: I guess here's my point: If it is in sense better and you're trying to make it better, why weren't they consulted. So no different than when a new piece of legislation comes to the floor, quite often ministers will reach out to us, right? They'll come and meet us up in the second or third floor, we'll sit down, we'll go over the bill, ask questions back and forth, and have some input on it.

But what you're saying right now, you're making the bill stronger, but you've yet to take the time to ask any of these first responders or nurses or anybody affected with this bill and get their opinion on it.

Mr. Gallant: Well, to answer your question: We relied on the specialists that deal with this when (Indistinct) bill.

Mr. MacKay: So you relied on the specialists which you're saying was your staff and workers comp. That's the specialists?

Mr. Gallant: And they consulted with different people and they did a jurisdictional scan, so yes, there was information gathered before. Yes.

Mr. MacKay: I was under the impression no one else was consulted, so who were the people that your staff and workers comp reached out to?

Kate Marshall Director: When we changed the policy in 2016, which is actually very consistent with the legislation, we did consult widely and specifically with first responder groups. I think we had the most feedback that we've ever had for any policy that we've changed. The elements of the bill are consistent with policy.

The consultation was done in 2016, when we changed the policy.

Mr. MacKay: Final question, Chair, then you can move on.

Thank you. In 2016, you met with them and you listened to their concerns and so why wouldn't you have thought to do it this time, after everything that has taken place? You met with them in 2016, and if this bill, is, in a sense, making it stronger, why wouldn't we have met with them in 2018 and talked to them, two years later?

Mr. Gallant: The PTSD was in the bill and that's what they wanted. Maybe, hindsight. Maybe we could have me. We just thought we were making it a better bill, and we still do. We believe we're making the proper legislation for all Islanders.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I noticed that Jason Woodbury is here today. He's been a great advocate for PTSD and the bill that the Member from Borden-Kinkora had taken forward. I give him a lot of credit for the work that he's done, along with the member from Borden, the work he's done on this topic.

What was his response when you met with him about this bill you're putting forward?

Mr. Gallant: I haven't – we didn't meet. We had a casual chat over dinner at the declaration of the Day of Mourning.

Mr. Myers: Perhaps, it's just my opinion, but Jason would be one of the primary resources in this province fighting for this type of protection. I met him, last year, through the member from Borden, when the other bill was on the floor. He's a great, not only a great advocate, but a great resource for workers in this province.

Why wouldn't you take the time to meet with somebody like Jason over a bill that clearly he would be an Island expert on the employee-side of it?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, I certainly respect Jason Woodbury and I respect his views. He sat on the floor here and expressed what he would have liked to have seen as a bill. We took it a step further thinking that it would help everyone and he would be happy with the PTSD staying in it. This bill is to help all Islanders. I can't say it enough. It's an expanded bill.

Mr. Myers: That's not really what I'm asking. You can take what he said on the floor here during the other bill, and paraphrase it into your bill and it strengthened it, but, if you were, in fact, believe, in your own mind, that you were strengthening the bill, why wouldn't you meet with Jason and ask for his opinion straight up?

It's pretty hard to take, what he said on a completely separate bill into consideration under a bill that goes quite a bit further especially when it comes to the diagnosis side of PTSD. I don't understand why you wouldn't make a renewed effort to bring him to the table on it.

Mr. Gallant: As I'd indicated, hon. member, I would have thought that he would have been okay with it being expanded because he was still getting the coverage he was looking for, for the PTSD for first responders.

Mr. Myers: I also see Carl Pursey here, who has been a tremendous advocate for workers, not only in Prince Edward Island, but across Canada. He's well known for the work that he has done.

When you met with him to discuss your bill, what was his take on it?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, I didn't meet with Carl Pursey.

Mr. Myers: I would think that he would be one of the premier advocates for the worker in eastern Canada.

Why would you chose not to meet with him?

Mr. Gallant: Madam Chair, as I had indicated earlier, like, you know, the hon. member can say these things and ask these questions. This is about Islanders, okay?

Carl Pursey and Jason Woodbury are Islanders. I'm an Islander. We're all looking out for the best interest of Islanders. That's what we were trying to do with this bill. That's what they were trying to do when they brought their bill forward. We expanded the bill in the hope that everybody would be happy with this bill and that we could work together and pass it.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Myers: I guess the reason I bring up Jason Woodbury and Carl Pursey is not only because they're here in the gallery today, but it's because they would be primary resources here on Prince Edward Island as advocates for the worker. That's why, I would think that they actually represent large groups of workers.

They are, definitely, Islanders and they also represent large groups of Islanders. They would actually be spokespeople for large groups of Islanders.

If you didn't meet with people who represent large groups of the labour force of Prince Edward Island, who did you meet with that is directly concerned with the worker part of our workforce?

Mr. Gallant: As I indicated we met with staff and workman's comp, who have the workers at the best interest. And to put in policies that are fair and adequately protect (Indistinct) in this province.

Mr. Myers: No, I guess, no disrespect to the staff at workers comp, but there would be plenty of people on Prince Edward Island

who would feel, over the years, they haven't been treated overly fairly by workers comp. I can't say whether or not they have. That's not really my job, but I've heard a lot of stories.

While, yeah, it's important for you to hear from the staff of workers compensation when you're making changes, in order to be fair to all Islanders, which you say, this is about all Islanders, you have to actually talk to Islanders, who aren't being paid by workers compensation. This sounds like this is some sort of a policy planning for workers compensation to more easily get the diagnosis that suits them versus the diagnosis that suits Islanders.

I'm wondering why you would choose to only pick the money side of the situation when you consulted and not the people-side of the situation?

Mr. Fox: Good question.

Mr. Gallant: We didn't look at it as picking money side, we looked at the right people doing the right diagnosis.

People down at the workman's comp and workman's comp deals with people. I can't get into any specifics, but we're talking about people that really didn't get coverage before. We're talking about what's in the best interest of Islanders with this legislation.

Under the policy that has been in place since 2016, as my colleague mentioned, people looked after through there. There was a great input and since December, two people have been approved. One more in the process.

The process is working. This just solidifies the policy that's in place now; getting it into legislation.

Mr. Myers: The curious side of me would wonder, when you're talking about the best interest of Islanders, if you were talking about injured workers or taxpayers. I think there's definitely a separation when it comes to workers compensation.

I want to talk about the doctors for a second because if 20% of 35 respondents said they were willing to do this type of diagnosis, that's seven doctors here on Prince Edward

Island. If, in fact, there's 100, which was stated here earlier. I applied basic math to that, I could probably guess that 20 would actually do the diagnosis if they had all responded. That's what my math teacher would have told me over years, so I'm going to apply that and say, 20 is quite a few doctors, who could do the diagnosis.

Why wouldn't you make an extra effort to confirm that that is the case because 20 doctors would be, I would think, a pretty good number of Prince Edward Island for diagnosis of PTSD.

Kate Marshall Director: We reached out to as many physicians as we could. And, while some told us that they had the expertise to diagnose, 80% told us that they didn't have the time to diagnose.

A diagnosis of PTSD requires an in-depth assessment. That can take up to four hours to reach through various different clinical interviews and exams and the use of various tools as per the DSM.

While there are family physicians who feel that they have the expertise PTSD or other trauma or stressor-related disorders, we felt that this was a relatively small proportion of family physicians and we don't want to put that added burden on them. Nor, do we want to get an incorrect diagnosis because a family physician doesn't have the time to do that full assessment and then go down a treatment pathway that might not be the right one. There is more than one trauma and stressor-related disorder.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

When we were debating Bill No. 102 here a few months ago, I brought up some concerns. One of them has been dealt with, the very simple housekeeping of making it just DSM so that we're dealing with the most recent, the most up-to-date version of that book, and I'm glad that was done.

I'm also pleased that you have expanded this to, along with Manitoba, now be the only two provinces that cover all workers for PTSD, or the presumption of PTSD. I was a little surprised but delighted that you've

done that. I think that's very forward-looking.

It seems to me that the sticking point here lies around the diagnostic limitations that some people feel not having GPs in there will create. Now, I was a dentist. I was a general practitioner. I was not a specialist; and I could, if I wanted to, I could have taken out wisdom teeth and a whole bunch of things which are covered by specialists, but dentists by their training have some experience in that and can do it. So I was able to, and I did, but I monitored myself and I did things that I felt was capable of and had good skills in and would offer good services. Some things I did not do, so I sort of self-monitored.

Here we're talking about a very – a life-changing decision that has to be made on behalf of a patient, a worker. It's my understanding that medical professionals need to be trained specifically in DSM in order to provide the expertise to make that diagnosis. I understand that there are some general practitioners who feel that they have the skills and the knowledge and the expertise to do that.

However, I think it's the wording here that we're not clear on, and when we say general practitioners can do this, are we talking about they have that skill set or do they have the statutory authority to do it? You're saying with this bill that we are not going to give them the statutory authority in order to do that. I understand that, and I understand the thinking behind that, and the fact that medical professionals do need specific training in DSM.

But my concern with that, and it's sort of been talked around a little bit, is whether we're going to create the potential for big wait times for people in order to be diagnosed so they can access this. Can you give us an idea as to whether that's a legitimate concern?

Kate Marshall Director: Yes. I think it is a legitimate concern; and again, I'll speak to what other jurisdictions have done. Other jurisdictions, large jurisdictions, have psychologists and psychiatrists on staff. What we would propose to do is create a network of private practice psychologists that we can access so that we can obtain

assessment and treatment in a timely way for Island workers.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's my understanding on PEI that we have quite an acute shortage of psychologists here; certainly psychiatrists but also psychologists, and we're talking in the private sector then we're talking psychologists.

I'm wondering whether you can give any sense of – no, let me put this another way. Currently, and you've mentioned, minister, that there have been three cases that have come forward to the workers comp between when Bill 102 was debated and today, and that two of them were covered by policy. If we create a waiting list for diagnosis, is that going to – will we be creating more barriers, or would we be able to move forward in the same way that we have done in the last six months?

Kate Marshall Director: We'll be doing pretty much exactly the same as we've been doing in the last six months, in that our policy is very consistent with the proposed legislation. When we receive information, usually from a family physician, that someone is struggling, we try to facilitate an appointment with a psychologist. That's how we've been handling it to date, and that's been working fairly well for us; but we want to formalize that, and create that network of people who are genuinely interested in, or more specialized in, diagnosing and treating even in the psychology field, have a special interest in this area. It's our hope that we hear from psychologists who do, and that we can create a relationship with them.

Chair: Hon. member, just before we go on.

Hon. members, we seem to be asking a lot of questions related to the bill, and I asked at the beginning if we would read clause by clause. You asked me, said yes you would prefer that. Now it seems to be that the questions are full on to the bill.

Would you like me to forego the reading of clause by clause and just open it up for questions?

Some Hon. Members: Yes. (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Mine's on the statement.

Mr. Trivers: Mine's on the statement, too.

Chair: Sure, okay, that's fine; but we're going to forego the reading of clause by clause and just continue in the line of questioning.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Just a final question, and again, I hope I say that we have sort of zeroed in on what seems to be the contentious part of this bill. So my question again is: When we create this network of private psychologists that we're going to tap into in order to make these diagnoses, do you have any sense of what – I mean, I realize this is a difficult question – but what sort of waiting period we could expect? Are we talking about months, are we talking about years?

Kate Marshall Director: Our average over the last two years is 75 days to get that firm diagnosis and benefits to that worker. The shortest timeframe is 34 days; so bearing in mind that PTSD can't be diagnosed until symptoms have been present for 30 days; that's four days after that. I guess it depends on the interest that we get when we go out to create the network. So it is a difficult question to answer, but that's kind of our average right now.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure. I know I said last question. This is my last question, I promise.

Do you expect that that wait time is going to be increased or decreased when you bring in the measures that you're talking about?

Kate Marshall Director: Based on what we heard from other jurisdictions that have gone down this road, significantly decreased.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you for your patience.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

My question really is around the fact that Bill 102 is already in place. It had Royal Assent. We still don't know why –

Chair: It didn't have Royal Assent.

Mr. Trivers: – it wasn't proclaimed.

Chair: It didn't have Royal Assent, did it?

Mr. Trivers: According to the website of the Legislative Assembly it has Royal Assent, I thought, but I could be mistaken.

Chair: It wasn't proclaimed, hon. member.

Mr. Fox: It had Royal Assent, but wasn't (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: It has Royal Assent, that's what I'm saying. Its status is at Royal Assent.

An Hon. Member: It's passed Royal Assent. What's that mean?

Chair: Hon. Member, it does have Royal Assent. It just hasn't been proclaimed.

Mr. Trivers: Exactly what I said.

Chair: Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Trivers: So –

Mr. Myers: Thanks for clearing that up.

Some hon. Members: [Laughter]

Chair: I just wanted to make sure we were on the same wavelength.

Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. One thing is, Bill 102 and Bill 2, the one that we're discussing right now on the floor, are virtually identical. You don't have to take my word for it. The Canadian Union of Public Sector Employees did a jurisdictional comparison in which they included both those bills. They included legislation in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia as well, and they said in their memorandum that this bill is almost identical to Bill 102.

So we have Bill 102 that we debated in this House. We voted on it. It passed. It received Royal Assent. Yet you chose not to amend that bill – as you say, expend it and make it better – which I think would be the normal course of action.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: You chose to introduce –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) kill it.

Ms. Biggar: You didn't want to do it.

Mr. Trivers: – a whole new bill instead of bringing these amendments forward. I just don't understand why you would do that. Could you tell me why you didn't amend Bill 102 instead of bringing forward Bill 2?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Is this some sort of political play? Like, I don't understand.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

An Hon. Member: Couldn't amend a Royal Assent bill.

Kate Marshall Director: We didn't – well, one of the reasons is that we didn't want to create confusion. So if Bill 102 moves forward with physicians able to diagnose and then we amend it as quickly as possible after and psychologists and psychiatrists can diagnose, then we create confusion for the public.

Mr. Trivers: That explanation just simply doesn't make sense to me. Why can't you – the bill has not been proclaimed. Again, the question is why it hasn't been proclaimed. We can talk about that later; but it's not proclaimed, it has Royal Assent. Why wouldn't you amend the current bill? There'd be no confusion between anybody. You amend the bill. It hasn't been proclaimed yet anyhow. So if you amend it, then everybody can move forward.

I don't understand why you felt the need to introduce a virtually identical bill, unless you're playing some sort of political game or something. I don't understand why you would do that.

Mr. R. Brown: The expert (Indistinct) save time (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. member!

Kate Marshall Director: Our understanding is that you can't do that –

Mr. Myers: Get your name on the list (Indistinct)

Kate Marshall Director: You can't amend –

Mr. MacEwen: Not five to one (Indistinct)

Kate Marshall Director: – a bill after Royal Assent.

Ms. Biggar: Correct.

Kate Marshall Director: Without it being proclaimed first, and so when it's proclaimed it's law, which means physicians can diagnose and then we amend and we say only psychologists and psychiatrists can diagnose, and so there's a period of time in between where Bill No. 102 is law.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, you're a former speaker of the House, are you allowed to amend a bill that has Royal Assent? Do you know?

Chair: I would have to get some advice on that, hon. member.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, are you stating that as a fact? That you know that for sure or you think that you're not allowed to amend a bill with Royal Assent?

Kate Marshall Director: That is my understanding.

Mr. Trivers: Your understanding?

I mean, minister, did you even look at amending the existing bill? Why wouldn't she even attempt to do that?

Mr. Gallant: It's my understanding it would have had to come back to the floor of the Legislature to amend it, and as I said earlier, we looked at this as serious legislation, not that theirs wasn't as serious. It's important and we have to get it right and we want to broaden the coverage for all Islanders.

Now, there is other trauma-related stress disorders that happen to people in the workforce. PTSD stayed there, we just expanded that and the bill is not identical because we're taking the physicians and saying it has to be a psychiatrist or a psychologist, and we're pin-pointing that it has to be that it has to be the most recent DSM, not five, four, three. That alleviates it having to come back to the Legislature (Indistinct) have to deal with (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Well, just for the record, I'm not really satisfied with the response and I think there might have been a procedural error here to table a bill that's identical to a bill that's already there, that really should have been amended, and I would like to put that forward somehow for look at by the Legislative Assembly staff, whether that's through the Speaker or the Clerk or how that works. I don't know how you do that.

Chair: We're getting an update.

Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Pardon me?

Chair: I'm getting an update.

Thanks.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great.

Thank you.

So, I won't pursue this line of questioning any longer.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

I'm listening here this afternoon on this bill, or these two bills, whatever we want to call them.

Minister, I spent 36 years as a volunteer in the fire service. I have many friends who served in the service. I have many friends who served in the RCMP, city police –

An Hon. Member: Nurses.

Mr. LaVie: – nurses.

Minister, I've seen a lot of stuff in 36 years. A lot of stuff you don't want to see, and I don't say that to brag. I don't say that to brag, for sure. I can remember every incident I went through, minister, and a lot of friends went through the same thing. A lot of friends with PTSD, and what I'm hearing this afternoon, it's either over psychiatrists or it's over physicians. It's over your bill; it's over the Member from Borden-Kinkora's bill.

Minister, I am disappointed. A lad came in with the bill and poured his heart into it. I see PTSD all around me. Minister, I don't understand – is this a political ploy? I don't know. But, I will have questions on why you're sitting in the Committee of the Whole House now with this bill.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. LaVie: We're talking about –

Chair: Do you have questions?

Mr. LaVie: – we're talking about –

Chair: – hon. member –

Mr. LaVie: – the lives of Islanders, first responders. We're talking about Islanders. Here we are arguing over doctors, psychiatrists. You don't have enough psychiatrists for what –

Chair: Hon. member –

Mr. LaVie: – you've got.

Chair: – do you have a question?

Mr. LaVie: How are we going to have enough psychiatrists –

Chair: Hon. member, do you have a question?

Mr. LaVie: – for – I've got the floor –

Chair: And I'm –

Mr. LaVie: – I have the floor. This is serious –

Mr. Myers: Indeed, he has –

Chair: Yes, it is –

Mr. Myers: – the floor.

Mr. LaVie: I have the floor.

Chair: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: This floor is mine! No. This is serious. I have been listening to this now for over an hour. I'm the service. I'm a first responder. I've seen a lot of stuff and a lot of people are suffering right now, and not getting the help. Here we are arguing over two bills.

All you had to do – you never contacted anybody. You never consulted with anybody. Here you are on the floor of the House, you can't answer the questions.

Chair, you can have the floor.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, hon. Chair.

I agree. This is serious. This is very serious. I appreciate the debate on all sides of the House on this.

I'm going to speak today to my experience as a daughter of a serviceman, who served this country for 30 years; and who I watched over the last 30 years, no, actually over the last 53 years because it's been all my life, struggle through one misdiagnosis after another misdiagnosis, after another misdiagnosis. Going to family doctors who wanted to help. Who wanted to help him but who were not trained in mental health issues; not mental health professionals.

My father struggled my entire life. It wasn't until he reached out to Veterans Affairs Canada, who have extensive knowledge and extensive experience dealing with people, who are suffering from PTSD. Right on their website they say: if you suspect you have PTSD talk to your doctor and get a referral to a mental health professional who will determine if you have PTSD. We cannot continue to leave this up to our family doctors, who have extensive practices and may or may not feel they have experience to treat this. We cannot let one person slip through.

By having this legislation, I feel strongly, very strongly that we are protecting Islanders. As a daughter I have experience. I would never want and I can only imagine the horrors that each and every one of our service men and women and our frontline responders and first responders face.

Hon. member from Souris-Elmira, I can tell you're passionate about this. I can tell it's in your heart and I can tell you want the best.

I do not think that any side of the House here should be playing politics on something so serious. I do not believe that anyone in this House is playing politics. We want what is best for our first responders and if we can strengthen that bill and we can do anything we can to make sure there are no misdiagnosis – when someone is suffering from PTSD, they can be suffering from many other issues, as well. They can be suffering from depression. They can show signs of depression. They can show signs of anxiety. They can show signs of rage. I've experienced this all through my life. They can show signs of addiction.

When they go to a family doctor, who, again, has broad knowledge of many things, but not an expert in any, and they go in and they say what they're suffering from or what they think they are suffering from then that doctor is going to treat them for that. They are going to treat them for the depression. Or they are going to treat them for the anxiety or they are going to treat them for the addictions and they may not get the help for PTSD. They might have to wait 54 years before they are diagnosed with PTSD. No person. No family should ever have to suffer that.

As much as I appreciate the debate and I appreciate the passion on both sides of this House, I appeal to every hon. member in this House to pass this so we can have Royal Assent and we can proclaim this bill and not one worker on Prince Edward Island will have to suffer for another day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I want to thank you, first, for bringing this forward because it is very important, I think, that we recognize, not only the work that our EMS frontline, first line responders, our firemen, our police officers, but also those nurses that work in the emergency of our hospitals, or that are out attending to other catastrophic events that might occur within our province. We have a lot of other factors that may play into why – or victims of violence, Mr. Speaker, Madam Chair, as well. They suffer from PTSD.

It can be pretty traumatic. If you're a child that was sexually abused or a woman that was violently abused by a partner or someone, you can suffer from PTSD. I think and I congratulate you minister for expanding the scope of this bill. Those people deserve, not that one deserves it over the other, all people that have suffered that kind of trauma in their lives deserve the opportunity to be able to be diagnosed and move forward with having that addressed,

I was also a member of CUPE. I applaud the great work that CUPE does, but I know that CUPE does not pick one group over the other to represent.

I have a question because there was a, sort of, underlying, nefarious comment made that this is to try to exclude people from being diagnosed.

You may not have the statistic, but maybe you can bring it back. Overall, at workers compensation, how many claims do you get a year, how many of those are denied?

If you have that, I don't know.

Kate Marshall Director: For psychological injury or –

Ms. Biggar: That –

Kate Marshall Director: – (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Maybe, just in totality. There seems to be a perception that the role of workers comp is to deny anybody that comes. If you're coming here, we're going to deny you.

Let's put that out there. You hear it.

Kate Marshall Director: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Let's not pretend that that's not said.

The role of workers compensation is there to protect workers. I'd like to have those statistics if I may.

Kate Marshall Director: Last year, we approved 91% of claims. This year, so far, I think we have denied nine claims. The vast majority of claims are approved. For psychological injury, since our policy change, we have accepted 90%.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Again, minister, I don't think we need to – and I think we have included a lot – the bill that came forward before was a start that to open this discussion, as well, right? I think this one goes beyond. I congratulate the Member from Borden-Kinkora and for Jason and Carl for the work they've done on that.

I know Carl and Jason, also would think I would hope that nurses in the field; others across the field also deserve to be covered under this. I think, by moving forward, ensuring that they can get that professional diagnosis from a psychologist is key.

Chair: Hon. members, there was a procedural question asked a few minutes ago. That answer is ready for me to receive. I'm going to just step away from the Chair for about two minutes; get that advice, which is waiting for me outside the door. I'll come right back.

Don't go anywhere. We're recessed for about two minutes.

[Recess]

Chair: Hon. members, we'll reconvene.

The question that was put to the Chair was that: If a bill has received Royal Assent, but has not yet been proclaimed, is it amendable?

The advice that I have received is: Yes, it is amendable. If a bill has received Royal Assent, it forms part of the act even though

it has not yet been proclaimed into force and as a result of it being part of the act, it is amendable by the act of this Legislative Assembly and we've seen other examples of that throughout the years. But I thank you for the question.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, I want just a further discussion on it (Indistinct), if you don't mind.

Mr. Roach: Chair?

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering if –

Chair: Hon. member, just a moment.

Mr. Trivers: I was going to ask the minister if he could explain why you're not actually amending the *Workers Compensation Act* as it now exists with Bill No. 102 passed. What you're doing is you're pretending Bill No. 102 didn't even exist at all, the act was never amended.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Myers: There has to be a clause in there (Indistinct)

Chair: Do you have an answer for it?

Can you repeat your question?

Mr. Gallant: We've already answered that question.

Mr. Trivers: So Bill No. 102 passed, it received Royal Assent and it amended the *Workers Compensation Act*, so Bill No. 2 would have to amend the version of the *Workers Compensation Act* that contains Bill No. 102 because it's passed and received Royal Assent, but it doesn't. It ignores Bill No. 102 completely like it never existed, so I think there's a huge procedural problem here because we've got a bill that passed this House, the *Workers Compensation Act* was amended, it received Royal Assent, so I think this entire bill is completely out of order.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, are you aware that the Canadian Medical Association reports in their journals that the vast majority of patients of family physicians will not and do not disclose PTSD symptoms to their doctors?

Mr. Gallant: I was not aware of that until you just pointed it out. It had been discussed when they did their (Indistinct) – forgive me, I have a problem with that word – when they did the scan across the country.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

And as with the Member from Souris-Elmira, I, too, was a first responder for almost 37 years and as a first responder, I have attended other first responder's residences when they were in suffering from severe PTSD. I've sat in a garage with an individual who had a shotgun in his mouth. I talked him out of taking that shotgun out of his mouth and I took him to Unit 9 – I did not take him to see a family physician. I think that was the appropriate thing to do. I have also seen colleagues take their own life who have been suffering from PTSD. I don't think it's something that should be friggged around with. I withdraw that word, Chair. I don't think that it's anything that should be taken lightly by any member of this legislation – every MLA in here.

Are you also aware, Chair, that the National Institute of Mental Health, when they ask who should diagnose PTSD, they say a doctor who has experience helping people with mental illnesses, such as a psychiatrist or a psychologist – should be the only ones to diagnose PTSD. Are you aware of that?

Mr. Gallant: Yes, we are.

Mr. Roach: Thank you. That's all I have to say, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I just wondered if there was a jurisdictional scan done in Nova Scotia as far as comparing what you would like to proceed with, versus what they do in Nova Scotia.

Kate Marshall Director: Well we know that most other jurisdictions limit their presumptive clauses to PTSD and there's only two other jurisdictions that allow a diagnosis by a physician – and that's Manitoba and Alberta. Saskatchewan is the only other jurisdiction who has expanded the range of diagnosis that can be accepted under the presumption.

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Chair: Hon. members, the hour has been called.

Mr. Gallant: Madam Chair, 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 Workers Compensation Act (No. 2)*, 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. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, May 4th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good weekend, everybody.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, May 4th, at 2:00 p.m.