

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Thursday, 17 May 2018

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome colleagues here and those people joining us in the gallery and watching from afar.

I'll start by recognizing Annie Boyle, a great volunteer in our community with the kidney foundation; Camp Gencheff, I'm sure other tickets she sold me over time. A great supporter of political party, too. Thank you, Annie.

We've got Danny and Shirley Murphy from St. Lawrence in the big west. Great to see them here. We've got the Myers from the east.

We've got Theo Fleury, a great athlete and advocate for justice. I expect we'll be hearing more from you today, sir. We want to welcome you here and welcome you back to our province.

We've got Brian Deveaux in the back gallery from the Souris area. Another contributor to political life in the province. I appreciate what he does in that area.

This week is the graduation week for Holland College, including tonight at the Alberton campus. We certainly congratulate all of the teachers and staff and, above all, the students and graduates from the various Holland College programs.

May I, in that vein, recognize Dr. Brian McMillan, who has served as Holland College president since 2005, and has indicated that he will be completing his mandate at the end of this calendar year, meaning that he'll have served for 13.5 years. A time of significant development of program, and student body and reputation for Holland College. We congratulate and recognize his good efforts. Again, recognize what Holland College means in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise here today, as well, to, not only greet those that may be watching on EastLink or on the Internet, but also to welcome some representatives from tremendous advocacy groups here on PEI.

I know we have representatives here today from Turn on the Lights. Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark is also here from Island Mothers Helping Mothers; tremendous organization that has done wonderful work all across PEI over the last couple of years.

Karen Jackson, representing the Union of Public Sector Employees and many other supporters here in the gallery here today.

Of course, I'd like to offer a special welcome to Theo Fleury and Dawn Roberts, as well, who has joined him. Thank you for coming here for a very special reason today.

Annie Boyle, of course, who I've had many opportunities to buy tickets from. Can't say no to Annie. The causes that Annie supports, whether it be the kidney foundation or Camp Gencheff, are causes that are very near and dear to my heart. Annie just has to call my house and either leave a message and she knows that I'll be returning a call to buy tickets.

I had the honour of attending a fabulous event last night at the Rodd Royalty hotel. It was the 12th annual Evening of the Stars. They had, pretty much, a sold-out event. Of course the Evening of the Stars is in support of the Stars for Life Foundation for Autism. I'm very happy to announce that last night, this organization raised over \$70,000 for their work that they do, the very important work that they do in our community, Island-wide.

In closing, I'd also to congratulate the 261 Island students that received their Duke of Edinburgh awards last night at Holland College. I'd like to congratulate them for their hard work and dedication to their

studies and this wonderful achievement that they have been bestowed with.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to welcome everybody to the gallery here today. I would also like to make mention of a couple of events.

I don't know how many of you have made it to any of the Special Olympic championship bowling that's going on just now. I popped over there yesterday morning and if you need your spirits lifted it's the place to go. It's just a fantastic atmosphere. Everybody supporting everybody else. I have had the pleasure of watching Team PEI for a little while yesterday morning. It was just a joyous event. I have to particularly congratulate Degan Hackett, who had a personal best in the Special Olympics national bowling championship. He shot 209 yesterday in the evening, PEI team – his best ever. To do that under the pressure of a national championship, I think, is just fantastic.

I also would like to mention today that this is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. It's a yearly event, which brings attention to the discrimination and the violence, which LGBTQ people still face in so many countries around the world. At least 75 countries criminalize same-sex relationships. In up to 10 of those, same-sex conduct is punishable by death. It's also a day to celebrate and recognize the advancements in the LGBTQ community. I think we need to do that.

I think, I particularly, want to mentioned the PEI Public Schools Branch and the decision they made yesterday to cancel school trips to Camp Seggie because of the discriminatory nature of their hiring practices there. I think they deserve great credit for making that courageous choice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today. Eddie Lund and Annie Boyle. It's great what you do for the community.

I'd also like to welcome Theo Fleury to the Island. I watched you in Calgary Flames and I always appreciated your talent. Now, I appreciate your community service, sir, so welcome to Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome all the folks in the public gallery. Mr. Fleury, I watched you play hockey, too. Welcome to PEI.

I'd also like to mention Shirley and Danny Murphy, constituents of mine from up in the St. Lawrence area. And their friend Annie Boyle, who I just met there a few minutes ago. That's interesting, too, that Shirley, she shares a name with my late father, that was his name; a good old Irish male name, as well.

I'd also like to welcome all the folks that are home watching on EastLink or on t.v. Welcome to our proceedings here today. Enjoy.

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

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

I want to recognize Karen Jackson of the Union of Public Sector Employees. I was the secretary treasurer there for a couple of years.

Last night, I attended an event. It was a full house and the speeches were visionary and forward-thinking –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, it wasn't full.

Mr. R. Brown: – of course, it was a Liberal leaders' dinner and it was a fantastic event.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) at the Sherwood motel.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. R. Brown: No, the Delta.

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

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

Sorry, I didn't hear you there over all the squawking going on.

I'd like to rise, as well, to welcome Annie Boyle, who is a constituent of mine, to the Chamber here today. It's always great to see Annie, even when she is coming asking for a cheque or a donation.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Reach Foundation

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today and recognize the Reach Foundation, which is located in Stratford, and for the great work that they do.

The Reach Centre is a safe, stigma-free daily environment for youth, who are in recovery from addiction and mental health issues.

I have seen firsthand the positive effect that the Reach Foundation has had on Island youth. The Reach Foundation provides an opportunity for Island youth to learn new life skills; set personal goals through a work experience program; and develop a plan for continued education surrounded by support and fellow youth, who are also experiencing similar lifestyle challenges.

The structured environment in a non-residential setting is an excellent setting for youth, who have just completed a treatment plan. It teaches them new skills that are transferable to employment, and makes them feel comfortable when integrating back into society.

The centre is also open to members, who would like to drop-in during the day to discuss any issues that they may be facing. These issues could include; help with writing an resume; post-secondary school applications; budgeting, or it could be just simply to hangout and talk to someone.

The mental health and addiction crisis our province has been facing touches nearly every Islander in some way or another. We all know someone, who is affected by this terrible disease.

As leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, I will always lead the charge for more support and help those who struggle with addiction and mental health issues.

I want to commend the Reach Foundation on the amazing work that they do every day in serving our community and the services that they provide to our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Morell Wellness Council

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today and recognize the Morell Wellness Council. The council wanted to get people together in their own community to improve overall health in our area.

The group was formed in September by Tyler Read, who is the physical education teacher and athletic director at the Morell Regional High School. Our overall health and wellness is integral to living a long and healthy life. Across Canada health care costs continue to rise. This is where prevention plays a key role. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

If we can do as much as we can to look after ourselves now, it will help our communities and, at the same time, take pressure off our system. The Morell health and wellness group looks to empower community members and students on how to make better decisions and provide a healthy atmosphere for them.

The group meets about once a month and focuses on a number of issues including; supports for seniors; smoking cessation; mental health; nutrition and exercise, and many more topics to come.

The high school's food class also has been put to work making healthy food for the people in attendance.

At the group's first meeting they had three people attend, but attendance has continued to grow each and every meeting. The group hopes to soon form sub-groups so they can break off and tackle different projects.

The group would also like to see other communities form similar groups or councils. There is an open invitation to anyone, who may be interested and would like to attend a Morell Wellness Council meeting to see what it's all about.

I want to thank Tyler for taking the initiative, showing leadership and starting this group. I know it's having an incredibly positive impact in our community.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Boys and Girls Club

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, I was pleased to attend the annual general meeting of the Boys and Girls Club of Charlottetown and Montague, even though I did get there quite late.

The Boys and Girls Club has been providing services and supports to Islanders for over 30 years as part of a national network that serves over 200,000 children and youth in 700 locations across Canada in 2017 alone.

The Boys and Girls Club develops and delivers dynamic programming that meets the needs of children, youth and families in our community, especially in the area of after-school education.

Our children and youth need access to opportunities outside of the school and health systems to learn and build relevant life, social and leadership skills in safe,

supportive and inclusive spaces. By keeping our children engaged, especially at places like the Boys and Girls Clubs, where values are centered on respect and belonging, we can ensure that young children will have the opportunity to grow into youth, who are healthy, active and safe.

This sets the stage for self-sufficient adults, who are more likely to participate in community and civil society. Most importantly, as a society, we need to value and support the care of our children and youth on a continuum from birth to adolescence. It absolutely begins with supports and services for parents, who are the children's first teacher. It is a proactive scaffolding of support for all children from excellence in early childhood education to progressive classrooms to dynamic after-school and summer camp programs and onward to relevant and engaging youth programs.

Instead of catching youth at the vulnerable ages of 11 to 13 to get them into programming that will help them stay out of trouble, we should be proactive in keeping our children engaged along this continuum and thinking about how we can meet their needs and help them achieve their goals through programs that are integrated into our childcare models, such as mentorship and leadership programs that they seamlessly transition to/from after school programming.

I'd like to extend my congratulations to the Executive Director, Amanda Beazley and her team and the board and staff at the Boys and Girls Club of Charlottetown as leaders in quality care for children and youth. They are well positioned to push the needle on after-school education standards on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to questions asked from the Member from Morell-Mermaid yesterday in regard to PEI health cards. There were several there.

I'd like to, as a result of some research done last night, bring some clarity. Every individual is required to go through the application process for a PEI health card. It's not automatic. When an individual receives permanent residency that's when they get it.

The individual has to be physically present when applying for a PEI health card. When receiving an application our Medicare officer does not consider any of the documentation pertaining to the Provincial Nominee Program, as they are not relevant to health coverage.

Every applicant is required to provide specific supporting documentation to the PEI Medicare Office, such as their permanent residency documents, work or study permits. With all permanent residency documents, the PEI Medicare Office validates this information through the citizenship and immigration Canada portal.

If citizenship and immigration Canada portal cannot validate those documents, our Medicare Office will submit a manual report so that the federal government can investigate further.

It's only after the PEI Medicare Office receives a positive validation from the CIC that it will process the application and provide the health coverage.

The PEI Medicare Office work closely with the PEI association of newcomers, though to Canada to ensure that individuals, who are new to the province understand the process and requirements when applying for a PEI health card.

As well, if approved a PEI health card for a foreigner is only valid for the same period as the terms of their permanent residency, work permit or study permit. Also, the renewal process involves submitting up-to-date and valid permanent residency work, study documentation. Again, these documents are vetted through citizenship and immigration Canada portal for validation before the individual's PEI health card is renewed.

As well, while I'm to my feet; in response to other questions regarding out-of-province monitoring, from the same member, the out-of-province claims department of the PEI

Medicare Office reviews all claims for payment before payments are processed.

They look at the individual's health claims history, as well as the eligibility of the client and the claim. If there are abnormalities in the claim history, the PEI Medicare Office follows up directly with the individuals to confirm their residency status.

Health PEI does not have an out-of-province referral program policy. Or, sorry: does have an out-of-province referral program policy. In section 3.1 of the policy, which I will table here later today, it outlines that: PEI Medicare will provide coverage for out-of-province health care costs only in the instances of extreme emergency, sudden illness or if they have written approval or referral directly from Health PEI.

Furthermore, on a monthly basis, there is inter-provincial file sharing as it relates to provincial health cards. This ensures that there is no abuse of provincial Medicare coverage, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Trauma, mental health and addictions all live in the same house.

Government's failure to mental health issues

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, why has your government failed to take all the necessary steps to support Islanders suffering from trauma, mental health and addictions issues?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it's been said on many occasions that there's more to do.

But let me be sure and be clear to the House that many steps have been taken. In our current Budget, an additional \$4 million in

2017-2018; steps taken to create the school support teams; the walk-in clinics; the seniors resource team to add resources, including the hiring of additional psychologists.

This is something that we take very much to heart, and have been acting on with resources and with a plan and a plan that we're living up to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The ongoing crisis around mental health in this province is feeding an epidemic of trauma for Islanders.

Premier, your government has had 11 years to take meaningful actions, but your priorities, unfortunately, have been misplaced.

Leave for victims of violence and trauma

To the Premier: Why has your government never legislated any leave, paid or unpaid for Islanders workers, who are the victims of violence and trauma?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as the House will be aware, we did, indeed, bring forward, through a policy at the Workers Compensation to ensure that workers who have traumatic injuries. And we've moved away from a standard that required it'd be a single event. This was something that was done in interaction with public unions and with paramedics and first responders.

I'm aware that our departments of workforce and our department the status of women have, indeed, been working together on the question of leave related to traumatic conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The epidemic of trauma affecting Island families and communities feeds into a cycle of trauma for those who are suffering. Hurt people can and do hurt people.

Today, our PC team is calling our bill that provides paid leave to victims of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence to the floor.

Bill providing paid leave to victims

Question to the Premier: Premier, will your government support our bill, and if so, will it be passed and proclaimed in a timely manner?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the bill, of course, remains to come to the floor and I'm sure there will be a meaningful exchange.

We've studied the bill and we're sympathetic to its purpose and to the initiative. May I repeat that our departments had been working on something substantially similar and we're about to embark on a consultation process. It is something that I believe we can deal with here on the floor of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The epidemic of trauma is not a gender issue. It is a societal issue and it affects everyone.

Effects of violence in the labour force

Question to the minister of workforce: Can you explain the impact domestic and intimate violence and trauma is having on Island workplaces and on the labour force on Prince Edward Island?

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

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

I thank you for the question, hon. member. We take concerns of this matter very seriously. The Employment Standards Board looks after these things.

Anything that we can do as a province, and as a government and with the work of the Employment Standards Board to make people feel safe and be able to come forward with issues, we'll certainly support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The epidemic of trauma is greatly underreported and those people that are advocating on the ground and people like Theo Fleury are seeing the real truth. It's close to one out of every two people are affected by this trauma.

Currently, Island workers cannot access leave that would assist victims and survivors in such matters that relate to this type of violence. Islanders right now could face having their employment terminated if they have to take any time off.

Support of legislation for victims of violence

Question to the minister: Do you support the legislation that we have on the floor for Island workers, who are victims of trauma and of violence and abuse?

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

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

Before I answer, I would also like to welcome Mr. Fleury to the gallery.

We certainly take, as I said, very seriously this issue and our department was about to do some consultations over the summer. There is a bill coming forward today and we look forward to discussing this bill. We'll see where it goes from there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you were going to consult on a bill this summer, it sounds like you support the idea. The Leader of the Opposition here has been quite active on the front of mental health. He has championed the cause. He's laid the whole framework for types of bills like this to be brought to this House.

For years, this caucus has been advocating for improvements in our mental health system here on Prince Edward Island, and for more resources in addictions.

The member from Borden had a PTSD bill brought to the floor, which your government still – even though you voted for it, still hasn't proclaimed.

Question to the minister: Since it sounds like you support the premise of our bill, if you're going to go out and consult and do your own, why has your government failed to do anything about it in the past 11 years?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I am very passionate about any measure that we can put in place for protection of those workers, who are experiencing affects of domestic violence and need to have that addressed.

I'd also like to note, as well, that the sexual assault response committee of the Premier's action committee on family violence. We have, and do offer workshops for counsellors, victim servicing agencies, medical, health, human service, education and justice system professionals, and first responders.

We are continuing to work right across government, right across the province with the non-government organizations that also offer those kind of services and we work collaboratively with those to ensure people are aware –

Mr. LaVie: Should be a priority.

Ms. Biggar: – in the workplace of those issues.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Domestic, intimate and sexual violence is an issue on Prince Edward Island and right across Canada and I appreciate the minister's passion.

Support of legislation for victims of violence (further)

But minister for the status of women: Do you support the idea of paid leave for victims of domestic, intimate, and sexual violence?

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

Ms. Biggar: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and I support extended leave as well so that they can tend to the issues that they need to take care of as part of that. Paid leave and unpaid leave is necessary. Working with employers to educate them as well is very important as to what has to happen. It takes a lot of courage to step forward out of a relationship where you are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused and I do believe that their employment should be protected.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Violence has a lifelong impact on a person's physical, mental, sexual, and even reproductive health.

A question again to the status of women minister: Do you agree with and will you come forward and support better access for paid leave that could help victims of these crimes?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we have been doing inter-

governmentally, with Victim Services. We have formed, actually, a family-friendly committee to bring that particular piece of legislation forward in addition to protecting those who have 18 month parental leave and a number of other measures. We have been working on that collaboratively with Victim Services to put together a comprehensive piece of legislation, including going further than this particular bill that's coming forward.

I will always support those kinds of measures to protect women – and not just women, but those who suffer because we do know that men, also, are victims of violence as well. We want to ensure that workers are protected and I will, as minister for status for women, support any measure that will protect women going forward to get them out of a situation of family violence.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know this is a societal issue, but some of this falls in your department, minister. Nationally, the annual economic cost of domestic, intimate, and sexual violence is estimated to be more than \$8 billion.

Research on Island re: domestic violence

Minister: Has your department ever commissioned any research into the economic costs of domestic, intimate, and sexual violence to the Island economy?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, as minister of status for women, certainly I work collaboratively with my other counterparts right across Canada. This is always something that is raised at our FPT table.

On PEI, we are the second lowest in the country in regard to sexual violence; however, any violence against women, in any regard, is not acceptable. That is why we partner with a lot of the groups that are across PEI to fund them and to raise awareness for that work. It starts at the community level. It starts right at, actually,

birth and anything that we can do to educate our male youth will certainly go a long way to changing that culture of abuse in our society.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, incidents of domestic, intimate, and sexual violence are typically underreported to authorities across Canada.

Support of legislation for victims of violence (further)

Question to the Attorney General: Do you support the idea of paid leave for victims of domestic, intimate, and sexual violence?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

Again, as has been indicated here previously today: That is something that broadly we think should be looked at and we're supportive of on this side. It certainly is an issue that has been seen time and again, not just in our province, but in other places across this country and that we do take seriously. We have done a lot, as I've indicated in this session, to move forward in attempting to tackle these sorts of issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Advocacy groups and investigative journalism like *The Globe and Mail's* Unfounded series highlighted the challenges around underreporting.

Importance of victims to be heard

Question to the Attorney General: Can you speak to the importance of victims of these types of violence coming forward so that their stories can be heard and acted on?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

That's a question that I would probably do very well to try and answer in 40 seconds. I think there's countervailing principles there and an individual's decision whether or not to report is their own decision.

But what I can say, is that we are, at this point in time, looking at what we might be able to do to make things as easy for that individual to report as we possibly can – whether that be through enabling the preservation of key evidence for a period of time after the incident, or whether that be just in the way that we approach the incident and are forward-facing towards the victim of assault so that they may feel comfortable in coming forward, either through themselves, or through a third-party organization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2017 alone, Island law enforcement agencies received nearly 500 reports of domestic, intimate, and sexual violence. That's over one a day.

Better access for paid leave

Question to the Attorney General: Do you agree that better access to paid leave could help encourage more victims of these crimes to come forward?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The strength to come forward to report an incident encompasses more than whether or not you have paid leave. I fully support that, but we need to have pieces in place that when a person comes forward, they have the support, and the comfort, and sensitivity that it takes for that. Enhancing emergency sexual assault services and protocol policy is under development, which is expected to enhance the sexual assault response in the province.

We're working collaboratively with partners to look at introducing the third option for victims of sexual violence, which to explain, that means collecting and storing evidence for up to a year to allow that victim time to process and have supports to come forward with reporting that type of assault to police.

We're also – with your indulgence, because this is an important message for victims out there – that they can be comforted to come forward. There is support there through mental health, through PEI sexual assault rape and crisis centre.

But we're also looking – willing to work collaboratively with partners to consider a third-party reporting mechanism. We will continue to work to have those discussions. But I want to tell any victim who feels that they need support, please come forward in a way. We need to work together with our police forces, with our supports to ensure that there is a compassionate response and that they feel safe in coming forward and that they can get the support they need – including with their employer.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was pleased to hear this week that a dedicated Crown prosecutor for sexual violence offences is being established.

Need for Crown prosecutor

A question for the Attorney General today: Would you agree that the need for a dedicated prosecutor underscores the challenges we face as a province with domestic, intimate, and sexual violence?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

I think that would be one facet of it for sure. Obviously, with these types of offences, they manifest in many different ways unfortunately. The prosecutor that deals with them would have, I would say, the misfortune of having to deal with all of them and all of them, unfortunately, have, over

the course of time, occurred within this province. That's exactly what we're taking steps to combat.

I am proud to say that we are taking this step and that we're not only doing that, but we're setting it up so that this Crown prosecutor can work with policing agencies and Victim Services and others to improve the way in which we do that in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An innovative approach in response to issues of sexual violence reporting that we've talked about before in this House is something known as the Philadelphia Model.

Progress made to include Philadelphia Model

A question to the Attorney General: Can you update the House on what progress has been made to include the Philadelphia model and how we improve reporting of sexual violence since we first raised this idea last year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

Again, as part of the addition of the new Crown and the additional steps that we're taking which also includes the formation of a committee that will be looking at our response to sexual assaults across the province – and as I indicated previously, looking at work related to how it might be made easier that victims would come forward, including the preservation of any evidence coming out of an allegation of sexual assault, possibly, for up to a period of a year and/or for reporting through third parties would all be envisioned as something that that group would look to tackle and to report on in the very near future. The work is being done as we speak amongst the agencies, and a key part of that was getting this Crown position in place to

move forward with a solid legal basis to do that.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Basically, the Philadelphia model involves bringing law enforcement and community advocates together around a table to review reports of sexual violence to ensure that these reports are being dealt with properly.

It's good to hear the minister talk about some progress. This model, used more and more across North America, improves communication and data management to respond more affectively.

Introduction of Philadelphia model in province

A question to the Attorney General: Time is passing quickly on this. Will the province introduce the Philadelphia model as an extra support to improve on how we respond to issues of sexual violence?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

Again, as I indicated, I'm not going to sit here and say whatever model it is that we ultimately end up moving forward with will be the, quote on quote, Philadelphia model, but what we are doing is putting a new dedicated Crown prosecutor in place.

That Crown prosecutor will work with victim services, policing agencies, and those sorts of resources to determine what best we may be able to do. In particular, if there are cases that are not dealt with through the court system, those will likely be reviewed by this group to determine what, if any, additional action can or should or may be taken to move them forward.

The other thing that I should point out here is that whether or not a matter proceeds to a charge, victim services is there for the victims of sexual assault and so we would

encourage those victims, that they can come forward through our victim services workers and that they are trained to deal with victims of sexual assault. We think that they are very good in that capacity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things I found most surprising about the recently tabled *Electoral System Referendum Act* was that the referendum commissioner would hold office from June 1st, 2018. That isn't much more than two weeks away.

Appointment of referendum commissioner

A question to the Premier: What is the urgency for appointing the commissioner right away?

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the point of tabling this legislation was to ensure that there was a level playing field, clear ground rules, and a key part of that is the appointment through this Legislative Assembly, through legislative management, of a referendum commissioner and indeed, to have that commissioner in place as this process goes forward, as the bill is passed, or as the law presumably will be adopted by this Legislature with or without amendments. Then, to have the commissioner in place, it's obvious that that will enable the law to be implemented.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With these timelines, I must assume that you have already somebody in mind for this position.

A question to the Premier: Have you already identified our future referendum commissioner from the comfort of the fifth floor?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I won't make any comment on the comfort of the fifth floor. I think members opposite are trying to make it as uncomfortable as possible, but this is something, as is clear on the face of the bill, that will be dealt with by legislative management and will be further considered and only put in place with a two-thirds vote of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Legislative Management Committee must make a recommendation for the commissioner, but the committee is controlled by government members and meets behind closed doors.

Again to the Premier: Have you instructed your government members of the Legislative Management Committee to rubber stamp your choice for commissioner?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, no I have not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the past, when the Legislative Management Committee was put in charge of recommending the appointment of an officer for the Legislature, they have advertised for the position, used a rigorous interview process to establish qualifications, but the timelines provided in this legislation would not allow that process to unfold.

If we abide by the fixed election date legislation, I see no need whatsoever for such rigid and accelerated timeframes. There is absolutely no rush here.

Confirmation of election timeline

Premier: Can you confirm for this House that there will indeed be no election this fall?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, on the question that led to the further piece that was asked here, about the timing –

Mr. Myers: Tories are ready.

Premier MacLauchlan: – I would not describe it as a rush.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

I believe there is a good –

Mr. Myers: Tories are ready.

Premier MacLauchlan: – reason, and it's evident on the face of things, and if you look at the –

Mr. LaVie: Not by the looks of last night (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – experience we had with the plebiscite in –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – in 2016.

When this bill becomes law, with whatever changes are made on the floor of this House, there's an obvious need to have a referendum commissioner and for the participants in the process of the referendum to proceed by the rules, and I took the third party to be in favour of that idea that there would be clear rules; that there would be a level playing field.

That's exactly what this bill does, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, your first supplementary on your second question.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, the Legislative Management Committee is controlled by government members and meets behind closed doors. This can lead to dubious and self-serving decisions such as rejecting key recommendations by the conflict of interest commissioner.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Again to the Premier: How do we —

Ms. Casey: (Indistinct)

Screening process re: hiring referendum commissioner

Ms. Bell: — expect there to be public confidence in this appointment if there is no application or screening process and the decision is made by government members in secret?

Ms. Biggar: That's the chair right there, of the committee.

An Hon. Member: That's the chair (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in the Legislative Management Committee and in its Chair, and in the good faith with which the members of this House meet, as they have done for many years, with the confidence of doing so in camera and with the reasons that are behind that.

I don't know that it's very helpful to all of the courtesy and the good grace that we expect in this Chamber and the way that we do work together through legislative management, to use the language that we just heard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you can imagine, the rumour mill is working overtime speculating on who the Premier has hand-picked to be the commissioner. The name I've heard more than once is former chief justice Gerard Mitchell.

A question to the Premier: Is the rumour mill correct or have you chosen someone else to be the referendum commissioner?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, first we have to pass the bill, at which point the Legislative Management Committee will have a job to do, at which point this Legislature will have a job to do, to consider a resolution and at that point, perhaps the rumour mill will move onto something else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Minister, many couples and the national average is 16% are struggling with infertility issues. Many cannot afford the in vitro fertilization or the intrauterine procedures that are offered off-Island.

Financial support for in vitro fertilization

Minister: Is there presently any financial support available to Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to in vitro fertilization or intrauterine insemination, we do not cover those by PEI Medicare at this point in time.

I am pleased to say that we do cover a lot of, I'll call, work-up service in this area. We do cover things such as blood work, ultrasounds, supports, other supports for anybody that is interested in this service. We will also arrange physical exams. We will work with the individuals to help them navigate and maneuver to services that are available in other provinces.

As well, though, we do cover out-of-province costs if the services are insured, but they must be done at a hospital setting, and not in a clinic type of setting, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For many people, who desperately want a family, they need help. This issue can lead to high levels of anxiety, depression, financial burden and put strain on the relationship.

Minister: Has your department considered, or will it consider assisting these people?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, the hon. member is correct. We do recognize that this places quite a financial and emotional strain and burden on these families.

As I mentioned earlier, we do provide some counselling services for families that are going through this process. Fertility coordination and navigation, we are very pleased to allow supports there, as well.

As well, in recent months, our Women's Wellness Program has aided in supports for family in this area. We do recognize that this is a burden on families and we want to work with them when we (Indistinct) Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, this truly does affect the quality of life for these couples, who are having

fertility problems, both emotionally and financially.

I'm glad to hear that your department is considering the delivery of clinical services such as IVF and the IUI treatment in the province and that you are considering it.

Tax break for in vitro fertilization process

In the meantime, will you, perhaps, collaborate with the Minister of Finance to consider a tax break for these Islanders, who made need this support, as it is in other provinces?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, indeed, I think that's something that we could probably begin some conversations with. I would commit to speaking to the finance minister to see if we have opportunity to do that.

As you say, hon. member, this is a very serious issue to families, who are trying to grow their families. We want to support them where we can. I will definitely commit to having those discussions with the finance minister to see if we can come up with funding.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, in 2016 and 2017 there was over 900 cases that were referred to Victim Services. In 29% of those cases, there was a family-type relationship involved.

Support for paid leave for victims of violence

Question to the health minister: Do you support the idea of paid leave for victims of domestic, intimate and sexual violence?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, certainly we do have a lot of supports for victims. I know firsthand as a survivor that a lot of these instances can go back to childhood.

Having the community around a victim, whether it's in the school, whether it's in the community itself, we do have services, community-based services that support a victim coming forward, whether it's in the immediate or from a past experience in a childhood trauma.

We have long-term care support including community mental health, Rape and Sexual Assault Centre. It's important that we involvement adult protection; that within our school system we look at child protection.

Victim Services and Child and Family Services work collaboratively to help address those issues and it does start at the community level, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, half of those cases involved female family or sexual abuse; 13% of the sexual assault matters referred to Victim Services involved male victims.

Support for male victims of sexual violence

Question to the health minister: What supports are available for your department for male victims of sexual violence?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, I, like other hon. members of the Legislature would like to welcome Theo Fleury onto the floor of the Legislature. Obviously a well, well known hockey player in Canada, but also a well known advocate in areas of sexual violence and supports of this nature.

When it comes to our health care system on Prince Edward Island, every ER department and every hospital across our wonderful province have trained staff in this area. They know how to – they know what to look for. They know how to begin protocols, whether it's involvement of law enforcement where needed, whether it's, depending on gender, they may refer to our women's wellness centre, they may refer to some of our

community folks, such as one of our two family service centres, or our McGill Centre.

They are highly trained in every ER across Prince Edward Island to deal with the situation. They do it with compassion. They do it with dignity. They do it when it needs to be done, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, we know there is a big demand for mental health here on PEI. The access to treatment can be very difficult.

That makes it even more important that victims have the flexibility to take the appointment when it becomes available.

Option of paid leave better access to services

Question to the health minister: Do you think giving people the option of paid leave could give them more flexibility to access services when they become available?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, this is a topic that does deserve attention. It does discussion. It does deserve a lot of focus on.

Obviously, over the last number of years this had become more prevalent in our little province, but it's also more prevalent across Canada, across our wonderful nation. There are discussions going on in every province. Yes, absolutely, we, as a province, should be looking at, and having discussions. Those very important discussions, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The provincial government is one of PEI's largest employers.

Support of paid leave to victims of violence (further)

A question to the finance minister: Do you support the idea of paid leave for victim of domestic, intimate and sexual violence?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: That's fantastic to hear, Mr. Speaker.

The province's Employee Assistance Program, EAP, opened 561 counselling files in 2015-2016 and closed 371 counselling files.

EAP files and victims of violence

A question to the finance minister: What percentage of those counselling files that EAP deals with would involve domestic, intimate or sexual violence issues?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not sure of the exact figure, Mr. Speaker, but I think one is too many.

I think the initiative by the opposition today and the bill that will be coming on the floor, it's a great initiative. I think it opens up other conversations and I think we're all going in the right direction. Kudos to them and Kudos to the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning about talking about this before.

We'll certainly review the bill when it comes on the floor and I hope we can all agree.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does seem like we're all on the same page, here.

It takes great courage for a person, regardless of gender, who has been a victim of domestic, intimate or sexual violence to

come forward, share their story and seek help.

Experienced advocates like Theo Fleury, who is in the gallery here today, estimate that 50% of people experience trauma like this. That's with a lot going unreported.

Extra supports for employees

Question to the finance minister: What extra supports is government looking at implementing to encourage and assist employees, who are dealing with domestic, intimate or sexual violence situations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I actually got to see Theo Fleury play in 1988. I think it was his first year in the NHL. I remember game six of Edmonton in the playoffs when he slid down the ice on his knees, waving his arms in the air. You know what? He left a legacy on the ice, but he's leaving a legacy after his professional career as a hockey player and I think that's really important. We'll do whatever it takes to make this right.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre, children who experience abuse are found to be 30% less likely to graduate high school.

School mental health teams re: abused students

Question to the education minister: How do school mental health teams deal with students who may have seen or experienced abuse?

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

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

I don't profess to know or be able to indicate in 40 seconds how these teams do it, but what I will indicate is that they have some

professional basis in this and certainly the new teams are geared to make referrals into the larger health community, whether that be two psychologists that we would have working in the department, which we now have a few more of, or whether it be in the health department, or whether it be the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre as another example within the community.

With my other justice hat, there are other services there and in family and human services, relating to child protection, as an example, that would also be involved in that kind of thing.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Children who experience abuse are four times more likely to become involved in the youth justice system – 26 more likely to experience homelessness.

Help for students in abusive situations

Question to the education minister: How can students who are in an abusive situation get help?

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

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

Another great program that's a new initiative of our government is the Bridge program, which brings together many of the resources that are called upon to bring to bear on these sorts of issues and really focuses them on the impacted individual. So that's one primary place where we would have a tool, if you will, to intervene where there wouldn't have been one a few years ago.

Let me say, as an example with the new student well-being teams, that's the purpose for the student outreach workers that are on those teams so that they know – they're on the ground level and they know what's going on with kids in their schools. That's been something that's been somewhat

misunderstood in the communities, but I think as they have more and more time there, their role and their value will really be understood a lot more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, final question.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Children who experience abuse are also four times more likely to access mental health services as adults, four times more likely to report self-harm.

Training for teachers and staff

Question to the education minister: What extra training is available for teachers and school staff to identify and help students who may be experiencing or witnessing abuse?

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

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

Again, I don't have kind of a list of training that teachers and support staff would go through, but I do know that there is some training in the identification of those sorts of issues. I can tell you, actually, that my wife has gone through an issue with a child in her class as recent as this year where child and family had to intervene.

I know that there is some in place, and I can tell you that between my department, and family and human services, and my other department in justice, they all had dealings with this young child and so there are services in place. Let me say that I think that we're doing a lot more in this area than we were even a couple of years ago. That's something that, as the hon. member has indicated, is hugely important.

Enduring that kind of abuse or any kind of emotional incident at a young age does have a very significant potential to impact a child for the rest of their life. It's something that it is very important that we get help to them as soon as we possibly can to help them to set on a path to healing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

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

Natural Areas Protection Act

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

I am pleased to rise today to recognize the 30th anniversary of the *Natural Areas Protection Act*.

This act was proclaimed 30 years ago today on May 17th, 1988. The act encourages the preservation of the province's natural areas to protect the character and conditions of these areas. More than 23,000 acres of land have been protected on Prince Edward Island, since the act was proclaimed.

NAPA protects our Island's significant environmental areas. These areas provide a wealth of ecological, social, and economic benefits. Government has set a target to protect 7% of Prince Edward Island and we have reached the halfway mark with 3.6% of protected land today.

Islanders believe strongly that we should preserve natural areas for the benefit of future generations and they have demonstrated this belief by voluntarily protecting over 6,700 acres of private land. In addition to private landowners and government protecting land, two non-government groups have shown tremendous leadership in the natural areas protection. Both the Island Nature Trust and the Nature Conservancy of Canada acquires lands for the protection and designation under NAPA. I want to thank and applaud both organizations for their dedication to this program and the hard work they do on a daily basis to preserve our beautiful province.

In honour of this special anniversary, we are hosting an event later today where we will express our gratitude to those who have voluntarily agreed to have their land protected. I invite all members of the Legislature to attend this thing.

Mr. Speaker, we have a small province and by working together we demonstrate how,

we the mighty Island, by focusing on the things that matter the most. Few things are more important than protecting our Island's most precious and irreplaceable natural areas for today and for the future.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I want to welcome this announcement, minister, and indeed there are many people here on PEI doing fantastic work to preserve and to expand the area of protected land. You mentioned Island Nature Trust and the Nature Conservancy, but also PEI Wildlife Federation is playing an important role in this as well, and of course the individual Islanders who come forward and donate their land for this cause.

We have a special challenge here, I might say, on Prince Edward Island with the significantly small amount of Crown land that we have compared to almost every other province in Canada. That makes the value of these small parcels – relatively small parcels of land – even more so. They are critical to provide wildlife corridors, to provide habitat for particular species, and we know that they're, without a species at risk legislation here on the Island, how critical that is.

For the Acadian forest, for plants, for migratory birds, it's all sorts of reasons why we need to protect the natural habitat. And, of course, it's there as a beautiful part of our province and the beauty of this province is something which is really priceless. Not only to us Islanders who live here and enjoy it every day, but it draws so many tourists here and they appreciate the unique beauty of this landscape here.

So I welcome this announcement, minister, and I look forward to 30 years from now, even further expanded areas of natural beauty being protected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Federal/Provincial Transportation Investments

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to rise today to recognize the continued federal/provincial partnership and investments in infrastructure that are helping our Island grow and prosper.

This morning, I had the privilege of making a joint announcement with the federal government in Abrams Village with the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning and MP Robert Morrissey for our 2018 highway infrastructure projects.

Since 2015, intergovernmental collaboration has meant investments over \$218 million in our province's infrastructure, from provincial highways, to public transit, to water and wastewater projects.

When the federal and provincial government work together, we can do many great things for Islanders. Well-built and well-maintained roads are essential to promote and support economic growth. We actually have 5,338 kilometres of roads and if you put that in perspective, that's enough to go from here to Kamloops, BC.

Our highways and roads allow our Island-made goods to consumers efficiently to local, national, and global markets. It allows Islanders to get to work and travelers to their vacation destination safely. It creates jobs in the construction sector, for families.

The five road improvement projects announced this morning were approved under the New Building Canada Fund and they're located in many small communities across PEI and our main transportation system of Route 2.

The projects include: resurfacing and rehabilitating 1,200 metres of road on Route 2 in Wellington Centre, 1,300 metres of road along Route 2 in Hazel Grove; resurfacing, rehabilitating and widening 500 metres of road in New Annan.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) call an election (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – as well as adding a westbound left turn, an eastbound right turn

lane, as well as an eastbound acceleration lane on Route 120 Wilmot Valley Road; resurfacing, rehabilitating and widening of 1,300 metres of Route 14 in Urbainville and 500 metres along Route 150 –

Mr. Myers: Would have sounded better if you used centimetres.

Ms. Biggar: – in Union.

Mr. Myers: Would have sounded like a lot more.

Ms. Biggar: We will also replace – I'm sure you can do the conversion of math.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We will also replace a culvert bridge structure as well.

I want to thank the federal government for being responsive to the Island's needs.

Prince Edward Island was instrumental in securing a change to funding criteria for roads and bridges that benefits the entire country and we were able to collaborate –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – since 2015 with the new federal Liberal government to do that because we could never get that done before.

An additional 650 kilometres of strategic Island roads will be eligible for funding under this new agreement and criteria.

The joint support for these –

Mr. LaVie: So you're telling us you're –

Ms. Biggar: – five projects –

Mr. LaVie: – doing it?

Ms. Biggar: – mentioned today is over \$2.6 million, with more than 1.1 of that eligible for 50/50 federal and provincial support –

Mr. Myers: Oh, \$500,000 call an election on that.

Ms. Biggar: Infrastructure investments have a lasting effect –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) sections of roads.

Ms. Biggar: – on our province’s economy. Prince Edward Island is a small province, but our size is our strength.

We do many things well, especially when compared to much larger centres in our vast country –

Mr. MacKay: The only one (Indistinct) 600 people in –

Ms. Biggar: – we are nimble –

Mr. MacKay: – a hotel.

Ms. Biggar: – enough to focus on what matters the most –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) be able to run –

Ms. Biggar: – this makes us the Mighty Island. And I know the opposition doesn’t want to hear anything we’re doing good.

The Department of Transportation –

Mr. Myers: We’re just not used to hearing –

Ms. Biggar: – Infrastructure and Energy –

Mr. Myers: – anything good. That’s all.

Ms. Biggar: – will continue to pursue collaborations with our federal partners for well-planned infrastructure projects to help support our province’s continued economic growth.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I feel like I’m speaking for more than just the third party today –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – of course when the minister stands – I’m speaking for all Islanders indeed.

When the minister stands up as she often does to talk about investments in road infrastructure on PEI, I’m always struck with the sense of *déjà vu* and it seems that we have so many announcements and we break the dollar amounts into smaller and smaller packages and the length of road into smaller and smaller increments, and \$2.6 million is not an insignificant amount of money, of course –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and it’s going to do some, no doubt, very worthy and necessary things.

The reason we have so many repeated announcements about roads is because we have so much need for road repairs. It’s an ongoing problem here on Prince Edward Island. You don’t just build a road and leave it alone like they do in California, or some of these other places.

We have to be constantly repairing our roads. That’s an enormous outlay of tax dollars to do that. Of course, we can fund projects with the federal government. That’s an enormous help and I’m very glad that we are able to do that.

This morning, as I always do on my way to work, I drove through Cornwall during what would be considered rush hour. As always, it was perfectly smooth. I didn’t stop for a minute, literally didn’t stop for a minute –

An Hon. Member: Surrounded by (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and it was perfectly safe and I arrived here in town and it was just beautiful –

Ms. Biggar: Thank you. Thank you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and I always think to myself why are we spending \$60 million to build a perimeter highway when we have this perfectly decent, useful safe good roads to get me from home?

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I pass the Esso gas station –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – it was busy. I pass Sam's Restaurant, the parking lot was full. And I just – it boggles my mind that we think that that is the best value for money when it comes to spending money on our roads, when there's so much need in every single part of this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: Who is doing the work?

Ms. Biggar: We are doing the (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Mr. Roach: Chapman Brother's in Souris (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Oh no (Indistinct) cousin.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document that shows the criteria for out-of-province referrals, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

Orders Other Than Government

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

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the 30th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 30, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 3)* Bill No. 116, ordered for second reading.

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

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 116, read a second time.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald to please come and Chair this bill.

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

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: I'd like to bring a stranger to floor.

Mr. Myers: Theo Fleury.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Welcome.

If you'd like to state your name any open comments you might have, that would be great.

Theo Fleury: Hi, everybody. My name is Theo Fleury and I'm an advocate for all trauma survivors in Canada.

In 2009, I took a leap of faith; a leap of courage, and told my story to the masses of people. And had absolutely no clue what I was getting myself into, other than the fact that I knew I was struggling with many, many issues in my life, and thought that by telling the world my story, that something would come out of it.

And what happened was one of the most incredible experiences of my entire life. By telling my story, I was able to help other people find the courage to also tell their own story. What happened is I got completely run over by people everywhere I went. People were seeking me out to tell their stories because they felt I was a safe person to be able to tell these stories to.

Trauma, mental health and addiction is the biggest epidemic we have on the whole entire planet. Trauma is at the core of every single issue we have in society. Every single issue. The reason why I say trauma mental health and addiction, I don't say them in separate phrases or give them separate meanings is because we experience trauma, it leaves us in emotional pain and suffering, which is mental health.

Then how do we deal with the emotional pain and suffering that's left behind from a traumatic experience? Well, we tend to gravitate towards the dark side of life and get involved in addiction. If we don't acknowledge the trauma, we don't acknowledge the healing part of where we need to go.

I was asked to come by the opposition party to bring this bill, and I have to say that I've never done this before, because I don't believe in politics.

An Hon. Member: Smart.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Theo Fleury: I'm not politically correct. Nor will I ever be.

But what the bill states, and if you read between the lines, is that it is an opportunity for the leadership of this great province, which I absolutely love the Maritimes. That's part of the reason why I'm here too, is because any opportunity I get to come out here is always a wonderful experience.

Today is about leadership. That's it. It's not about the bill, it's about leadership. What you can portray to the masses and the people that don't have voices, yet is that: We support you. We believe you. We understand you. When it comes from this level, it gives those people the confidence, the support, the love, the caring that all of us survivors need because we need to be believed. We need to be understood. We need to be able to have a voice. By passing this bill, will say a lot to the people of Prince Edward Island, and the people in Ottawa.

The people in Ottawa don't care about this subject. I've been with every single MP, and it's always excuses, excuses and I'm tired of excuses because I'm doing the work of the government every day. Everywhere I go, every event I show up, I'm getting bombarded because they go: what do I do now? I've gone through the system. I can't get an appointment. I can't, I can't, I can't get the healing that I need, so what do I do? What do I do next?

What I've found in my journey is that it's not rocket science. It's not getting a script for synthetic brain chemistry from a physician that's going to heal me. It is community, community that is going to end the epidemic of trauma, mental health and addiction. Big Pharma owns mental health and that has to change. That absolutely has to change. There are incredible holistic treatments out there that don't cost anything.

I participated in sweat lodge. I participated in Aboriginal ceremony. I participate in yoga; meditation, breathing. That has to be the message that comes out of this gathering today: is that there are lots of ways to heal that don't cost. They don't cost money.

I'm very honoured to be here because I thought I'd be here 25 years, and it's only taken 10 to get to this point. That means there is change. There is hope. But, most of all, there is healing available if you so seek it. There has to be a certain willingness in government to talk about holistic instead of pharma.

I know that pharma pays for a lot of campaigns and stuff, but it's not good. It's not good. It causes more harm than it does effect. I understand that bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, these things, they need

medication for help but I would say the general population who suffers from anxiety, depression, panic disorder, it's all about wrapping community around them.

The reason why we have an epidemic of fentanyl and OxyContin use is because we're not connecting to people. From a brain-science perspective, Oxytocin is the drug of love, so the pharmaceutical companies created a drug called OxyContin, which gives us the same feeling as being connected and that's why we get addicted to these drugs. Fentanyl is a hundred times more potent than that. That's why it's important

This day is incredibly important for all of us, as leaders, to change the message; change the way we talk about trauma, mental health and addiction, that we acknowledge that it's an epidemic. We are losing people every day unnecessarily because we are influenced by big corporations that don't want us to deliver this message. That has to change. I can do it because I'm committed. This is what the rest of my life looks like and I'm in therapy for the rest of my life, and I'm absolutely 100% okay with that.

The message has to change and by delivering this bill, it's a new conversation because you're telling people we're here. We understand that this has happened to you, right? This has happened to you and we believe you.

The justice system is set up for re-victimization. That's all it is. It's all the justice system entails is re-victimization where I have to tell my my story over and over again. Every time I tell my story I'm re-victimized, and at the end I'm not believed. With men, we get one chance, one single solitary chance where a man gets up enough courage to come forth to enter himself into this system, and if he has a bad experience, we never get him back. Probably four times out of 10, that guy ends up committing suicide. That has to change.

If men cannot find safe places to heal, guess what? We're going to continue to abuse women. We're going to continue to abuse children. That has to change, as well.

Like I said, I'm absolutely over the moon to be here because this was an intention that

was set a long time ago, and, like I said, to be able to have this opportunity, thank you to the Progressive Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island for this amazing opportunity and something I won't soon forget.

There's a lot of awareness around this subject but there's not enough people getting well. Awareness is great but awareness without action is nothing. How are we going to put all this awareness into action and start to get people well?

It starts right at the community level. It starts with you guys. It starts with leadership. Changing the language of how we talk about this is that it's not secretive anymore. It's real. It's as real as real gets. People's pain and suffering. I just spent 14 hours at Stony Mountain penitentiary in Winnipeg, Manitoba, talking to 24 murderers, and the pain and suffering that these men have endured in their childhood would make you want to throw up.

I know why they do the things that they do because of that experience. Just abuse after abuse. The layers of trauma is just remarkable. And unfair. And in this society it should never happen. Should never happen. Doesn't need to happen.

It's all about humility and compassion. The best leaders that I've been around in my whole entire life in the hockey world, each and every leader; great leader, led with humility and compassion. Not with ego. If you lead with ego, nobody will follow you. If you lead with humility and compassion, people will follow you to the ends of the earth with humility and compassion.

When you leave here today, think of compassion always. Don't try to compare yourself, your trauma to somebody else's trauma because there is no comparison. Pain is pain. Suffering is suffering. We see it every day in the world. It's all about compassion. The more compassion we have for this subject, it will alleviate a lot of the pain and suffering that's happening in the world, right?

A big thank you from the millions and millions of survivors in this country. I think that Canada is very capable of becoming the leader in trauma and mental health and

addiction in the world. It's not rocket science, it's not money that's going to alleviate this, it's going to be changing people's attitudes; people's language around the subject that will have the biggest impact.

Whatever is in this bill today, if you read between the lines, it says: I care. I care. Care deeply about this subject. I know you said \$8 billion, it's more like \$50 billion, the trickledown affect that trauma, mental health addiction has in this country. Give me \$1 billion dollars, I'll solve this crisis very easily.

Like I said, today you're going to reach out to those people, who are in their pain and suffering and you're going to say to them: I care. I care and I'm listening. This bill could be the voice for those millions of people that are suffering. Could be the voice. Can be the standard in which we start this amazing change that needs to happen.

I thank you for allowing me to speak.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Thank you so very much, Theo.

The sponsor of the bill would like to give an overview.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) as Theo has said, it's a time for action. This is kind of an action bill. It's a starting place for us.

This bill introduced amendments to include domestic violence leave; intimate partner violence leave, or sexual violence leave into the *Employment Standards Act* to allow employees the time and opportunity to make a life change to enhance their safety and security.

The *Employment Standards Act* provides for a minimum standard in areas of employment; modernizations of employment legislation ensures that PEI keeps pace with best practices and legislative developments across the country. Sexual assault, sexual abuse, et cetera, is encompassed with the term 'sexual violence.'

Chair: Thank you, sponsor.

First, speaking to the bill, I have the Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward, as well. I'd really like to thank Theo for you agreeing to come on the floor and to bring a very poignant point of view towards this bill, and what we're trying to accomplish here.

I was first elected in 2011, and shortly after that, I had a conversation with one of my constituents, who is a friend, and just started basically – we were at a grocery store and I said: hey, how's it going. They said, great. (Indistinct) and they walked away. Took a couple steps, stopped, turned around and they said: No, you know what? Do you really want to know how it's going? I said yes I do. That's why I asked you. I wasn't talking as a politician, I was talking a friend.

This individual, she was there with her husband, and just sort of went off to the side. She just broke down. She told me what was going on in their life with their, at that time 17-year-old son, and the mental health issues; the addiction issues that he was experiencing and basically what they had gone through over the last, approximately, four years

I got quite involved right from the get-go trying to reach out and learn as much as I could to find the supports and the resources for this young man and his family. It just sort of snowballed from there and the more people I got to know, and it wasn't so much in the health care system or in the bureaucracy, the people that I was getting to know were the people that were out there, as you said, in the community. Community, community. Those are the people that I found were really in the trenches, and supporting people, particularly with the mental health and addiction issues. As you said, too, all levels of trauma come back and live in the same house.

I feel very fortunate that I do live on an Island in a small province that we still do believe in community, and we have people that are willing to step up and support one

another. I mean, I just have to look over my shoulder, Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark is here with us today and the amazing work that she's done, advocating for particularly mental health and addictions and sexual assault issues here on PEI, is second to none. Her level of commitment and the time that she puts in as a volunteer for the betterment of her community, and for the well-being of others less fortunate, I mean she's –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: Sarah's one example. We have other groups here on PEI. I talked about the Reach Foundation earlier. There's a group in Summerside that was formed that I got involved with about six years ago called HOPE: Helping Other Parents Educate. It was, again, one of these community groups, a support group, not even a peer-support group, but a support group who was born out of necessity because they were turning every which way they could to try to find the help and support and resources for, in a lot of these instances, their children. It just wasn't there so they were coming together to be a support group for one another. HOPE eventually moved to Charlottetown, as well. We have two organizations there. Another great organization Turn on The Lights. I could go on and on and on.

I guess, I do have a few questions, Chair, for Theo here today. You talked about the federal government. I'm curious, with regards to that, what measures have you tried to bring forward or what's the resistance? Or is it just an education process or not understanding the issues?

Theo Fleury: I find that there's a lack of education. A lack of acknowledgement that this is the biggest epidemic on the planet. Justice, forget about having a conversation about justice because there is no such thing. It's a legal system. That's all it is. That's it.

I would say the majority of MPs that I talked to that day, they all said: Well, there was a law passed a long time ago where judges aren't held accountable for their decisions. For example, in my case, I didn't want to go through the justice system. I didn't want to go through the justice system. But I felt obligated to get an education by bringing my own complaint to the thing. Thank god my

guy pleaded guilty, because I didn't have to show up in court. I didn't have to look at the guy. I was lucky.

It was a difficult time in my life, to re-live and rehash and have that police officer ask me to repeat myself 10 or 15 times. So that means I'm not believed, as soon as I walk in. I'm not believed. I have to keep rehashing over and over again.

When I left that conversation from the MPs is what – I said: What is the low-hanging fruit here? When it comes to this. I said, well, it's healing. Healing is the low-hanging fruit. Because if I'm in the process of healing, if I'm in the process of getting better, I don't care about justice. I don't care about justice.

If you guys don't care about justice, then give us support for the healing process. Give more money, give more resources, give – promote to the universities that we need more EMDR specialists; that we need more therapists; we need more social workers. As soon as you get out of college, guess what? You're going to have a job. Because it's a big epidemic. But there's none of that. There's no resources being put towards the healing process because that's the low-hanging fruit is that we all have the ability and the opportunity to heal.

Then why are we pushing our resources in that direction? At the end of the day, it doesn't cost a whole lot to get a yoga instructor in a room and a bunch of people doing yoga, and seeing the benefits of that. Or getting people in a room and teaching them breathing exercises to help them overcome their depression and anxiety. It's that simple. I'm telling you. I've done it. I've done the Big Pharma. I had a gun in my mouth 14 years ago. That's where my experience with synthetic brain chemistry took me. I had a gun in my mouth

Then, I started on a holistic journey and holistic path of self-forgiveness, self-love. What does that look like? I started taking care of myself. Started sleeping well. Eating well. Exercising. All these things. That's what's going to overcome mental health. It's not some $E = mc^2$.

It's getting people to connect to one another through relationship, right? And through that

relationship, that's where you're going to find healing. That is what, I would say, needs to happen. Community, to me, is the answer. Is having a bunch of compassionate, caring, loving people, who are willing to connect to other people in relationship that's going to change how we deal with this.

I say if you have parents, you've experienced trauma in your life. That's all of us, okay? So we all have trauma. That's why I said, trauma is a string which binds us all together as human beings. We know that trauma is here. Trauma leaves us in emotional pain and suffering, mental health. If we can get people here and stop the addictive behaviour; give them other tools besides drugs, alcohol, food, sex, gambling, relationships, all these addictions that we got involved in, if we give them other alternatives, which almost immediately provide some sort of – what's the word I'm looking for – some sort of relief, then people will grab onto that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks. I know your list is growing there, Chair. I won't take up a whole lot more time, but, at some point, I might like to come back.

One of the things that I've seen changing here in the landscape of Prince Edward Island, particularly around addictions and mental health to a certain extent, as well, is over the last five or six years, the stigma around it is going away. It's still there.

Theo Fleury: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Let's face it, still there. But it's being released a little bit. People are a little more comfortable or free; not embarrassed to come forward if they have mental health or addiction issue.

One of the issues that we're still seeing here on PEI, and I'm just talking PEI, but I know it's nationwide, I know it's worldwide, is the stigma around domestic violence, sexual assaults, those type of traumas.

We have a major issue here on PEI, particularly around the unfounded. I'm just wondering if there's any advice or suggestion or thoughts that you could have on that, as far as, how we can actually

evolve and get better as a community to support one another around this very serious issue of trauma"

Theo Fleury: The stigma is an ugly five-letter word called shame. That's the stigma, is shame. So if we take the shame out of all of these things because hurt people hurt people. There has to be a certain way where you can get the offender and the survivor in the room.

First of all, I think because I've worked in the prison system now for about five years, I've been to 15 different prisons, is that a lot of these guys show remorse when we're speaking to them about the things that they have done. And there's a certain amount of willingness for them to change that.

So, you know, we always put all of our resources into the survivor and we forget about the perpetrator. But the perpetrator is also hurting, because he's suppressed, that old-school mentality of sucking it up. When your mom used to say to you: Oh, stop crying. I'll give you something to cry about. Well that tells us that we're not allowed to show our emotions. So we stuff it, we stuff it, we stuff it and then what happens is a massive explosion happens inside of us because we've stuffed so much that we don't have anywhere to store it anymore. So it comes out in anger or rage. But we've experienced that trauma in our life, and so how do we manage it? Well, we hurt other people. But if we can get to the core of what your trauma actually was and we can deal with it, that's going to help.

So there has to be – it's like looking at the big pie of trauma, and sexual abuse, and addictions, and all that is that if we leave one piece of the pie without support, that piece of the pie is eventually going to become the whole pie.

So that's why I went into the prison system, because I wanted to learn from these guys. I wanted to go: How did you get here? And what I discovered is that they all had childhood trauma that was undiagnosed and untreated. But there's still a willingness for them to get the healing because they feel remorse. They feel sadness. And that's what I connected to the most in the prison system was I was speaking to these guys, but I was looking at myself in the mirror 13 years ago;

emptiness, sadness, loneliness, all that – I related to that. So if we know what it is, we can wrap community, we can wrap services around this person to get them the healing that they need so that maybe that relationship isn't over. Maybe that relationship can come back together. So, you know, there's always a reason for somebody's behaviour, and that behaviour is a learned behaviour from childhood. So if we don't deal with that behaviour, that person is going to continue to do what they continue to do. Right?

Chair: I've got a number of people on the list. I wanted to go to the minister of health because I know he's got somewhere to go.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you for moving me up a bit on the list. I'm feeling a little bit guilty, Theo today, leaving. I have a meeting already that was set up earlier. It's about the replacement of our mental health facility in our region here. I'm meeting with some, what I'll call, experts, on what that can look like in the future. Currently, what we're going to replace is a facility – an old facility that back in that day when we talked about mental health it was institutionalized facility.

So your message today: I'm listening, I'm listening, I'm listening. When I go to the meeting in a very short time here, I'll be bringing some of your message forward. So I think as we envision what this is going to look like and we call it our mental health campus, we are looking at those – I'll say interventions by the right health professional as you referenced as well: social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists – when they need to be psychiatrists –

Theo Fleury: Absolutely.

Mr. Mitchell: So that's the path we're getting on here which I think you would say is the right path, or I hope so.

Theo Fleury: Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Mitchell: The thing, though, that – and also the big thing is get them there, get them the treatment they need, and get them transitioned back to the community, and that's a big focus as well – and trying to put

in supports for mental health, our community services that are a huge part of successes today.

So to your point, I agree 100% with what you're saying. To be standing here today listening to your life experience and your message is so powerful and I'm glad I have it, but I wish I could stay for more to hear it all today. So I guess for me –

Theo Fleury: Can we get this guy a ticket for tomorrow night?

[Laughter]

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: You know what? You never know who shows up at these things. But I guess my question for you – the one that I – you know, I'm not struggling with, but when you mentioned the holistic approach versus the pharmaceutical approach, and some of these – we're a small place, PEI, we all know our neighbours, we all know people in our community and for me, I think that some need pharmaceuticals.

Theo Fleury: Yes. Bipolar, schizophrenia, that's it. Everything else can be dealt with because it's a Band-Aid solution to a bigger problem. It just puts a Band-Aid on it. The problems don't go away. Your issues don't go away.

Mr. Mitchell: Well that's good because I wanted to know what pharmaceutical – in your opinion would be (Indistinct)

Theo Fleury: I understand there are certain mental health issues that need medication – and that's a very small majority of the population. But giving somebody synthetic brain chemistry, unless you put them in an MRI machine and actually see the activity that's going on in your brain. You know – Zoloft does certain things. If you lack dopamine or lack serotonin production, Zoloft might be able to help you, but we don't know that. And the fact that medical doctors are subscribing anti-depressants is like ridiculous because they're not trained. Psychiatrists are.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you for that.

Just one more quick question and I have to be out (Indistinct). As far as addictions, I know it's off the course of the bill, obviously, but mental health part, I'm trying to maneuver all those – but addictions as well – and pharmaceuticals and opioid replacement. Get them off where they are. And we went from – it's not the proper term, but longer service beds to transitional beds to get them back to the community as quickly as we can and build some supports out there. Is that, would you say, a reasonable treatment for addictions – if that's your addiction?

Theo Fleury: No. One out of over 30 people that go to 30-day treatment centre go on to have continued sobriety. The other 29 will continue to struggle because relapse is part of recovery.

Mr. Mitchell: And that's often said, relapse is definitely part of the process.

Theo Fleury: It costs \$30,000 for a bed for one month. If you know that only one person is going to succeed, that's ridiculous that we're spending that much money to get one success story. You know what I mean?

Mr. Mitchell: I know exactly what you're saying.

Theo Fleury: The reason why addictions is so prevalent is it's the way that we numb out from our emotional pain. It's like we don't have to deal with it. The more I drink, the more drugs I do – but we also know the type of drug you use says a lot. The opiates users are people that had zero connection as children. Their parents were not available. Abandoned, neglected, foster kids, all these – that's why they gravitate towards that. The speed users: cocaine, all that stuff, well we – that was my drug of choice because I lacked – I couldn't produce dopamine and serotonin which is the pleasure part. So when I was on the ice, my brain was completely regulated because I was producing enough dopamine and serotonin playing hockey that I didn't need it at that time. As soon as I left the rink, I didn't know who I was, so then I gravitated towards that because it helped me numb out all that pain. That's all addictions is, is just a way of us numbing out our emotional pain and suffering. That's it. I see it as addictions are mental health's way of

screaming to us that we need help – to all of us.

Mr. Mitchell: Well listen, I very much thank you for that. I will watch the video of what goes on on the floor here after. You never know if one of the hon. members aren't live streaming from Friday night. Who knows who'll be standing at the back?

Theo Fleury: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this forward and thank you so much, Theo – I'll call you Theo –

Theo Fleury: Yes.

Ms. Compton: – for coming to the Island. My mantra for this province has always been: We're small enough to create our own destiny and big enough to make it happen. I continue to sing that story.

We can make changes here and I think for everyone of us here in the House to hear what you have to say is important. We talked about the economic impact – being \$8 billion and I just know because my previous life I was an administrator for about a hundred employees. You knew things were happening with your employees and having – being able to approach them about it was really difficult and I know we're urging government to provide supports for human resources and management around how we approach this. How does, as the employer – you what's going on, you're trying to be there, you're supporting your employees as much as you can, but they really don't have the necessary supports there for them.

I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about your knowledge on how that would work or how that's worked in the past or in your experience.

Chair: Theo?

Theo Fleury: Well, from a psychological perspective, you have to build trust. What trauma teaches us is that we can't trust anybody. So building that trust, which means passing bills like Bill No. 116, is a great start because it's building trust that government actually cares about mental health, which then will create more conversation, right? Which is what you want, is more conversation, but it's all about trust. We need to trust that government has our best interest at heart which is passing bills, giving more funding, acknowledging that this is the biggest epidemic on the planet. When you get an opportunity to do an interview and talk about this, be vulnerable, talk about your experience – because vulnerability creates safety. And then when you have safety, that's when the magic of healing happens. If the leadership isn't willing to be vulnerable and talk about their own experience, then there is no connection there. It's like, yes, this person is talking about this, but they've never experienced it, so they don't know how I feel.

So building trust through communication. I know you all have Twitter accounts because I've been on every politician's Twitter account taking a picture. So you have your own platform. You have your own opportunity to talk about your experience. So building trust with the community is a great way of doing that.

There was a study that came out that said most psychologists are more messed up than the people that they're working with. But I know in university, when it comes to teaching, or learning about psychology, or trying to become a psychologist, they don't talk about vulnerability. It's that old scene where the patient is on the couch and the thing is there. No, you've got to get down to their level. You've got to get in. That's why I enjoy working in the trenches is because I'm actually making a difference – being vulnerable and creating that safety where people now want to talk about their pain and suffering. And that's the key to healing, is getting people to talk about their pain and suffering. We just, kind of, skim over it all the time. But if we're vulnerable, honest, open, and willing to have these tough conversations, that's the key.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate your comments there about the treatment centres and how one in 30 – I'm not taking anything away from the treatment centres, but I always wondered, myself, what was the point for a number of those people.

Theo Fleury: Right.

Ms. Compton: We had a dear friend who was in the local treatment centre, I think, 34 times.

Theo Fleury: Yes.

Ms. Compton: And the only thing it did –

Theo Fleury: That's 900 grams – one person.

Ms. Compton: And the only thing it did for him is create another addiction.

Theo Fleury: Yes.

Ms. Compton: In the end, lost his life.

Can you speak a little bit more – we talked earlier about the different healing processes, or the different ideas you have. We all know that there's a shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists and I'm not 100% sure that's the answer, and I don't think you think it is either. But just a little bit more about the healing groups and the centres that you've been involved with and how we could make that work here in the province.

Theo Fleury: Yes. Well, in order to heal, we need to get our body, our mind, and our spirit all connected. So the last thing that happens in the process is you bring in spirituality or that three letter word G-O-D, God. Well, most people are upset with the white bearded guy in the sky – which I was. And it was the last thing in the process that I got, was the spirituality part. So I worked on my body, I worked on my mind, totally neglected my spirit and I still was struggling and I'm like: What is this all about? Why am I still struggling? Well, I run into this old, Aboriginal woman and she starts teaching me about spirituality.

But really, what is spirituality? Spirituality is relationship. That's it. The relationship I have with myself first and then the relationship I have with everybody else. So the program – so a treatment centre, you know what they do at a treatment centre? You go in there, they take away all of your coping mechanisms, they open up a small portion of the Pandora's box and take you to 12 step and then 30 days later they let you out. Well, five minutes after you walk out the treatment centre you get triggered and what are you going to do? You're going to go back to what you know.

The process of healing has to come from within. You can't help somebody that doesn't want help. But I'm a fixer, so I want to try and fix people's problems. But that's not doing them any service. I'm just an enabler. So as addicts and alcoholics, that's what we're really good at. We're good at collecting enablers. Because the more enablers we have, the longer the behaviour will last. But eventually, the enablers get sick and tired and then they leave or they create healthy boundaries for themselves, which then leaves us alone, and then we hit the proverbial rock bottom where we've got to make a choice: am I going to die, or am I going to live? Well, most people want to live. That's that boost and then once they're at rock bottom, they're willing to do anything to change their situation.

That has to be the treatment model, is: how do I rebuild a relationship with self. So that means I need to forgive myself, I need to love myself, I need to learn humility, and I need to learn compassion because that will rewire all my past trauma – is self forgiveness, self love, humility and compassion. And the reason why I do this work is because the more people I help, the healthier I get. It's that simple. Helping is healing. And so you need to get that person to that point of helping is healing because that's what's going to change their lives forever – is the fact that they become worthy.

This is what I learned writing my second book and I wrote it with a neuroscientist. We discovered that trauma teaches four things that become the core of our belief system. Trauma teaches us abandonment and neglect. That's the first thing that

trauma teaches us. Second thing: I'm not good enough. Third thing: I'm not lovable. And then the fourth thing which is our people who commit suicide and are addicted to OxyContin and fentanyl are: Do I even exist in the world?

Those are our four core beliefs of what trauma teaches us. So how do I rewire that system? Self forgiveness, self love, relationship, spirituality, humility, compassion. That's the rewiring of the trauma in our brains. Breaks the old neurons and creates new ones, away we go. That's the treatment plan that has to happen. But in 30 days do you think you can go through that process? That's a lifetime. That's a lifetime. When you wrap community around these people who are all speaking the same language, that rewires the brain.

There was a study done in an MRI machine where they had moms and babies in MRI machines. When they came out, they put the little cap on their head, and as soon as mom saw a baby, the right side of mom's brains lit up like a red hot Christmas tree, and so did the baby's. They did the same thing with spirituality. They put somebody in an MRI machine and told them to pray. Do you know what happened? The right side of their brain lit up like a red hot Christmas tree because they were connected.

The people who aren't connected – and those people are drug users and needle users and all that because they can't connect because they feel abandoned and neglected, not good enough, not lovable. Do I even exist in the world? We need to get those people connected to us. We need to show compassion. How many people are in Toronto walking down the street and they see all these homeless people and they just walk by them? I stop and talk to them because they're human beings. They're people and they're way more interesting than people that are walking down the street doing this.

That, to me, is a big part of what we need to heal, is create these communities that are talking like this, that are bringing relationships in. Because, to me, that's what spirituality is. It's just a relationship.

Chair: Thank you, Theo.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Thank you, Theo, for being here.

I think many of us in this room are survivors; we just don't talk about it. We don't talk that we are survivors of different kinds of abuse; family violence. I know I am.

Theo Fleury: Thank you, for that.

Ms. Biggar: But, I think you used a word 'shame'. There's also another word, 'stigma'. And I think Islanders; we're small-knit communities. There is a stigma there and I think we have to move beyond that. This is not socioeconomic. It happens in high profile families, we just –

Theo Fleury: Probably more than –

Ms. Biggar: More than – and that's probably the hardest one to move out of, right? If you're in a high profile family, if you're a victim of whether it's physical or emotional abuse, it's hard to move and to move out there in a small-knit community like this. To say: Oh, that's so and so's child, wife, whatever. As soon as you walk in the door around here, you're known. So that's very hard.

I think we have started to move around, and that does lead to mental health issues obviously. That's why we do need, I believe, to work at the community level. That's where it has to start. We have to have the pieces in place for those who have had the strength, I'll say, like you, to come forward; to have that support that they need to deal with that, whatever type of trauma, as you say, it is because it can be all encompassing.

I think in our schools, I come from as an education assistant working with children in the schools; I've seen it where those children, they are calm, most of the day.

Theo Fleury: Yeah, because you're the only secure (Indistinct) figure they have in their lives.

Ms. Biggar: So when it gets to the time when that bus is going to take them home, that's when the acting out starts.

I think we – and I commend the teachers in the system that when a child does disclose or if a friend of yours discloses, it's like how can we be supportive and makes them feel safe to take the next step? This bill is a first step, for sure, and I support that.

There are other things we can do within our employment side of things as well that – as minister of status of women, this is something I have worked on. It's just coming here now. That's great. That's fine. We don't have to own it, right? We're all here together. But you know there are other things that we need to support women and families, and men, in –

Theo Fleury: It's just as many men that are being abused as women.

Ms. Biggar: I recognize that and again –

Theo Fleury: Mostly emotionally, not physically or violently but emotionally.

Ms. Biggar: Correct, and that is a large stigma.

Theo Fleury: – which is the worst kind of abuse that a man can suffer, is emotional abuse.

Ms. Biggar: I know in my role as status of women at the federal provincial level, I know that you have addressed at that level the ministers of status for women which we are all from other provinces and we do have a working committee here within my women's secretariat from victim services and work force and advanced learning and my department.

I invite you to – if you're able at some point – to chat with that group, I certainly would welcome that interaction.

Theo Fleury: Well, my business manager is right there. She'll give you a card when we leave.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, sure.

Theo Fleury: We'd love to help in any way that we can.

Ms. Biggar: I also want to note that I did see your presentation when you went to Lennox Island.

That's my community. I lived in the neighbouring community of Lennox Island.

Theo Fleury: Oh yeah, I was there. Great place.

Ms. Biggar: I know that's a very passionate topic for you as well working with first nations –

Theo Fleury: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: – and aboriginal peoples.

At the very community level, though, what kind of work have you been doing, I'm going to say? What would you suggest communities do? How can we get that we're working within my department to support a project, for instance, for young males, to take that, as you say, you're not allowed to cry. This is how you're supposed to treat a girl.

Is there any experience, I guess, that you have in working with that kind of topic?

Theo Fleury: Geez.

Chair: Maybe, Theo, just before you get into that –

Ms. Biggar: Oh, sorry.

Chair: We're having a really fantastic, amazing discussion here and one thing – I do want to get back to the bill –

Ms. Biggar: We want to get the bill passed.

Chair: – at some point, but definitely answer this question because it's a great question. But after that, I'm going to ask members to let's focus on the bill (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Sure, I just want to raise that issue because it is very important at the community level, especially in the small community like this.

Theo Fleury: Well, I have a theory on the reason why when I come out to the Maritimes I find the highest incident of

trauma in the Maritimes; is because the explorers came first, discovered here. The church came behind the explorers. The church was responsible for a lot of the abuse that happened.

Now we're dealing with, 160 years of – so we have trans-generational trauma that's being passed down all the way through. So, we have to be patient, which I had to learn because I'm a go-getter and I just want to get stuff done.

But, I realized that patience is a virtue, and I commend every single group or organization that's dealing with trauma on a daily basis. I know that you're doing the best you can with what you have. And as long as people are healing and getting out of the old behaviours that they continue to do, and the only thing I know how to do is lead by example. I can talk, I can talk, I can talk all I want, but it's the law of attraction rather than promotion. Because a lot of my friends – who I thought were my friends – my drinking friends – when I got sober, they all went away. They say: You want to find out who your true friends are, get sober, so I did that.

But what happened was a lot of those people who left started to come back. Why? Because they saw me different and then they started asking questions and then that created more conversation. So you know those young men that you're mentoring have to become leaders and through their action, they will create more change. So I don't know if that answered your question but –

Chair: Thanks.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you for being here.

Theo Fleury: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you for sharing everything and your perspective.

Theo Fleury: Thank you for being vulnerable. I appreciate that.

Chair: All right. Thank you, members and Theo.

I wanted to call on the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. I believe he has some input on the bill.

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

Mr. Fleury, sorry I mispronounced your name last time.

Theo Fleury: It's okay. Everybody does.

Mr. Gallant: Your presence here today is going to have a profound effect on all of us here today and the people that are viewing. I know that. We all say it takes a community to raise a child, but it also takes a community to keep an adult going too, if there's a traumatic event or a crisis in their life.

The best way we can overcome these things is by talking to people and learning.

I thank you for your strength, and your passion, and your knowledge on this issue. This is an issue that affects people right across our country, as you said. And we're not immune to it here on PEI. Even our post-secondary institutions – thanks to people like yourself for speaking out – have come forward to our department and wanting us to put in a sexual harassment policy –

Theo Fleury: Wow.

Mr. Gallant: – which is wonderful.

Theo Fleury: Yes.

Mr. Gallant: We've met with the PEI student union and we've met with other groups and it's important to them and it goes to show that we are talking about it today, whereas, it was mentioned here before, it was kind of something that we don't talk about. They also see the need for mental health awareness at our post-secondary institutions and they came to us with a proposal and we funded that. These initiatives with driven by the youth because of the outspokenness of people like yourself and they're feeling they can come out.

I can't thank you enough for being here today. I would like to thank the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this bill forward. Our department was looking at things like this over the summer, but this bill is a good bill. I would like to make a friendly amendment with your permission, hon. member.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Mr. Gallant: You had indicated in your bill you'd like to see three days paid leave and I know some provinces do five and five, some do ten. Would you be amendable to go with your three days paid leave and extend another seven days unpaid leave?

Mr. Myers: Absolutely.

[Applause]

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Mr. Gallant: Hon. members, would you like me to read the motion and pass it out?

Mr. Myers: Sure.

Mr. Gallant: You support this bill with this friendly amendment, okay?

Chair: The motion for the amendment is seconded by the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Mr. Myers: Are you going to speak first?

Chair: He's going to read the – members, he's just going to read the amendment.

Mr. Gallant: Whatever you choose.

Mr. Myers: Go ahead and read it, yes.

Mr. Gallant: Propose amendment to Bill No. 116 *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 3)*:

1. Adding up to seven additional days of unpaid leave.

Domestic violence leave, intimate partner violence leave or sexual violence leave.

22.4 Domestic violence, intimate partner violence or sexual violence leave

(1) Where an employee has been employed by an employer for a continuous period of three months or more, the employer shall, at the request of the employee, grant the employee

(a) leaves of absence with pay of up to three days, and

(b) leaves of absence without pay for up to seven additional days,

which the employee may choose to take intermittently or in one continuous period, during a twelve-calendar-month period, taken at the employee's discretion, for a domestic violence leave, intimate partner violence or sexual violence leave.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and the Status of Women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chair: All right. Thank you.

The seconder would like to – although I've been informed we don't really need a seconder but that's great that you're doing that – would like to just speak very briefly –

Ms. Biggar: I will.

Chair: – to the amendment.

Ms. Biggar: Again, I think this is very important that we work with the employer to educate them on the importance of why we have to have this, whether it's an hour they need to take off, or whether it's three days they need to take off to get out of that situation, this is something I think is very important and I support the amendment to the bill.

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Calling for the question and one person, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, wants to speak to the amendment.

Leader of the Opposition: Sorry. Just a quick question before we call the question.

I want to ensure that the original bill, and this amendment, in particular, if a particular employer or company has a program in place that is even more robust than what we're proposing here, that that is not going to impact an employer.

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

Mr. Myers: I believe that – I'm not a lawyer, but I believe that's the way the *Employment Standards Act* works already is that –

Leader of the Opposition: This is the bare minimum.

Mr. Myers: This is bare minimum.

Leader of the Opposition: This is the bare minimum.

Mr. Myers: Anybody can add on top of that that.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, perfect.

Thank you.

Chair: Members, do we have call for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Chair: All in favour of the amendment as proposed please say 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: All against please say 'nay'.

Leader of the Opposition: Carry the bill.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Mr. Myers: Let's carry the bill.

Chair: The amendment is passed.

I did have some others on my list to speak to the bill. I wanted to call the Leader of the Third Party; he's been waiting patiently over here.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Well, I mean I don't really want to hold up the progress here, but I did want to say how moved I was by everything you've said today, Theo. For me, that was one of the most moving speeches I've heard in this legislature in the time I've been here.

Theo Fleury: Thank you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I want to thank you for your eloquence, and your courage, and the

vulnerability you've demonstrated in being here today – and your wisdom.

Theo Fleury: Thank you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It was a very, very moving session.

Thank you.

Theo Fleury: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. hon. Leader of the Third Party.

I'm hearing a question.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Chair: All right.

All in favour of the bill as amended please say 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: All against please say 'nay'.

The bill has been carried as amended unanimously.

[Applause]

Mr. Myers: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 3).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to with amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to*

Amend the Employment Standards Act (No. 3), I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same with amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry. Carried.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the 28th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 28. *Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, Bill No.114, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, would you please come and chair this bill?

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Plastic Bag Reduction Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Fox: Can we have an overview?

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, I think we had some general discussion as to – about the bill. It's Bill No. 114 and the member is going to give us an update or an overview.

Are you taking somebody on the floor?

Mr. Roach: No, I'm not. No.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Roach: This is the overview I provided previously, but I'm happy to review it again.

This bill is brought forward; it's one that the large majority of Islanders can relate to. Far too many times I've been out on the water or driving by and looked in the ditch, and the trees and I've seen hundreds of plastic bags being left aside and littered, which in turn only deteriorates our environment.

Implementing this plastic bag ban is overdue. We need to begin a fight to fight climate change, and create a more sustainable Island and our country for future generations. We may be a small province but leading the way on this initiative could prove to have a huge impact if other provinces were to adopt a similar ban.

Currently, there are several municipalities across our nation, who currently have bag-ban bylaws but no other province has implemented something of this nature. We simply can't go any longer at the rate in which we use and improperly dispose of plastic. As a country we have enough plastic bags and bag waste to circle the entire globe 55 times. It's disgusting the amount that we use and how easy it really is to stop using plastic bags, such as at the grocery store and department store.

Reusable or even paper bags are a simple alternative to helping save the environment, and allowing Prince Edward Island to become an even more eco-friendly province.

I received a great message of endorsement from a school principal in PEI. She told me that after I brought this bill forward that she began to implement a school-wide plastic reduction program where they get rid of all their Styrofoam cups, bowls and plastic lids for their hot lunches.

They decided that it was time now and acted upon it and now is even encouraging other principals in schools across the Island to take action on this initiative. Introducing it to children in our schools is a great sign of things to come, so they can truly understand the effects of plastic being left on the environment.

Islanders can understand the harm caused and they understand that that this is a pivotal step in the right direction. Although there

are numerous bag bans across our nation and entire world, one country that certainly sets the bar high is Kenya, of all places.

Kenya recently implemented a bag ban in which people who break the law, whether a customer, manufacturer or business, can be fined up to \$38,000 or imprisoned up to four years if they do not have the funds. This is a very strict law, of course. However, for a poorer country like Kenya to put such value on their environment it really goes to show how we must do the same.

What began as a personal issue for me has transpired into a massive support base. Seeing litter around our province infuriates me, as a matter of fact. The vast majority of what I see is plastic bags, those one-use bags from grocery stores.

Our coastline sees more and more of these same bags every year. We must change our ways or else our children and grandchildren will suffer immensely.

Recently in conversation with the Women's Institute, because they've been doing this now for – this is the 45th year. They've told me that over the last number of years they see that it's getting worse and worse. It's not getting better.

We're not trying to hinder businesses from doing their work; however, we hope that it will be cooperative and understand the long-term positive effects this ban will have. To date, I have received hundreds of texts and emails and other messages of support for this bill and it continues to rise. There have been numerous congratulatory letters to the editor in both *The Guardian* and *Journal-Pioneer* stating that this is an essential step; a first step for Prince Edward Island to become a more eco-friendly province. The time is now. We must act on it.

Together, each one of us, in this Legislative Assembly, we can all show that we are leaders and leaders by example in hopes that the rest of our country will follow our guidance in implementing a provincial bag ban.

I just want to leave this one quote with you from David Suzuki. I really like it:

The weakness of all plastic bags is their abandonment in the environment.

I think that speaks volumes.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I have the Premier, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, and the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, on my list so far.

The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I've heard from individual constituents and other Islanders who have spontaneously approached me to say they admire this; that they appreciate it, and I might say, are inspired by it.

Two that stand out, I had as did others, a letter directly from the Women's Institute. In fact, it was within, I would think, 24 hours of the tabling of this bill, that there was a quite well articulated – I'm not suggesting that it would be anything else from the Women's Institute – but it was a strong endorsement of the purpose of this bill.

The woman I want to mention takes it to a different constituency, I'm pretty sure that the students in our schools don't need the same level of, I might say, education around these issues that the general population may. I had a visit on a Sunday afternoon from representatives of a grade 1 class, who came with a whole scroll that they had put together about this bill. They had renamed the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, as an earth superhero. Then, had various further powers that they attributed, or hoped that you would have for the proponent.

In any event, you had the power to bring this bill forward. I'm looking forward to working on it and living up to the positive response that it has already received.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Just curious, member, is there any – I'm getting positive feedback as well from people in my district on the bill, I'm just

wondering has there been anybody against the bill and if so why?

Mr. Roach: I would say – well I haven't had anyone come to me or send me a note or anything with respect to saying: I'm against the bill. To say that anyone has come and said they're dead against the bill? No.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, that's good.

One thing I noticed in the district that I guess I was pretty proud more than anything to see and something I wouldn't have thought of, but here a few days ago there was a young man in my district, a lobster fisherman. He had put a post on Facebook where he was picking bait bags out of the water where some people were throwing them in.

This young fellow is in his early twenties, and he brought that to light and said: Listen, I'll put a garbage can in the wharf in my fish-house, and you can put the bags in there and I'll take them to the garbage.

I noticed the comments; a lot of young people agreeing with him. You had mentioned the Women's Institute are saying they're finding more garbage in the ditches and so forth but I thought to see young people realizing the importance of taking the garbage and making sure they don't throw it in the ocean, I was pretty impressed and I was just proud to see that happen in my district. I just wanted to mention that.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

I have a few questions, here. I'm not against this, but something I'm sort of wondering is: Why wouldn't you have brought this to committee first to have a chance to talk to and different stakeholders, or different groups on this?

Mr. Roach: I think, I looked at the timeframe when I became a private member, and the time that I had between then and the sitting of this Legislature. I felt that when I started to do my research, I saw the number of other places across Canada; City of

Halifax; City of Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City; there were a couple of places in Manitoba and one that stood out a lot was Fort McMurray. It's actually a regional municipality there.

I looked at, and read all the work that had been done at a political level in all of those communities. When I read about Halifax, I can't tell you how many times I saw that in Halifax, it had gone to committee. It's been recommended, and it goes to this committee; it's recommended that it goes to that committee.

For the last, at least, two decades, I know that there was opportunity for many organizations particularly, within the industry to do something themselves. I felt that, for myself, it was kind of a time crunch. I'm not saying that this bill will reach – will stay the way it is for years and years to come. This bill is just to get it established that PEI has a ban on bags. There is going to be plenty of time before it actually comes into place that it could be adjusted or amendments made to it.

Mr. Fox: Why wouldn't we look at enforcing a refund on bags at, like a bottle exchange? What we do with cans or pop bottles? That for every bag you take back to a bottle exchange, plastic bag, you get five cents back?

Was there any research done or did you – any places where that's happening? That it's actually proved that –

Mr. Roach: There's no place where that's happening that it's approved that it's been of any benefit. The biggest offender of bags in our oceans, and bags that are in our environment; in our streams; in our forests; in our woods: everywhere is the one-use plastic bag that comes out of grocery stores. That is why I stayed and kept my focus on this one item.

Mr. Fox: So with that, in definitions, it says: "...“plastic bag” means any bag made with plastic, including biodegradable plastic or compostable plastic, but does not include a reusable bag.”

I'm wondering, with that definition, how would that apply – and then if you go into, where is it here, prohibition:

“For greater certainty, no business shall sell or provide to a customer a plastic bag.”

How would that apply to when I go to Canadian Tire and I want to pick up a package of light bulbs, for example, or fuses, which specifically come in a plastic bag? Would there not be a possible effect on that or how would we deal with that?

Mr. Roach: Well, you know, this act is not all-encompassing; and that's why the bag is focused on the one-use plastic bag that we get in grocery stores. I'm not saying that there's not a use for plastics in our society. There certainly is. When we look at things like medical supplies, items that are used, you know, that I – when you look at in the exemption section, there certainly are many uses for plastic bags in many different areas; but this particular plastic bag is the worst offender against our environment on earth. That's why I'm focused on that one bag.

Chair: Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Something I've been talking about a lot about the last two or three years is reforestation, so I was curious in something that was in an article by the retail council. In that, they said that – and I don't know if this is true or not – but it says: producing paper bags with water and chemicals involved is harder on the environment than the process of creating of plastic bags.

So I'm curious on that comment. Because if we know that you need reforestation, we know that you need plants out there and trees to help reduce carbon, is there any thought about this more trees have to be cut down more? More water would have to be used, more chemicals to produce a paper bag than this?

Mr. Roach: And that's an argument that I've read that they've used, but I haven't seen any science behind that –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: – whatsoever; however, the science I have seen behind this is much stronger and much greater, and I don't think

we always have to say that the only alternative for a plastic bag is paper.

I have reusable bags that I have bought from many different grocery stores and from different shops that have emblems on it about Prince Edward Island or whatever the case may be, different advertisements, and they are neither plastic nor paper.

So I think that the campaign that I would be encouraging is one that moves in that direction of using reusable bags. We have reusable bags out there. I have some in my house. I've had them for so long, I can't tell you how long, and they still haven't broken down in any way and I'm still using them.

I think that the biggest thing we have to do is change our habits and our ways. It's very easy now, and the more you think about it, the more cognizant you are when you shop. So quickly people will say: can I put that in plastic or they're about to put it in a plastic bag. It's so easy to say: No, that's okay, don't put it in plastic.

I went to the store last week, forgot my reusable bags. Didn't have them with me; they were at home. So I simply took my groceries, rolled them out to the truck and put them in the back of the truck as they were and went home. I think a lot of it is just how we shop and how we carry ourselves. We obviously certainly do need to respect our environment.

Just to give an example about the plastic bags: Scientists now, they've discovered that we actually have four of these whirlpools that have hundreds and hundreds of square miles of plastic just circulating. It's estimated that by the year 2050 the weight of all plastics in the oceans will be greater than the weight of all fish in the oceans. That's kind of a scary thought. And let's face it: plastic, it never breaks down. It just goes –to nothing. It breaks down as smaller plastic molecules and is – wherever it lands is wherever it is forever.

Mr. Fox: I would agree with you on some aspects of that because I know one thing when I go to a grocery store or a parts store or something, they offer – Canadian Tire, they'll say: Do you want a bag? No, I don't need a bag; I can carry it out loose. I do that all the time, right?

But I've often wondered: When we did have a price on bags – and we used to have a price on bags at the grocery store, they used to charge at Sobeys and Atlantic Superstore I think it was five cents a bag or something like that – why would we not make it a law that they have to charge 50 cents or a tariff or something to that and then have something back at the bottle return to encourage, like – does Waste Watch ever talk to that?

Mr. Roach: Yeah, and I think that the fact that they're not charging us 5 cents or 15 cents I think is just a game of chess, so to speak. They're charging you for that bag.

Mr. Fox: It's hidden.

Mr. Roach: It's hidden. You're paying for it. Make no mistake about it. You're paying for it up front and you're paying for it when you try to get rid of it and you're paying for it when the garbage collector comes around and picks them up; but the problem with those bags are they're so light, the way they're reused they're in our environment. They're the worst piece of plastic we have in our environment. Mind you, there are many others I could list as well; but this is the one, this is the start.

Mr. Fox: Go ahead for a second there, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

I also have heard from people about this bill, and definitely the people are excited. They all agree we want to see plastic bags – the single-use plastic bag you talk about – reduced.

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Mr. Trivers: I would definitely agree with you there. The spirit of this bill is right on the mark. Absolutely, I support that wholeheartedly. I was wondering, though: Who did you consult with on this bill? What groups did you consult with?

An Hon. Member: The retail council.

Mr. Roach: Well, I did –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Yeah. I did speak to some major chain stores, some of the managers. I did speak to some of the people who work at the checkout counters, just to try and get a feel for what it was. I did have a conversation with Jim Cormier from the Retail Council of Canada. It was a very interesting conversation because I did learn a lot from him about the failure of large corporations to kind of turn this plastic shopping bag thing around.

There was a bit of an agreement at one point in time in Nova Scotia where they were going to stop selling plastic bags. Well, the bigger chains couldn't agree on that, so chain pulled the bags off the shelves. The other chain said: Nah, I don't think we're going to do it. So they had massive sales for about a month or so until the chain that had come into the agreement said: Well, we're going to have to put them back on the shelves because there's no fair practice.

I think that the – my feeling, too, when I stepped away from the conversation with Jim Cormier was simply that the bigger chains, in particular, have had the opportunity for the last ten decades to do something about this and they really haven't; and in my research, I found that the only time they got interested was when someone wanted to put a ban on it or wanted to start to work on it.

So I think that the one thing that this act or this bill would do, it would take every one of those chains and every store owner in Prince Edward Island and put them all on a level playing field so that not one can get ahead of the other; and I believe there's probably an industry out there that will pick up on this fairly quickly, and fill the void of those bags at the store.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, the Retail Council of Canada did contact me as well, and they sent me some information. Did they send you any of the information that they had?

An Hon. Member: We all got it.

Mr. Roach: Yes, we all got it. Yes, I read it.

Mr. Trivers: So did you read through all the information they sent you?

Mr. Roach: I did, all of it.

Mr. Trivers: One thing that they did send was the work they did with BC retailers to reduce the distribution of single-use shopping bags.

They talked about, as multiple member (Indistinct) read it that, that's, sort of, the approach they wanted to take.

It's a devil-in-the-details sort of thing. Everybody wants to work to see plastic bag reduction but they had concerns about the details of the bill. Since you've read it, hopefully you understand their concerns.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Did you consider making any changes to the bill based on the feedback you received from them?

Mr. Roach: No. What I did say to Jim Cormier, and I will tell every member in the House the same thing: the way I feel is that there seems to be an interest now to get involved. Like I said, they've had the last couple of decades, because we know this has been a big problem.

However, I would be fully open, at any time once this bill is in place to sit down with the Retail Council of Canada, and see what they're going to bring to the table: What are you going to bring to the table? Not just telling government: You should do this. You should do that. You're a big part of the problem. What are you going to bring to the table to help us get rid of those terrible plastic bags?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: I invite them to come forward. There's no rush with this. We're not saying this – tomorrow we're going to go out there and start beating anybody up, but there's going to be plenty of time. We'll have probably 14 months before this kicks in where I would welcome the Retail Council of Canada to come down here and work with us collaboratively. I have no problem with that.

Mr. Trivers: I mean to be fair, you've been a legislator for a decade yourself and you're just getting the chance to bring this bill forward, as well.

Indeed, it is the government that actually has to control this sort of thing through legislation. They did in, my conversations, with Jim Cormier, he said that they were not consulted before you introduced the private member's bill afterwards. I'm glad you're willing to work to change it and make it palatable to the Retail Council of Canada.

I don't know if we want to discuss some of the changes that they were looking for right now, or as we go through this bill. You should know – you probably know what they are.

Mr. Roach: I have a pretty good idea of what they want. But, again, what they've tried to do, at least, in Atlantic Canada, before in my view, has failed. I think that, we, as a government, and as governments across this great country of ours, I think that we have to take more of a leadership role. I certainly welcome them to come and work with us on the collaborative basis.

If they have great ideas, well, maybe in the fall session of the Legislature, we can do some amendments to this bill; provided that they're going to come to the table with more than just, you know, late-coming advice.

Mr. Trivers: Minister, or member, I should say, the Retail Council of Canada is a national organization. They're professionals that have dealt, like you said, with distribution of various retail items and bags have been a part of their life for a long, long time. Indeed, it does concern me that you weren't able to consult with them prior to actually writing your private member's bill.

I do want to see Prince Edward Island be a leader in this, and possibly work with Vancouver Island, as well. I think that would be really a great thing to see the west and the east sort of pioneer this.

Have you considered maybe discussing this further at committee, now that you have the Retail Council of Canada engaged, now that you talked with them, so that you can get the details right in this and do this in a way that's going to get the most reduction of

plastic bags, and most reduction of bags, in general, so that it's best for the environment.

Some of the suggestions that I've noted from the Retail Council of Canada would actually see an even greater reduction of bags than the bill actually sort of targets.

Mr. Roach: Again, I'm not saying that this – and I said this right from the outset, when I was on the floor before; I don't see this bill as having all the answers.

But I think this bill does have the answers for the worst offender in our environment, and certainly for Prince Edward Island, I think it does. We can't afford, in PEI to have to deal with this kind of environmental problem. We're a small Island. Again, I said it before, when I go around I see the plastic bags that I see in the environment, it just sickens me because it's not necessary.

We can get along in this province quite easily without those one-use bags. We're a population of 150,000. Again, I'm more than willing to work with them but we've been waiting two decades now.

I certainly appreciate their position, but they don't represent the environment. They represent the retailers. Where do our bags come from? The bags come from retailers.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

Mr. Roach: 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 had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Plastic Bag Reduction Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, this House will recess until 7:00 p.m.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: You may be seated.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to call Order No. 12 to the floor, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No. 12, *An Act to Respond to the Legalization of Cannabis*, Bill No. 29, in committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're back on track now.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford to come and chair this bill.

Chair (McIsaac): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Respond to the Legalization of Cannabis*.

Hon. members, the minister would like to bring a stranger to the floor.

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: One or two?

Mr. MacDonald: Two.

Chair: Two? Okay.

An Hon. Member: Two is good.

Chair: Two is good.

Great, thank you.

While they're coming on, we are on page 35, schedule 3, section 2.

Section 1 is passed. We're debating number 2; page 35.

Blair and Graham, can I get you to introduce yourselves and your title, please?

Blair Barbour Manager: Sure.

Blair Barbour, Manager of Policy, Planning and FPT Relations at the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

Graham Miner Acting Director: Graham Miner, Director of Highway Safety Division.

Chair: Thanks so much.

Are there any other questions on section 2?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 3 at the bottom of page 35 running through to the bottom of page 37.

Any questions there?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: This is section 3, Medical Exemption.

It's on the third of the way down, page 36, and I know that the proof of being a medical user now is that they carry their little containers and I understand, speaking to some of the medical users here on the Island, that it used to be, under the previous federal legislation, they had a little ID card which was a lot easier to carry around than these things.

Is there any chance that we will move back to that, ultimately?

Graham Miner Acting Director: I haven't heard anything to that effect. But, the way

the act is designed is to match up with whatever the federal government does. If they go back that way, the act will just follow along.

Chair: Further questions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Top of page 37; this whole section here is about penalties related to being caught impaired. I'm just wondering how PEI compares to other jurisdictions in terms of our penalties, suspensions, ignition locks, and things like that.

Graham Miner Acting Director: In terms of our penalties with all the other jurisdictions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, other provinces.

Graham Miner Acting Director: With all the other provinces, we're either equal to or greater than in terms of the penalty size. Our short-term suspensions are the same or more. Our impoundments are the same or more. So in that area, we're equal to or greater than all other jurisdictions.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's great.

Chair: Anything further questions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm good, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry. Carried.

Top of page 38, section 4.

Are there any questions there? Shall it carry. Carried.

Bottom of page 38, section 5. Shall it carry. Carried.

On page 40, section 6. Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 7. Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 8. Shall it carry? Carried.

Top of page 41, section 9.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

This is to do with graduated drivers and the different standards that are going to apply here. As I read this, I see that there's – if I'm interpreting it right, that there's the blood or saliva test, whatever is done, there's an automatic suspension, is that correct?

Graham Miner Acting Director: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, and that's different from a regular driver?

Graham Miner Acting Director: Yeah, for graduated and those under 22, there is zero tolerance. We have it for alcohol right now, so it will have the equivalent on the drug side with, of course, the exemption for medical marijuana (Indistinct) it's a match up.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm concerned.

I mean, that's the age group that tends to use marijuana fairly – a lot of them do. As we discussed yesterday, I think it was, the THC stays in the bloodstream for a long time. So you could have somebody that hasn't smoked a joint or taken cannabis for two weeks and they're driving a car and there's an automatic suspension.

Are you okay –

Graham Miner Acting Director: It won't occur on the saliva test. It will be gone from the saliva, that goes fairly quickly and that's why, within terms of the Criminal Code itself, the testing that you do must be within two hours of the offence or any evidence gathered after that is not valid.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, I meant to ask that question yesterday, the difference between how quickly THC is removed from saliva as opposed to blood, Graham?

Graham Miner Acting Director: Yeah, it's very fast. It's quicker. That's why, for alcohol in the Criminal Code, it's a three-hour window and for this there's a two-hour window.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: Further questions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's all I have.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Section 10 begins two-thirds of the way down on page 44.

Questions there? Shall it carry? Carried.

An Hon. Member: No more questions.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Chair: Section 11?

Some Hon. Members: Carry the bill.

Chair: Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Good, thank you.

We need to go through and carry the sections.

Section 1 was amended. Shall that carry as amended? Carried.

Section 2. Shall that carry? Carried.

Schedule 3. Shall that carry? Carried.

Schedule 4. Shall that carry? Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Great, thank you.

An Act to Respond to the Legalization of Cannabis.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. MacDonald: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report the bill agreed to with amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Respond to the Legalization of Cannabis*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same with amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, that the 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: Order No. 17, *An Act to Amend the Health Services Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 36, ordered for second reading.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Health Services Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 36, read a second time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will now call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and chair this bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Health Services Act (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. Fox: Overview.

Chair: Overview, thank you.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Good evening; could you introduce yourself and your title for the record.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: I'm Nichola Hewitt. I'm a solicitor and legislative specialist with the Department of Health and Wellness.

Chair: Welcome.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Thank you.

Chair: Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you very much, Chair.

The amendments that are put forward in this bill are basically administrative in nature, but have been designed to increase accountability within our health system. They will create stronger linkages to the community and clearly define the roles and responsibility for both the ministry and the health authority.

The current act that we are operating under is nine years old. It's a good time to update that and modernize the act itself. Obviously, the act will bring clarity to the roles of minister; the health authority; the CEO, and relationships thereof.

The amendments have been discussed with the board chair and the board members. This is about improving our system and ensuring that all Islanders have the best access to the

best health care on Prince Edward Island that we can do; and collectively with the board, and the ministry in creating that stronger linkage with the linkages to the community engagement groups. That should be the outcome all across our province.

Thank you very much for listening to that.

Chair: Hon. members, do you want me to still read line by line?

Mr. Fox: Section by section.

Chair: Section by section. Okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct) question (Indistinct)

Chair: Sure. The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Minister, you mentioned you had discussions with the board. How did that go?

Mr. Mitchell: We had a great discussion. Obviously, the board has been doing exemplary work but, a volunteer board managing an entity of \$710 million is onerous and burdensome on them.

We have lots of expertise and experience within the department and we create this linkage together to assist in that. I indicated that, collectively, I have some ideas that I'd like to see the board work with us on and I know they do as well. I said: it's an exciting time for moving forward with a new path. We'll sit down. We'll figure out how to carve that out moving forward.

Obviously there are some questions but they will be answered as we sit down and map out what our road plan will look like and the work that we expect to get done over the next year or so.

At the end of the day they all seem very receptive and positive to working collaboratively together. Up until now, there's a – with Health PEI and the department there has been some disconnect, so forming those linkages, it's a good thing.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can you give us a description of the division of responsibilities

between Health PEI and the department and how this bill is going to change that? That's the crux of what we're talking about.

Mr. Mitchell: I'll give you a general view and probably Nichola can do more of a legal type of thing.

Currently, the role of the board is, kind of, those day-to-day operations that they're more involved in probably, with branching out in some areas. I think there are all kinds of things that we can work on together; be it patience registry; be it panel sizes; be it ERs that we're struggling to keep open. These are all things that we can come to solution with and they can be part of it. I think that's what they would like to focus, as well from my conversation.

Previously it's been pretty directed. The CEO, too, is responsible – has been responsible only to the board. Now, the CEO will be responsible to the board and to myself. It's a good linkage.

This is a big entity; Health PEI. We have all three; you call them a triangle today: CEO, minister, or ministry, and board. We're going to put those back into three parallel lines so they're going down the road together.

Do you have, kind of, a formal overview I guess?

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: The way the act is structured right now, the ministry is responsible, for developing a provincial health plan and doing a lot of policy work in the long-term, kind of planning; whereas Health PEI is on the operational side of things.

What we're looking at is working more collaboratively together as the minister said. The minister is going to be developing the strategic plan. But Health PEI, also, will be working on a strategic plan. There's already provision in the act under section, I think it's subsection 3 (3) to develop an accountability framework. We're going to be working on that at this point in time to further determine exactly what roles each party is responsible for.

Mr. Mitchell: Right and those discussions were had with the board that we are working on that plan.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: We will all be at the table together; the board, myself, and Nichola to, kind of, develop that strategy of how that needs to be.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: We're just –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Nichola.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Right now there's not a lot of clarity around the roles and responsibilities. The amendment is really setting out the roles and responsibilities. I didn't dream this up; I did some jurisdictional scanning.

I guess I might as well just give you a quick background.

This act, we started working on this, I wasn't in this role at this time, but it would have been in 2007, 2008, possibly 2009; somewhere in that area, maybe as late as – no, I think 2009 the bill had passed, so it was leading up to that.

At that time we were one of the first jurisdictions to have a single health authority. Most other provinces had multiple health authorities, which is what we had at that point in time. Since then we've had BC, sort of, consolidate into smaller number of health authorities, but they've got a larger population of course. Alberta has certainly streamlined it. Saskatchewan, in 2017, streamlined theirs. They've now got a single health authority. Ontario narrowed it down to 16 health authorities. It sounds like a lot, but they've got a huge population. Nova Scotia now is – they have a provincial health authority, and then they have the IWK. New Brunswick is down to two. I believe Newfoundland is down to two, as well. Since we passed our original act, a lot of jurisdictions have streamlined their whole structure.

This just does not work particularly well the way it is right now. We looked at what the other provinces were doing and we've

modelled most of the amendments, 99% of the amendments were modelled on Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.

Mr. Mitchell: If I might add, as well, I could probably come up in further discussion, but there's another – I'll call it significant change within the legislation – is the structure of the board. Currently, there are 12 members but we're going down to a seven-member board.

At the time, like nine years ago, or 10 years almost, that the act was created, we didn't have the two health engagement community boards that we do east and west. Both of those boards have about a 12-member – they can have up to 12 members on those boards.

The way the new structure looks is; we're going to take the two chairs, one from the east board and one from the west board and have them on the health board. Good representation. Good linkage there. Good tie-in to what these boards are hearing out in the other areas of the community. I think that's a very positive change.

As I said they didn't exist back nine years ago – to bring it to seven, with these two external boards that will work basically in concert with them – is a good move. When you relate that to I think it's Saskatchewan, they have a 10-member board. We're significantly smaller in our population, so seven, that sounds like an act, the best number to kind of begin with.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Of particular concern to me is accountability. To make sure that there is a clear line and a clean finger, you know, we'll be able locate: you are the one that's responsible here.

You mentioned, Nichola, that there is a section in the act where it specifically talks about accountability structures.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: What I said was: under 3 (3), the minister in consultation under Health PEI may establish an accountability framework that describes the roles and responsibilities of the minister and Health PEI. That's currently in the act. It's already there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Okay. What we're doing now is, we're just saying: these are the powers and these are the duties of the minister. These are the powers, and these are the duties of the board. We're simply updating them.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: In your mind, by the time these amendments come into place there will be a clarity of accountability –

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – that currently does not exist. Is that one of the problems that you were –

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – inferring earlier?

Mr. Mitchell: That's right.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

On final question, thank you.

How are you doing in terms of our discussions about the new CEO for Health PEI. Where are we with that?

Mr. Mitchell: Currently, we have an interim CEO, Denise –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Keith.

Mr. Mitchell: Denise. Keith has left –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, right.

Mr. Mitchell: And Denise Lewis Fleming, who was in the chair –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, sure.

Mr. Mitchell: – with me last week, she is the interim CEO.

The CEO search has been ongoing. A few weeks ago, we had a number, a small number but nonetheless, a number, that we were looking at but because of various reasons it reduced itself. They found other work or –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I remember you talking

—

Mr. Mitchell: — yeah —

Dr. Bevan-Baker: — about that before.

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct) sickness and family for one, so we were done to a very small pool. We asked to continue to look out and see what other options are there.

Another change with this act is, that was a board committee that was doing the search. This, act brings the search or the appointment of the board chair back to LGIC, which is consistent with all other Crown corps on PEI. So we're bringing it back to the PEI style. That's yet to be determined, moving forward we continue on with the search, which seems to be very small at the moment. Maybe other times in years we'd create a bigger pool. It's hard to say.

We have a good interim CEO, no question about that. We all know her capable qualities and how she can do the job well. We'll have to have further discussion on that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate that. Thanks, minister.

I'm good. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, this bill is obviously a surprising bill. We haven't heard about it in a policy-type statement where there was a throne speech or a budget speech.

When I used to work at the department of health, there was a guy there who was there quite some time and he used to joke, he said: There's only three things you're guaranteed: death, taxes, and the 10-year restructuring of the department of health.

This is a significant policy change for your department to take over, basically, accountability for the board. What triggered that? What triggered that that the department should have full control over that?

Mr. Mitchell: I think, if we go back to budget — I mentioned that it's a \$710 million — it would be a volunteer board — a capable volunteer board, but (Indistinct) volunteer trying to manage \$710 million. Quite frankly, they've been struggling with deficits over the last several budget cycles. So, it's timely now to offer assistance and to develop that linkage within the department because we have expertise and we have knowledge and we have people that are willing to assist there. So that's one of the reasons to take the burden off so that we can do some other policy pieces.

We can look some things that we need to look at: as I said, downsizes, ER closures, doctor recruitment — help us out there. There are all kinds of work to do. Now is the time to get the legislation passed and spend the summer rolling up our sleeves, figuring out a road map and a plan going forward. Because, let's face it, this fall we're starting our budget stuff again, right? That's the time to get connected at the table, everybody sit down and figure (Indistinct).

That's why we're doing it today. It's aligning well with what other jurisdictions are doing and aligns well with how we handle other Crown corporations on the Island as well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Reading between the lines, it feels like the department is saying it can do either a more efficient job, or better job than what was going on. It's a tricky one. I don't necessarily disagree because I do know that sometimes you need — we elect a government to make decisions and get things done. I could see how — not a power struggle, but I could see how different priorities for a department versus priorities for a board. An unelected board, mind you, though. Was it a consideration to disband the board and go the old way of just having a department of health?

Mr. Mitchell: No, that wasn't a consideration. In actual fact, what has been going on, in my time in the chair because this is my first budget, I believe it's (Indistinct) we were informally doing what

we're doing here now. We were offering assistance. They were accepting when they need to. So this is just, basically, formalizing the roles.

In legislation – we've been doing it, basically, to a degree anyway. Formalizing and then from time to time you would question roles. This brings the clarity to that and I think that's what everybody wanted to see and it's important to do. No, there was never a consideration of disbanding the board. The board is a good board, full of great professionals with a lot of expertise. We'd be silly not to utilize the knowledge that they have.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Yeah. I agree, the clarifying of the roles is key; but we can't forget that – I think the most significant thing into here is the buck stops with you now. The bottom line is you. You have the final decision, not Health PEI, you have the final decision.

We've talked about this with the department of education before too and I know a number of us on this side of the table weren't happy with the process that happened to that. So I want to be able to say: benefit of the doubt. Let's get things done. You hear from us all the time talking about the things that we want to see done: scope of practice, significant investment in mental health, all these things.

Do you feel that with this structure now and with you having the final say that we can see – and efficiencies in department of health. Do you see an easier way to get to those goals now?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, I think, relationship building is an important part of this. Obviously, there was no link to me from the CEO before. The CEO was staff of the board and that was only that flow of information. This clearly will allow the board, myself, as the minister talk, and the board members to figure out a plan together – which is really important from my perspective. I answer the calls, I have all the accountability. I have all the responsibility and rightly so that we should have the

authority to do what needs to be done. I think this is an important move, yet one that was kind of informally being done to most of the degree. So here we are moving it forward and I think everybody's looking forward to opportunities that may present themselves.

Mr. Trivers: Straight answers in Question Period?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Myers: Don't go overboard.

Mr. MacEwen: Now I completely lost my train of thought. Real answers.

No. That's good, minister. You know, what's the saying: With great power comes great responsibility. So we will certainly be here to watch how this unfolds, I guess, with – the perfect example was going back – it's a small example, but the debate that the former minister and I had about the public meetings and health and the board was saying one thing and the minister was kind of saying one thing and I think it was because they really did think two different things and no one really knew how clear that was. It was a pretty grey area. I commend you for the first steps that we're making – well, the steps that the board made and now that you're putting into this policy too. I think that's kind of an example of that grey area that existed, but I'll come back to again that you know –

Mr. Mitchell: I think what's fair to say is the board maybe felt there was a communication breakdown. I know I certainly did too. When you are linking the department and Health PEI together, this allows for opportunity for a two-way flow that maybe wasn't as good the other way either. I think they're seeing the benefit of that by forming this new act that – it's going to be linked. The communication is going to flow both ways, so just what you say doesn't occur. I've been in that situation myself. I think it's important that we're all on the same page, at the same time, heading in the same direction. That's what this is going to achieve.

To your point – and I didn't really mention that in my preamble either – those public parts of the meetings are part of the act now. They're all (Indistinct) with a different policy, but we always receive criticism of things on policy. So it will be put into the act since (Indistinct) the act it was ample opportunity and time to do that. Those are in there now, basically, what you already knew.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you. Criticism, constructive feedback, (Indistinct) –

Mr. Mitchell: Yes. I might have used the wrong term.

Mr. MacEwen: No and okay, but like you say, all those things are good and the terminology you're using to describe this sounds all upbeat and chipper, but at the end of the day, there's something going on that the department feels they want the decision-making ability. So we will be here to watch that and see how that goes over the next while and we'll rate you and hold you to account on that.

Mr. Mitchell: I appreciate that.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, do you still require me to read section by section?

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Chair: Carry the bill?

Ms. Bell: Section by section.

Chair: Section by section?

1. Section 2 of the Health Services Act R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. H-1.6, is amended by the addition of the following after subsection (2):

Responsibility for strategic direction

(3) The Minister is responsible for the strategic direction of the health care system in the province and, for the purpose of ensuring that the strategic direction is implemented, may do anything that the Minister –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry. We meant just section by section, not clause by clause.

Chair: Oh, okay. Sorry.

If at any time you want me to stop just –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, we'll let you know.

Chair: Thank you.

So, shall section one carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

It's just a question coming back – a bit of a follow-on from some of the questions in the preamble regarding that accountability and delegative authority.

When you're creating these shifts in clarity in governance structures, I know you talked about a triangle, minister, but there's the role of the strategic level, at the ministerial level, and a strategic level, at the board level, and then the CEO, and then down through that way into operations. What you're showing here is that these roles are about strategic planning and evaluation and performance measurement, but are those going to come from the strategic plan you set in your department or are those going to be done with the board?

Mr. Mitchell: In our conversation, we're going to develop that –

Ms. Bell: You're going to develop it, okay.

Mr. Mitchell: – together, but at the end of the day, if we have to – we got to agree on it, obviously, but if I have something that I want to suggest, we will hash that out. If they have things, we'll hash it out, but at the end of the day, we'll make an agreement and then I will sanction that as minister, of course.

Ms. Bell: Right.

You had mentioned about roles and responsibilities and part of that is that clarity of delegated authority.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Ms. Bell: So having a very clear kind of up and down; it's probably less of a triangle and more of a tree.

Mr. Mitchell: We're trying to make it very much less of a triangle. It's kind of a triangle today, so we're trying to get them going as three lines heading together.

Ms. Bell: Yes. And some of that is – looking back at that previous clause which says the thing that: anything the minister considers advisable in the end, it is that that final decision will sit with the minister.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right, with the minister.

Ms. Bell: Has that been, minister, because up to this point there's been a gap between your – sometimes what you would see as strategic direction what was actually happening at Health PEI?

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: At the end of the day, somebody has to make a decision –

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: So we placed of it on the minister's shoulders.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: That was, again, I didn't reinvent the wheel here. I've taken verbatim what has been utilized in the other provinces and they opted to go with the minister responsible.

Mr. Mitchell: Right. So in its most simple terms, Health PEI shouldn't be making an announcement that I find out on the news, conversely the department of health shouldn't be making an announcement that Health PEI's finding out on the news. Those are things that we're trying to strengthen relationships on and that we're all – we're not duplicating anything either by using this method.

Ms. Bell: Where you speak in here then around that goals and objectives and performance measures and targets, would you consider, from a minister's perspective, having those be public?

Mr. Mitchell: Could you ask that – I missed that first part.

Ms. Bell: Part of the thing that you're planning on working on here is about the goals and objectives for the provision of health services and performance measures and targets. Are those going to be available to the public?

Mr. Mitchell: I would think so.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Why not?

Mr. Mitchell: Once we develop, I'll call it a work plan, it's an operational plan is what we're referring to, but once we develop that, I'll say, it will be a yearly plan with – but let's face it, it will be a yearly plan that's changeable because there's always something coming from the left or the right under health, so we may have to drop something and add something, but I don't see any reason why the public they wouldn't know what we're working on. It could either be a part of the public meeting where you announce what you're doing, or posted online. I don't think that would be a very big problem to get it posted it online. This is the operational plan and the business we're going to be working on. I think that'd be easy.

Ms. Bell: Part of that, minister, is when you talked about strategic accountability and strategic plans, is that an operational plan is usually in that kind of year, 18 months, 24 months, but ideally it's coming from a strategic plan which is a much more longer term vision and that would be coming from your department.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right, yes.

Ms. Bell: That's great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to support the comments from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid and

really – sometimes it seems like there's actions that need to be taken and often when it's left to the – Health PEI in this case – to take them without direct (Indistinct), it's hard to get actions moving forward. I agree, this would allow the minister and through the political system, to really improve leadership within the department and I look forward to that.

I was wondering if you're planning, when you're dealing with these specific powers on addressing things like the provincial protein tender – I know which is under Health PEI and that was one of the things from before. It's like: Hey, that's why Health PEI looks after that. And things like Skip the Waiting Room, for example – are you going to sort of weigh in at that level to try and get action? Because I mean to me, I think – I don't know, do you think that's appropriate? Part of me thinks it is, but –

Mr. Mitchell: I guess some of those – I guess we would be considered operational, but I think, obviously, from my perspective, I think they would come up in discussions.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Long-term strategy.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, long-term strategies. That's kind of – there's three more that I'll add to my list. At least it will – I could bounce some ideas off the 12 – who have a lot of great experience on items like that – probably those three and others. But final decision – we'll put that in the strategy that we're going to talk to – at the public meetings. I've got to give the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid credit there. He kind of got people thinking about: Yes, maybe I'll go and sit in on some of these meetings. Some of that could even be discussion at some of those meetings. It's open-door; it's a blue sky here when we're moving forward here is what I think we can discuss, and probably make some advancements – could be those three you spoke of, I think.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Where people are really interested, of course, when I'm out talking to constituents, is where the rubber meets the road really in

the operational area. We saw with the education act; we move elected school boards and then bring it within operations within the department and I think the expectation was: Hey, now the minister can really control things at an operational level. But, of course, when we hear the minister speak he's like: That's public school branch, we can't touch that.

I was wondering, if we're going to be in a similar situation here, are you planning to really impact things at an operational level? Or is it going to be actually: No, we're just setting a high-level strategy, we just pass it off at an operational level, I can't really answer to that. We have to go –

Mr. Mitchell: I think we're at a place now where we're going to sit down and we're going to figure out our direction together. Operational, policy –

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Planning.

Mr. Mitchell: – planning. All of those are going to be pieces of it.

I think we will have opportunity for those discussions. There will be no way that I can stand (Indistinct) and say I don't know anything about that, because I will know. I'll be part of it now. And I should be because obviously we talk to Islanders every day. They phone us. We see them in grocery stores. We see them in coffee shops.

We're getting the pulse of what people think and want. That didn't go to that level before, so now we have a way that I can take all of that with me, too, right?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, minister.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Section 2

Subsection 3(2) of the act is amended.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Just a question on (e.1) the organization and internal management.

There's a piece there around the appropriate level of administrative services and the percentage of the total budget administered. That seems quite specific.

Has there been a reason why that in particular has been included?

Mr. Mitchell: No, that was a question that the board had as well.

I think we all have to work under budget constraint. If you're asked to maintain a specific level then that's what's expected of you. Do you want to address that?

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: So this is absolutely consistent with the two most recent jurisdictions, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, verbatim.

Because, again, we're trying to streamline things we don't want – I mean I believe we have five committees, subcommittees, the health authority. Nova Scotia has two. There are instances where there may be duplication and things of that nature.

Ms. Bell: The spread.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yes, exactly.

So, again, we're not reinventing the wheel here and this is a discretionary authority. It's so the minister may.

Ms. Bell: That's great. I'm good.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know that the motivation for this was not to save money, but I'm wondering whether that will be one of the effects of the changes that will be made.

Mr. Mitchell: That could be a very much an affective change (Indistinct) when we get figuring out things a little differently, looking at them objectively from several lenses, maybe, that are perhaps not going on today as good as it could be.

Nicola mentioned that Nova Scotia has two committees, we have five. Maybe that's something, as I said earlier in an interview, is five the right number when I was asked? I alluded to the board: Maybe it's seven, maybe it's three. We will figure that out a little bit later on. Little changes like that will have an effect on expenses and things like that too.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: So a lot of this framework was put into place right from the get-go and once it was put into place, it's not really been substantively changed since that time.

Now we look at what other provinces are doing and we're sort of sitting back and saying: There may be an opportunity; maybe not.

Ms. Bell: Just one last question on the last line in that section which is determining the health services to be provided by Health PEI.

Again, I understand that this is a framework to allow for potential, but is that a possibility that we do have services that would be provided outside that current structure, perhaps by a third party or through some other mechanism?

Mr. Mitchell: It's not the intention, no.

We're planning on working together. From time to time, you might have a consultant, I suppose, to give you advice on something if you needed it. But, that would be about the limitation of third party involvement. I think we've got lots of experience and expertise within the board within the department that we can get a lot of good things moving on. But I'm going to be honest. My phone rings every day with items that I go: That would be a good one for the board to work on. You know what I mean? Things you don't even think about until somebody brings it to your attention.

You folks get those calls too, obviously.

Ms. Bell: Ostomy supplies.

Mr. Mitchell: Ostomy – there's another one.

There's four plus the four that I had earlier. We've got work for a year.

Ms. Bell: That's great, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Just a general question, I suppose. I mean, you have to believe in this, of course, minister. You're bringing the act forward –

Mr. Mitchell: Absolutely.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and used lots of positive language about working together and straight lines and getting rid of triangles and working cooperatively, but in another way there are voices not present here today.

You could look at this and say this neuters the board. All of the ultimate authority is devolved to the minister now and I'm just wondering whether there was any concern expressed within the board of the amount of control that is shifting from the board to the department.

Mr. Mitchell: I think to Nichola's point, we didn't reinvent a wheel. We basically copied verbatim from other jurisdictions, including the role of the board of the authority, which is, this is it. Is it a little bit different than the former? Yes, it is.

But we're 10 years at a different level today. We're significantly bigger budget than 10 years ago when this all began, like four times bigger. It's the right correction to make at the right time. Is there questions? Obviously there would be, right? But, I'm making assurances to them that this is about collaboration. This is about Islanders' best health, efficient health care where we can, and I think, for the most part, they're agreeing with me. It's a pretty big burden to maintain, the \$710 million budget operation day-to-day as a volunteer.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Thanks, Chair, I'm good.

Chair: Shall section 2 carry? Carried.

Section 3

The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 3.

Shall section 3 carry? Carried.

Section 4

Subsection 7(1) of the Act is replaced and the following substituted.

Shall that section carry? Carried.

Section 5

The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 7.

Shall section 5 carry?

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, when I was at a couple of these public meetings they talked about the structure of the monthly meeting, the agenda that was there for the board and everything like that. But, they also, for example, the group that came up with the new public portion of it, they're doing – I think it was called the public engagement subcommittee. So there are a number of subcommittees that are there, right? Is there what, four or five?

Mr. Mitchell: There are five.

Mr. MacEwen: There are five.

Mr. Mitchell: There are currently five.

Mr. MacEwen: Now, part of my concern finding that out at those meetings was those meetings weren't public. There was nothing – not that they all have to be public because they're doing work, but there was no reporting back. There was no – the expenses of the board are there. Would the expenses of the subcommittees be reported publicly? Would the decisions or minutes be reported publicly? How is that going to work going into the future?

Mr. Mitchell: Going into the future, the way this new act, because it's modern, because we're in the day and the age of transparency and accountability, I think you will see more public pieces to this.

For instance, discussion with the board today was if they're rendering a decision, basically, against a physician or something like that, typically that was done in camera and it was not as good of knowledge as this is going to bring. We're small. Even if something was done like that, somebody would talk to somebody and there would be a question (Indistinct)

We're trying to avoid that. We're trying to make it public. It would be the situation, not the individuals involved, but the situation we brought to the public meeting to say: We just recently rendered a decision like this; this is the result of it. You're going to see much more of that; not specific names or anything. But, that will allude to the public that this is the work that's going on and this is the result, so much more public scrutiny, I think.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, minister.

Like I said, I didn't realize that there were this many other subcommittee meetings that were going on.

When the Health PEI board reports its disclosures, financial disclosures, would all of the remuneration for all of those private subcommittee meetings, would that all be included in those totals?

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: It should be, yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: Under this?

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yeah, they should be because the subcommittee is a part of the board, right? So it should be – it's an expense of the board.

Mr. MacEwen: And of course those expenses and everything will still be –

Mr. Mitchell: Posted.

Mr. MacEwen: – status quo going forward?

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall section 5 carry? Carried.

Section 6

Oh sorry, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: I apologize, Chair, but I missed a section and I just had one quick question on four, the number order got a little confusing.

Chair: Yeah, they are. I'm trying to keep it straight.

Ms. Bell: It was just a question, actually, on remuneration – I cannot say that word – for the board, for the new board.

I know you had mentioned a previous one is volunteer and you've got a very specific build for the new board which includes the chairs and then five additional members. Are those positions going to be remunerated?

Mr. Mitchell: Those remuneration –

Ms. Bell: You can't say it either.

Mr. Mitchell: – (Indistinct) are by a meeting. They are by (Indistinct) whatever meeting they have.

Ms. Bell: Oh, per diems?

Mr. Mitchell: They are per diems amount that – I guess they're not in the act, but they would be in that framework, that regulation piece that we'll be working on right afterwards so that's where that shows up. It would be in what exists today. I don't have the per diems but –

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: Yeah, none of that's changing.

Ms. Bell: Sure.

Mr. Mitchell: The per diems will remain the same.

Ms. Bell: So in the same kind of structure as you use for Engage PEI type (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Exactly.

Ms. Bell: – (Indistinct) okay.

Do you have a timeline for that framework, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: Oh, good – I don't want to ask her because I've got her doing a lot of things.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: The accountability framework?

Ms. Bell: No pressure.

Nichola Hewitt Legislative Specialist: I would say that's probably front and centre in the very near future.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: I have her doing a lot these days,

Ms. Bell: It seems that way, minister.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, I do.

Ms. Bell: Great, thank you, Chair.

I'm good, thanks.

Mr. Mitchell: She's really good at it.

Chair: Shall section 6 carry? Carried.

Section 7

Section 12 of the Act is repealed and the following substituted.

Shall Section 7 carry? Carried.

Section 8

Subsection 13(1) of the Act is amended.

Shall Section 8 carry? Carried.

Section 9

The Act is amended by the addition of the following after section 15.

Shall Section 9 carry? Carried.

Section 10 (1)

Shall Section 10 carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Health Services Act (No. 2).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Mitchell: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thanks, minister.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Health Services Act (No. 2)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Point of Order

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

I rise on a point of order.

Being at another engagement this afternoon, I was unfortunately not here, but on hearing of some comments made in the House and in checking with Hansard, I just want to bring to your attention – and maybe you would look into a session – because someone like myself – it had to do with the Legislative Management Committee and how it is operating.

Very displeased with comments that were made by someone who doesn't serve on the committee, and judging us. The comment was: Dubious and self-serving decisions that we make there. I'm wondering if you would check into that and see if you consider that –

Mr. R. Brown: Non-confidence in the Speaker (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, well I knew you served on it yourself as well, but unparliamentary language and sort of unacceptable from someone who is – it was made by the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, towards a committee she does not sit on. I thought we do exceptional work there. She said that also that it had to do with some decisions that we were making. I don't think we made all of those either. I'm not going to talk about what goes on in the committee. I'm very disappointed to hear that kind of language in the House, and I would like you to look into that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. member, I'll have to take that are under advisement.

Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance that the 1st order of the day be now read

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Order No. 1, Consideration of the Estimates, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will now call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Casey): Hon. members, before we go into committee, I'm going to give way to the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir for recognition.

Recognition of Guests (II)

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

It's late in the evening, and I would like to recognize a couple of guests that have taken the time to come in this evening to see what takes place in the Legislature. Lorne Yeo, it's great to have you again tonight, and Sharon Riley from the Montague area; very active in our community. Please enjoy what's taking place here tonight. Thank you. Thank you for coming.

Chair: The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Hon. members, we are now going to be discussing the budget estimates for the Department of Family and Human Services. We're on page 72.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll allow her – or allow him to get set-up. I was looking the other way.

Good evening, introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Lane Pineau Director: It's Lane Pineau, Director of Finance for the Department of Family and Human Services.

Chair: Welcome.

Minister, do you have any handouts that you would like to table?

Ms. Mundy: Yes, we do.

Lane Pineau Director: Yes.

Chair: Okay, perfect.

Handouts are going to be tabled and circulated.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: I only have a couple of questions on this. Do you mind if I just ask them off the top?

Chair: No. Do you want to wait for the minister to give her opening statement, or do you want –

Mr. Myers: Yes, no go ahead.

Chair: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You go first.

Ms. Mundy: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You might answer them and then (Indistinct) ask a question.

Chair: Do you want to wait for the handouts to go around?

Mr. Myers: No, she can start.

Ms. Mundy: I can start.

Mr. Myers: You start, yeah.

Chair: Perfect –

Ms. Mundy: (Indistinct)

Chair: – the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, you have the floor.

Ms. Mundy: It is a pleasure to be here today to present the 2018-2019 budget estimates for the Department of Family and Human Services.

Our government recognizes that all Islanders should share the benefits of a strong economy. This is reflected in our new provincial Budget, our third consecutive balanced budget, which does place a priority on significant supports to help Islanders with the cost of living.

Chair: Hon. members, I know the handouts are being circulated, but I'm having a hard time –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Chair: – hearing the minister. Thank you. I appreciate your help.

Minister, you can have the floor.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Chair.

The work we do in the Department of Family and Human Services is focused on supporting Islanders who need it most and helping them to be more self-reliant. This is achieved in areas, such as, housing services, social programs, child protection and disability support. In most cases, this work is done in collaboration with municipalities and community partners, and also across all government departments.

Government is proud to support community organizations in helping people to overcome barriers; gain self-confidence; and become employment ready. There are a number of tremendous initiatives that have been launched, or are in progress to support Islanders and to make their lives better. Many in our department, but there are also many collaborations across government involving many departments, including collaborations and programs with finance; agriculture/fisheries; advanced learning; health and wellness; education; transportation, infrastructure, energy; and justice.

A housing action plan is being developed in collaboration with the Housing Supply Task Force and a team of housing experts. Our budget announced investments of \$17 million over two years, as well as the creation of 1,000 new affordable housing units in the next four years.

A poverty reduction action plan is also being developed in collaboration with our community groups, and municipalities, which will build on many of the government initiatives to reduce the impact of poverty. As part of this work, we have launched an engagement process so Islanders in municipalities across the province can join in the conversation and provide their input.

Government continues to make investments to support Islanders who need it most when they need it most. We want every Islander to have access to the tools they need so they

can contribute to society as fully as possible, and attain greater security for themselves and their families. Everyone in Prince Edward Island deserves the chance to live a full and rewarding life and we are doing our best to make that happen.

Thank you.

Chair: Hon. members, before I go to the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for a question, when I'm reading the sections, do you want me to read the full section as I have been doing, or the last couple of budgets we've read the title and the total? What is your wish?

Mr. Myers: I'm okay (Indistinct)

Chair: Title? Perfect.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

It's just a few random, and it will probably save us a whole lot of headaches if I just get them out and then leave you alone.

Ms. Mundy: Go ahead.

Mr. Myers: One of the ones – I had this and I've you talked to you about it before, is the low-income housing program that you have.

I have two different streams of issues with it. One is I hear from people that it moves up. So, we have some seniors, who would still be working seasonally and in the summertime their rent goes way up. It ends up being above what the limit would be.

Take Cardigan, for example. It would be the highest rent in Cardigan in the summer when somebody's working. Then, it goes back down to normal, what it should be. Is there anything that can be done with that?

The other thing that people say is that because it's based on what you make before taxes, they feel like it may not necessarily be a fair system for them. They feel like it should be based on their take-home.

Can you touch on either one of those for me?

Ms. Mundy: Sure. Those are two really great questions.

In answer to your first question: Yes, it is something that we're looking at.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Ms. Mundy: I guess, the outcome, it's something that was raised during the deliberations on the housing action plan, the provincial housing action plan. We are looking at that; ways so that Islanders might be able to budget a little bit more month-to-month rather than, again, the fluctuations. We are looking at that.

Maybe averaging it out over the yearly based on their yearly income tax. Whatever the line is in their income and basing it on a month-to-month, rather than, like you said, the fluctuations. That is something that we are looking at.

Mr. Myers: Which is awesome.

Ms. Mundy: Your second question again, was – sorry?

Mr. Myers: I had people wondering if it could be based on their after-tax –

Ms. Mundy: Right.

Mr. Myers: – instead of their (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: Okay. Another great question.

We have agreements and Lane can correct me here, if I'm wrong. We have agreements with CMHC on what we are allowed to charge.

All that is within an agreement with CMHC. Until our agreements expire with them and we re-negotiate new agreements, we have to abide by what the rules are with them.

Lane, can you elaborate anything more on that?

Lane Pineau Director: No, that's –

Ms. Mundy: Right.

Lane Pineau Director: Our programs are approved by CMHC.

Ms. Mundy: CMHC, yeah. We have to run with the rules that they provide us with when we sign new agreements.

Mr. Myers: Okay. I actually really just have two more.

One is based on, and it's kind of a difficult one. I know you have a difficult job. It's a difficult department. You have a lot of different things. We have talked about this before. Some of the common complaints that I get, and I'm wondering more so if you could look into it, or if there's some sort of program review you can do.

There would be clients of your department. There are enough of them that I feel like I should talk about it.

Ms. Mundy: Sure.

Mr. Myers: Who feel like their worker lords power of them somehow that they – and tries to keep them almost – fear. I don't know what checks and balances you have in your department.

This would be a great example of a place where we could have an ombudsman. Where somebody independent, who's not a politician could take that complaint and kind of follow it through and look into it.

It's not something that I, necessarily, want to be in the middle of, but I feel I have to be because there is nobody else. Are there any checks and balances, I guess? Is there any level of confidence you can give me that that isn't happening.

Ms. Mundy: I can. Actually, I sat down, myself, because you often hear stories from people when they're at their lowest, or when they're at their most frustrated. I was hearing, and I hear from the MLAs, as well, right?

I sat down, and went through an intake. It's not left up to just one worker. It usually goes through two or three steps before someone is approved or someone is denied. Anything; when it comes to our home renovation programs, or when it comes to where they are on a waitlist.

I was quite confident after I sat down and went through the whole intake process.

What happens from the time one of the workers receives an application to when a letter is mailed out, if it's a unit that they're getting, until the acceptance of the unit.

Each and every one of you know that I am here and I do investigate. I always err on the side of caution when it comes to the client. We do go back and we do pull up the file. We will look at who touched it, how many hands it went through to make sure that all those checks and balances are in place.

Mr. Myers: Thank you. I just have one more.

I'm just going to try to transcribe this one. It has to do with people who have, people with intellectual disabilities living in their home, and offer, as a service, live-in quarters and supervision and that kind of thing.

It has to do with the amount of funding. What I have is \$300 a month for supervision; \$300 month for personal care. Then, there's \$24 a month for clothing, and \$19 a month for personal needs. That you pay \$800 a month for (Indistinct) needs.

What the people are saying to me is that if you broke this down to an hourly rate that you're drastically underpaying the people who are opening up their homes to do it, and that the waiting list is currently very high, waiting for associate families. I don't know if you can confirm that. I'll leave that to you to answer.

The question is: How do you expect to find more families willing to open up their homes when the rates are so low for the amount of service that they have to offer? People looking at the cost effectiveness of it and saying; maybe it's not worth getting into.

Are you looking at anything that will alleviate that?

I'll leave it (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: Both our foster care program and the associate program are under a review.

The associate program, we've within the last probably year-and-a-half, we've hired a full-time residential care manager who is

overseeing that program, as well as a residential program through QCRS or Community Connections. Anything to do with people with intellectual or physical disabilities that have to rely on residential, whether it be associate families or residential homes at any one of our community partners. We are looking at those programs.

We are working hand-in-hand with the community partners that deliver the programs, as well. The Associate Family Program is one of the ones that are very close to my heart. I actually recognized them here in the House last year, so they do wonderful work.

We have many families who are aging and they need that help, and they want to make sure that their loved one is cared for when they're gone. It is a very important program.

Mr. Myers: Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering where we are with affordable housing for seniors. I know there's been a lot of talk about money and announcements, and I'm wondering, as far as for private apartment buildings, that maybe they can sign up with the province to have affordable housing as part of that unit; where we're at with that, especially in rural communities.

Ms. Mundy: Another great question and you are a great advocate for your community. I will give you that. Other than the hon. member sitting right down next to me here, I'd have to say the two of you advocate most for housing for your communities.

Where we're at right now is the \$17 million that we allocated in this budget; part of that will be allocated towards (Indistinct) rent supplements and those are portable rent supplements, exactly what they say, that go with the clients. So, if we have a client on the wait list that is in, let's say, a rural community, and they qualify and they're next on the list for housing and we do not have housing available for them, public

housing, social housing, or housing that is deemed senior housing that's within our program, they will be allocated, what we call, that rent supplement.

Like I say, that will be part of that \$17 million that we're rolling out over the next two years, and we are waiting for our housing action plan to come out to kind of guide our deliberations on where those are going to go and how many of those will be allocated to rent supplements.

Ms. Compton: If I get what you're saying, someone who qualifies for subsidized housing that actually is assigned to the client and so if they want to stay in Murray River or Murray Harbour, then finding housing in that community is the option, and you're willing to look at that.

Ms. Mundy: It could actually even go to someone who is on the list that currently is living in a unit and can't afford it. It's eating up maybe 30% or 40% of their income. If they are next on the list, well then we will help them with that. So they might not even have to move, is what it is (Indistinct) to keep within the community.

Ms. Compton: Just on that note, if they're on the list but they're not at the top of the list, but then there is an opportunity, say a new apartment building in an area, is there an opportunity for them then to be next on the list because there is a housing area?

Ms. Mundy: Good question.

What we would do first is offer it to that person that's on the top of the list. So it could be somebody that's living in Summerside, but the unit comes available in, let's say, in Belfast or Georgetown or whatever, so we would offer that unit to them first and if they decline, then that's when we go to the next person on the list and we offer it to them.

At any time, as well, somebody can ask for a reassessment and we do encourage our clients to, if their life situation changes in any way, call up your worker and get reassessed because where you are today – if you have a health issue or we have some clients who have pets and then the pets pass – so they're on a list for a pet-friendly apartment, but then the pet may pass away

or something, make sure that you call and that could bump you somewhere else on the list.

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

I'm just looking at the debt under housing services. It was \$315,300 and now it's \$264,000. Is that payments for provincially-owned housing or – can you explain what that is?

Ms. Mundy: I'm showing here that it's lower interest on the reduced outstanding mortgage balances, so it's –

Lane Pineau Director: With CMHC.

Ms. Mundy: Pardon?

Lane Pineau Director: With CMHC.

Ms. Mundy: With CMHC.

As we pay it down, the interest (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: Mortgages that the province holds.

Ms. Mundy: Exactly, with CMHC.

Ms. Compton: Okay.

That's good for now.

Thank you.

Chair: Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, I just wanted to confirm – are we in the housing services part or –

Chair: We are. We're in the housing services part.

Premier MacLauchlan: Okay, I'll hold my question til we get to social programs.

Thank you.

Chair: Okay.

Thank you.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Just one quick question, minister.

On the community grants, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the \$3 million – what was that?

Ms. Mundy: That was a three-year agreement that we signed with CMHC to create a community housing fund that we could, I guess, support through community partnerships. So, we will be appointing a committee that will oversee the fund and they will work with government to develop an action plan on that as well.

Mr. MacKay: That's great.

Thank you, minister.

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, it's good news. It's great news.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I just want to clarify, that CMHA – not CMHC, right?

Ms. Mundy: Oh, sorry. Yes, CMHA.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, right.

Ms. Mundy: Sorry, yeah. I'm terrible with acronyms.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Did you say that's a three-year fund?

Ms. Mundy: Yes, three-year agreement.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Three-year agreement.

Will that be \$3 million per year?

Ms. Mundy: It's \$3 million –

Lane Pineau Director: No, it's a one (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, it's a one time, yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: One time, but it will be spread over three years.

Ms. Mundy: Exactly.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Is that a part of or is that in addition to the \$17 million for the housing strategy?

Ms. Mundy: That's in addition.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: In addition to?

Ms. Mundy: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, great.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I have a constituent who called me on behalf of her daughter who is a single mom with three kids and can't find a place to stay because, as we know, the rental market is – there's a very low vacancy rate. But, she, apparently, also doesn't qualify for any subsidies. She must be employed, so she's moving sort of back in with her mother.

I don't know – and we know that the Auditor General has made a number of recommendations and criticisms within housing services, if the Public Accounts committee ever gets to meet again, we should be able to review that further, but I was wondering how you recommend we approach that situation. Is that just something – who in your department would that mother or daughter call and do you think that there's any chance at all they would receive any funding?

Ms. Mundy: Call me. Call me like each and every one of your colleagues do.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Ms. Mundy: I can't discuss individual cases here, but I've always said my door is always open and I have great staff there that help people navigate every day. I had someone in my office there last week that was there asking about a certain program, but in sitting down and talking to her, there was a multitude of other programs. Even though she didn't qualify for that program, there is a multitude of other programs that we could help her with.

But, a lot of the times people are talking to people that they know or someone who – Jim's grandmother who said that this is how it is and so they don't even apply, which is very disheartening. So, after she called my office and we told her all the things she qualified for, she was in tears; happy tears.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, minister.

You have been great to work with and I'll definitely get in contact with you and hopefully, even if the eligibility requirements can't be met for this person, then maybe you can find them some other way they can be helped.

Thank you.

Ms. Mundy: And there are. Like I say, we have programs and partnerships with many other departments that we can also direct them to and connect them too as well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, of the 1,000 units that were mentioned in the recent budget, how many of those are new builds? Sort of new – not currently occupied, going into the market versus upgrades or renovations to existing, occupied –

Ms. Mundy: Did you say 1,000 or 2,000?

Ms. Bell: One thousand.

Ms. Mundy: One thousand, okay. I was just going to correct you.

Ms. Bell: Yeah, the thousand – 2,000 would be great. We'll go with 2,000.

Ms. Mundy: On my wish list – and that's a great question.

I wish I had answer for you here right now, but we are – again, we have a housing supply taskforce and (Indistinct) development team that have been working very hard with our departments to come up with the housing action plan, and so we have allotted, we're saying, a minimum of that and we are going to, I guess, wait for those discussions and those recommendations to

come forward as to how we are going to distribute that.

Some of it will go towards new build. Some of it will go towards renovations. Some of it may even go towards renovation programs. Some of it will go towards rent supplements, but we are going to take the recommendations from the committee that has worked so hard over the last several months and we're going to let those discussions lead how we're going to, I guess, allot and distribute those 1,000 units.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Ms. Mundy: Just a correction – I'm sorry. My colleague has corrected both of us on the \$3 million is part of that \$17 million.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Ms. Mundy: Yes.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister, for that information.

You mentioned the housing taskforce. Is the housing taskforce – I think it's – I understand it's due to finish its work shortly. How is that work of the taskforce going to connect to the work of the community consultations that are happening with the strategy build?

Ms. Mundy: With the housing – or provincial housing action plan.

Ms. Bell: That one.

Ms. Mundy: They're all working collaboratively together so we are taking information from all of them and we – or from both groups, as well as the community consultations, and we will be compiling it into a report that will be delivered to myself and the department.

Ms. Bell: Minister, is there any opportunity to begin expanding any of that commitment for the housing requirement in advance of the taskforce completing its work or the strategy plan being tabled? Because that could be much further down the road and in the meantime, that the demand is so important right now.

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, well we did part of the \$17 million that we allocated, which out of that will come the 1,000 affordable units. I made an announcement, I think it was last week or the week before, on a million extra dollars that was going into the PEI Home Renovation Program, so therefore taking anyone who had applied this year for the home renovation program, they will be receiving it. So, I think upwards of 463 people will be receiving their renovations grants.

Ms. Bell: Chair?

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, if I may jump in (Indistinct) did announce here in the House the 44 or 47 units in the Charlottetown area (Indistinct) –

Ms. Mundy: Oh yes, that's right.

Premier MacLauchlan: – that are being done –

Ms. Mundy: Thank you for reminding me of that again.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, we do have new builds with the 44 units, the RFP we awarded to Ellis Brothers – yes Ellis and Bert in the Charlottetown area that will be going up, expected to be constructed by March of 2019.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: And then, yes, the RFP for Summerside, we'll be making an announcement on how that is going to roll out, so there will be minimum of 20 units. I can't – it'll probably be more.

Ms. Bell: Great.

Ms. Mundy: Those will be new builds, yes.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, minister.

You mentioned the home renovation program and I'm happy to be corrected, but I understand it currently has a cap of \$8,000 for a successful application. Is that correct?

Ms. Mundy: It's \$6,000.

Ms. Bell: Six thousand?

Ms. Mundy: Six thousand, but persons with disability can also apply for an additional \$8,000 to meet an upgrade or a renovation to meet or help them with their disability as well.

Ms. Bell: Are there any plans to review that cap and look at increasing it, given that the buying power of \$1 is no longer where it was perhaps when that went into place?

Ms. Mundy: Absolutely, and that's something we are considering not only in the PEI Home Renovation Program, but the Seniors Safe @ Home and the Seniors Home Repair Program, so all three programs are being reviewed and we'll come out with how the programs are going to roll out with the housing action plan.

Ms. Bell: The other piece with the home renovation program that we're hearing a lot, particular from some constituents in my district, is that the income cap of \$35,000 for combined in household and then the property value cap of \$145,000 is meaning that fewer and fewer are qualifying, either because the property values have changed, or because that income gap for combined income is really quite low and so there's a limited pool with eligible applicants.

Is there also a consideration to think about sort of expanding or reviewing, and increasing that eligibility, particularly on the property value piece?

Ms. Mundy: It's a fairly new program. That is a good point, and it is something we are looking at.

However, with it being such a new program, every year there was always carry over. There was people – and it always went to the lowest income, and since we'd never – up until this year – had awarded a grant to anyone who exceeded the \$35,000 – it was always well under, I think last year we got to about \$30,000. So everybody that qualified, before we ran out of money, was well under the \$35,000 cap.

So it wouldn't make it would invite more applications, yes, but we've never, ever reach that threshold. So now that we've put more money into the program and we are

getting through those people that are in most need, we are looking at expanding that. My colleague in transportation, infrastructure and energy, she has an energy efficiency program, a low-income, and that threshold is higher. I think it's \$50,000.

Ms. Bell: Yeah. That's exactly it.

Ms. Mundy: So clients who do not or may not be able to access our program, we automatically send them over to that department to see if they might qualify there.

Ms. Biggar: Madam Chairman?

Chair: I think the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy has an intervention.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

And yes, the minister is correct. Through Efficiency PEI, what we're doing actually is partnering with family and human services as well to add on to what they – if they've qualified for the home reno program, on top of that, they will also qualify for other pieces for improvement to their home under the efficiency programs that we have had but we are expanding as well. So that is an added bonus for that reno to that home. I just wanted to add that on.

Thank you, minister.

Ms. Mundy: Sure, and just to add to that again –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: An amendment to the amendment, right.

We want to make sure that if we are putting a new furnace in the house, that number one, it is an energy efficient furnace, but we're also looking at the windows or the doors or anything we can do to again make sure that the cost of the heating is going to be brought down as well.

Chair: Thank you.

Housing Services

Total Housing Services: 21,186,000.

Shall the section carry?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Question.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Is this where the rental subsidy programs would be found?

Ms. Mundy: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So a specific question about spaces for underage single people – and there are not very many, if I understand correctly, 10 or 12 or something like that; and a very low turnover because once you get in there, you're eligible until you're 60 or –

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, until you're seniors. Until you both are seniors.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right. So I have a constituent who's been in a situation where she's been waiting for a long time now and unable to get in and the advice she's been given is to look to the private market. Of course, the gap between the rent subsidy that you get and the cost of housing in the private market, there's just no way she can do that.

So that's driving up the – I imagine the number of people who are looking for these spaces is going up, because more and more people are finding themselves squeezed by this gap between the market price for rental properties – particularly in Charlottetown, but it's everywhere – and the money that's available to them. So what are you doing about that?

Ms. Mundy: That's a great question and it's something that actually a year-and-a-half ago when we first started this whole review of the housing program and the housing action plan was that the non-senior singles were the ones that were struggling and we were finding that they were couch surfing and they were two and three living to a home. So it is something we've already alerted ourselves to.

We're helping as many as we can as possible, and it is something that we're hearing as we are doing our public surveys

as well. So again, we've got a co-development team and we've got a great housing task force that are looking at that and how we are going to address that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know this is not directly related to this, but it's not anywhere in any section in particular and I'd like to ask it particularly because of the guest who's here with us today who brought this up when she was a witness in front of one of the standing committees and it's the guaranteed universal basic income, which would of course alleviate so many of the problems, including the cost of housing.

I'm wondering where you are. There was a requirement to report back to the House every year. Is there any update on that, any move from the federal government in terms of their partnership with this province?

Ms. Mundy: I will be tabling an update. It's funny that we're talking about it now, but I did text my deputy and I said: When are we due to table that document? So I will be tabling a document shortly.

I can talk about what's going on in Ontario and Quebec right now. They've both got basic income –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Pilots going.

Ms. Mundy: – pilots going, and we're watching it very closely and my department is working with their departments.

It's kind of ironic to also note that in BC, both the Green Party and the NDP party who ran on the pledge that they would be implementing a basic income guarantee if they came into power have now kind of pushed it down the road themselves and said they aren't even going to look at it until 2020; and they've only allocated I think four million for it, and what they're saying is that we want to see what's happening with Ontario and Quebec and see how things are going.

And I think it was just a week-and-a-half ago or maybe two weeks ago, I think it was the Finnish government who said after they've got one more year to go on their basic income guarantee pilot project, and they will be discontinuing it.

We are gathering information. We're continuing, but we did say all along that we would need involvement with the federal government or partnership with the federal government, and we were going to embark on our own poverty reduction action plan which that, we have received accolades from the Tamarack society just on how we are using community capacity and we are talking collective impact, vibrant cities models, and actually they've contacted us and we're thinking of doing a think tank here.

They're so impressed with how we are addressing poverty, and I think one of their quotes was that if more governments across Canada thought the way Prince Edward Island was thinking, we could end economic poverty in this lifetime. So we are going to continue along with our poverty reduction action plan.

However, you know, as the motion indicated, we will continue to pursue it and with the federal government, but our focus is on our strategy and building on the investments that we're making. You look at my budget alone, I think my budget other than health was probably one of the largest increases when you take the capital investments. I received almost an 18% bump, so we're building on investments. We're engaging the community. We've realized that government can't do it alone, that we need other partners at the table with us and that's what we're doing.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Could you just tell me the name of that report you cited? The Tamarack –

Ms. Mundy: The Tamarack Institute.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, and that's freely available, presumably?

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, I think it was the February newsletter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. Thank you.

I'm aware, of course, there are many – we talk about universal basic income as if it's one model and it's not at all. There are so many parameters and criteria that can be changed. It's becoming increasingly clear to me that the success or failure of such a

program depends very much on the details. Indeed, some have been tried and failed if you like or decided that they didn't want to continue. In BC, because that was going to be an entirely provincially funded program, yes, they have decided at this point, let's go forward with it.

It was always my intention when we brought forward the motion, that was unanimously approved, that it would be a partnership with the federal government and the size of a program to cover the whole Island here, if we decided to do that, would be something that would be manageable for a government on the scale of our federal government.

You say you're bringing the report back, so any question I ask now, you're going to say just wait until –

Ms. Mundy: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – we see the report and that's fine, I'm totally happy with that; but I just wanted to point out that universal basic income not a failure or a success. It's very much a work in progress, and many more economists from all over the spectrum are suggesting it's not just a good idea; it's going to be a necessity.

I'm glad you're pursuing that and I hope we have good news in a week or two whenever it comes in.

Thank you, Chair.

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

Mr. J. Brown: My question was actually already answered. I was curious as to – I had read a report on the Finland project having been pre-announced to be discontinued or cancelled or whatever and was just curious as to whether your department was on that. It sounds like you are, and great to hear, I guess. It'll be interesting to know or learn as to what happened over there.

Ms. Mundy: We are. We're engaged and we're gathering information and we'll continue to do so while we plug away at our poverty reduction action plan.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you.

Chair: Great, thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the Total Housing Services carry?
Carried.

Seniors and Corporate Support

Seniors

Total Seniors: 354,500.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

The website for the senior secretariat describes it as a body created to provide policy and program advice. I'm looking at the grant breakdown and it's got a \$57,000 to the secretariat. What is the work that that secretariat has been able to do within that kind of envelope of sub support?

Ms. Mundy: They do amazing work. They are a very active and engaged group. I was speaking to them, actually, just a couple of weeks ago about a project that kind of morphed. It started as one thing. It was called the men's shed. It was a program that was to try to get widower gentlemen – men who had been widowed – because they were facing social isolation.

So they created this men's shed and it was a once-a-week group that would get together and just kind of get them out of the house and get them talking about meal preparation and just things that were going on in the community and trying to get them, again, like I said, out of the house and out of their loneliness. It's evolved though, because there was a women's group that heard about the men's shed and they were like: I don't know if we're good with just the men there, so is it okay if we come along too? So then the women would go there and the men would do their programming and the women would do their programming and then a few people would bring guitars and now it's turned into almost a weekly ceilidh.

Those are kind of programs that the secretariat, I guess they adjudicate. Many

seniors groups are allowed to put in their ideas and then the seniors secretariat pick the ones that they feel would offer the most social inclusion. It could be something to do with meals; it could be arts and culture related. They also do their senior Islander of the year awards as well. So, recognizing again the impact that seniors do have and raising awareness of seniors' issues. They do great work.

Ms. Bell: I was actually really surprised at how small the budget is for this whole section for seniors, given, as we know, we've got a lot of discussion about aging population and one of the things we hear a lot, even for seniors who aren't at risk, is just some of the challenges of navigating for seniors – in terms of navigating, for instance, government services and programs like efficiency programs and finding your way through that space.

Would there be any consideration to thinking about that kind of a role or an opportunity – with a relatively small increase in budget or reallocation of budget? And the other piece around that too, Chair, the budget lines for the other organizations that get grants, obviously they're pretty static, so that overall review of when is it time to think about increasing or changing the focus of programming support.

Ms. Mundy: Actually, a collaboration between myself and my colleague with health and wellness, we will be launching very shortly if I'm not mistaken, in the next couple of weeks probably, a first-ever seniors wellness and health strategy and with a real focus on the social aspect, rather than – many times when we talk about seniors, it's always about the pressures – long-term care – we never talk about the societal issue.

Ms. Bell: Quality of life.

Ms. Mundy: Well, exactly.

I always say that it's – the minister of health – it's his responsibility to add years to our life, but it's my department, as minister responsible for seniors, to add life to those years. So if we're gifted with – they say we're living 20 years longer than we were 100 years ago, but what are we doing with that gift of life, right? So it's that quality.

There are a lot of good action plans that will be coming out when we release the wellness and health strategy for seniors.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry – sorry.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No problem. I know it doesn't appear in this section, but I'd like to know where it does appear and that's the grandparents as primary caregivers. Which section will we get to?

Ms. Mundy: That would be under child protection.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Child protection.

Ms. Mundy: Child protection, or child family.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay. I'll hold my questions until then.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Corporate Support

Total Corporate Support: 925,700.

Total Seniors and Corporate Support,
1,280,200.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Social programs

Total Social Programs: 76,630,100.

Total Social Programs: 76,630,100.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: When I looked over some of the grants that were put out there, I see Community Inclusions Ltd. and obviously that's an organization near and dear to my heart and does some pretty good work in the O'Leary area, as well as all of West Prince.

I look at the budget estimate for 2017-2018 at \$850,000 and the budget forecast was

\$1.1 million. So then in 2018-2019, you're budgeting only a 1% increase over what was not even sufficient last time. So, I'm just wondering, is there an explanation to why that number is so glaringly different comparable to all the other organizations? So is there something happened there? I'd like some explanation on that and try to explain how 1% increase would be sufficed.

Premier MacLauchlan: I think the second – the actual spend (Indistinct) was that end of year money, wasn't it?

Ms. Mundy: Right, yeah.

Mr. Henderson: Was that end of year money not to bring them up to just be at even, though?

Ms. Mundy: No, it was one-time funding is what that was.

However, I actually met with this group maybe two weeks ago. We had a roundtable session and it was actually very engaging. Many of them – I guess there were a few purposes to doing that: number one is to let them know we're listening. We're engaged. Number two: I wanted them to meet one another because many of the groups are – they're all doing wonderful work, but some of them don't know what the other is doing. I wanted to hear their success stories and I wanted to hear their challenges.

So we brought them all together and it was an hour that we blocked off and turned into two hours and I learned a lot about what they do and they learned a lot about what we do. I did commit that government was here to listen and that we were in the process of – we had just contracted a consultant firm who has worked with many of our sister provinces to help develop a funding model because we don't want, every year, to be having to inject a one-time funding to these organizations. We want them to be able to plan sufficiently year after year and continue to do the good work that they're doing.

They were very happy to hear that. They were also – we let them know that they would be engaged; they'd be part of this process. Actually, we met with one group even today just to kind of lay out the plan for going forward. We are really looking forward to the group that's going to come in

and help us develop that funding model, because for year to year, we have been – we've been maybe increasing it by 1%, but we're still really not getting to where we need to be. And we need to make sure – holding the government purse as well that we are getting value for our money as well, right? So we left there in full agreement, in full partnership that going forward, we would be coming up with a funding model.

Mr. Henderson: But my point: that's a massive discrepancy. That's 30%. You only increased them by 1% over 30%, so, are they spending money that far out of whack? Or is their numbers have spiked and it's going to go down next year? Anyway, I'm totally with you in saying that you have to make sure we're trying to provide them adequate funding as they can continue year to year so they can manage and plan, but that's a huge difference in comparable to all the rest. I'm just trying to figure out why is that and why wouldn't you try to address that.

Ms. Mundy: Sure. And we are. We're working very, very closely with Kevin down there at –

Mr. Henderson: But I'd argue you're not. You only increased it by 1%.

Ms. Mundy: No, we are. Again, we're working on a funding model that's going to help address them and help keep them sustained going forward.

Mr. Henderson: But in your budget, you've only increased 1% though.

Ms. Mundy: How much can I say? No, how much can I –

Mr. Henderson: But anyway, we'll deal with that again.

Ms. Mundy: No. How much can I –

I'll have a sidebar with you afterwards, okay?

Mr. Henderson: Okay.

Ms. Mundy: Sounds good.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party, did you have a question? Or no? Or was it Belfast-Murray River?

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Okay, sorry. The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Well, just to follow up –

Chair: Oh, sorry, was he finished?

Yes. No. He's finished, sorry.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Just to follow up on – Tina's not listening.

Ms. Mundy: Sorry, who am I – who's asking?

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

Ms. Compton: Just to follow up on the minister's question there, I was looking through the community grants and if we could go through the list, I mean, we've got the CNIB, we've got Community Connections Inc., we've got Community Inclusions Ltd., Inclusions East, Pat and the Elephant, Queens County Residential Services Inc., Souris group home, and Stars for Life and they all had a fairly significant increase and then it's going back to what they had in the estimate for last year.

Can you give us an idea with all of those? I don't know if you want to do it individually, but is it the one-off situations, or is it the same story: you've had a conversation and you're working with them, but they're not getting as much money?

Ms. Mundy: I guess there's a difference between operating and the funding that we provided for specific projects and these were projects that were going to be a one-time project like, say, for Community Connections, for example, that was to help them establish extra residential units. Pat and the Elephant; they were looking at purchasing a new vehicle.

So these were asks that they already had into the department over and above their budget asks. We sit down with them every year and go over their budget and find out what their budget asks. So those one-time ones are those that one-time funding at year end that we had because of the surplus. That went to specific one-time projects. So that wasn't meant for operating. That was not meant to be continued on. That was to provide them with the funding for that specific thing.

Ms. Compton: So that was extra federal funding.

Ms. Mundy: Exactly. Yes, it was an ask that they'd had into the department over and above their regular budget ask. When Pat and the Elephant came, we don't – it's not a yearly budget ask for a vehicle. It was a one-time ask.

Ms. Compton: So all of those increases were from federal money they received?

Ms. Mundy: No, that was as a result of the surplus; the strong economy and the surplus that we had.

Chair: You're good?

Ms. Compton: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I just want to look at the DSP line there and I'm wondering whether that amount covers the mental health-related disabilities that were mandated by the court decision?

Ms. Mundy: Actually, we had started that and we'd already said before the court decision that we were going to be transforming our disabilities support program and including mental health, so I just want to clarify that that it wasn't because of the court decision that we decided to do that. That that was something that this government had committed to doing prior to judge Key's judgment.

But in answer to your question, yes. The increase there is the anticipated uptake of transforming the program and including mental health.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Do you have any sense of how many recipients there will be under that particular aspect of the DSP?

Ms. Mundy: We are anticipating an increase of about 500.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: 500?

Ms. Mundy: 500 clients, yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Wow, that's significant.

Going up a little bit to the salaries line, I see that that's jumped by \$1.5 million. I'm just wondering why that is and who those extra people are.

Ms. Mundy: Those increases are positions that we are going to have to create for the new Disability Support Program. We are now going to need clinical designated assessors and also Community Connectors. Again, because we're going to be providing a navigational support to anyone who walks through the door at disability support, they're not going to have to have multiple workers.

They're going to have one dedicated worker and we are going to have community connectors that are going to help connect them with services in the community as well. We are also looking at approximately four additional social program caseworkers for our Seniors Independence Program; so the new program that we launched last November –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Ms. Mundy: – to help provide light housekeeping, snow removal, grass cutting for seniors to help them stay in their home. We're anticipating an increase of case loads as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

Just to clarify a little bit there, minister. The spend on the DSP program went up about one point, well, from the forecast from last year, about \$1.2 million

The salaries have gone up, oh, gosh, \$1.5 million. Are we – is the increase in salaries to manage the program more than the

payments that we are giving out in the program? Is that correct?

Ms. Mundy: I'll defer to Lane for that. I don't have anything in my notes for that.

Lane Pineau Director: I'm sorry, could you repeat that question again?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure. The salary line has gone up in this section, and the Disability Support Program payments have also gone up. I just discovered that the large amount, maybe not all of it, but the largest portion of that salary increase was related to new positions, in order to manage the disability program expansion into mental health. I was asking whether it seems to me like it's costing as much to manage the program as it is in new payments that are going out. Is that a fair assessment?

Lane Pineau Director: With the enhancements to the DSP program, there are different skill sets that are required. There's different functional assessments that are being done for a new client that comes on in the program. And we also have to remember that this reflects an investment partway through the year, right? This is taking effect in June. It doesn't represent a full year's worth of payments to the program. While we can anticipate that there'll be further program growth next year.

Ms. Mundy: I think the salaries, from what I'm seeing here, the salaries are on the salary line, but the Disability Support Program, those are – that's actually for the program. That would not include the salaries.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No –

Ms. Mundy: Right.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – I understand that –

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I was looking at the two increases –

Ms. Mundy: Right.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and just looking at the – one imagines that the amount of money it costs to run a program should be much less

than the amount of money going out through that program, but it seems like this was almost one-to-one if not more to manage it than is going out the door and that's why I was asking those questions.

Lane Pineau Director: That would also include Seniors Independence Initiative staffing, as well.

Ms. Mundy: That also includes the Seniors Independence Initiative. It's not strictly just for the Disability Support Program.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Ms. Mundy: That's salaries right across – through the whole department.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure, okay. I'm fine.

Thanks Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you talked a lot about the Disability Support Program transformation and I can see that from last year and this year, there's been a spend of \$250,000, \$260,000 on consultants to obviously effect that transformation.

Two questions. One is, who was the primary provider of that service, or the third-party service? When are you expecting that to actually take effect?

Ms. Mundy: We're expecting the program to roll out in June.

Ms. Bell: June, okay.

Ms. Mundy: Lane can give us the name of the group, the consultant that we hired. I will tell you that they are experts in – it's a functional assessment tool, right?

Lane Pineau Director: Functional assessment –

Ms. Mundy: Sorry?

Chair: Hon. members, there should only be one person speaking. We're having

difficulty hearing the question and the answer.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Minister, you have the floor.

Ms. Mundy: Sure. The consultant that was hired, they have been brought in to help us with a functional assessment tool, because the Disability Support Program, the transformation, it is also going to be based on the level of function, and the level that the person's disability affects their day-to-day life.

Right now, it's based on diagnosis. When we're bringing in mental health to the program, we have varying levels of disability with a mental health theme or a mental health (Indistinct)

Let's say somebody – you have bipolar and I have bipolar. Without a functional assessment on how it affects our daily life, we would both be receiving just X amount. Whereas when you're episodic, you're in full bloom, you can't work, you can't function, you can't even get out of bed let's say that day, your level of disability is going to be much greater than mine, where I might be holding a part-time job.

That functional assessment tool will be so very important to make sure that our clients are receiving the most benefit from the program.

Ms. Bell: That's a really fulsome answer. I really appreciate that, minister.

I guess the first thing that comes to mind is: Are you going to be reassessing existing clients or clients who've previously been denied?

Because that particular thing, that case that you described there is a really common occurrence of denial for clients, who have episodic disability, particularly around PTSD and some of those less easy to diagnose, not that any of these things are easy, you know what I mean?

Ms. Mundy: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: Would there be an opportunity to have that reassessment, or –

Ms. Mundy: Absolutely, yeah.

Ms. Bell: That's really good news, minister. Thank you for that.

Chair, may I ask another question?

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: The Disability Support Program as has been connected to the disability tax credit on the federal basis, is there going to be an automatic enrollment for those if they qualify for the disability tax benefit that they can be automatically enrolled in the provincial program? Rather than need to go back through another reassessment. Has that been considered?

Ms. Mundy: That is what we're looking at, the role of the community connector –

Ms. Bell: Right.

Ms. Mundy: – and the navigator. We are going to make sure, that again, we don't have our clients running from department to department to municipalities to community partners to federal government. It'll all be one-door access: they walk in. They present, and we do all that background work for them.

Ms. Bell: Right, okay.

I have questions on the other programs, rather than disability support.

Chair: In the child and family section?

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Chair: We're going to get there.

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: On this social program section. Again, this is related to legislation more than it is to budget. The supported decision-making legislation is being, sort of, grinding its way slowly through the administration and I'm wondering where we

are with that. I keep asking about it. I keep being told it's almost here.

Is it almost here?

Ms. Mundy: Yes.

The minister of justice and myself have been working very closely on this. There was a little bit of overlap between our departments. I think we're still a little too soon to make any kind of an announcement. However, my deputy will be meeting very shortly with the group that we've been –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, the advocate –

Ms. Mundy: – meeting with for an update.

It's something that it probably – I can't say – it's always been on our management plan, but at one time, we deferred it over to justice. Justice is, I think they're finished with it now and kind of turning it back over to us but there's still going to be a collaboration there to be able to move this forward. That's about as much as I think I can say right now, but we have moved forward.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right, we're nearly there.

Ms. Mundy: Nearly there.

Chair: You're good?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm good.

Ms. Mundy: Further than we were –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Mundy: – further than we were last year, let's say.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: I just realized, sorry, thank you, Chair. I just realized what you meant: that there are a number of other programs within social programs that I had some questions on –

Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms. Bell: We're still in that section.

Chair: Yeah, sure.

Ms. Bell: The question, chair, minister, is on the Child Care Subsidy Program.

I know you had announced an increase to that program. We know that access to affordable child care is the number-one barrier for women entering or returning to the work force.

What we're hearing consistently is that with eligibility being income-tested, that the threshold is so low, there's no incentive for people to come off the subsidy to get work if they can't get full-time work, because one cancels out the other.

Are those funds are going to be allocated to increase the threshold?

Ms. Mundy: Another great question.

This kind of goes back to, I think, something that I'd mentioned to one of the members of the opposition. We made changes to that program in September of last year; considerable changes to the program. We increased the threshold. We increased the full-day, half-daycare rates. We increased the private sitter rates. We reduced the administrative burden, so we made it once a year, whereas it was every two weeks. We made considerable changes, but we haven't been able to get the word out there, because people are still saying that the thresholds are too low, so people are not applying.

Part of this is my frustration. We are – we did through education, a collaboration with education, we will be increasing it again. We're also looking at how can we get the word out. Can we send a letter to every family in child care centers? How can we get it out? Because I spent some time on a lot of these Facebook groups too and I'm answering people and saying, apply, apply. And they're, like, oh, no, I've become been told they won't qualify. You're screening yourself out before you even apply. Apply. Then, people are coming back and saying, oh, my God, I can't believe it. I'm being fully – there's no parent share.

I appreciate you advocating for them and keep advocating and we will be increasing it even more, but part of the reason that it was underutilized is because people are

screening themselves out, they're not even applying. We need to get that word out. If you have one of your constituents calling and saying, I don't qualify, say when was the last time you applied? When was the last time you got an assessment? I encourage everybody to do so.

Chair: Charlottetown– Parkdale.

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

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

Ms. Bell: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: Okay, good.

Ms. Mundy: 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 the grant of supplementary supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Friday, May 18th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, at 10:00 a.m.