

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy

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LOCATION: LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER, HON. GEORGE COLES BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

SUBJECT: BRIEFINGS ON THE TOPIC OF VEHICLES PASSING SCHOOL BUSES (RELATING TO BILL NO. 101, AN ACT TO AMEND THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC ACT)

COMMITTEE:

Allen Roach, MLA Montague-Kilmuir [Chair]
Hannah Bell, MLA Charlottetown-Parkdale
Jamie Fox, MLA Borden-Kinkora
Matthew MacKay, MLA Kensington-Malpeque
Alan McIsaac, MLA Vernon River-Stratford
Hon. Tina Mundy, Minister of Family and Human Services
Hon. Pat Murphy, Minister of Rural and Regional Development

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Hal Perry, MLA Tignish-Palmer Road

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Darlene Compton, MLA Belfast-Murray River

GUESTS:

Public Schools Branch (Dave Gillis, Catherine MacKinnon) MacWorth Industries (Wayne Ellsworth, Dan MacDonald)

STAFF:

Emily Doiron, Clerk Assistant (Journals, Committees, and House Operations)

Edited by Hansard

The Committee met at 1:30 p.m.

Chair (Roach): Welcome everyone.

I'll call the meeting to order now and I'd like to just get a couple of things out of the way first. When you are going to speak, if you could identify yourself first and the people that are doing our audio, they'll know who you are so that as you continue to speak they can identify you. We'd appreciate that, if you could.

Secondly, anybody who has cellphones, if you could either shut them off or ensure that they're on silent, we'd appreciate it. It causes difficulty with our audio people and certainly, when we're in the middle of a conversation it might interrupt, either your thoughts or the MLAs that are here and the ministers that are here. I would appreciate that.

Again, welcome everyone. Do I have an adoption of the agenda?

Ms. Bell: So moved.

Chair: Hannah Bell.

We're here again today to talk about the issue of vehicles passing school buses and we do have a – and it's relating to Bill No. 101, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*. Today we are going to receive a presentation from Public Schools Branch corporate services, Dave Gillis, who is the leader of corporate services department for the Public Schools Branch, and Catherine MacKinnon, coordinator for transportation services.

Our second presenters are MacWorth Industries regarding the highway safety prevention bar. I take it that Dan MacDonald and Wayne Ellsworth are here, and I think it's something that they've invented and are looking at. We look forward to both of those.

With that, Dave, I would ask that you introduce yourself and both of you, and then we can start with your presentation.

Dave Gillis: Thank you.

My name is Dave Gillis. I am the leader of corporate services with the Public Schools Branch.

Catherine MacKinnon: I am Catherine MacKinnon, transportation manager and coordinator.

Dave Gillis: If it suits the committee, I'd like to go through the presentation start to finish if that's okay and then address any questions or follow-up afterward.

Chair: Okay. Everyone is great with that,

Dave Gillis: Excellent, thank you.

To begin, I do want to thank you. I want to offer some gratitude to the committee for allowing us to speak on this topic today. This is a very serious issue. It's an ongoing issue. It's one that has impacted us on a daily basis, but I believe it impacts us all.

Most of us being parents, we can all empathize with the impact traffic going through flashing school bus lights might have on students, on their parents and relatives, but I also want to emphasize the fact that it has a very dramatic impact on our school bus drivers. These folks love the kids on their bus. They treat them as though they're their own. Many instances, we've got drivers who have experienced post-traumatic stress symptoms as a result of issues like this. It's a very serious issue.

We also have support staff in the schools that deal with students going through issues after the fact. Obviously, it also impacts our law enforcement officials, our transportation officials, our folks here today, the community members, the travelling public; very few of us that this doesn't impact. It's a very serious issue and we thank you for the opportunity to speak on it with the intent of attempting to improve the situation.

With regard to the scope of the issue, it's an ongoing issue. From the moment the first school bus started travelling the roads in Prince Edward Island this has been an issue. For years we have been working in committee forums of one sort or another to try to improve the situation and we continue to. This issue is bigger than PEI. It's right across the country. Other jurisdictions and geographies are dealing with the same issues

and we just – even last night on *Compass* we heard the situation in Indiana of the fatality directly related to this issue, so it is bigger than us. It is a big issue.

But, we have our specific situation, the Public Schools Branch last year in the last school year; we received 130 reported incidents of traffic going through flashing school bus red lights. That 130, that number is on par with previous years. It's not dramatically higher or lower. To date this year we've received 24 such reports. That's in the two months of the school year til the end of October. We extrapolate that out that would total about 120 this year, which would be on par with the 130 in previous years.

Also, by way of scope, it's important to note that the Public Schools Branch does manage 14,369 bus stops every day. That's 14,369 in the morning and again every afternoon. The volume is very high, so the opportunity and likelihood that this is going to impact our folks is high because of that probability.

As we estimated, the specific topic of traffic going through school bus red lights, we've basically broken it down into three chronological components of the event:

- (1) Are the actions in advance of the incident, or the preventative measures that we can take before an incident takes place;
- (2) Are the factors involved during the incident, or the mitigation of risks at the time of the incident;
- (3) Is following the incident or the enforcement and correction of activities if we've has an incident.

Those are the three chronological phases of this that I'll focus on and try to address piece by piece as we go through.

From our perspective, prevention is the key here. If we're dealing with an after-the-fact scenario, it's because something threatening has already happened. If at all possible, we would like to prevent these incidents from ever happening in the first place.

In our attempt to do so, at the Public Schools Branch, we review bus stops annually to determine that they're in safe locations. We

ensure our school buses are fully operational daily; that all red lights are working, that the stop arms working, that it's completely functional, all safety features are in play. That takes the form of a pre-trip inspection our bus drivers do prior to taking any trip. They make sure those safety features are in play.

We are diligent in ensuring that school bus drivers are adequately trained. This is extremely important on this topic to know in advance when you turn your ambers on, when it flips to red, that your stop arm is out, that your crossing gate is out, that you are communicating effectively with the students that are getting on and off your bus, and that the protocol is followed in the safest manner as possible.

It's also important that we emphasize education with the students to ensure that they are aware of safety protocol with regard to safe travel on buses and getting on and off buses, as well as even just waiting at the bus stop.

We continue to work with community partners to raise awareness with the travelling public. We do acknowledge the fact that no one here has complete control over anything. We do have to focus on what we have control over. We do work diligently with our community partners to raise awareness of the topic with the travelling public.

We also work with parents and guardians to ensure that they are aware of how they can help as well, and they can with reinforcing some of the safety lessons with some of the supervision parts of it when PSB employees are not there to supervise.

On the topic of risk mitigation, this is kind of oriented around the fact of: Okay, we're here. We're at a bus stop and an incident is imminent. We ensure that our bus drivers are implementing the proper protocol for safe pick up and drop off of students. We ensure, again, that our school bus lights, all signage and equipment, are fully functional and engaged. We encourage students and caretakers; their parents and guardians, to proceed with awareness and caution, and we continue to encourage the travelling public to be aware and, extremely importantly, to abide by the law. We do have existing law

that is very stringent. In almost every one of these situations that we face, it's as a result of someone disobeying or breaking the law.

On the tail end of it, after an incident has taken place, there is an enforcement and correction component of things that we also work on. The process – the incident would take place. Our school bus driver at that point would immediately contact the Public Schools Branch and file their report. The Public Schools Branch forwards that report to law enforcement and the incident is reviewed. As with any such thing, as much information as possible is gathered and reviewed and recommendations are then made where necessary for safety improvements.

This includes requests for additional road signage or better road signage. This includes reviewing a route or a stop for safety purposes. It includes additional training for students or staff, and such things.

The fourth and final point on this slide is with regard to the judicial follow through. Once the report is turned over to law enforcement, they can conduct their investigation to determine whether criminal charges are to be laid and how that is to proceed.

As shared earlier, we have been working diligently for years on this topic. In that timeframe, we've done a number of things to try to improve the safety of buses. Some of these are listed on the slide. We've added additional amber lights; at one point they were just reds. We've added ambers to warn the travelling public in advance that the bus will be stopping.

These amber lights, they're exclusively used for one purpose. If you see the amber lights blinking, the only thing that's telling anyone is that students will be getting on or getting off that bus very shortly. Prepare for it. When the reds flip over, the process will have begun. The amber lights are extremely important and their addition is key to the discussion of how we proceed. So often we see the travelling public at an amber light or a red light, or approaching an amber light, at an intersection and they speed up to get through it before the reds come on.

If we have a clear message – if nothing else gets out here from today, it's that amber light needs to be the trigger to promote an action to slow down and prepare because kids will be getting on and off that bus. It's not an 'if'. It's not a 'maybe'. It's a definite. That's why those amber lights are coming on.

We've modified the rapid flasher lenses. They've been retrofitted into all school buses. At one time it was the old incandescent blinker bulbs. We've converted to LEDs so that they're more easily seen, more brilliant. We've added improved reflective taping to all bus profiles to make them easier to see. The crossing control gauge, that's the big arm at the front of the bus that swings out, has been added to allow the kids to get out ahead of the bus to establish eye contact with the driver more easily, to see the scope of the geography as much as they can, to proceed safely.

We've added additional stop arms; that's the red stop sign that flips out from the bus. All of the new models, effective last year, that we've purchased and that we will purchase going forward, will have two of those arms coming out as opposed to the one that had been there previously. As has been shared previously, we have some cameras that have been installed on some buses in the past and we have some GPS systems that have been installed on some buses.

We continue to review modifications and initiatives in other jurisdictions to ensure that we're as advanced in this topic as any. We do have a procurement committee that struck – that purchases the buses each year. They work in conjunction with the other Maritime Provinces to put the tender together and a good portion of the discussions had every year with regard to the safety features that are on the buses and which ones we are going to order and go with.

In addition to the modifications to the school buses, we also, being in the public education field, find it very important to continue with our public awareness campaigns. These have taken various formats over the years, but our school bus red light campaign is a yearly initiative. We work with unions, with law enforcement officials, with other community partners to implement that campaign.

A number of safety materials have been distributed to a variety of places, including local businesses. We've had posters in doctors' offices and other waiting areas to try to promote the issue. You've probably seen some television campaigns that have been on the air over the years.

From a PSB specific perspective, in May and June annually, we go out and we meet with daycare providers to discuss school bus safety. The daycares are not within the purview of the Public Schools Branch but we know that those kids will be ours next year and we want them prepared to be able to safely get on and off the buses. We do go to the daycare centres with pamphlets and videos and share some information with the families and the kids there. Quite often, we'll take a bus to the location so they can get on and off and experience that prior to doing it for real on the first day of school. We continue to share that information with parents and families.

In September, annually, our focus turns more towards the kids that are at our schools that we focus on and we distribute and share school bus safety information to our students, parents, particularly, our younger children, at that time each year.

By way of conclusion, I think it needs to be stated that student safety needs to be considered a shared responsibility between us all, between members of the travelling public, parents, Public Schools Branch employees, government officials, our law enforcement providers. There are very few areas or people in our society that don't carry a shared responsibility to ensure that our students are safe, particularly, with regard to this topic and travelling the roads.

We feel that effective ongoing improvements require a coordinated, multi-organizational focus on three things: On awareness – pardon me – on education, first; on awareness, second, and on enforcement, third. Those are kind of chronological, similar to the before the bus stop, during the bus stop, and the after the fact. We do feel that Public Schools Branch has a role in that and we need to focus on what we have control over and that primarily is in the education and awareness part of it. The enforcement piece, obviously, is a law enforcement component to it. We have a

Highway Safety division component to it with regard to signage and things like that.

But long story short, there needs to be an ongoing, coordinated, multi-organizational effort with this focus in our opinion to see real positive change in this area.

So critical success factors that we anticipate would include: preventative initiatives around education and training as we touched on, risk mitigation initiatives, those would include safety equipment and correctional initiatives, enforcement of laws to reduce risky driving behaviors. I don't think it's any great stretch to think that the majority of these types of incidents we're dealing with perhaps distracted drivers.

We have yet to come across anyone who said: First of all, I didn't know I wasn't allowed to go through the red lights. Folks aren't generally doing this on purpose. It's happening for a variety of reasons; distracted drivers is one, cell phones et cetera, drowsy drivers, alcohol or drug impaired drivers, speeders, people who have an appointment in five minutes and are not happy with having to stop every so often for the bus, those types of things. So, enforcement of the law is to reduce the risky driving behaviors is a key component of this as well.

Our focus from a Public Schools Branch perspective, we feel we are positioned well to ensure the school bus drivers understand and follow appropriate safety protocol. We're positioned well to educate students on school bus safety and we're positioned well to communicate with parents and guardians on how they can help in the process.

We are positioned well to continue to act as an advocate and a partner to enhance the school bus safety equipment. To advocate for additional and improved road signage where needed, to advocate for additional police presence – particularly in hot-spot areas and to advocate for judicial enforcement and follow through, specifically with regard to this topic.

I shared there are a number of initiatives afoot with regard to this topic. We have a red-light committee in place now that involves our school bus drivers, our unions, our law enforcement officials, our highway

safety officials. That committee is on record with our goal this year as being to decrease stop-arm violations by 50% while children are loading and unloading from Island school buses within the 2018-2019 school year. It is a lofty goal but I believe with a coordinated multi-organizational effort, it's something that we can attain.

Once again, I want to finish the way I started by thanking the committee for allowing us to speak and hearing us on this issue.

Open the floor to any questions.

Chair: Thank you very much, that was a great presentation and I've been – we do have some questions, so I've been keeping track of the members as they've identified so, I'll go to MLA Fox first for a couple of questions.

Mr. Fox: Thanks Chair, thanks Dave.

I just got probably about a half a dozen questions there. What's the ratio of charges to instances?

Dave Gillis: That's probably a better question for highway safety because we don't always see the tail end of this but I can say from what I understand, we had 130 official reports that we had submitted and it's my understanding that about 12 of them resulted in charges last year.

Chair: MLA Fox.

Mr. Fox: Have we done an analysis of: is one area more prone to these instances than others?

Dave Gillis: At this point I feel like I'm hogging the mic. Catherine is our coordinator she deals with this everyday if folks are okay with both of us jumping in on this.

Catherine MacKinnon: Okay. To answer that, there have been hot-spots: Trans-Canada, St. Peters highway going out towards Canavoy – the black stretch is out there, Albany as you've witnessed the other day. But in reality it happens anywhere. It can happen in a subdivision as well. So although we identify to the police enforcement, the areas, and ask for presence of patrol, extra patrol in some of our areas –

Hunter River was a major stretch there for some time. It's at any time and any location.

Mr. Fox: Have we done a study of bus routes to stops? Because, what I see or what I hear, is in some areas there's five buses basically going up the same road to do the same job that two buses could be doing. So, have we ever done an in-depth look at, actually, our bus routes to pick-ups?

Catherine MacKinnon: Yes we have. In the past we had two buses serving – the high school bus – serving the same family, on the same road and an elementary bus coming behind to do the same purpose. It took a substantial study between the Charlottetown Rural family and Stone Park, a number of bus routes were reduced at that time.

As we go through our system, through the attrition and the retirement of bus drivers, is when we take a look at our stops and our routes to see what we can eliminate, how we can improve and streamline.

Dave Gillis: I'd like to jump in there too, as well, Mr. Fox. The reality is we are dealing with an extremely high volume of stops – that 14,000 buses is a big volume. For us to evaluate thoroughly those routes, those stops, it's a daily thing on a daily basis. We would gladly accept additional help in the form of staffing to review it, things like that, but we continue to review it on a daily basis. When issues like this come up they prompt us to review the stop, they prompt us to review the route to see if we can tweak it or modify it to increase the safety.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

We know the police can't be everywhere; I understand that totally 100%. Have we ever thought about using shadow vehicles? What I'm thinking there is it could be a member of the Public Schools Branch or conservation officers, it could be used highway safety officers – if could be if the sheriff department's not busy – we have used resources are we working with maybe highway safety or correctional officers or conservation officers – or I should say sheriff's department – to maybe do shadowing of buses too?

Catherine MacKinnon: We haven't to date, would refer to it as shadowing, but we

have called upon highway safety to send out members in certain areas for (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Dave Gillis: Part of that is the identification of the hot-spot areas that Catherine referred to. So when we have multiple reports from the same area that checks that flag as a hot-spot area we do report it to law enforcement and they've been great to try to support us. In many situations they have been on site in those hot-spot areas but they can't be there all the time, every time. So it has – their presence has been noted and it's been appreciated and we have had that experience.

Mr. Fox: I'm curious Dave, why are the cameras not working?

Dave Gillis: Good question. From what I've been told is that there is a variety of factors that come into play in this. Not the least of which, the technology of the cameras obviously is a bit dated now, that notwithstanding the climate that we operate in as a key factor.

The majority of incidents that we have with regard to drivers going through school bus lights, not exclusive, but the majority, are drivers approaching the school bus. Typically, people that are following the bus they see a big yellow bus, they see the lights, they're more prepared to stop. The majority of instances are coming toward the bus.

Now, I'm not a law enforcement professional but it's my understanding that we first of all need to identify the vehicle clearly and in the case of Prince Edward Island, we don't have front license plates, the buses are approaching this way.

The second thing, it's important that we know who's driving the vehicle, a lot of times with the climate that we operate in, the cameras have grime or snow or humidity, condensation on them.

The third and probably the most important thing, Mr. Fox, to try to answer your question, I think the cameras tell a part of the story but it's a part of a bigger picture. What I mean by that, we have the strictest laws, the harshest, most harsh penalties for

this offence in the entire country, so there is a very strong probability that if you are charged with this offence, you are going to go to court and you are going to fight this charge. While we feel that a higher penalty will be a deterrent, we're not seeing it translate into additional convictions, because part of the process in a courtroom setting is for the judge to try to determine the whole scenario.

Often times what the cameras don't show are how much in advance were the amber lights turned on before the red lights came on: did that school bus driver give the driver approaching enough time to stop? Was the stop handled in a manner that follows protocol from a safety perspective?

Do I think cameras could be an effective tool to help support this initiative?

Absolutely. I think the more tools we have like that at our disposal, the more likely we'll be to be able to identify this; but I don't want to underestimate the point that the cameras used for conviction purposes – we're talking about something after the fact, where it's already happened. Our focus needs to be equally as much on the preventative side of it and preventing it from happening in the first place.

So, why the cameras don't work? There are probably a few layers to that question.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Dave Gillis: That's my (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Final question.

I'm curious, on page four, you alluded to GPS systems have been installed on some buses.

Dave Gillis: Yes.

Mr. Fox: What purpose is that?

Catherine MacKinnon: Well, we have them currently installed on 31 of our buses; not only tracks the speed, it's now able to track the length of time that the ambers and the reds are on as well.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

MLA MacKay.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks, Dave and Catherine for taking time and coming in to speak with us today. I appreciate that. I also have five or six questions as well.

On the 130 reports, you'd made the comment there was about 12 charges laid. So our maximum fine now, which is supposedly the strictest in the country, is 5,000. How many of the 12 were convicted with the \$5,000 fine? Do we know?

Dave Gillis: I don't know the answer to that.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Dave Gillis: I will say this, though, while I'm at it. If we could get more convictions – I think it's a circuitous kind of discussion – if we could manage to get more convictions, I believe the word would get out there more. Without a conviction, we can't have Steve Bruce report that this was an incident or this is what happened.

Mr. MacKay: Right.

Dave Gillis: We don't hear anything about it. It shocks a lot of people to hear that we've had 130 of these types of (Indistinct) – it would shock you. In the Halifax area they've got 1,400 of these last year; it's a big issue.

I do think if we could – the conviction side of it is a piece of it. It's an important piece of it, and it would act as a deterrent if folks actually saw that people were being convicted; but often times we don't get the follow-up loop as to what exactly happened in that court case or whether or not they – so it's potentially one highway safety may be able to answer for you, but from our perspective, we don't always get that full picture of (Indistinct)

Catherine MacKinnon: And many people, with the \$1,000 fine, they just wouldn't pay the ticket.

Mr. MacKay: That's right.

Catherine MacKinnon: So we're not able to follow up with that. There has been times where we have attended the courts and were able to call *The Guardian* and the media and (Indistinct) attention at that time.

Mr. MacKay: And I guess that's where I'm struggling with it the most, right? As a father of three, I pick my daughter up every day at daycare. She gets off the bus, and the first thing you look at is the traffic, right?

Anytime myself, see a red light or a stop sign, it was something we were taught at an early age: You see the stop sign, you stop. People are still struggling with that issue.

Truthfully, I don't think the laws are near harsh enough. If you were to pass a school bus, you should lose your license. It should be as bad as you can absolutely get, especially when you got children involved. So I don't think people are taking it seriously, as far as like you say, they can go in and pay the \$1,000 fine and move on.

To have 130 incidents is too many. Obviously, to decrease the goal by 50% is huge, but still leaves a large number that – it only takes one, and knowing that, as politicians and leaders and, we can make positive change working together to try and prevent anything from happening.

I want to give credit where credit's due for the ideas and with the arms coming out, I certainly think that's a good idea; but has there been any approach, I guess, with putting everything together? So one, right from the cameras to the arms, to have the license plate both on front and back of vehicles, to do absolutely everything we can do to lower that number down instead of just trying one piece by piece to go full in and put everything in, do everything we can at this time to prevent an incident from happening.

Has that been discussed?

Dave Gillis: I think everything is on the table with regard to this. To me, that line of questioning leads me to the scope aspect of this. We saw what happened in Indiana yesterday. We see what's happening across the country. Every jurisdiction is struggling with this –

Mr. MacKay: For sure.

Dave Gillis: – in one way, shape or form. If there was any silver bullet, it wouldn't take long for the rest of the world to know what that is and follow it.

In our procurement department, we've got folks going to purchase their next round of buses. The very first thing they're asking for is a complete list of every possible safety feature we can get on the buses to determine which ones we're going to go with.

I wish that we had that template that says: Here's what's going to guarantee you that this issue goes away. I'm not so sure we're ever going to be able to prevent somebody that's drinking and driving from passing that school bus, or somebody that falls asleep at the wheel, or somebody that's texting and driving, regardless of how much we do.

It really has to hit home at that level where the drivers have to abide by the law, basically. It's going to take some enforcement, and that positive reinforcement. From an educational and training perspective, it's going to take the – I'm going to call it negative reinforcement – but it's the convictions and the awareness that if you do this you will be caught and you will be prosecuted for it. From my perspective, it's that cumulative effort from many sources that's going to lead to a better situation here.

Catherine MacKinnon: Also, just to follow that with Dave, that is our main purpose, is to work with our partnerships and highway safety and all the justice departments and the department of education to come up with a comprehensive awareness and education plan.

It's not one time we put the stickers on the back of the bus, \$5,000 fine and lose eight demerit points. That's not really reaching the motorists and the public out there. The contents of all the other factors, your insurance and all of that I think, is where we need to bring forth as well.

And it's – we need the public's help, there's no question about that. We need the public's help. We need – when they see a violation going through the red lights, we need to be able to have them encouraged to phone

Crime Stoppers and get the word out. It needs to become a suppertime conversation between everyone, and I think right here in this room it can start.

Mr. MacKay: For sure. And just final statement on it: So obviously it goes back to the public and they need to be more aware. We've seen that the \$5,000 stickers have not worked, right? It hasn't really decreased; and from my understanding from what I've heard, out of the 12 fines that are out there, I don't know if there's ever been one that actually got the \$5,000 fine, but I could be wrong on that. It's been a while since I heard an update. So, obviously people aren't taking that fine seriously.

I know every time we've come to the floor here and we always discuss laws or fines and we say: Well, we're the highest in the country with this or the highest in the country with this. Well, I think we've got to stop looking at that. Maybe if we make something a little more strict and say: You know what, if you pass a school bus you're going to lose your license for a year; that might start getting the attention of people.

Because they obviously haven't taken the fines too seriously, and I think we need to go farther with that, right? Whatever it is, my fear is – and hopefully it never happens – is that we've been fortunate so far that out of these incidents nothing's happened, but it's only going to take one incident and it's going to change the whole perspective and everything. If we can prevent that somehow by everybody working together and brainstorming some ideas, I certainly think that's the way to go.

Anyway, thanks for answering my questions.

Dave Gillis: You're speaking our language.

Chair: MLA McIsaac.

Mr. McIsaac: Thanks very much, Chair.

Dave and Catherine, I'm glad you're here and a good presentation. I hope the media can make this the number one story this evening because it certainly is – it needs to be covered well.

The first thing I want to do is give a lot of credit to the bus drivers. I think they do an awesome job. I know if I get behind a bus and there are three or four cars in front or behind me, after the child's on the bus they will pull over to the side and let you go by. They're not on the road to hold up traffic. They're there to pick up the kids.

That's awesome, and they recognize that it slows traffic down, but they abide by the law and they go out of their way to make sure that traffic keeps flowing as much as possible. So kudos to them for the great job they do.

Dave, you had mentioned earlier about the yellow lights and something like a traffic light where – does yellow mean slow down, or does yellow mean speed up and get through before the red. Why do we use yellow? Why don't we just use red? Because it seems like if you get rid of the yellow and everybody sees red; that means stop.

There's not a story, there's not a text or an email or a program on the radio or whatever that's worth the price of a child. Put the red lights on and you stop. You're never going to get caught for going through a yellow light. But if it's a red light, maybe they will stop. Red light seems to mean serious. Yellow lights, they don't seem to take them seriously, apparently.

But maybe we need to look at no more amber lights. The red lights are coming on early enough so that when the bus is stopped, everybody knows the red lights are on. So could we think of possibly getting rid of the amber lights and just going with the red? I'll give you that one. I got a couple of other questions.

Dave Gillis: I'm not sure I'm going to be able to answer that one, Alan, exactly. I think the parallel would be every street light on every street corner goes amber before it goes red to give the travelling public a bit of a warning that that stop is coming. I think the intent of why there are on the buses now is for that same purpose, but I think where we're missing the message is that that yellow light means – there's no question that students are going to be getting on or off of that bus very shortly – you need to proceed in a cautious manner than you would at a street corner, where potentially there is

probably nobody going to cross the road. You know with certainty we're going to be in a situation that's dangerous.

I don't pretend to be able to speak as an expert on highway traffic safety, or why there is yellow lights, and why there's red lights, but what I have heard is that the ambers are intended to give the travelling public advance forewarning that the reds are coming and they need to be treated as the front end of a red light, not something to hit the gas pedal over.

I think every law that you read on yellow lights tells you to slow down and proceed with caution. Nowhere does it say speed up so that you can get through before the red light flips on.

Mr. McIsaac: Chair, but I would like to debate you on that because red means stop.

Unidentified Voice: Red means stop.

Mr. McIsaac: Some people don't know what yellow means apparently and I think if you relate it to the street corner – well you might end up with a fender bender, but if you end up with a little bit of a hit here – this is serious. You are talking about flesh on bumper and it's a serious issue.

A question I had, it had to do with – I know in my riding in the Mount Mellick area – Catherine likely knows it well, there is three lane traffic, with what they call – I think – a suicide lane in the middle there. You can pass either way, as long as you get out first or whatever the law is, you know better Mr. Chair. But, kids are picked up on one side of the road – either picked up or dropped off by their gate in the morning and the evening, then they have to go across three way traffic. I know there have been some conditions made where the bus driver will drop them off farther down, which is not too bad, but even if they are dropped off to cross those three lines on a good day, versus a day when it's snowing or it's wet or something like that and it's terrible.

I notice in town, they have volunteers or people hired as crossing guards, so when kids are walking down the street, they'll go out and stop the traffic. This may be far out, but I think the children are really worth it. I know we have the deputy minister of

transportation here and he doesn't let his crew to go out to do any work on the road unless they have a flagger there.

Is it possible that we have a volunteer or senior or someone could travel – even on a trial basis – on this type of road – I'd love to have them on everything – so that before that child gets out and crosses the road, that flagger or whatever gets out with a stop sign, like they do in town, and say: hey, traffic stopped, it is stopped and now dear, you can go across.

But, we have to do something; maybe – I know the drivers themselves certainly have to do something, but we have to do something too, until we get the message out and we do not want to have an incident like they had in Indiana or anywhere. But can that be looked at? Or what can we do in an area like that? I know these parents are really, really concerned, as are all parents for their children, but, have we ever tried putting a crossing guard on a bus, or anything like that?

Catherine MacKinnon: No, not to date. Crossing guards in the Charlottetown area belongs to the City of Charlottetown – they are with the town. What we've done in many high areas, where it has been identified too, is we try to serve both sides of the roadway now. Reluctant to some parents, because that means that the children are on the bus a few extra minutes and the bus then has to go down and find a turning location and come back up and service it. It has worked in the St. Peter's area, Trans-Canada, certain areas out here in the Mount Herbert area that it's working.

Dave Gillis: Just to add to that. The Public Schools Branch is also attached with operating efficient transportation and nothing trumps safety, that is not what I'm suggesting at all, but one of the current topics that we are trying to address is time aboard school buses.

In the example in Albany, for example, part of our solution to that is sending the bus on both sides on a go-forward basis. But, that's going to mean additional travel time on the buses for those students. Now in that situation, it's not as big a deal, it is not very many minutes, but to try to do the same thing in Ellerslie, trying to get kids to

Westisle, you may be putting that kid on a bus for the better part of an hour or a half or two hours in order to travel that entire highway on both sides of the road. So, we are balancing that. Nothing trumps safety – that will always be the number one, but it sometimes is contrary to some of the other initiatives that were attached to it as well.

Catherine MacKinnon: We're also in partnership, very well, with the transportation infrastructure and energy traffic engineers that go out and do site distance for us and they determine whether or not there is road signage. We've been asking highway safety to consider new signage – new and improved. We've had one installed a year ago or maybe two years now, in the Western portion with a flashing light that was bringing attention to that particular area. So, if it's something like that, that we need to explore, in our higher areas to bring more attention, we have the signs out indicating a different speed. Maybe there is something that will say: do not pass through red lights periodically move it around to the different sections. That's just an option that we've been exploring.

Chair: MLA McIssac.

Mr. McIsaac: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Just a final comment. Again, I just want to put kudos out to the bus drivers because I know in speaking to some of them, they have a lot of stress on them. Just to stop on the side of the road and you let that child out to cross, I mean, it weighs heavy on you, and on a bus driver. Kudos to the work they do because we need them. But we, in the driving public, have to do a better job of what we are doing. I don't know. I'd look at getting rid of the yellow lights. I'd put on the reds or whatever we can do. We are going to hear another presentation later with another idea, that's terrific.

But thanks for the presentation and I hope that the driving public can do a better job.

Chair: MLA Murphy, or sorry, minister Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: Thanks for the presentation.

I'm really glad to hear that the emphasis is more on prevention than after the fact. That's what we need when there's an injured or dead child laying on the road. It don't matter how many cameras are on the buses, and that's what we have to try to prevent.

I'm just wondering too, there's 14,000 plus stops. How many of those stops would a child have to – and you've already touched on it a bit there earlier– but how many of those would require a child to cross the highway? Is that a number that you would have readily?

Catherine MacKinnon: I wouldn't have that, but we could certainly get it for you.

Mr. Murphy: I'm just wondering, too, the 130 incidents and I know it's all part of the big puzzle, charging after the fact, it helps create the awareness of the whole issue. But that ratio seems to be way out of whack – 130 incidents and only 12 charges laid. I mean, there's something wrong there. And we heard from a RCMP officer here, and I forget what his name was now, on this particular incident, and he indicated to us that it was up to the officer's discretion.

I'm wondering, is that something that we should do away with? Do we make it more black and white, that there is no room for discretion on the charging officer? If you go through the lights – you get charged.

Dave Gillis: We have heard the anecdotal stories– and I'll share one or two with you. But we've heard the stories where the bus driver knew the person that went through the red lights because they lived in the same community as them, made the report, RCMP officer showed up at their door, had the conversation. Went back to the bus driver and said: I had the conversation; they knew what they did was wrong, they were very sorry, they'll never do it again, but they can't afford a \$1,000 fine, so we're not going to charge them in this situation.

Those types of story exist, they do have discretion, it's my understanding, to charge or not to charge. The black and white approach – I think it has its pros and cons, and certainly worthy of debate, but right now the discretion does – there is some discretion in the hands of the RCMP officers. I think it is a contributing factor to

the number of convictions that we are seeing. But, I think it's only just a contributing factor, I think there are other factors involved.

Mr. Murphy: Alright, just a –

Chair: Minister Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: – couple of maybe suggestions.

I seen on Facebook, actually, where down in some of the states where the driver took it upon himself to basically straddle the yellow lines, it make it almost physically impossible for a vehicle to get by it in either direction. Is that something that could legally be done here? Or, is it something that you guys could recommend could happen on some streets?

Catherine MacKinnon: It's not legal to do here at the present time. The bus must remain in the travel portion of the road. It must not block or enter into the other opposing lane.

Mr. Murphy: Another thing, and this is a bit of a suggestion too, is there any thought to – I know with heavy equipment or trucks or whatever they have, an audio, a beeper or whatever on the – is that something that might help grab the attention of oncoming traffic? Like when the bus stops, the lights activate and then there's some kind of audio sound that's made too? I don't know if it would or not just trying to think outside the box.

Dave Gillis: It's certainly possible and we appreciate the suggestions don't take our unknowing to mean that we are contrary to a suggestion, the more the merrier.

Again, it speaks to the scope of the issue that we are looking for a best practice that's out there and I have yet to see any jurisdiction that would stand up and say: we've got the solution and here it is. I think things like that potentially may have some merit, provided that driver coming had their radio down or wasn't on their phone or wasn't paying attention to the situation but I can't speak to whether something –

Mr. Murphy: It would be great if they could – if there's some way when the red

lights were activated that it could disable their cell phone –

Dave Gillis: That would be great if they could when (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct) to solve that issue.

Dave Gillis: (Indistinct)

Mr. Murphy: One more suggestion and maybe it's already happening, but the driver's education classes, is there a real big emphasis put on this particular incident of passing flashing lights?

Dave Gillis: We don't teach driver's education from a Public Schools Branch perspective, it's a private initiative – private companies do that. I can't speak to what is taught or what is not and what is emphasized. We do encourage all students to take driver's education and we do advocate strongly for this to be a key component of it, but we're not in a position to be able to dictate: thou shalt have this as a chapter in your book to teach.

Back to a previous point I made, I have yet to encounter anyone who said: I didn't know I wasn't supposed to go through the red lights.

Mr. Murphy: Exactly. It's distracted drivers mostly.

Dave Gillis: Yeah. I do know that the Highway Safety branch has modified – updated their testing such that more of it is around school bus safety. That component of the test, if you don't get that right, you fail the entire test which is a big step in the right direction but I'll get them to speak more to the details on that but I think we are seeing some movement in the right direction from some of our partners on this.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you.

Chair: Minister Mundy.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you Chair and thank you Dave and Catherine for coming in and sharing your information with us.

It is an important topic, something I shared with my colleagues during the last

presentation is (Indistinct) former life I was a bus driver myself. I have some intimate knowledge of what goes on on a bus and what a bus driver feels every time he or she flips that red light. You're hoping for the best and that's not a good feeling.

As a parent, just last year my daughter was on her way to work and she had stopped when she saw the buses yellow lights flashing, she'd stopped but the car behind her decided he was going to speed through it and he rammed right into her.

So, again, I've got that intimate knowledge on both issues. I'm glad to hear that the topic is front and foremost on a lot of peoples mind right now and I think – I'm glad to see the media here covering it today because I do think we need to hear more about people talking about it rather than an incident like happened in Indiana, or even a couple of weeks ago, the near miss here on Prince Edward Island. We don't need to be hearing those reports, we need to be hearing about how our communities are coming together to prevent these incidents from happening.

You mentioned hot-spots on the Island such as Trans-Canada and when you identify these hot-spots, you usually call enforcement in and they come and they have a presence there and the incidents go down a bit during that time, but then when the police presence leaves, do you see it go back up again? Is that –

Catherine MacKinnon: It can go back up again. Particularly, I'm thinking out at the Canavoy stretch there, we had several days of police presence and there has been one or two incidents that the bus driver was able to file a report where they went through, but that's the last I heard of that particular area.

Ms. Mundy: So in absence I guess, of a police presence there – and I know with transportation, infrastructure and energy, when they have roadwork going on they sometimes have those road signs. Have we ever looked at having those kind of flashing road signs installed around areas where those hot-spots might be, to have that ever present presence rather than having to rely on police to enforce the area?

Catherine MacKinnon: And that is part of our discussions with Highway Safety –

Ms. Mundy: Okay.

Catherine MacKinnon: – to see. Again we have a number of school bus signage: stop ahead, throughout the province and hopefully working together – many of them are not valid anymore, they need to be removed and refreshed with a newer and a brighter approach to the signs. So we're working with them too, to have them removed and installed in the areas as needed.

Ms. Mundy: Yeah, I have a few and I'm going to be all over the place here for a little bit. So, we have 14,369 stops: how do you choose those bus stops? And are they reviewed? Do we know they are in the safest possible place or is there annual review or how do you –

Catherine MacKinnon: We have adapted a practical guide to safe bus stops in our boards and in the Public Schools Branch. We ask the drivers to identify if they're having any issues or concerns, potential dangers of a particular stop.

The review itself is just ongoing all the time. With children moving in and moving out again, those stops – the driver will quickly make aware to the Public Schools Branch that there's a concern, or it's on a hill, or it's on the steep of a hill, or whatever, so they are certainly being reviewed. If there are any questions in the sight distance as mentioned before, we certainly call upon the traffic engineers to go out and do the measurements and they determine the signage.

Ms. Mundy: So in the case like we heard a few weeks ago where the white Jeep Cherokee almost struck a child, are we having a review of that location as well?

Catherine MacKinnon: Yes we are.

Ms. Mundy: Yes we do okay. Okay that's good to hear.

We talk a lot – some of the recommendations you know were education awareness and enforcement and fines, but those are things that we see at the beginning

of every year. We have a huge push on public awareness: the buses are going to be back out on the road again, children are back in school. We hear it on the radio, we see it in the paper, we see it on TV. Enforcement, you see police stepping up enforcement. As indicated, I think MLA MacKay mentioned: we have the highest fines in the country. Still, it appears that every year we have on average 130 reports. So the trend doesn't seem – it seems what we're doing right now isn't working, right? It's not.

We're doing a great job of getting the word out and we're spending a lot of money doing it, but we still every year, it seems we have 130 reports each and every year. So, I think we need to – the recommendations that we need to continue to do this – absolutely, but I think we need to be doing something more. I liked what you said about engaging the public and that it's not just a solution that you're going to come up with on your own.

So, have you thought about reaching out to the public, having some kind of a public campaign to engage the communities on what their suggestions are? Because there's a lot of smart people on Prince Edward Island and some really creative ideas so would that be something that you might look at doing? Do you have a solution, is there someone out there who has a solution from their kitchen table that might help us with preventing. Again, the cameras and the fines, that's all after the fact, but a child could be dead after the fact, so we need to prevent it.

I would like to see and I wonder if there would be any interest in having some kind of a public campaign out there to see if anybody has an idea and if we do any kind of jurisdictional scans to look at what other communities are doing or countries are doing. Is everybody in the same boat? Does everybody have the big yellow bus? Maybe the time of the big yellow bus is over and done. Is the big yellow bus – do we just not see it anymore? Because we get so used to seeing it on the road that we don't see it anymore?

I know as a bus driver there were three incidents where somebody almost went through my lights and I laid on the horn and they stopped, and I actually leaned out the window and I said: What were you doing?

And they said: I didn't see you. We say it's a big yellow bus and how can you not miss it? But people miss it and people drive through it.

So the idea that – and I'll give an example, and the MLA here doesn't like this example I use, but I drive back and forth from Summerside to Charlottetown every day, and I must pass a dozen farms on my route, but I see them so often that I don't see the cows anymore; but if you dropped a purple cow or you dropped a polka-dot cow or something in a field, I'd probably pull over at the side of the road and I'd stop to look at it.

So maybe we need to look at the bus itself. Maybe people don't need to see it anymore. Maybe it's time for, you know, we wrap the bus in something different, we have a different colour, I don't know; but the idea that we're still just going forward and saying it's education, awareness and enforcement, I don't think it's getting us where we need to be. I think we need to look beyond that.

The idea of crossing guards on the bus – maybe, but I look at even Charlottetown here – which I thought was a great idea – at crosswalks they have those orange flags at each crosswalk. Is that something we could install? I know it's 14,000 stops, but again, I think that's thinking more creative and it's thinking outside the box and it's thinking, again, prevention rather than cameras and fines, which is after the fact.

I don't envy what you do, because you have thousands of little lives in your hands each and every day. I respect the work you do. You're doing a wonderful job, and even the fact that you're here to listen to us rant and rave and listen to whatever ideas we have, I appreciate that. So, (Indistinct)

Catherine MacKinnon: Thank you.

I do believe that the message is that we need to change the driving habits and the behaviours out there somehow.

Chair: MLA Compton.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair, and thank you Catherine and Dave for coming in.

You're both well aware that there was an incident in my district just Tuesday, and I want to thank both the departments for getting back to me so quickly. I reached out to both ministers that evening and they got back to me right away, as did the deputy and a number of employees with the departments.

We talked about hot spots. The Dover Road's not really a hot spot, I wouldn't think, but as you know this has happened twice this fall at the same location. So it is a huge concern, and I appreciate the work that you're doing, but I know myself when I got the call from the constituent, I felt at a loss as to what I could do to make a difference.

We talk about thinking outside the box and I'm going to chime in with Minister Mundy and say that as legislators I think that government – I will push government to come up with a new campaign for education awareness and enforcement. Maybe it needs to be a front license plate again. Maybe it needs to be thinking outside the box. Maybe it needs to be a stricter fine.

And you know, here are the steps: This is the education, this is what we're going to do, we're making you aware of it, and we're going to enforce it, and maybe this fall there will be a campaign, or next spring, to ensure that we look at everything, and I'll push government to do that.

The stop-arm violation report, I know there was one filed about Tuesday and I know there was one filed before. Can you explain a little bit more about what happens? That obviously went to the RCMP, but there didn't seem to be anything done.

Again, I don't know, we won't speak to this particular incident, but in general, where is the follow-up, and are the parents of the child who almost got hit, are they made aware as to the follow-up and what is the process there?

Catherine MacKinnon: Well, the process is that once the driver files his report, or her report, it's sent down to the proper detachment immediately. It's left then between the officer on the case and with the driver. Many drivers have to go in to make a statement.

So we, as the school branch, we very seldom get a response or a report back from the appropriate detachment. We're hearing it in the news as well, or they laid a charge or whatever; but in that case, there were two incidents down on the Dover Road and they were both reported and action was taken.

Ms. Compton: I'm just wondering: We talked about the fines aren't working, and from what we hear, 12 charges out of 130 again, pushing the departments as to how we can make a difference with that and I think it's a multi-faceted approach.

I know in this particular case there is going to be a sign put up either this week or next in the westbound direction and that's great, but I still feel that there's more work to be done, and like you say, what is the right answer? So I'll come back to fact that we do need a campaign of some sort and stricter fines, or as MLA MacKay said, you'd lose your license. I think when it comes to the life of a child, no amount is too much.

But again, preventative focus and the need for more convictions, and how we work with – because it is a criminal conviction, does it become more like impaired driving and the way that that's treated. Maybe that's something that we as legislators need to look at.

I just want to thank you for the work that you're doing for my constituent, and for my area, and we look to hear more.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you.

MLA Fox, just a quick question and then I'll be going to MLA Bell.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

When we listen to what Alan said and Tina said and Pat said, then going over, of course, to Darlene, have we looked at a strong social media campaign? Because I know, as government, we see campaigns on there or ads by government on Facebook and stuff like that in regards to funding announcements or this program or that program, so I think it's – statistically, I think 80% of all people use a smart phone or some kind of tablet device, so maybe we need to

look at a really strong graphic, education-booster post on Facebook and media. You see them all the time, right? So maybe we should explore that possibility – suggestion.

Dave Gillis: It certainly is a positive suggestion, and you're right, the social media seems to be – well, it's the way of the world and the way of the future, so absolutely we'll be taking that back to the committee.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: MLA Bell.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

I don't have a huge amount of (Indistinct) and I think everybody has mentioned most of the key points. I have a quick question for you. I'm getting from this we have the need for a zero-tolerance approach. It brings to mind the public campaign that had great effect with Mothers Against Drunk Driving that actually changed what is socially acceptable.

Distracted driving is something that we've talked about as sort of that's the way things are, but obviously this is the worst case scenario and so there is a piece in here where we have to stop saying that's the way it is and actually make this socially unacceptable.

And that's not something that you can – like you said, there is no quick solution, as much as we have so many great pieces of input. So we have that zero tolerance education requirements and then the physical tools of prevention: arms on buses and lights and so on, and then the outcome in the worst case scenario.

What do you need to make those things happen? Because we've heard all these amazing ideas today, and there's a lot of things, but we have that opportunity in this committee. What do you feel you need as a department to address some of those challenges? Because this is something that requires some support.

Dave Gillis: It absolutely does. Again, I don't pretend to know what that silver bullet is that's going to make it all go away, but I think one thing right out of the gate: We

need everyone to understand and recognize the severity of the issue. I think people aren't quite in tune with how serious it is to go through a set of school bus lights.

Second thing I need, I think we need, is buy-in from all the other community partners that this is an issue worthy of their time, support, money and effort, and it's not something the Public Schools Branch is going to fix. It's not something justice is going to fix. It's not something highway safety, on their own, is going to fix. It's going to take that cumulative effort from us all, pulling in the same direction to see improvement in this area.

Again, there's the unknown factor. You're never going to be able to prevent that impaired driver with an educational campaign. The distracted driving piece, I think there's miles of work that can be done, and from everyone's perspective there's value in doing that. Again, it's the recognition of the problem, and a willingness from society at large to support moving toward a solution for it.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

All right, so lots of work to do but thank you, Chair, for the opportunity.

Thanks for the presentation.

Dave Gillis: You're welcome.

Chair: Thank you.

Just a couple of quick notes, and I may have a question myself.

Dave Gillis: Sure.

Chair: One of the things that I noticed has been consistent over the last number of meetings is that we've probably had three or four MLAs that have all said that a front plate would be a good place to start. There have been some great ideas that have come forth, and I think we certainly look forward to coming back from this committee with some recommendations being brought into the Legislature on this.

I just want to confirm that in your statistics that you gather, or in the conversations that you have, that the biggest issue is oncoming

traffic. Not so much the people that are coming from – they seem to get it with the bus right in their face – it's the oncoming traffic where the greatest issue is?

Dave Gillis: Yeah, and I don't want to mitigate or trivialize or minimize the issue of drivers coming up from behind because that is still a factor. But, of the 130 reports that we see, the majority are oncoming traffic. We still have folks that are coming up from behind and maybe five minutes late for an appointment and are frustrated with the bus stopping every so often and they go through. But the majority of what we are seeing is on the oncoming traffic.

Chair: I know there was a lot of conversation around the amber light, and I know my member colleague from here will support me on this – amber light means get ready to stop. That's clear as a bell, that's what it means. Get ready to stop. It doesn't mean anything else.

In your presentation, you talked about prevention and community partners encouraging the travelling public. You know, we probably have two people in the room here today who have an opportunity to have the tremendous impact on the message that you're trying to get across to the public. I'm just curious whether or not you partner with all forms of media to try – and I don't mean just call them up and say: listen, we'd like to do a story. But I mean partnering with them in a relationship as you might have with your local police department, or getting all that information out into the doctor's offices.

Have you approached them in that manner as opposed to just getting a quick story out? It's fall, we should get something on television about it. If you noticed lately, they're doing a continuous service waves of change around a particular issue here on Prince Edward Island and I couldn't help but draw that analogy to how important this issue is to Prince Edward Island to families and approach them – Can we do something similar to that? Where it's not just; you know what? It's on the news on Wednesday night, but that there is a continuous movement on that. That's a change we need that's just as important.

So, I'm wondering, have you approached them with that kind of thought?

Dave Gillis: The relationship has also been there by way of CBC and other media sites being very good at reporting what we've asked them to report if we have a public service announcement, those types of things. But, you're speaking about next-level relationships, and I don't think we broached that piece yet. Although, we certainly would be in favour of as many people being onside as possible with regard with this to get the word out and to share it.

Chair: I don't mean it has to be every night. But, once a week, we're doing a story—

Dave Gillis: An update —

Chair: — to continually update and grow and those sorts of things. I think it's safe to say that every person that's in this room in here wants to see things improved with respect to school buses. I'm not so sure that in all the years that we've been trying to promote bus safety that the word is getting out. It gets out for a couple of days and then everybody is back in the routine. It's a month into school and nobody is talking about: Look out; the kids are going to be out on the road tomorrow, that sort of thing. It's a tough fix. When we look at North America as an example, there is no fix in Canada, and after we've seen that's taken place in Indiana, its apparent there is not much of a fix there, in that country either.

I think as long as we have this in the forefront — all of us — of our thoughts, that that is what we want to try and slow that down.

I know that in my former career, unfortunately, I had the opportunity to be responding to a call, I was only two minutes away, and it was a 13-year-old girl who was hit by a school bus, so I was there within minutes. My heart was probably pounding harder during on that than at most other times in my career. To top it off, when I got there, it was my supervisor's daughter.

So, I know what it's like to get that call and answer that call, and to be there. I don't think it's anything that anybody wants to have the opportunity to experience.

With that, I want to thank you. I'll make this statement, and I think I may have made it last time, I'm not sure. I'd like to see it that when that stop sign comes out, that there is some sort of a laser on it, and that the first car that goes by, somewhere on the side of the bus, it blasts out a piece of paint that going to hit the vehicle that just went through about that big. And everybody will know what you just did. Kind of extravagant and kind of out there, but you know what? I think we need to start thinking way outside. But I do agree that it's too late if somebody gets hit. It's after the fact, so I am all in favour of everything that we could possibly do up on the front head of that, to prevent that from anything happening.

MLA Fox, you had a question.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair, just a quick question.

Who sits on this red light committee?

Catherine MacKinnon: We've had representatives from the justice, as well as the different detachments, home and school, school bus drivers, JVI, commercial course, many department (Indistinct) of that kind.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Okay, if there are no other questions, I would certainly like to thank you both very much; a very informative presentation. Thank you for taking the time and the patience to answer all the questions that were asked here today. I certainly applaud you for the work that I know that you are doing, going forward. I understand that there are also discussions going on with the Chief's of Police and the bus drivers and that they are working towards a comprehensive plan to try and help eliminate people passing school buses. It is great to see the effort of that end as well.

I want to thank you both, again, very much for coming in to speak to our committee today. So, with that, I would like to take about a three minutes break, so that we can get ready on our audio visual for our next presenters.

Unidentified Voice: Thank you.

Chair: Okay, we'll resume this committee meeting on infrastructure and energy.

Now I'd like to welcome Dan MacDonald and Wayne Ellsworth from MacWorth Industries regarding a highway safety prevention bar that you've invented and are looking at possibly putting on school buses.

With that, I'll turn it over to you to go ahead with your presentation.

Wayne Ellsworth: Okay.

Dan MacDonald: Good afternoon everyone. I'm Dan MacDonald.

Wayne Ellsworth: And I'm Wayne Ellsworth.

We are MacWorth Industries. We formed MacWorth Industries back in September 15th, 2016. Both Dan and myself were inventors of the Highway Safety Prevention Bar. Our goal today is to have our product viewed by the committee and to be able to come together to help us move forward to have this put on.

Dan MacDonald: First of all, I'd like to thank you all for inviting us here today to talk on such an important issue that's happening in our province and across the country.

Something I just want to mention there: Our company is a recipient of the 2017 Innovation PEI Ignition Fund Award, and we are very happy that we won that last year. We thank Innovation PEI for helping us out throughout the whole process.

Before we get into the presentation, we're just going to share a little bit about ourselves.

Myself, I've owned The Cooperators now seven years up in West Prince. I have two locations. I've been 15 years in the financial services and insurance industry, and I currently employ six people.

Wayne Ellsworth: Myself, Wayne, owner/operator of a business in West Prince as an entrepreneur: six years as owner; 28 years specializing in sales and retail. We're the best in the west.

Dan MacDonald: Ideas around safety: If you look at this diagram here, this picture, it shows you all the most dangerous zones of a school bus. You see the most dangerous zones are at the front and at the back, and as well as from the side impact of a school bus.

What we're trying to do is prevent any illegal passing happening, and that's happening straight across the province. It was mentioned earlier in the last presentation, that arm that swings open in front of the school bus, that was actually developed 20 years ago by a police officer; and the reason why he invented that product was because a student was actually run over by a school bus driver. Now that arm swings open so it gives the school bus driver a visual of a child passing the road.

We're trying to bring that awareness at the back of the school bus as well, because illegal passing is happening way too often. On a school bus there's visual awareness all over it. You talked about reflective tape. You talked about new LED lights. You got the little stop arm at the front and now at the back. You also have the arm at the front. So why not try and put an arm at the back as well? Because we want to raise not just visual awareness, we want to raise a physical awareness as well, so people will know there's a barrier in case they try to make an illegal pass.

Facts about some school bus safety: We talked about the facts that were here today, close to 140 violations – or passings, I'm sorry – but in North America alone there are actually 85,000 school buses that get passed every single day. This has been a study that was designed there back in 2017.

Images below: Quite frankly, I don't know if it's the answer because it's still going on. The stop sign here that you see is a visual awareness, and it doesn't seem to be working. The stop sign at the back, yes, they were put on last year on some of the buses; but again, read in the minutes last month that the bus driver MacKinnon said that it worked for maybe a month or so but then people just went on their merry way.

This arm here, we were well aware of this when we invented our product. Of course, we had to look into patents and things that are similar. We're well aware this is not

new, and, getting back to that back arm, this picture was taken 2007. This arm that comes out here, again, it's not a new thing, but from our recent research and from what actually was mentioned in the last meeting, these extensions are a heavyweight construction. There's malfunctioning happening in the actual arm itself, the stop sign. So why have a bus be in for repair? It should be out on the road. And we truly believe that we got something that can help prevent that.

So getting into the technical side of our project, I'm going to have Wayne, pass it over to Wayne, and he's going to share some information on that.

Wayne Ellsworth: So where it came about for me, like a lot of you folks here, is you have kids in school and to-and-from school Monday to Friday.

I had a brother. I live in rural PEI, up Nail Pond along rural PEI, so not a lot of traffic, but he was getting off the front of the bus, and a driver from behind passed. Only for him being a fast runner, he wouldn't be here today.

But like a lot of kids, they're not aware of what goes on once they get outside the bus. They're assuming that everybody is going to abide by the law. He seen the open lane, his gateway, and he ran across like everybody else. With the noise of the buses and stuff like that, there're a lot of distractions for a kid.

On the way to work, here a couple of years ago, behind these big yellow school buses that a lot of people see as an annoyance, and what was talked about a while ago, if you're 5-10 minutes late, your urged to pass. So I had seen this car, inching, trying to get around the back of the bus when it was fully stopped. I was well aware of it and there was horns going, not just mine.

So when I got to work, I had told Dan – we worked in the same area – and I was like: This is what I witnessed we got to come up with something to be able to stop that. From a driver's point of view, sitting in a car or a truck, middle of the windshield, eye height is where the awareness, that's where they put that warning sign \$5,000, eight demerit points.

So in my shop one night, I made prototype number one. We thought it was a good idea. Prototype number two we're getting a little more serious with it. When Dan goes to the next slide, you'll see the prototype that we currently are working on now.

Without altering the bus' structure or removing anything, we're adding a piece of safety feature. This is the, we're going to say, the internal part of it. The housing is not on it here, you'll see it in the pictures coming up of it completely with the shroud. That's in the extended version. The tube is made of Lexan, lightweight materials, strong. Inside the tubing is going to be your strobing LED high-visible flashing bar, forward and reverse. We have the added sign on the outside part which is sticking into the passing lane. If you look closely towards the bumper where it exits the yellow diagram in behind, it's another safety added feature that if somebody does strike it, it's a foldaway hinge that allows that extra – if they do decide to hit it we were looking at safety in mind.

This is actually actuated by air and/or electric. We're still in the development stages because of our conditions here on PEI. We could have three seasons in one day. It could be plus 12, zero, minus 20. So with those conditions has bearing on being air. We're currently working with AKA, with their engineering team. They've got electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, so we're working to finalize our prototype.

Dan MacDonald: As you see, we all know parents are speaking out and these are just some screenshots we took there. If you look down at the bottom, I think a six-foot 2x4 attached to the rear sign would be a deterrent. That's kind of like what we're doing, and one of you mentioned that bringing it out to the public community about ideas. This was mentioned in the news too. Prevention is better than punishment.

Again, it's been in the news and it's just something that we're all here today trying to prevent. I liked what I heard with the last presenters. I truly think that we all need to come together as a province, as communities, as businesses and work on the whole round circle of this like MLA MacKay said.

If we look here this is actually – we made some connections there with Wilfred MacDonald, he's the fleet manager of the school buses here on PEI and he was kind enough to allow us to work on the school bus during the summer months.

This is actually our unit installed on the back of a school bus. Our lead and mechanical engineer on this was Tom Haan. I don't know if some of you are familiar with Tom, but Tom is a very intelligent man. He helped us a tremendous deal on this project. So this is outside of his shop and unfortunately we don't have our license to drive a school bus so we couldn't legally take it out onto the road itself, as much as we really wanted to.

You see, the actual unit deployed and again, there are lights on the stop sign, it's just not on this stop sign. We were rushed in the phase to get this ready because we wanted to present it actually before school started in 2018, but we never got the chance to do so.

As I said, it retracts six and a half feet out, more or less – I have a video here that I'd like to share. So this, Wayne maybe you can –

Wayne Ellsworth: Yeah so, we have our shop guy Nigel, he's deploying it there by a remote handheld device. As you can see the device, it runs off the school buses air system and it actually (Indistinct)

With the LED lights we felt that they were going to be high visibility, two in the front – without robbing the buses power. Above the stop sign, I just want to make it aware if Dan can stop it right there – there is a clear portion of it – that's fine. There's a clear portion where we are hoping that – install our cameras.

The cameras, we've been in touch with Sony. They have a very high quality camera, the size of a key. There is different technology that they use that can be put and used in low lit areas.

One thing with our unit, as it retracts into its housing, the unit itself is safe from travelling debris, snow, salt, dirt and everything, when it's travelling up and down our highways. When it deploys there's – we're working on a self-cleaning unit to allow the unit as it goes in to make sure that when the camera

does come out it automatically – the camera actually takes a video.

Dan can talk more on the video camera part.

Dan MacDonald: So currently, on what's on a lot of devices today, even our cell phones, it's called a CMOS imagery, CMOS scanning it's called. It has what's called rolling shutters, right? And what a rolling shutter does is – I don't know if you ever try to videotape a fast moving object. A lot of it's, whenever you're videotaping it – like say a propeller – it's getting a blurred shape, you're getting that 's' shape. Same if you flick a nickel and the nickel's spinning, you take a picture of it, it's not fast enough because it's not as high quality as it needs to be.

Same thing with guitar strings if you were ever to videotape or take pictures of guitar strings, just the frequency – it's too fast for that CMOS camera imagery that is in most cameras today. Actually, I think on some school buses, there is CCD imagery and that means, if you were to take a light, a picture and the car lights are on, you can see the image of the lights shining up. That's no sense right there, that's absolutely no sense.

You need to go over to the CMOS imagery – which if they were to snap a picture – it washes away that glare from the lights it washes away the glare from the sun. I read in the minutes once that there was a picture that was taken at 10:00 a.m. in the morning that looked like it was 10:00 p.m. at night.

This CMOS imagery that's in these cameras like our phone, that wouldn't happen. But again, this new product called 'global shutter' that will take away – if you were to take a picture of a propeller – you're going to get that picture.

You're going to take a picture of a train flying by it's going to be a clear picture; it's not going to be a blurred vision.

And again, getting back to our cameras, it ignites when it comes out and it shuts off when it comes in. To be honest with you, we're going to videotape it; we're not just going to snap the picture, we're going to videotape it and then break it down into frames. Mark our word – if we videotape someone passing a school bus, we're going

to advertise that and it would be public knowledge and we're going to catch the person that's making that illegal pass. We're going to break it down with a video and we're going to break it down into frames.

So if we look here, our product currently right now is with Aspin Kemp and Associates and we're looking at seeing what can be done for mass production of these because we do know there's currently 300 buses here on PEI. But if we do get interest and we do have an order placed on these we want to be able to provide our product.

We have had interest from neighboring provinces, Nova Scotia and also interest in Alberta. But we would really like to have this started in our backyard in PEI and because we made it PEI, we want our business to be in PEI and we want to save lives in PEI.

Again, this is the little camera, it's the size of a key and it's very high tech and it's something that, I think, needs to be upgraded on school buses. We talked about prevention, yet again, we're raising a visual awareness and we're also raising a physical awareness. That way, if a motorist does make an illegal pass, we're going to catch them in the action.

It was mentioned earlier, to bring it up to 50% – to make illegal passing stop here on PEI – we would like to get that number closer to 100%. I know it might not be that possible to get to 100%, but it would be nice to shave that down to up to about 80%, 90%, 95%.

Wayne Ellsworth: MacWorth Industries, we'd like to develop a new business here on PEI, as a lot of entrepreneurs and businesses, we'd like to be a profitable business, a taxpaying business to generate tax back into the economy.

Not only creating jobs – our motto is to think twice. We want to be able to save lives; we think that through the economy and help with our government and our partners here today, that we can move on to the next phase.

With things that go on in government, in projects, in businesses, funding is going to have to be there for us to go to the next

phase. Again, we're working on the final product that we can have tested throughout our winter months on the buses as a pilot project and maybe we can pick the hot-spots to try them out and gather feedback and bring it back to AKA and see what's working, what's not working onto it and build from there.

Dan MacDonald: Again, our purpose is to add one more piece of added extra safety to all school buses here on PEI, Canada and even internationally. Yet again, it'll protect the loading and unloading of our children which is our most precious cargo. It will give parents an added piece of mind that their child will be safe while in transit to their school buses. Again, we're just trying to simplify the existing safety.

Our final thought: students are far safer in school buses, but when they're outside the bus, they're more vulnerable to injury or death.

Any driver who passes a stopped school bus illegally is endangering children and possibly, even his or her own future. So try and save a few seconds on passing a school bus and hitting a child can be devastating, not only for the victims and for their families, but also for the motorists who have to live with the sad consequences for the rest of their life.

Wayne Ellsworth: So again, being proactive and preventative maintenance, the old saying goes like: an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. So, being proactive and having that prevention, it could stop a lot of extra resources to try and chase down the driver or trying to convict them, which in turn, costs time and money.

So, if we can invest in being proactive in preventative maintenance – and it's not just a stop sign, it's a child's life and if it saves one kid's life it's worth it. You can't put a price on a life, but you can put a price on a piece of aluminum on a bumper.

So in closing, we'd like to thank you and our motto is: Always at MacWorth Industries, is to think twice.

Dan MacDonald: We want everyone to think twice before stopping a school bus, and again, that's something that we're going

to continue going forward with, so thank you.

Wayne Ellsworth: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair: Thank you very much.

I have a list of a few people with questions here already.

MLA McIsaac.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much.

It's great to see people, innovators certainly, taking on this topic because earlier today we had quite a discussion on it too. It's certainly worthwhile.

There's another saying that says: Look both ways. You teach your kids to look both ways before you cross the street. Does your item look both ways or just from behind? Because we heard from Dave last time that a lot of problem is with people coming to meet the bus. So can you put a camera both ways?

Dan MacDonald: That video camera is aimed both ways at all times, so as soon as it's ignited it's videotaping straight ahead and it's high definition. This is high, high quality. It's more quality than your HD television at home and it's videotaping as soon as it opens looking forward and as well, looking back. There are two separate lenses there.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay, I didn't see that. Like the saying goes, I was hoping it would look both ways, but I didn't hear that.

Dan MacDonald: Yeah, no it does.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay, super.

Thank you.

Dan MacDonald: They are actually currently using it Minnesota and it's working tremendously. This company in the states that I've been talking to, and they know it's an ongoing issue, not just here, it's everywhere. To integrate that into something that we have – in the beginning it just started out with the bar, but adding – just

brainstorming ideas like hon. Mundy there, as a community and thinking of stuff, the video camera came into play. So yes, it can film both ways.

Chair: Thank you.

Minister Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks, guys, for the presentation. It's good to see some westerners down here in the city for a change, especially two great thinkers that are thinking outside the box and trying to solve an issue that we'd all like to see some positive resolution to.

I'm just wondering, is there – I have a couple of questions, actually. First, do you have a price figured out on this now, like what it would cost per bus, to put it on a bus? Or is that something that you're willing to divulge here today?

Wayne Ellsworth: Yeah, we can share some details.

When we started out with our projections and our business plan last year, we had a certain design. We had a certain price. So, to bill one unit, especially a prototype, is farfetched of what it's going to be. It's just a lot of research and development. There's a lot of changing. We're hoping that now we can kind of get this – our dart thrown towards the bullseye so we don't have to just tweak a few things.

But, where we would like to be would be between a \$5,000 and \$6,500 range per bus. That's ready to mount on. AKA, when we toured the facility they definitely had the capability of doing it, and they would do the manufacturing, assembling of these units, packaged ready to go to the school bus depot to have them put on; so, between \$5,000 and \$6,500 right now. As that number grows – I mean it's like supply and demand – if you go to the manufacturer and you get 20 units, they're going to charge you a certain price.

Mr. Murphy: More volume, better price.

Wayne Ellsworth: Or volume, so that's something we're trying to –

Dan MacDonald: And another thing that we're being promised is that it would be fail-proof – quality and control before it actually goes on any buses.

You mentioned there are 14,000 stops; this thing will be tested and opened 14,000 times. So, it's going to work the same way it worked on the first day of school and on the last day of school.

Mr. Murphy: Are you currently in talks with anybody in government? I know your – (Indistinct) company is here today. Is there willingness to do a pilot project within government?

Dan MacDonald: We've been in talks – as I said, we've attended a lot of government meetings and on economic development and Chris Palmer – before Chris Palmer was Heath MacDonald and Heath was the one who awarded us with this Innovation PEI award before he moved on.

We had conversations with our MLAs in the area, but all in all we are trying to get in the right direction. We're new to dealing with government. We wouldn't be the first ones to say that, but we've learned a lot in these last two years. We put in a lot of time and countless hours and a lot of money. We've invested \$35,000 already into this and because it costs money to do the engineering and the research and to finding the right components.

But in the meantime, we would love to sit down and actually talk to the people that will put us on the right path to come to some type of cooperation, some type of agreement, some type of deal. If we can get the help from you here at this standing committee, that would be absolutely fantastic.

Mr. Murphy: So you would be interested in doing some sort of a limited pilot program with the school buses (Indistinct)

Wayne Ellsworth: Absolutely.

Dan MacDonald: Absolutely. We're ready and prepared and you've got to give us a little bit of time, notice, but we're willing to do so. But again, we need the help and cooperation of our government.

Mr. Murphy: Thanks, guys. I think it's a great product.

Unidentified Voice: Thank you.

Chair: Minister Mundy.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you.

This excites me. This is exactly what I was talking about by engaging the community. Solutions don't have to come from government all the time. We have smart, clever Islanders out there that are engaged and they can come up with the solutions for us. I think this is brilliant. I think this is a start. I'd like to see you be able to fulfill and, maybe as MLA Murphy said, have some kind of a pilot.

I think it's just – actually it's just a start because I think we should reach out to – if you were coming to us, how many people are in their garages or in their barns or just at their computers figuring our solutions to every-day problems anyway? If we can put this out there to the broader community I think we'd be getting back an awful lot of solutions.

I thank you for persevering and for being innovative and bringing this to our attention. And again, to my colleagues here, I think this is the start of a bigger conversation that we need to have Island-wide, and it will keep the issue front and foremost of bus safety and school safety and children's safety. I think we need to really proceed with some kind of an awareness campaign and invite Islanders to come to the table with us and help us solve this problem because if you hadn't been here we wouldn't have known about you, right? And how many more of you are out there?

I really think we should take the lead on that and that should be one of the recommendations coming out of this committee.

I just had a comment but I do have one question. It shows it coming out of the back bumper. Does it come out of the front as well, or is it just out of the back?

Dan MacDonald: I'll just (Indistinct) it can. Again, that's just going to cost more money

Ms. Mundy: Cost, right.

Dan MacDonald: – and we're coming in with one unit.

So most definitely it can be put on the front, but we just thought at the time that the back would be the first focal point and again, when the idea came it wasn't just an idea that comes about that you sell on a shelf somewhere. This is actually saving lives; it's kids. As parents, it's a different type of idea.

When we took it to Innovation PEI in Alberton they said it was one of the best things that they saw come across the table in years and this is something that you should pursue, and we are. We're trying to pursue this and to see this actually on a bus school – we mentioned it before – if it saves a kid's life, it's worth it. If I see it on one school bus, all that time and energy that we put into this was worth it.

We run two well-organized businesses in West Prince. We give back to the community in West Prince like you wouldn't believe. We advertise for arenas. We sponsor events. We're always donating our own money and we want to see this be a bigger thing in West Prince and PEI, I'm sorry, and getting back to education. That's something on our focal point we would be – there was talks about Facebook – our business would raise that awareness campaign.

We would go into schools. We would talk about school bus safety. We would show them the safety of our device. We will not only tell the citizens of PEI to think twice, but teach our children to think twice as well.

Wayne, do you have anything to share on that?

Wayne Ellsworth: Yeah, well going back to school buses, when we started this device school buses was where it started, but we can see it branching off to RCMP vehicles. This unit would mount onto the back of the bumper. You see it on the news, where RCMP pull over and check the car in front and get struck. It's weird, there's a lot of distraction on the road. By creating that flashing light, and steady, highly-visible LED light, and having a bar, sometimes just mere seconds can save lives. It could go

onto RCMP vehicles, and it could go on department of transportation vehicles. It doesn't have to have a stop sign, it could have an arrow, it could say slow down. But when not in use, it would retract back into his bumper, front or back. So school buses are where the idea has spun from, but we can see that it can be used on department of transportation vehicles.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay, MLA MacKay.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair. And thank you Dan and Wayne for coming in for the presentation.

I've got four or five questions here. The first question, I guess, how long – the arm we've saw on the video – how long does it take for that arm to come out? How quickly does it come out?

Wayne Ellsworth: About two seconds.

Mr. MacKay: Two seconds.

Wayne Ellsworth: About two seconds. We have a solenoid and that's something we would have to talk to D250, which is a governing body for school buses. How fast would they want it? It's not what we want. We can make it go out as slow as we want, and come back in as slow as we want, but what is the right speed? So we can adjust the time lapses by what they would want.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Chair?

Chair: MLA MacKay.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

And out of the 300 buses, how long would it take to install those arms on the 300 buses, a timeframe?

Dan MacDonald: That's what we've been in talks there with the manufacturing facility in Montague. If we can come to an agreement soon, we would like to see this on every bus by 2019.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Dan MacDonald: Because it's, again, love to see a pilot project, but those passings

could be happening where our devices are not on.

It's 5,000 units and 300 buses – that is \$1.5 million. That's \$10 of every PEI citizen's tax-paying dollars to help contribute to saving a kid's life. And to be honest with you, I think the money is already there, I think it is in government. I have been to the meetings and we've talk about it. There are no new businesses starting up. We have money in the budget for economic development. Maybe I'm wrong, but it's just that this is something that we want to pursue and most definitely, we can get it on before the start of the 2019 school year.

Chair: MLA MacKay.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Obviously, you know, I think it's a great idea. I hope you can take some constructive criticism, though. One thing I notice, and this is just what I found from looking at the screen, is that that stop sign seems small. Can that stop sign be bigger and that system still work?

Dan MacDonald: We try to keep it as pinpoint to the size of the bumper itself because – if we can just go back into some pictures there – because we didn't want it hanging down below the bumper as well.

Chair: Could you go back to that, you just passed it there, could you go back? There.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, like, that's a big sign.

Unidentified Voice: That's a bigger sign.

Wayne Ellsworth: Yeah, when you see there, in perspective of our bodies here, that sign is about 12 inches. That tubing is about two and half inches. So in total, we've got about 15 inches. We didn't want to drag below the back of the bumper on the bus, so this unit – there was a few hurtles with this here. Not all school bus bumpers have the turn down exhaust; a lot of them have the ones that come out the back. We didn't want to interfere with that.

Our mechanical engineer tech, Tom, said that it would be nice to have a bumper. We contacted Wilfred, and Wilfred said: Sure, stop by. We had some conversation with

him, and he gave us a bumper. Tom built the stand for it for presentations and when he had the actual bumper, he started building everything around from it. The housing itself, we have to worry about the exit door at the back of the bus – that it couldn't interfere with that. We couldn't go up, so we had to stay just at the height of the bumper and actually, right now, we have a step where if you are ever exiting the bus as kid, there is going to be a safety tape that was never there, so you can actually use it as a step.

So, it does two things. It acts as a step, but the focus was to keep it harnessed and everything inside and keep out of the debris. There are a lot of things you see there on the picture. That spot above where the sign is, that's where we would like to see the cameras; right in the middle of where the passing lane is going forward, and to the reverse.

There were a lot of things that we looked at with the design, too. We don't need this to deploy out while going down the road. It's like your car, once you get up to a certain speed, your doors lock automatically and same as that. It'll have fail sensors once it starts to roll, the power would be cut off the solenoid so it couldn't accidentally engage –

Mr. MacKay: Right.

Wayne Ellsworth: – as it's going down the road. So –

Chair: Okay.

Wayne Ellsworth: – so there are a lot of things that we have addressed as we were going.

Dan MacDonald: And another thing with that deflecting hinge, in the beginning, it was just a breakaway elbow. But we felt for highway safety, that a breakaway elbow may not be the right thing for the safety of the roads because we didn't want the bar flying into oncoming traffic or flying off the school bus and maybe damaging the school bus and maybe damaging it or going through the windows.

If you ever go through the Confederation Bridge or the Halifax bridge, so many people go through it; it just deflects like this,

right? They still go by it, right? We don't ever want to put anybody's life at risk with this. It's all around safety, but if you hit it, chances are, we are going to catch you on videotape. You're going to go to your insurance company and put in a claim because your car is now damaged, and we're going to find out who you are because there's going to be marks on it.

But going back into that deflection, even how I've read online and read on Facebook, some people have said: Well, what happened if it distracts the driver and the driver goes into the oncoming traffic? Well, what would you want? Would you rather them to go into the oncoming traffic or a ditch, or if they hit the child? They've got seatbelts, they've got airbags, and they've got a frame around them. Unfortunately the person that is in the oncoming traffic was in the wrong place at the wrong time, right? But the children have nothing saving them. There is nothing. So, I am, as a parent, willing to take that risk. There should be no questions about – I'm just getting into reading some comments and I was afraid it might be asked here today, so I'm just being proactive.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Mr. McIsaac: MLA MacKay.

Mr. MacKay: Two final questions.

You mentioned that you were at Innovation PEI in Alberton, when was the first time that you met with them?

Dan MacDonald: It was August – I think it was August 15th. We were exactly a month in before we went and formed our company with the profits.

Mr. MacKay: August of this year?

Dan MacDonald: No, 2016.

Mr. MacKay: So, you started this out in August of 2016? So over two years ago you started this? And as far as the ministers – when was the last time you had met with a minister regarding this?

Wayne Ellsworth: Well, we've been in talks with our ministers, not necessarily

having meetings, but conversations, quite often. Like –

Dan MacDonald: Pat there, there was one at Mill River and it was a meeting and Heath MacDonald was there. But it wasn't our one-on-one.

Mr. MacKay: No.

Dan MacDonald: It was a side conversation after the meeting asking us how things went, are going. Where are we at? Is it ready? And that was more of the questioning part because we didn't want to be going in front of government with – because we started with hockey sticks and pizza boxes,

Mr. MacKay: Right.

Dan MacDonald: That's where we started.

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Dan MacDonald: And we wanted to come in with something professional like this. And it takes a long time. It took a long time for funding to come in because, from innovation too, because there are certain progresses that you have to take to get the funding. And yes, we used some of our own money, but we were certainly waiting for that money as well, because at the end of the day, we have something here. We want to help protect our roads and our children and save lives, but it costs money.

We all watch *Dragon's Den*, right? We don't want to be that person on *Dragon's Den* that says: Well how much money have you invested in this and you have no sales? We don't want to be that person. We were asked to go on *Dragon's Den* in March when they had it here in Charlottetown, but again we want it to be perfect and we want it to be ready. We just need the help from government to get that done.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, gentlemen.

Chair: Thank you.

MLA Bell.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks so much for your – I can certainly feel your pain. Working in and around

entrepreneurs for a long time, it always takes so much longer and it's just so hard to keep showing up and doing the work. And like you said, you're the one the paying the bills. I really recognize that.

There are a couple of things – one of those things about navigating the system of how do you get the support? Like, you need the money to make the prototype, and you can't go in without the prototype, and you need the business plan, and you don't know where you're going.

Have you talked to anybody at the Startup Zone? Even though that I know you're West Prince based, and it is a Charlottetown thing, but they also are more than a physical space. Have you ever met anybody from there?

Dan MacDonald: The only person that I would really have contact with is Daniel (Indistinct). I don't know if you guys are familiar with Daniel. He gave us information on how to get some funding from different organizations and whatnot.

But to answer your question about Startup Zone, no. As I said, we've signed a lot of NDAs, a lot, almost too much to track.

But anyways, we finally patented the idea and now we're in public with it. So that's, you know. Trust me when we see this stuff in the news, we're just dying to call up that person that made the complaint or private message them on Facebook, a parent, and say: You know what; we may have a solution here. When you're trying to develop an idea and have a patent and start up the business and you're told to keep it as private as you can it's tough. It's really tough.

Ms. Bell: Chair?

So it is a limitation of your NDAs and your business structures. You've mentioned Aspin Kemp and you're working with that. Are you the sole owners of the patent or are you doing that in partnership with other –

Dan MacDonald: Not as of yet, we're the sole owners.

Ms. Bell: Chair, so the reason for asking, Chair, is there are – sometimes when you're trying to navigate this system and you're in

this sort of space one of the things that can really help is to have mentors who can help navigate you who aren't government. Yes, I am sitting in this chair telling you that, but because they have a different set of experiences and priority and can assist to help you better navigate that space.

So Startup Zone is one of those places that may be able to help you, because one of their roles that they provide is not just the space, but mentorship. For example, one of the resident organizations that works out of there is Island Capital Partners. So Island Capital Partners are a private venture – I will email this to you – are a private venture capital firm who have funding of their own money in that venture capital fund, as well as money from the province to the tune of about \$4 million. They're specifically looking for companies to invest who are Island companies who are bringing forward innovative ideas that have market value.

You've also got an advisor from the NRC – the National Research Council – who is in charge of finding industrial tech and helping those companies that are developing something in the industrial tech space get to market. How do you get from early stage prototype to pre-commercial to commercial, and then through that space so that you can build the customers, build the sales, build your business plan?

Those are the things that often bog businesses down, because you're spending all of the money making the thing to get from the hockey stick and the pizza box to the cool flashing lights, but in the meantime you've also got to be accountants and marketers and figure how do you get through the meetings and so on. So I think that can be really valuable for you –

Dan MacDonald: We would love that help.

Ms. Bell: Well as much as the government is the market, there are also bigger markets too. Like it's not just us that wants this product, and we heard about how there isn't a product in the marketplace. So Chair I will follow up separately to give some of those contacts over.

The final thing for that Chair is to mention that the other primary potential partner is the Government of Canada, Federal

Government of Canada, who also have a program of buying prototypes as the first customer. It's called –

Dan MacDonald: Building Canada?

Ms. Bell: No it's not called that anymore. It is called Innovative Solutions. Same idea. And again, navigating into that can be kind of hard so you probably feel like you've got a lot on your plate right now but spreading your net a bit further might be potentially the thing that opens the door for you.

Whatever way we can assist to help you get this onto the buses to get to the point where we can test, would be phenomenal I think for the need that we've heard about such earlier today.

Thank you so much.

Dan MacDonald: Thank you.

Wayne Ellsworth: Thank you.

Dan MacDonald: Just one thing to add there. I know we give you the presentation here but we do have a business plan that we've done up through Gran Thornton and if any of you in the room are interested in taking a look at that, we'd be more than happy to distribute them to you.

Ms. Bell: (Indistinct)

Chair: MLA Fox.

Mr. Fox: Thanks Chair.

Just three quick things; you mention a price of \$6,500. Is that cameras installed and everything or is that: here's the box, you install it?

Wayne Ellsworth: This would be a unit with the cameras, lights. You take it out. There's mounting bolts you drill through the buses structure without the bumper without affecting – without compromising the strength of the bumper and it bolts on.

That's what our electrical engineer now, is the quickest, safest way to attach the pneumatics and the electrical part so it'll be ready. It'll have the wiring harnesses and be dropped off at the bus depots and they would install them.

Mr. Fox: So basically –

Wayne Ellsworth: So this would be an all-in-one box ready to rock and roll.

Mr. Fox: So basically what I'm understanding is when the lights are activated, it robs air from the air brake system, which would activate the solenoid, which would put the lights on, which would draw power and turn the lights on and basically that would be it in a nutshell.

You mentioned a minute ago, something about a bus standard organization –

Wayne Ellsworth: D250?

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Wayne Ellsworth: Yeah.

They work in part with Transport Canada. D250, they look after all the buses. They have meetings quarterly – biannually throughout Canada with our provinces and we were actually invited here a year and a half ago, two years ago, to attend one of these.

When we started out, we started government Transport Canada and we started to get all these avenues and D250, they're the ones that work and they implement things and if they see this idea and they say: You know what, it's going on all the buses. That's something that D250 –

Mr. Fox: So, with that, am I understanding it right then if: you get the prototype done, then would that organization have to approve it before it could be used on a school bus on PEI? Or is this something we can build here on the province and we can automatically install it with no input or regulation from this other group?

Dan MacDonald: Actually, I've been in contact with the company called Brun-Way it's a –

Mr. Fox: In New Brunswick.

Dan MacDonald: In New Brunswick.

They put a big swinging arm on the side of the snowplow –

Mr. Fox: I'm familiar with that, actually.

Dan MacDonald: Yeah, and I contacted them and spoke to the general manager there and just asked them if they had any issues with D250 on their idea to barricade the oncoming traffic and he said: Not at all.

All they did was keep them in the loop throughout the process and we have been doing that with D250. They actually mentioned us in one of the meetings that they had in Kelowna, BC, because I heard that from that from the person I've been dealing with in Alberta to get it on their school buses out there.

Mr. Fox: I actually toured that and had a tour of that when use the towable snow plows –

Dan MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: – when it goes out and it drops, so I'm familiar with that group, the organization.

Final question and I'm very curious about this: MLA Matt MacKay asked a question a minute ago asked a question. You've been dealing with innovation – am I right to say you've been dealing with Innovation PEI on this idea since 2016 and we've had no movement whatsoever? Am I understanding that right?

Dan MacDonald: Well, in 2016 we confronted them with the idea and in 2017, it was in September, and then they said that there's an ignition fund coming out and you can win \$25,000 if you are one of the top recipients. They told us to apply, and we did. That ignition fund went the whole year; it didn't get awarded to anyone until September. We didn't know until the fall of 2017, right?

In the process we had to make it, we had to go through the different avenues of engineering, costs, ordering parts from California, the States, overseas, Truro.

Mr. Fox: And you've done this whole project on your own money, own funding?

Dan MacDonald: In that process, and then we got awarded the \$25,000 in September

but we never actually got that money until December and then we're into 2018.

You know, it only seems like yesterday because I know two years sounds like a long time but it's not. It seems like it went by really, really fast but also –

Mr. Fox: Okay thank you, Chair.

Dan MacDonald: Thank you.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Chair: Any further questions?

Just a few comments; I applaud you for working through the system, I know what it takes to get prepared to bring something and apply, to get to the ignition fund. I congratulate you for receiving that.

Also, I think that making the move to go down to talk to AKA – I'm very familiar with the – they've done a variety of engineering activities and you probably couldn't have picked a better engineering outfit to align yourself with because I know some of the things that they do there.

I'd be quite interested to see how you progressed with that, but I think it would be really nice to see a pilot project. I think if you turn around and look at the guy behind you he would probably be a pretty good guy to start. Start and talk to him and ask him: How do we get it on at least one bus once we have that prototype once we have that prototype completed through the engineering process?

I think your timing is good. I think your development period of time – considering you started with hockey sticks and pizza boxes, I think you've done well to get as far as you've got.

No question, I think after today this is going to be out in public, your phones are probably going to start ringing and your email will probably pick up as well as your Facebook, but do you have any idea of a timeframe where this could become a pilot and be tested? Do you have any idea from AKA when you would expect to have something that you could put on a bus and test?

Dan MacDonald: AKA – not exactly quite the timeframe yet, but our lead mechanical engineer in the beginning that helped us through this whole process did come at us with a proposal. He would need about three months to finalize it all – 90 days.

If he can get his full potential in working with AKA on it, to keep them both – because it would be nice to have the two of them working on it because there's some ideas that Tom Han has and some ideas that AKA has as well.

To get down to the point of it, we want to be able to have something ready. Tom can't mass produce them, but he's a very smart man and he can certainly add added features to this. He has services, he has a business and we've already talked to AKA and they said: Well, we may need to ask him some questions and have him work together on it. We're quite fine with that.

At the end of the day, guys, it boils down to money and we need help with this. We can just go and say: Yes, go ahead. Let's do this, you guys go at it. If it costs 100 – well yeah, we've had some quotes from engineers that it costs \$100,000. Well, we scraped that.

We do have a private investor that would like to help but that's his hard-earned money too that I would feel awful if we took away that money from this gentlemen and nothing came about it.

Again, to answer your question, I say give us 90 days and we'll have something. We'll have a pilot project ready to go here on PEI, especially in the winter months because that's when we want it. We want to get any type of issues that could happen; we're going to do it with this pilot project in the winter months and then have it ready for 2019.

Chair: Okay well, certainly on behalf of the committee I want to thank you both very much for coming in. This was very informative; I think we've learned a lot here. Just on the end, it would be nice to have a paint gun at the end of that –

Dan MacDonald: Well, you never know.

Chair: Just kidding; but no, it looks like a good product and I wish you all the best

going forward with this, and I can assure you that this committee will take your presentation very seriously as we look at all suggestions and everything that's been brought forward to us.

What I would do is thank you, and I think we'll hold on once they're finished up and we'll just finish up with our meeting.

Dan MacDonald: Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you both very much for driving down today and giving us your time.

Wayne Ellsworth: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Wayne Ellsworth: Thank you.

Chair: We're still in session, so is there any new business?

Ms. Bell: (Indistinct)

Chair: MLA Bell.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Chair, if I can request that the committee consider calling, as a matter of urgency, Maritime Electric, to brief us and explain the current purchase agreement with New Brunswick Power.

Chair: Okay, we'll certainly have that discussion here at committee. I think we already have our next meeting booked. It's a week today, next Thursday, November 8th at 1:30, and we have our presenters already booked to come in on that day.

So, any further discussion on the request for Maritime Electric?

MLA Fox.

Mr. Fox: What's the purpose?

What's the purpose of the – I know Maritime Electric was in back a year ago it would have been, maybe longer than a year ago, and they went over the purchase agreement or how they buy power from NB Power or how they source it on the market, so I just want to know what's the purpose. What's – for what reason?

Ms. Bell: Chair?

Chair: MLA Bell.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

The purpose of this is that, as has been discussed in the media very recently that we have, obviously, a new agreement that has been negotiated for 2019 forward that is being referred to without us having the details of that agreement. So we would like to have Maritime Electric come in to provide some of the detail around that agreement so that we can be better informed on those details for the next five years to come as they are directly impacting policy decisions and the upcoming activities in the Legislature.

Chair: Are you telling me that there's a new agreement, just now?

Ms. Bell: There has been an agreement, the agreement that is currently in place that we do not have the details of, but it is being referred to, and we are asking for them to come in to this committee to provide details of that purchase agreement and the conditions in which that was agreed.

Chair: I think what MLA Fox is saying is that they were in and did disclose, if I'm not mistaken, those details. Is there any way we can go back and find out if –

Mr. Fox: I guess I'm confused. Are we talking about the agreement that – there was the original agreement that was three years, I think it was a three-year deal, and that one's coming to a close. So I'm wondering is there a brand new deal she's talking about or –

Ms. Bell: We have had a number of different discussions in the media recently about the agreement which is coming into place for the next five years which incorporates the discussions that have been around the impact or not of carbon tax pricing among other things.

As you said, as the current agreement has come to a close, a new agreement has been agreed, as has been disclosed by the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and is being referred to without us having the details of that agreement.

We are asking for Maritime Electric to come in and provide details of that so we can be more informed and make a more informed and evidence-based discussion.

Chair: I believe the minister is coming in at our next meeting, so perhaps we can kind of verify some of the suggestions that you made at that time and try and get it directly from the minister responsible.

Ms. Bell: Chair, that would be most –

Chair: And then we could move forward from there –

Ms. Bell: Exactly.

Chair: – if you're good with that.

Ms. Bell: That would be the most expeditious way to move forward, so thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you so much.

Any further new business? Do I have a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Fox: Adjourn.

Chair: MLA Fox adjourned.

Thank you all very much, great meeting.

The Committee adjourned.