

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

It's a great pleasure to be in the Chamber again today and to welcome back all of our MLAs and staff for another busy week of proceedings. I'd like to welcome everyone who's made their way to the public gallery today. To those who are watching at home, I see my good friend Bob Gray, a great fan of UPEI basketball.

The weather in Prince Edward Island has finally turned and I think that it was so nice to see all Islanders out enjoying the splendor of what is that Island summer.

I did have the great privilege on Saturday to attend – along with my legislative colleagues from Summerside-Wilmot and Tyne Valley-Sherbooke, the very first graduating class of Ecole Sur-Mer in Summerside.

It was an incredible evening and a very proud night for students, for all faculty and all family, so congratulations to those.

I'd like to offer my congratulations of course to Cole McLaren of Morell, who signed a contract last week with the Detroit Tigers of Major League Baseball. Cole graduated from the University of Pittsburg this spring and has reported to the Tigers rookie league camp in Lakeland Florida. I want to wish Cole the best as he embarks in the next stages of his baseball career.

I'd also like to pass along congratulations to Jordan Spence of Cornwall, drafted No. 95 in this weekend's NHL draft in Vancouver, by the Los Angeles Kings, a crowning achievement for sure. Jordan's sister Kairi is a very close friend of my daughter Camdyn and both young ladies will be part of the Grade 9 graduating class this evening at East Wilshire School and I'll be missing part of the evening session tonight in the Legislature to attend that formal event.

I'd also like to extend all congratulations to the provinces graduating students and their families and teachers, it's a wonderful accomplishment and I wish them very well in what comes next.

Just while I'm here, I'd like to thank all Islanders for their texts and for their phone calls, I have embarked on a bit of a healthy eating routine and exercise, so it's not the stress of this job that is making me look thinner, as my mother has pointed out. The grey hair I can't do much about, I blame that on the job. I know my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, had lovely hair, black hair, not that long ago. But Mr. Speaker, I'm alive and well and I'm actually working at it under the guidance of Kurt McCormack from down your way Mr. Speaker, ProTrim Fitness, so shout out to Kurt.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Premier, for that lovely remark.

I want to welcome everybody to the gallery today. I want to mention a couple people in particular; Susan Holmes and Cora Nicholson are with us today, two of the whistle blowers involved in the PNP case from many years ago. Welcome to you, welcome back to the Island, and welcome to the Legislature here today.

Bethany Collicutt-MacNabb and Bob Gray are sitting in the corner there, nice to see you again. I think it's Alan Holman at the front, I can't quite see but I think it is, it is Alan Holman. Welcome Alan.

I, too, had a lovely weekend; Diversity was on here in Charlottetown, down on Queen Street, fantastic performances by musicians and dancers and artists and lovely food. So I want to congratulate everybody who took part in that, the organizers, Craig Mackie, Mark Carr-Rollit amongst them. There were some issues with a generator earlier on, but we got round that. We should of gone with solar, it was beautiful sunny day, we would have had no problems if we had done that.

Last night, I had the pleasure of attending a public meeting in Emyvale in my district, where Stephanie Arnold who works with the Climate Lab here at UPEI was giving a talk on climate change and its impact, particularly on the community of Emyvale, and many of the residents were there talking about how they can personally and collectively do something to combat climate change.

It was a great talk and I want to particularly thank Adrian Desbarats who was the person who spearheaded that, put the meeting together, it was a great turnout and a very lively discussion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It certainly is a pleasure to rise once again to welcome all to the public gallery and as you can see, it's a full house in our public gallery, as this is a very important day in the Legislature here on Prince Edward Island as we will be having our budget address a little later. It certainly is great, a lot of familiar faces. I do want to also mention Bob Gray who's a former educator on Prince Edward Island, a former educator with many Mitchell's in past years, so it's great to have him in the floor of the House today, Janna Gallant, Ms. McNeill, good to have you in as well. The weekend was a very busy weekend; it was a beautiful weekend on Prince Edward Island.

I had the opportunity as well to be down to the diversity event and I had my two granddaughters and they were completely enthralled by everything that was going on there and we were able to have a few treats as wells, so it was a great day there. I did have the opportunity to talk to some tourists that were in and talking about how lovely our province is.

Today I had a chance to talk to a restaurateur who said it's been very busy in his restaurant anyway, in regards to tourism folks that are coming in and staying. He referenced that typically tourism doesn't really start on PEI until July 15<sup>th</sup> but its alive and well early on PEI this year.

So once again, to all Islanders that are watching in today from home, I wish they have a great day from home and enjoy the proceedings as well Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

It certainly is a pleasure to rise here in the Legislature again today. I would like to welcome all the guests to the gallery, certainly acknowledge the presence again of the Leader of the NDP; it's always great to see you here with us.

I'll tell you today, if you were to order a custom made summer day, you couldn't do any better than it is out there today. It's just fantastic. It makes you appreciate what a great Island and what a great province that we do live in.

This week, there are two graduations taking place in my district of District 26 Alberton-Bloomfield. This coming Wednesday evening, Hernewood Intermediate School is having their school graduation, and last evening I had the pleasure to attend the Westisle High School graduation.

There were 139 students graduated from Westisle and I certainly want to congratulate each and every one of them. There was \$460,000 given out in awards, prizes, and scholarships to those 139 graduates. It was just a great evening, great accomplishments by our graduates up in the western end of the province.

Certainly, would like to recognize and acknowledge too, the valedictorian last evening at Westisle, Luke Diamond. Luke did a fantastic job, had a great message for his fellow grads. It was interspersed, I guess I would say, with a few rather humourous comments and the like, but certainly everybody enjoyed.

Also, would like to acknowledge the Governor General's Award winner, Brynne Perry. Congratulations to her for her accomplishments, and all of her hard work.

Finally, just acknowledge one of our Pages here, Emily Maxfield. Emily graduated from

Westisle last evening, and graduated with honours. So congratulations to Emily.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

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

I'd like to welcome everyone to the House today, and it gives me great pride and honour to represent District 8 Stanhope-Marshfield.

I want to give a shout-out to a special constituent in my district, Ewen Stewart from West Covehead. He recently, this month, donated his 1000<sup>th</sup> blood donation – 1000<sup>th</sup> – only the second person in Canadian history to do that. So a big shout-out to Ewen, he's quite proud of his accomplishment as he should be.

When I met him on the campaign trail, he took me in and showed me his 900<sup>th</sup> plaque on the wall. I told him when he got 1000 I'd take him some cake. I owe him some chocolate cake he told me.

I also want to shout-out to all the farmers. Today is a great day. It's a great hay day. Normally I would be making hay today, but I'm pleased to be here representing District 8.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well I, too, attended a graduation yesterday for the Charlottetown Rural High School. I would like to send a special congratulations to, not only to 303 graduates who crossed the stage yesterday, but to my nephew, Will Vidito, who not only graduated with honours, but has been signed with the Holland College Hurricanes basketball team to play this fall with a scholarship.

So congratulations, Will. I still can't believe that he's not only taller than me, but also graduating.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if I can have your indulgence, a quick shout-out to the

organizations that provide supplies for those in need. Particularly right now, we're looking for sunscreen, as the weather has changed and it is the summer; that organizations like Anderson House and the Upper Room are in desperate need of supplies to protect those who cannot afford it with supplies.

Perhaps if members can share that in their own spaces that would be most helpful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Certainly, a pleasure for me to rise in the Legislative Assembly as well today. I extend greetings to anybody that may be tuning in via the Internet or EastLink.

I'd also like to recognize a few people that have joined us here in the gallery, as well: of course, Joe Byrne, the leader of the NDP here for Prince Edward Island. Bob Grant, I know he's been already mentioned, Bob and I actually went to school together. Right, Bob? Just in a different capacity. Bob was a fantastic teacher that I experienced at Stonepark.

There's been quite a few events this past weekend that I had the honour to attend and help out at. In particular, I'd like to thank the residents of Stratford for the immense generosity. I took an early morning shift at the Tim Horton's in Stratford to help collect money for the Upper Room Food Bank and I believe the total raised between Friday and Saturday was encroaching in around \$2,600, so I'd like to thank the residents for that terrific generosity.

Also, the Leader of the Third Party and I got to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PEI Sport Hall of Fame. It was an amazing event at the Rodd Royalty and there were many of the current inductees that were in attendance and it was a wonderful celebration of their achievements and past athletes as well. So, hats off to a great organization that's helping to celebrate and promote fitness here on PEI.

I'd certainly be remiss, too, if I didn't recognize an organization that rehearses throughout the winter at Andrews of Stratford called: DNTS – Deathly Not the Symphony.

They're a wonderful organization headed up by Jan Gomersall and this particular concert was the last concert for their season and it was a tribute to one of their past members who just unfortunately passed away last week – a previous neighbor and friend of mine, Roger Smith. A beautiful tribute, his family was there. His brother and sister-in-law even made it over from England. It was a wonderful tribute to just a tremendous man.

DiverseCity, I know it's already been spoken about. The Leader of the Opposition and I got to celebrate that and I know many other members did attend as well. Again, just hats off to Craig Mackie and Mark Carr-Rollit for the wonderful work that they do every year on that.

As I spoke at that event, it's great to see how much it's expanded over the years, but also expanded to go out to other outlying communities here on PEI, so I encourage everyone to keep an eye open and to help celebrate in the other communities when it does come to town.

Last, but not least, again, the Charlottetown Rural High School graduation which has already been mentioned. I was very proud to bring greetings on behalf of the Premier and the Province of PEI to the graduation exercises and of course, it is a school that I graduated, very proudly graduated from back – a number of years ago.

We did have 303 graduates that did go through this year, and I think it was actually the largest graduating class of any high school on Prince Edward Island. But in particular, I was extremely proud and honoured to once again this year present the prize in memory of Dr. David McKenna who was a previous MLA here in the Legislative Assembly.

It is a prize that I have supported now since David's passing back a number of years ago and this year it went to Michelle Baldwin and I congratulate Michelle on her hard work and dedication to her studies.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

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

I want to reiterate the hon. Premier's mention of East Wiltshire School but I also want to – this will be the last graduation for principal Windsor Wight. I think most of us likely know Windsor and he always lived by the motto: who you are as a teacher is more important than what you are teaching. I think kudos to him and he's certainly done a lot for that school and our area.

DiverseCity, 15 years I believe was the time that this has been running. I met Sean Murphy on the street at DiverseCity and he said: I would've bet money that this would never be like it is today.

Inclusivity in our society is extremely important. I'll be making a members statement on Jordan Spence because I think it's pretty important.

I also wanted to – if she's listening – Minister of Finance, wish her all the best today. It is a pressure packed day when you're coming, especially with your first budget and kudos to her for coming and meeting with us this morning. Good luck in her budget.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

I just wanted to take a minute to congratulate the graduates of Westisle, in particular the scholarship and award winners, it's just fantastic and it's such an exciting time. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Some of you may have noticed that I sort of rushed in here just within the nick of time and that's because I was attending a fantastic event for the Special Olympics Prince Edward Island. That is a wonderful organization. I've had the opportunity to volunteer with them last year when they had

the bowling championships here on the Island and it was just remarkable.

With begging the Speaker's indulgence, I would like to also share that they have an online auction happening currently, until I believe 9:20 p.m. tonight, so I suggest if you get a chance check that out and perhaps there will be a few items that you might be able to bid on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I just quickly wanted to welcome everyone to the gallery, specifically Mike Trainor. He's a political studies teacher at Three Oaks High School. I just met him here today. Actually, probably a number of us in here received emails from some of his students to answer some questions. I know I responded to mine; I can't remember the student's name off the top of my head, but it's was good questions and I was happy to answer them.

I'd also like to mention the Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere mentioned about sunscreen. I know the Food Bank in Montague is also in desperate need of it as well, as we get into the summer season.

I was very pleased on Friday to bring remarks at the Colonel Grey graduation at UPEI. The Minister of Health and Wellness mentioned – it was quite a number of years ago – that he graduated. It was only 10 years ago this year for me –

**Mr. MacEwen:** They thought you were the valedictorian too.

**Mr. Deagle:** Yes, I (Indistinct) a valedictorian but some were confused.

Anyways, Mike, I hope you enjoy the proceedings today and I hope everyone has a good week.

Thank you.

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Arlene Van Diepen Power Lifting Title**

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

I rise today to recognize an extraordinary athletic accomplishment from one of our constituents in the Green Meadows area, Arlene Van Diepen.

At 60 years old, Arlene Van Diepen has become something of an overnight success story in the field of power lifting. She has recently gone on to become a winner at the regional level, and won a bronze in the deadlift and bench at the national level in power lifting.

In addition to becoming a power lifter at the age of 60, she's fought her own personal struggles with Crohn's disease while managing all of this.

Crohn's disease is not an easy illness to overcome; it commonly causes pain and fatigue, which makes Arlene's accomplishments even more incredible and shows a great deal of resolve on her part to overcome any potential barriers.

Arlene also happens to train at Full Throttle Fitness, which is a locally-owned gym that operates out of Morell. I'm sure Arlene's achievements have been a great boost to their business and it's always good to see the money going back into our community for sure. In fact, it was actually Courtney Steele, the owner of Full Throttle Fitness, who encouraged Arlene to pursue power lifting in this past year.

Arlene and her family are just the most wonderful people and we're so very proud of her. I'd sincerely like to congratulate Arlene for her extraordinary athletic achievements and wish her all the best in future competitions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **High School Graduation**

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

This past week Prince Edward Island saw hundreds of high school students graduate.

I would like to extend congratulations to each of them on reaching this important milestone.

To the students watching from home and in the gallery, I want to remind you that high school graduation is a huge accomplishment. It opens many future doors; all of the things that you have learned in high school will be needed in the future.

Appreciate the grind of how hard you've worked because it prepares you for bigger challenges. It's also important at this time to think about all the important efforts the staff have done; teachers, principals, educational assistants, workplace assistants, student well-being teams, councillors, student attendants, youth service workers, cafeteria staff, custodians, administrative assistants, bus drivers, and of course, their parents.

The support of so many people helps nurture success of our students who are the future of our Island.

Being a high school graduate is not the end; it's a new beginning. And for all these achievements to be put in place, celebrate your accomplishments.

I wish all Island students health and happiness and hope each of you achieve future goals. This entire House is cheering you on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

### **Jordan Spence**

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

It is an honour for me to recognize Cornwall-Meadowbank resident and LA King's draft selection, Jordan Spence.

The team picked up the rights to Jordan Spence of Cornwall during the weekend's NHL draft.

Jordan is a defenseman and is a member of the QMJH's Moncton Wildcats and

represented Canada at the U18 World Championship this spring.

Jordan was born 18 years ago in Sydney, Australia to Adam and Kyoko Spence who settled in Prince Edward Island when Jordan was a young child.

Jordan attended local schools and played hockey in the local minor hockey system at the AAA level representing Prince Edward Island at a number of tournaments.

Jordan's junior hockey career began in the 2017-2018 season with the Western Caps of the Maritime Junior Hockey League where his skills as right-handed defenseman caught the attention of major junior hockey scouts.

In 2018, he was drafted in the second round by the Moncton Wildcats of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

His rookie season with the Wildcats was somewhat stellar. He had six goals and 43 assists for a total of 49 points. He was also a member of Canada's team at the under-18 world championship held in Sweden.

In recognition of his hockey achievements over the past season, the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League recognized him as the league's rookie of the year.

Cornwall appears to have another star defenseman in addition to Adam McQuaid in the making.

I ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing and commending Jordan on his hockey achievements and wishing him all the best in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

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

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

Last week, the Member from Montague-Kilmuir asked me about the Sorreys Bridge and I have an update.

The bridge was last inspected in 2017. The overall condition is poor and it fits into what

we would call our high-risk category. Another inspection will happen this year and currently, we expect the structure will be replaced in 2020.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

On Friday, the hon. Opposition House Leader asked me about how many community organizations my department provides operational funding for. I have that information with me and will table it.

But, I also want to clarify my remarks from Friday. I mentioned that my department supported NGOs to the tune of \$10 million last year. It was actually \$12.4 million.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

Last week, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton asked how the economic plan being prepared by the Partnership for Growth will include and support the community sector.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind the member, and all members of the House, that the Partnership for Growth is being led by the private sector, not government. We are simply a partner.

However, I know that the hon. House leader and Member from Morell-Donagh, who also happens to be government's lead on this project, spoke in one of the first meetings of the Partnership last week.

During his remarks, he emphasized the importance of diverse representation at the table and he challenged the Partnership to see who was missing from the discussion and make every attempt to include them.

I strongly agree with the Member from Charlottetown-Brighton – we need a wide range of voices around that table, but we are in no position to dictate to the Partnership

who should be included in the discussion as we are only a member of the Partnership.

It is being led by the private sector with the guidance from the Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked me two questions on Friday that I have endeavored to bring the answers back to.

The first one was a list of what the province has done with regards to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and that answer has proven a little bit more difficult to find because it has spread over so many departments, which leads to the second part of the question which he asked about appointing someone as a direct point person within government to be responsible for the implementation of the murdered and missing women and girls report, which I'd like to do.

I'd like to sit down with both the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party. We've identified somebody within government who would be a perfect person for this and I would like to find out what would be the best way to go about setting this up so we can report back here annually and make sure that information is shared.

I will get the first answer to that question here tomorrow, I sincerely hope.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Questions by Members

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

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

I just want to start by thanking all the ministers for their prompt and fulsome replies to questions from last week.

The *Rental of Residential Property Act* was proclaimed in 1989 and except for a few minor adjustments; there have been really no

major changes to the legislation in now what is now almost three decades.

Consultations by a legislative standing committee about 10 years ago heard from both landlords and tenants that the act does not address situations that they face in a fair and equitable manner.

A review of the act was carried out by IRAC in 2006, resulting in 37 recommendations for amendments to the act.

Last year, government released its Housing Action Plan to address the housing crisis on Prince Edward Island and one of the actions of that plan was a review of the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, which as I understand, is currently under review once again by IRAC.

### **Update of review of *Rental of Residential Property Act***

A question to the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning: Could you update the House on the status of that review?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thanks for the question.

In fact I just had a meeting with IRAC the other day and that was one of the topics of conversation. They basically said that the review is underway and unfortunately, I don't have a timeline for the Leader of the Opposition on when that will be done, but I will get back to him with that.

Thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, I'll expect that tomorrow minister.

Thank you very much.

The *Rental of Residential Property Act* has been the subject of scrutiny by both tenants and landlords and it's clear that Islanders have a lot to say about this important piece of legislation.

### **Public engagement process for review of act**

Question to the same minister: What will the public engagement process be like for this legislation for the review?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning

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

In fact that was one of the subjects we also talked about and really, what was our first meeting with IRAC as a new minister. In fact, the direction that I gave was that you need to have a broad engagement with stake holders and we brought up a few of the stake holders that might be part of that. I asked really to be included as part of that planning process and make sure that we include the people that are impacted because they're the ones who need to have that input into the review process.

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

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

On Friday, the minister tabled two annual reports from IRAC and one of the concerning trends from the most recent report is the substantial increase – nearly 40% actually – in formal applications to the director of residential rental property, relating to the termination of rental agreements.

Our party has tabled amendments to the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, which I hope you will debate tonight, that would provide tenants with more time to appeal an eviction for reasons under Section 15, which include very specific things, like renovations and the conversion of premises into non-residential uses.

### **Support of minister to *Rental of Residential Property Act***

A question to the Premier: Can we expect your support for this piece of legislation?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question and I am looking forward to the discussion tonight. I do believe that a lot has changed in this regard and it's time to have these rules and regulations updated.

I think the issues we were dealing with today are vastly different than 2006 whenever that review would have taken place. I'm interested to take in that debate tonight. I do think changes have to be made. From what I've read of the motion so far, I don't have any problem with supporting that. I think it's a very reasonable amendment to the motion that we give a little bit more time to appeal the eviction and I would be subject to how the debate goes tonight. I would be looking to support that.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you. Really glad to hear that, Premier.

Of course, review of an act is one thing, but implementing the recommendations that result from such a review is quite another. Our amendment – which is really just a very small, although an important part of the act is clearly only part of what needs to be done – an act that requires a major overhaul.

### **Commitment of enacting recommendations**

Again, a question to the Premier: Will your government commit to enacting the recommendations of this most recent review of the act?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I think we have to obviously see what the recommendations are and I hope that they're good recommendations and if there is a process that is outlined by the minister that is inclusive and actually brings in viewpoints from a broad selection of Islanders, I think that's a very good chance that we would get positive recommendations.

The frustration I have is now as the Premier of this province is, nobody seems to want to take on the full responsibility for the housing situation. IRAC says this isn't my problem; tourism doesn't want to touch it. So I think we do need to work a little bit harder to make some recommendations here as to how we actually address this crisis, not just for today but for tomorrow.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

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

As we move towards a carbon neutral economy, as committed to in the throne speech, we need to consider how we might achieve certain targets. The electrification of transport may seemingly be one of our most challenging due to the large amounts of infrastructure changes required. For instance, I usually drive an electric car but I can't take it to work anymore because there's no charger here for me to use.

Mind you, I've been driving electric since 2012 and ranges have extended considerably, such that I could likely easily drive to Charlottetown and back with a similar purchase nowadays.

However, knowing there will be a place to plug in is essential to reducing range anxiety and increase of locations electric vehicle accessibility.

We have a small amount of level three chargers going in soon that will recharge a vehicle in 30 minutes, which is a good thing – but those are of little use in many situations as they are not where everyone needs to go.

Many level two chargers would be a much more useful solution for commuters like myself.

### **Installation of level two chargers**

Question to the Minister: Will you be installing level two chargers across PEI at strategic locations?

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

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

Yes, we will.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister from Summerside-South Drive.

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

Initially, strategic locations for level two chargers could be where electric vehicle owner's drive and park, it just makes sense.

Does the minister have any data on where we might best place our charging infrastructure?

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

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

I don't know if we have any data, I mean, we know the travelling patterns. We know down east that we have significant traffic off the ferry which would be car traffic; we know we have significant traffic from the Magdalene Islands which would be car traffic.

We have the locations kind of picked out for the first round of phase two chargers but we're looking at a spot in Souris, we're looking at a spot in Montague, we're looking at having this spread right across Prince Edward Island so that we can reduce, as you say, the range anxiety.

This is only step one, so while we're bringing in the level three chargers in yes, you'll be able to park downtown here very soon close to this building because we think it's important that you're able to. We think it's important that – we have a fleet of our own vehicles that are electric and it's important to us as a province to be able to charge our own vehicles.

Next, we will continue to add chargers across Prince Edward Island each year until we have what is an adequate number, which at this point, we're probably not even close to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

**Mr. Howard:** Access to chargers is another issue we'll have to address.

Having a charger exist is not enough; you need to be able to access it when you need to charge.

For instance, you can arrive at a charger only to find a non-electric vehicle is blocking access or another electric vehicle is plugged in.

### **Access to electric chargers**

Are there any considerations for this being discussed within government?

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

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

I guess this is probably a common problem anytime you have a parking spot that's dedicated for anything other than general parking. I'm sure that if you listen to other groups as far as people with disabilities go, they would say that they had the same problem with the blue parking spots all across Prince Edward Island.

I know it's been a part of discussion here in the Legislature before: how we would better utilize those parking spots and if we should have a fine structure.

When it comes to the spots, they're going to be clearly marked – like clearly, clearly marked that this is what they're for.

We are going to do a campaign to let Islanders know that, not only we have them, where they are, but what the expectations are as far as parking goes and amount of time to park one and what the cost will be, those types of things.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

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

Electric bikes are another emerging trend. These can be used to get around outside of winter months. This combination of active transportation and small scale electrification will become more prevalent.

### Uptake of electric bikes

Are there any plans to encourage the uptake of electric bikes?

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

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

At this point we haven't even gotten a program off the ground to help people get into electric cars, so we're working towards that. As we talked about in House here last week, I believe our solar option is stage one to living a sustainable lifestyle and as I've said to you in private discussions, I believe that electric vehicles is clearly stage two – something that I'm committed to work towards, it's something that our government is committed to work towards and I'll take any recommendations you have seriously and I'll bring them back to our efficiency people and to our energy people and make sure that they get on the agenda.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-South Drive.

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

The active transportation network's bike lanes and regulations will be sufficient to encourage the safe use of these of these types of active transportation. The range extension that electric assist affords means it would become much easier to bike into town from rural areas – meaning we will see an uptake in bicycles on our highways.

### Improvements to highway infrastructure for bicycle traffic

Can we expect to see any improvements to highway planning infrastructure that will accommodate the inclusion of more bicycle traffic?

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

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

So we have a sustainable transportation committee – the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change; him and I set that up not that long ago. We have a strategy that we're about to unveil that's going to

cover a number of topics, one of them will be active transportation links and how we plan to deal with them moving forward in the future, so yes, it's on our agenda.

I realize there hasn't been a lot done in the province in the last 100 years as far as bicycle goes. Prior to that probably there was. At this point, since there are some vehicles on the road there's been very little done to accommodate any other type of vehicle on the road.

Yes, it's something that we're looking at. It's something that's in our planning, and it's something that we're going to try to get to as we build new highway structures across Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

PEI doctors are currently paid under two types of models: salary and fee-for-service. In 2017, changes were made to the fee for service model.

### Models of pay for doctors

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Are you familiar with these changes?

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

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

If the hon. member could be just a little bit more specific with regards to which changes she's referring to.

Over the last number of years, of course, there's been a lot of modifications around model of care, not only with doctors, but also with our nursing staff, with our paramedics, and many other medical healthcare professionals here on PEI.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

It's my understanding that before the new fee structure took effect, doctors were paid \$28 for seeing a walk-in clinic patient for less than 10 minutes and \$35 for a visit more than 10 minutes.

Under the new structure, doctors now earn \$25 per walk-in patient regardless of the length of visit. At the same time, physicians seeing their own patients saw their earnings for a basic office visit go from \$28 to \$35.84.

### **Changes in fee-for-service structure for Island doctors**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Do you agree with these changes in the fee-for-service structure?

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

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

When you talk about healthcare it's a very complex issue. Of course, when we're dealing with medical professionals such as doctors and the way they're compensated, there's many aspects with regards to how that works.

With regards to changes in the fee structure, at current policy and current review, things are moving forward as they are.

But you know we're in interesting times right now. We are entering into negotiations very soon around our new master agreement, and if there are certainly issues around that, then I would welcome the hon. member to bring them forward and we can certainly have a discussion around incorporating those discussions in the negotiations of the master agreement.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

Going door to door during the election, one of the most common concerns I heard in my area was about the long wait times at the walk-in clinic in Summerside, both for walk-in and family practice patients.

Family practice patients are often not able to make an appointment in a timely manner and must attend the walk-in hours to see their family doctor. Additionally, individuals reported being limited to one concern per visit, which does not allow for a holistic understanding of one's health and wellbeing.

### **Tracking of patient experiences**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Does government track or evaluate wait times and patient experiences for walk-in and family practice clinics, and, if so, how have they changed since the new fee structures were implemented?

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

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

Currently, the data that is collected – we know how many patients are going to the various walk-in clinics. We can mind that data through the billings structures.

I've also heard concerns from Islanders with regards to going to a clinic to see a physician and only being able to talk about one ailment or one issue that they may be concerned with. Frankly, I'm concerned about that as well.

The wait times that we're experiencing here right now, it hasn't happened over night. It's been ongoing now for quite a few years. We know that we have issues around our emergency rooms. We have walk-in clinics, of course, that are extremely busy.

What we've said as a government, clearly stated in our platform, clearly stated in our throne speech, is that we are prepared to invest into primary care so that we can get more doctors here on the Island and that we can make wait times decrease so that Islanders can get the medical advice in a more timely fashion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

In a CBC article, the president of the Medical Society stated that the changes to the fee-for-service model were to encourage family physicians to see their own patients instead of the patient going to the walk-in clinic.

### **Evaluation in changes to fee-for-service model**

Question the Minister of Health and Wellness: Has there been any evaluation to find out if this intended purpose has been achieved?

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

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

I don't have the answer on that. I would certainly be more than willing to bring that information back as soon as possible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

Both salary and fee-for-service models have been shown to have downfalls in terms of access to timely and effective family practice care. As such, other provinces are now looking at blended models that include a mix of patient-based, capitation payments and volume-based payments through fifer service.

### **Exploration of blended capitation models**

Question to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness: Is your department willing to explore blended capitation models as an option for doctor remuneration on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

As a new government and especially as the new hon. minister responsible for health and wellness, I've clearly stated all along that

look, we're looking at providing health care here on Prince Edward Island in potentially a new, collaborative way.

When we talk about health care, we talk about delivery of health care to Islanders, everything is on the table. We're constantly having discussions within our department. Right now, we did evaluate an EMR, electronic medical records, and we found by talking to the doctors that pilot simply wasn't working.

So you know what we did? We ended that and we're going back out to tender to find a product that's actually going to work better for the doctors so that they can see their doctors in a more timely fashion and that we can collect that data that we need.

So sorry I'm taking a little bit longer, but yes, everything is on the table.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

Prince Edward Island is divided into two employment insurance economic regions, Charlottetown and Prince Edward Island excluding Charlottetown.

These are based on employment rates and there is quite a discrepancy in the hours and weeks required between the two zones. While this is a federal issue, it is having huge impacts on residents of Charlottetown.

### **Employment insurance zones**

Question to the hon. Premier: What is your government's position on the two employment insurance zones on PEI?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question.

It is a question that we have probably all have heard a lot about in the most recent provincial campaign.

The previous government had written a letter of support to support one EI zone in

Prince Edward Island providing that it was actually at the lower requirement of hours needed, which would be the outside of Charlottetown component and that would be the official stance that I would have.

I would have no reason to not support that. I think it's easier for Prince Edward Island if we have one zone, but as I mentioned yesterday when I met with the mayors of Charlottetown, Stratford and Cornwall, as we advocate for this, make sure in the same vein when we advocate for one zone, that we make sure it is for the lower requirement number so that everyone in Prince Edward Island is treated fairly.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

I appreciate that.

So you kind of gave us an indication of your plans moving forward on this.

Would you provide the House with an update in six months to let us know how that goes?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park pointed out, it is in fact a federal jurisdiction. I expect with a federal election in the offing this fall that will be continue to be something that will gain a little bit more momentum going forward.

It was a commitment that many of those running in the election last time had committed to it, but as yet they have not been able to make the required change that is needed.

From a lobby prospective, we will continue to lead that charge here and absolutely I would loved to report back here in six months that something positive has happened but that's going to require an election to be held and some decisions to be made following that, but I will certainly come back in six months with any information that I have.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

My question today is for the hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

A \$10 million renovation and expansion to the Bell Aliant Centre and École-sur-Mer in Summerside will take place this year.

However, there remains a pressing need in other French language schools like École Evangeline.

### **Structural problems at École Evangeline**

Minister: Are you aware of the structural problems at École Evangeline?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche for the question.

*Merci beaucoup.*

Thank you very much.

In fact, I'm very well aware of those concerns as the member knows. Those concerns have been brought up for many years now and with the school being built back in the 1960s, it's important that some changes are made.

I'm pleased to say that tomorrow we're meeting with *la Commission scolaire de langue française* and hope to discuss some of the priorities and see where that lies, including École-sur-Mer, in some of the project there.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, your first supplementary.

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

Ecole Evangeline was built, as the minister said, in the 1960s and it's showing its age.

The two main options appear to be renovation of the existing school, or to build a new school.

### **Options for École Evangeline school**

Has the minister had any discussions with the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to what option would be preferred?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

Indeed, that's a really good point. Those are some tough decisions that will have to be made about Ecole Evangeline – build new or renovate – and then of course, with Ecole-sur-Mer so close by, there are students that have gone from Ecole-sur-Mer to Evangeline and Evangeline to Ecole-sur-Mer. As I mentioned, meeting with the CLSF tomorrow, we want to look at all of those options and see what is the best way forward; Gilles Benoit is the new president.

Really, in our new roles here in government, we haven't had an opportunity to meet as a group to talk about our infrastructure either, so those will all be on the table.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, your second supplementary.

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

Hon. minister, I'm sure you're aware that the French Language School Board had indicated renovations or some kind of look at the Evangeline school was a priority for them last year.

### **Ensuring of funding for Ecole Evangeline**

Would the minister – would you be prepared to include this in your capital budget and ensure Evangeline school is given consideration by Cabinet in the next funding year?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

There's nothing I would love to do more than to stand here right now and be able to make a promise like that, but until I talk with my Cabinet colleagues and talk with Treasury Board, I can't stand here today and say I can commit to that.

I do know there was \$55,000 worth of repairs made to the roof of Ecole Evangeline last fall, which is small, but at least that addressed that priority. Again, talking with *la Commission scolaire de langue française* tomorrow – I'm hoping to get an idea of exactly what their priorities are and if Ecole Evangeline is still at the top of their list.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

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

My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture and Land.

The 2019 potato crop is in on Prince Edward Island and inevitably, that comes with bills that come probably about a month later. Many of those bills are rather expensive; costs for fertilizer, fuel, wages and so forth.

The federal AgriRecovery fund is a federal disaster relief initiative to help producers with extraordinary costs of activities necessary for farmers to recover following a natural disaster; the federal government cost-shared this initiative with the provincial governments.

Prior to the recent provincial election, the PEI department of agriculture made application to the federal government to have Prince Edward Island participate in this program.

### **Status on AgriRecovery application**

Could the minister provide this Legislature with a status of the AgriRecovery application?

**Speaker:** the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

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

That's a great question.

As a farmer myself, I know that Mother Nature can be very cruel and she was very cruel to our potato farmers last fall. This all adds extra burdens to our farmers and as you say, their bills are starting to pile up right now.

I commend the minister of agriculture for putting the application forward for this ag-recovery fund, which triggers a disaster year. It's a Canadian-federal program and we did get accepted for it and our government, as soon as we got in, that was our first line of business. Mr. Premier and I sat down and had discussions with everyone involved and our assessment has gone to the federal government and now we're waiting back for their answer.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, your first supplementary.

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

PEI potato farmers did have a challenging 2018 fall season with over 7,000 acres of not-harvested potatoes and concerns about the impacts that that will have on a virus-free potato 2019 crop.

There are many volunteers could possibly emerge – when farmers have to comply with crop rotations.

#### **Availability of AgriRecovery to PEI growers**

It's good to know that the minister is saying that has been accepted but does the minister have any indication of when and how much funding will be available to PEI growers this season?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

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

I know the importance of the timing of this and we are constantly in conversations with our federal counterparts to get an answer and we're patiently waiting. We expect an answer any day on when the timeline will be.

Over 8,200 Islanders are directly employed in the potato industry, so it is an important part of our society and our primary industry.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, your second supplementary.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously there certainly were other commodities too, that were also impacted on issues pertaining to weather last year and once again, it's encouraging to know that they have been approved for funding, but we still don't seem to have a lot of details here.

I'm told that these details are out there but what are the qualifications for farmers to tap into this particular fund and will other commodities be eligible for funding?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Land.

**Mr. Thompson:** To answer your question, yes.

Other commodities, these did trigger the AgriRecovery, some horticultural did and those details will be coming out with the assessment as soon as we hear, which should be very soon, I hope.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Morell-Donagh.

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

I know when I was elected in 2015 I started asking a lot of questions about the school psychological assessments and actually, I know the entire opposition before me had asked the government many times about this.

I've got a bit of a different angle for Question Period but we're certainly not going to let up now.

#### **Update on waitlist for psychological assessments**

I'm wondering if the Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning can give me an update on the waitlist for these assessments?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay. Well thank you member that is a very good question.

The waitlists are something we're still working to address and working to get down and it's something that – if you want to know the details of the numbers on list, I don't have them at my fingertips and I'll get back to you with that. You can believe that of course, in the department it's something that we're looking to reduce the numbers on as quickly as we can.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Morell-Donagh, your first supplementary.

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

I know the third party over there is looking for some credit and you know what, I'll give them some credit. It ballooned under their watch to about 400 people on the waitlist in about three and a half years. They brought in some new psychologists which would help reduce it and they took our advise and started hiring privately as well, which brought it back down – I think in January this year it was back down to about a two- and a half- year waitlist.

There was a constituent about mine contacted me this weekend that recently it was back up to approximately three years.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) in six weeks you did this?

**Mr. MacEwen:** It's from January until the election actually –

**An Hon. Member:** Oh.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I'm wondering if the minister can confirm if that's true or not?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Mr. Trivers:** Well thank you member.

As I said, I don't have the number at my fingertips to confirm that, but I will get back to you on that. I can say it is something that we're looking at addressing and trying to

improve on and today is budget day and you never know what might come up.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Morell-Donagh, your second supplementary.

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

It's easy to get caught up in these numbers and these lists but we want to see action. I hope that this current government does what we said we'd do for a long time and try and address this problem. We need to get these waitlists down.

There's people that are in Grade 3 that are waiting until they're in Grade 6. It's a serious situation. If we've got to go back out to the private sector and hire them again, I would encourage the minister to do that.

#### **Commitment to reduce waitlist**

Will the minister commit today to getting that list down as quickly as possible?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

It's hard to disagree with an argument like that and I will go back to my deputy minister and I will go back to the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning and that is one thing we will set as one of our priorities.

Thank you.

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

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

Many people have approached me with suggestions for the use of the land formally occupied by the Prince Edward Home.

One *Guardian* Letter to the Editor suggestion was for a botanical greenhouse. Brighton residents have suggested affordable housing or expanding the Victoria Park.

**Plans for land of the old Prince Edward Home**

I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What are the plans for the use of this magnificent piece of land?

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

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

So at this point, we are just coming to the end of phase one of demolition. There's another second phase of demolition for the newer part of the building, which will probably start in the next month or so.

That won't be completed until sometime in November, and, at that point, we plan on putting grass seed there.

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

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

The land in question is arguably one of the most prominent in the city.

Question to the minister: What steps are being taken or will be taken to consult city residents on the use of the land?

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

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

So at this point, we don't have any plans to use the land for anything.

We plan to plant grass there, and hopefully by next summer we'll have grass. So I'm not sure if we need to consult anybody to do that, but the plan at this point is we're going to plant grass there.

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

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

Thanks for the response.

So are you saying you're not going to consult the citizens on the suggested use? You're just going to plant grass?

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

**Mr. Hammarlund:** (Indistinct) because you can do many other things like affordable housing, for one, that keeps coming up.

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

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

Planting grass is part of our project right now for demolition of the project.

So we have demolished the piece that was built in the 30s. The section of the building that was built in the 60s, we're finishing the mitigation on it now, and when the mitigation part of it is done we are going to tear that down. The contract basically says when the site is all cleaned up, put topsoil down, and plant grass.

I'm not saying we won't consult. I'm saying we don't have any plans.

So if there's a time that somebody thought that we needed to do something there, then we would have to consult just by virtue of the way government does business, and the way you have to do business when you come to the City of Charlottetown to do business.

It's been expressed to me that maybe the City of Charlottetown is interested in doing something there. At this point, there's been no formal discussion with me. If they were to take it on, then it would be their responsibility to consult with the local residents.

But at this point, the plan is to get the building out of there. We're going to put topsoil down, and we're going to seed it out. As per the arrangements, we have to tear the building down.

If there's further discussion down the road, then of course we'll include anybody in that needs to be included into it.

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

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

Thanks for the response.

I think planting grass is an excellent solution in the short run, but we all know that whatever you're planning, be it the affordable housing or any other construction; it's going to take a long time for the planning process.

### **Consultation process re: land**

Don't you think the consultation process should start now?

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

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

The consultation process would start now if we had plans, but as I said, we don't have plans.

The building has sat there vacant for a number of years. It's been, quite frankly, an eyesore. It's been a place that we didn't know if it was safe for children to be around, and people were smashing windows and breaking in. It was important to us to get the building out there.

So we started that process and, like I said, we got the first part of the building down, which is the part that was built in the 30s. They're mitigating the rest of the part, taking out the pieces that they can salvage whether it's metals that the contractor can sell or any mitigation of any dangerous goods that were in there which was all part of the mitigation plan.

Then we will take that part down, and we will return – so the idea is at this point we're returning it to its original use, which was grass. I know I keep saying we're going to plant grass there, but we're planting grass there at this point.

If there is a discussion to have, or if there's social housing that needs to be built and people think it should be built there, then that certainly wouldn't fall under the responsibility of the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

That would fall under either somebody else's department here or the City of Charlottetown, or perhaps a private developer.

At this point that's not in the plans for that site. I'm not saying it can't be, I'm not saying it won't be, but I'm saying from my perspective in our department, our responsibly is to get the building down, get it on dump trucks, ship it out and return it to its original state. Any other discussion, we'd be willing to have, but all our input would be at this point would be the land. The land resides with us, any moneys that would be needed to do it, or any planning that would be needed to do it, or any community outreach that needed to do it, would have to be done through the proper department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

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

I know the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women's head is probably spinning right now so I don't like to do this, but, women represent half of our population, yet are grossly underrepresented when it comes to governance. Increased political involvement by women, better corporate performance and more inclusive organizational cultures are all benefits that arise when women get involved in their community by joining a board.

### **Status of Island corporate directors**

A question to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: What percentage of Island corporate directors are women?

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

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

I don't have that at my fingertips but I would be happy to bring it back to you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member of Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**Ms. Bernard:** Other jurisdictions require corporations to work toward improving

gender balance on boards. Several European countries require a minimum percentage of women to serve on each board. In places like Ontario, corporations must report on things like the number of women on their boards, their policies for gender representation and their nomination and selection process for directors.

### **Representation of women on boards**

A question for the hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: How will your government encourage better representation of women on boards?

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

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

I can say, one way that we're showing it in government is now Executive Council actually has gender balance, so that make a difference for this government. I will be encouraging all boards to have gender balance moving forward.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown- Victoria Park, your final question.

**Ms. Bernard:** Currently it is difficult to find accurate and up-to-date information on the representation of women on boards.

A question to the hon. minister: Will you commit to regular reporting on the prevalence of women on corporate boards and including this information in the next Women in PEI: A Statistical Review?

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

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

I will be happy to commit to that.

### Statements by Ministers

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

### **Launch of go!forit**

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

It was approximately 9 years ago when go! PEI was launched. Over the past 9 years, the Department of Health and Wellness, in partnership with recreation PEI and many community groups are working to ensure this made in PEI initiative gets people up and moving.

Over the years, thousands of Islanders have been encouraged and motivated by go!PEI, people of all ages and lifestyles, it encourages all of us to go for a walk, go for a bike ride, go to the market, and to take ownership of our personal wellness and believe that we have the power to make it better.

go!PEI is one of the government's integrated approaches to chronic illness prevention and management. Funded through the Department of Health and Wellness, it was designed to be a support system for all Islanders, to help create healthier lifestyles and decrease the risk of chronic illness. go!PEI offers a wide range of resources and support systems, including an interactive website with lots of information and financial assistance for community level programs such as, learn to run programs, cycling initiatives, healthy eating activities, walking or hiking programs, pickle ball, community gardens and much more.

go!PEI provides a port at the grass roots level. It focuses on using the resources already in place by supporting local food producers and encouraging people to get outside, walk the confederation trail, run on the beach, and use the existing local infrastructure available throughout our Island communities.

Today, I am pleased to inform the House that go!PEI has launched a new program called go!forit with additional financial support from the Public Health Agency of Canada. Approximately 200 Islanders have already signed up for this one year program.

Over the next year those 200 go!forit participants, including individuals, family, groups, and worksites, will have a one-on-one tailored support to help them live a healthier life. They will receive a personalized walking program, biweekly physical activity classes or activities, monthly health presentations on a variety of

topics, and a pedometer to track their progress.

Participants will have periodic health assessments to see their progress and help evaluate the program.

Our hope is that this will be a life changing opportunity for these 200 Islanders who signed up when a public call went out last month.

I'm so pleased that our department is supporting this fantastic new initiative, as well as other valuable programs available through go!PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

It is indeed welcome news to hear of this funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada to support go!forit PEI. It's a federally funded program, and it's wonderful to hear that 200 households and 20 small-to-medium workplaces are going to be able to participate in the first year.

It's my understanding that there's two years of funding that would reach over 500 Islanders.

One of the goals of this program is to break down barriers to physical activity, specifically for Islanders with mobility challenges and health challenges that contribute to a sedentary lifestyle. That is just wonderful, wonderful news.

It would also be important to consider additional barriers that many individuals face, such as access to safe and affordable recreation facilities and programs in their local communities.

Low-income Islanders often face additional barriers to regular participation in physical activities such as proper equipment and footwear, fees in activities, child care as well as supporting those with erratic work schedules to find balance and time for physical activities. Of course that can apply to individuals from all levels of socioeconomic status.

I would suggest that these are just some areas that the provincial government could look at providing some additional support alongside the go!forit PEI program, so that everyone can have equal access to effectively engage in this wonderful opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

**Tronosjet**

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

As we all know, innovation is to success in all sectors of our economy. Companies across the economy must keep on top of new and emerging trends to remain competitive over the long term.

Today we see Tronosjet doing just that. Tronosjet operates out of facilities in Slemmon Park and Charlottetown Airport Park, and is a growing contributor to a very successful aerospace industry.

The company manufactures parts for aircraft, and performs heavy aircraft modifications, especially for tankers used to fight fires.

A new project being supported by ACOA, NRC, and Innovation PEI will allow Tronosjet to research and develop new parts for certification that increase design flexibility compared to traditional manufacturing. These parts will be produced through 3D printing, and have the potential to decrease manufacturing costs while making the parts easier to service and more reliable.

That puts Tronosjet on the cutting edge of aviation parts manufacturing, and will put the company in an enviable position moving forward. This is the kind of innovation we want to see from entrepreneurs and businesses across the province, and in every sector of the economy.

As such, we will be providing Tronosjet with a \$50,000 grant to assist with the innovative project.

Tronosjet is proving that with hard work, good science, and a keen eye to the future, any company in any sector can be an innovator and a leader.

On behalf of the provincial government, I congratulate Mark Coffin, Jeff Campbell, Mark Booth, and the rest of the staff at Tronosjet for their incredible work on this project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Thank you to the minister for this wonderful announcement.

I believe that's a completely new piece of equipment for PEI, and it's great that we get such a wonderful resource.

I'm wondering given the public funds that are going into the equipment, of course, to what extent will it be shared beyond just the company in question, but we'll see. I would really appreciate some more information on what this particular piece can actually do, and if there's some options for sharing it in the future for the rest of PEI people that are trying to make step forwards.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

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

I'd like to thank the minister for his statement, and Toronosjet, as he had indicated, set up in 2014 in Slemmon Park and recently expanded to Charlottetown. The company has been a great success, and has been growing its capabilities and workforce.

It is nice to see research and development being done right here on Prince Edward Island. Companies like this help explain the success of the PEI economy in recent years.

I'd like to extend my congratulations and best wishes to the company, management, and to all employees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty replying to the minister's statement from Health and Wellness.

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

This is a great announcement. \$460,000 is an incredible amount of money towards going for activity and Recreation Prince Edward Island.

The go!forit initiative is really, really important, and you can see earlier in the House the Premier even talked about how he was starting his fitness journey here –

**Premier King:** I already started.

**Mr. McNeilly:** You already started, that's great.

These are important. Those are important for us to show an example, all the MLAs in here, as well as into our districts.

I do believe that Recreation PEI is desperately underfunded up until now. We need to together collectively, look at making our Island healthier, and we're going to do that, though our communities doing things like walking programs. We don't have to wait for funding, we can do it now.

It's important. It's the soul of being healthy. So I really applaud this new information.

Don't forget that we strive for 150 minutes of activity. Each person needs that a week. Go home today, discuss it with your families, and allow your kids to participate in your activity classes and when you go do things for activity purposes.

As well as the kids, listen to them, they know how to get active, and let's play together.

Thank you.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, I present herewith with a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, which said message is signed by Her Honour.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, I shall ask the Clerk to read the message from Her Honour.

Hon. members, will you please stand while the message is being read.

**Clerk:** Hon. Colin LaVie, MLA  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
197 Richmond Street, Charlottetown  
Prince Edward Island

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Her Honour the Honourable Antoinette Perry, Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, hereby transmits the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure required to carry on the public services of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and also until the passage of the estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

In accordance with the provisions of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and the Prince Edward Island Terms of Union, Her Honour recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

By Command,  
Pamela Trainor  
Assistant Clerk of  
Executive Council

Also signed by Honourable Antoinette Perry  
Lieutenant Governor  
24 June, 2019

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I present herewith the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Province of Prince Edward Island for the fiscal year ending

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said estimates be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Premier.

**Premier King:** I have more, I do.

Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the consideration of the Estimates in Committee of the Whole House be added to the orders of the day until such time as they are dispatched.

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

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Ms. Compton:** Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the hon. Premier, that Motion No. 26 be now read.

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

**Clerk:** Motion No. 26.

The hon. Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women moves, seconded by the Honourable Premier, the following motion:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that this House approves, in general, the Budgetary Policy of the Government.

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

**Introduction**

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

Good afternoon, bonjour, **kwe'**.

I am happy to rise today to present the Annual Operating Budget for 2019-2020 for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

It is the budget plan that builds on the strength of our economy and our communities, draws on the best ideas from all parties in this Assembly, as well as many partners outside of government and sets out strong and stable supports that will allow the people of this province to succeed.

Coming into government, we inherited a sound economic environment and strong approach to fiscal stewardship left by the previous government. Responsible bottom lines, as well as strategic investments over the past four years have ensured that our province is in a position of relative strength.

Indeed, much of the base for this budget was put in place by good direction from the previous administration.

Last week's Speech From the Throne outlined a longer term vision to making life better for all people. Budget 2019-2020 sets out the first steps to putting this in place.

The steps we are proposing are secure in building long-term prosperity for all Islanders and establishing strong promise for our youth and future generations.

The steps we are proposing are shared based on priorities identified by all parties in this Assembly and many individuals and groups came forward during the budget consultations initiated by the previous government.

The steps we are proposing are sustainable, providing a path to deliver on the many priorities we heard from Islanders during the election and we are confident that the steps we are proposing will enable us to deliver on priority commitments while maintaining a small operating surplus.

The result is a budget proposal that is responsive and responsible; responsive to the priority and pressing issues and needs of Islanders and responsive in making wise investments for both the present and future.

### **Investing in the Priorities of Islanders**

We are blessed to be able to live in this province, communities throughout this province provide our people with a base to succeed. It is in our homes, in our communities that we have important values instilled in us from the earliest ages. Through our parents, grandparents and elders, our teachers and neighbours, our classmates, teammates and friends, we are taught to place value in place and people.

It is in these same communities that we see economic and social enterprise take off:

fisheries, aquaculture and farming – cornerstones to the history and fabric of our province continue to advance through good ideas, innovative and sustainable practices and new products and markets.

Our farmers and fishers capture the essence of PEI enterprise in their persistent hard work and consistent effort to modernize their practices.

Their efforts over many decades have turned PEI food products from the land and the sea into much sought after commodities providing safe and healthy food to families in PEI, Canada and around the world.

Tourism, culture and creative industries increasingly have grown in all parts of our province.

With Prince Edward Island now being known worldwide through our amazing performers, artists and culinary specialists, newer industries on the Island are leading to revitalize facilities and consistent community growth – from aerospace in Summerside to biosciences in Charlottetown, to advance manufacturing in Southern Kings. Our young people are staying or coming home to build good long-term careers and lives in their home areas.

Through community collaboration, social enterprise and volunteerism, these young people are helping to keep our communities strong while contributing to the overall quality of life in our province.

However bolstered we can be with our economic growth and community enhancements; we cannot overlook the fact that not all Islanders are sharing equally in the same success. Our family, friends and neighbours confront health and mental health challenges, concerns about job security and housing, real struggles with poverty and social connection.

It is vital that we work together, invest and support in ways that ensure that everyone in this province has a path to succeed.

Our budget presented today drawn from ideas and priorities identified from all parties in this Assembly provides further steps to keep those pathways open for all Islanders.

The plans for investment include \$195 million in total new investment with \$77.4 million offset by federal program revenue resulting in new total net expenditures of \$117.6 million.

\$36.3 million in new expenditures for health care services and that's a 5.4 increase over last year.

\$19.2 million in education supports, particularly for new classroom teachers and educational resulting in a 4.8 increase over last year.

\$11.3 million to address poverty and affordable housing.

Infrastructure operating expenditure of \$109.7 million offset by \$98.4 million of federal revenue.

\$4.1 million in new investments to combat climate change and \$5.7 million to support our primary industries, particularly following the devastating growing season of 2018.

In all cases, we have looked beyond the budget lines to reach the issues that directly affect the lives of Islanders.

More access to primary health care, more localized support for mental health, better supports in our classrooms, enhanced support for food and housing rates for those under social supports and more active engagement with non-governmental organizations who help deliver supports to Islanders.

### **PEI Economy and Fiscal Highlights**

Based on the enterprise of our business community and NGO leaders, Prince Edward Island is in an enviable position economically.

Our population through net growth international and domestic migration continues to increase and was estimated to be 155,318 as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

While many have been attracted by employment and quality of life opportunities, this growing population is also creating more opportunities for all Islanders.

The number of employed persons on the Island increased 3.1 percent in 2018 to a new all-time high of 76,000 while the unemployment rate decreased .4 percentage points to 9.4 percent through May 2019 – employment has grown by 1 percent while the unemployment rate has averaged 9.3 percent.

At the same time, total labour income on the Island grew by four percentage points in 2018. Through the first quarter of 2019, it has accelerated by 5.1 percent.

While we have a way to go in both employment and income, progress has been made in creating more and better opportunities for everyone who seeks to make Prince Edward Island their home.

This greater person success is also lending to general economic success.

Retail sales grew by 2.9 percent in 2018, the fastest growth in the region.

Through March 2019, retail sales were up 2.4 percent, business leadership has led to international exports increasing 5 percent in 2018 and through April exports were up 13.8 percent.

Manufacturing shipments increased 8.2 percentage points in 2018 and they are up 12.5 percent through April 2019.

As we all know, this general economic surge has created pressures in some areas, notably housing.

While government is making necessary investment in affordable housing, the private market did respond in 2018 with new housing starts totally 1,089, an increase of 19.5 percent, the last time housing starts exceeded 1,000 units was in 1988.

Our primary industries, while generally strong, are susceptible to environmental factors. Owing to a difficult growing season, farm cash receipts declined 2 percent in 2018. Through the first quarter of 2019, they are up 15.6 percent due to a rise in crop insurance payments.

The preliminary landed value of the 2018 lobster fishery was 38.7 million pounds, an

increase of 6 percent from 2017 and a new all-time high.

Lower prices for lobster, however, had an offsetting impact on the value of the landed catch, which was down 12.8 percent. Early indicators of the 2019 lobster fisheries show landing above last year's levels and a modest improvement in prices.

Our tourism product remains strong and indications are that total overnight stays on the Island exceeded one million for the second year in a row in and through the first quarter of 2019, bridge and air traffic and room nights sold have all increased.

All signs point to a Prince Edward Island economy that is fundamentally strong. Those strong fundamentals are leading to more full-time jobs and higher overall wages, providing more opportunities for Islanders. We need to keep that momentum going while investing in key areas of social and community supports.

Our budget plan seeks to achieve that for all Islanders. The strong provincial economy is contributing to a positive outlook for the provincial budget, as a result of increase own-sourced revenues from sales tax and personal and corporate income tax. The increased revenues allow us to afford new investments in health care, education and families, while maintaining a modest surplus of \$1.8 million.

At the same time, our net debt to gross domestic product continues to decline to 30.7 percent, the fourth best amount Canadian provinces and a key indicator for our bond raters.

### **Investing in More Responsive Health Care**

During the election campaign we heard, I think across all parties, that the number one issue for Islanders is more accessible and responsive health care. Every single person in this province is touched directly or through a family member by the necessity of active and frequent attention on health and wellbeing. We are getting older and even when we are young; we know that paying attention to our health is paramount to our quality of life. We are truly blessed in this province by talented health care

professionals who regularly go beyond the norm, to ensure that we have the level and quality of care we need. Our doctors, nurses and specialists are all to be commended for the personal and professional attention they provide to us.

We have heard that more investment and innovation is needed to make sure we are not over extending, both our professionals and our overall system of care. The reality is that more than 13,000 Islanders do not have a primary care provider, with many ending up in walk-in clinic or emergency departments as a result. We need to change our approach.

Our government is committed to working with the physician, nursing and specialist communities to find better, sustainable solutions to the growing pressures, including practice innovations that ensure we are drawing on our best expertise, wherever it resides and we need to start now.

Our budget commits to \$36.3 million in new and additional investments in health care, a 5.4 percent increase in expenditures over last year.

This includes two new family physicians in Queen's County and \$1.6 million to support nurse practitioners added in the past year. Together these investments will provide primary family medicine to 3,000 Islanders who are currently on the waitlist; a first and significant step to ensuring that everyone has access to the care that they need.

Our budget also includes \$1.3 million in new orthopedic specialist services to elevate the growing wait times for hip and knee replacements. Additional support for an anesthesiologist at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will ensure that operating rooms are fully utilized to meet the surgical needs of Islanders.

\$560,000 in additional annual expenditures on drug coverage will support Islanders who are suffering from chronic disease. This includes expanded coverage for medications for the treatment of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and for the treatment of diabetes mellitus in patients with high cardiovascular risk. New medications will be added as of August 1<sup>st</sup> for the treatment of patients with heart

failure and for the treatment of patients with lung cancer.

During the campaign we heard of particular areas of concern in health care, and our budget plan addresses several of these. This includes a commitment to breast density notification for all Island women, and funding for ultrasounds for women who fall in the most dense category as a means of providing earlier detection.

It includes \$150,000 in support for midwifery in the province to allow these services to be appropriately established consistent with current and anticipated demand.

Support will be provided for ostomy supplies for Islanders who need this specialized care and resources to carry on a healthy life.

Our budget also follows through on the commitment to deliver 100 new long-term care beds across the province, with \$3.2 million in new dollars identified in the budget plan. We will continue to provide needed supports for our seniors, in their homes and home communities, as well as in specialized care, so that their lives are fully supported in their later years.

Mental health and addictions represent the most difficult area of health and wellness facing us all. We all know the effects these diseases can have on individuals and their families, and the challenge of providing the right response, at the right time in the right place.

The master plan for renewed services is well underway, and over the course of the next three to four years, working with our professionals and community experts, we will see a major transformation in the delivery of mental health and addictions services across our province.

In this budget, particular support is identified for the mobile mental health crisis program, for mental health services at Prince County Hospital and for the forensic unit at Hillsborough Hospital, so that the full spectrum of needed services is enhanced.

At the same time, our budget commits to furthering the work of providing supports early on, even before issues may be developed. Student Well-being Teams, first piloted in 2017, have touched more than

19,000 students and family members since the program began, helping students to build resiliency, better manage their health and mental health and cope with life challenges. Teams have supported parents through programs like Triple P Parenting.

As of fall 2019, all schools in Prince Edward Island will have mental health therapists, school health nurses, school outreach workers and occupational therapists working alongside teachers and school staff to support children and their families. Family Ties support workers will be added to some teams, providing an at-the-elbow supports to families in their homes, schools or wherever help is needed. A psychologist will also join the program to assist with more complex cases. Additional positions will be added in 2020-2021.

We are committed to continued investments which ensure that our health care system is proactive, responsive and efficient. We will place more emphasis on wellness at all levels, on community and practice-based innovations that provide more direct supports to Islanders, and to working more closely with our professionals on both immediate changes and long-term enhancements to our system of care in this province.

### **Investing in our Future**

The main theme our government has underlined consistently is that of people, the people of this province. None are more important to the future of Prince Edward Island than our children and youth. The path they are provided in education and community life will lead to their own success, as well as that of our entire province. Any investment we make now will provide returns for many years to come.

With that in mind, we are committing in this budget plan to an additional investment of \$19.2 million, a 7.7 percent increase over last year – in support of K-12 education, and early years education.

These investments are the single largest increase in education in over a decade, underlining the significance that we all place on our young people.

Our investments will mean more resources in Island classrooms, and more instructional supports for our students – 32 new teachers will be added to address growing population

and growing complexity in classroom composition.

Additionally, 42 new educational assistant positions will be added in our schools. In all, 74 new front-line staff will be added to our English and French schools.

We will continue to invest in our highly successful early childhood education. The budget plan follows through on the wage increases for our early year's educators, with a commitment to working on a long-term plan that sees these wages consistent with the value we place on these programs. The wage benefits will be extended to the Best Start Program as well.

We will undertake a full development of a 4-year-old pre-school program, with resources committed this year to a full public engagement and assessment of what a community-based program could look like in our province.

We remain committed to the development of a school food program, and will undertake further pilots in the upcoming school year to refine how a comprehensive initiative can be best organized for Island schools and students.

Our post-secondary institutions, *Collège de l'Île*, Holland College and the University of Prince Edward Island, will all receive a 2 percent increase in operating funding to allow their tuition levels to remain competitive while they deliver and develop academic and training programs that prepare our students to succeed in work and life.

We have earmarked the necessary funds to establish a fully independent Office of Children and Youth Advocate, and will maintain budget flexibility to allow for additional funding as directed through the Legislative Assembly once the office is fully established. The budget plan also includes support for a second children's lawyer, as well as additional support for child protection services.

### **Investing in Supports for Islanders**

We have said that for the Prince Edward Island story to be truly remarkable we have to consider that it is a story that pertains to everyone. If one of us is suffering, it should affect all of us and compel us to act; to

provide, to correct and to improve. It is how we serve one another that is and will be the real mark of us as a society – one built on inclusion, encouragement and opportunity for all.

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan, introduced by the previous government, provides a comprehensive blueprint for where we need to act. The Official Opposition has quite rightly said that our true objective should be poverty elimination.

Our budget plan commits to an additional \$11.3 million in this fiscal year to address social development. This includes \$4.7 million to address poverty reduction and AccessAbility supports for Islanders. It also includes a \$225,000 commitment to develop a PEI secure-income pilot. All parties in this Assembly have previously unanimously supported the development of a basic income guarantee in collaboration with the federal government. We are not going to wait for our federal partner, but rather propose that we undertake to do what we can here on PEI in the interest of developing some real solutions that combat and alleviate persistent poverty.

We will continue to invest heavily in affordable housing. Our budget plan includes further commitments in this fiscal year of \$2.2 million in rent supplements and \$4.4 million to build affordable supply in partnership with community and non-governmental organizations, developers and the federal government. Already, over 500 affordable housing units in all parts of PEI have been initiated through the Housing Action Plan, with a similar amount at some level of development.

In addition to support for Bedford MacDonald House, we are committing \$100,000 annually to support a shelter for women in the province. Additionally, we are increasing grants through the Interministerial Women's Secretariat by \$100,000 each year for the next three years to provide needed support for organizations that support women's inclusion in our province. Added to that, \$100,000 is being provided to support a Survivors of Sexual Assault Program.

While we invest in support for those who need it the most, we also want to ensure that

all Islanders and lower-income Islanders in particular, are seeing more disposable income left in their pockets.

Our budget plan follows through on our commitment to raise the basic personal tax amount to \$10,000 as of January 1, 2020. Proportionate changes will be made to the spouse and equivalent to spouse amounts.

On top of that, we will increase the low-income threshold from \$17,000 to \$18,000, also effective January 1, 2020. These provisions, taken together, will result in a single parent saving up to \$202 in taxes each year and a senior couple saving as much as \$215 in taxes – real savings, resulting in real dollars in their pockets. These changes will provide an estimated \$7.6 million in annual tax savings to Islanders.

After raising the basic personal amount to \$10,000 and the low-income tax reduction threshold to \$18,000, there will be an estimated 1,700 additional people who will no longer pay PEI income tax.

### **Investing in Communities and Business**

We have said consistently that our communities, and the people who comprise them, are the real source of strength in our province. We are proud of where we come from – we may even be a little competitive about it – and are always willing to work hard to see our communities thrive.

With a very active federal partner, we have made some historic investments in modernizing our infrastructure and will continue to do so. Our network of roads and bridges has seen major improvements, and we need to continue that in the interest of road safety and efficient passage of our goods across and from the province.

This extends to the development of more active transportation corridors, so that Islanders can opt for commuting by bicycle, and the encouragement of existing and new transit possibilities to lower the number of passenger vehicles on our roads. Our budget commits to new and additional funding for Pat and the Elephant and for Transportation West.

Major infrastructure project areas include \$56 million for roads and bridges, and \$13.8

million for water and wastewater. A recent call for proposed areas of investments with municipalities, First Nations and community organizations brought forward 120 projects to be reviewed and initiated over the next few years.

Of course, increasingly our infrastructure is technology-based and \$17.4 million has been budgeted this year for the broadband initiative, including \$2 million to support local companies and their particular roles. In all, this single project will invest more than \$80 million in upgrades in this needed area, with only \$13.6 million of that total coming from provincial sources.

An additional \$4.3 million will be provided directly to municipalities and \$2.2 million has been budgeted for community growth initiatives identified by local communities themselves.

Encouraging a vibrant and competitive business environment is a strong priority of our government. As I outlined at the outset of this address, we do well when our businesses do well. When businesses thrive, more Islanders are working. More products and services are being sold around the world. More recognition comes PEI's way. And more opportunities are created for everyone.

We already are fully engaged with the Partnership for Growth to identify and pursue ways we can help businesses – of all size and in every sector – succeed. We know the fundamentals are important – access to talent and capital, less red tape, a competitive tax environment – and we are prepared to address all these issues with the Partnership group.

Budget 2019-20 commits to lowering the small business tax rate by a further 0.5 percent, down to 3.0 percent, beginning January 1, 2020 benefitting approximately 2,600 small businesses. This will mean that only New Brunswick is lower than PEI in provinces east of Manitoba when it comes to these rates. It also represents the fourth successive year where the rate has gone down.

In this Budget, the Department of Agriculture and Land will take over management of the dead stock contract to

reduce the administrative burden placed on the dairy farmers of Prince Edward Island. Over the next year, the department will undertake a policy review of the handling of dead stock in the province, with the goal of identifying an effective long-term solution.

Given the difficult growing season of 2018, significant investments are being made this year to protect our \$268 million in crops grown in our province. The budget plan commits to \$5.7 million in additional investments into agriculture insurance rates and premiums to better protect these valuable commodities, and this government is committed to supporting growers to access any additional programs which may be made available.

In the next year, we plan to fully scope a Land Bank initiative, including the prospects, terms and long-term budget requirements associated with it.

The Government will continue to support the fishery and aquaculture sectors through investments of \$2 million in the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. This investment will drive innovation, automation, productivity and lead to more diverse seafood products for markets all over the world. In addition, the province will support the PEI seafood industry through the new federal/provincial partnership to provide the Canadian Fish and Seafood Opportunity Fund. This program will build upon the Canadian seafood brand and promote seafood to existing and new markets.

We expect 2019 will again be a strong year for tourism, culture and creative industries in our province. Buoyed by a very strong product and a competitive dollar, we expect high levels of visitation and stays in all regions of the Island.

A highlight of the year is our first-ever opportunity to host *the Congrès Mondial Acadien*.

*Un haut fait de l'année sera sans doute le Congrès mondial acadien, que notre province a l'occasion d'accueillir pour la toute première fois.*

The province has committed \$600,000 to PEI's part in the hosting of this major event.

In 2018, the Mi'kmaq of PEI and Governments of Canada and Prince Edward Island signed a framework agreement towards a path of reconciliation. Along with our federal partner, our government is committed to working with the PEI Mi'kmaq towards a renewed government-to-government relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership. Budget 2019-2020 commits up to \$500,000 to enhance capacity for partnership with the Mi'kmaq.

### **Investing in Environment, Climate Change and Energy Futures**

We think of immediate business context in all sectors, including our primary industries, we cannot overlook the environmental and climate context we are all faced with. As we have said several times in this Assembly, Prince Edward Island – more than most jurisdictions – is acutely aware of the perils of climate change and its consequential impact on our natural environment.

The province's Climate Action Plan, Climate Adaptation Plan and Energy Strategy all seek to identify and initiate efforts that lower our emissions and provide environmentally and economically sound options in all sectors.

Our budget plan continues to advance this work, by providing a total of \$10 million in incentives for fuel switching in existing homes and businesses and in system investments to see our overall source of energy be increasingly, both renewable and homegrown.

The new 30 megawatt wind farm will be initiated this year at a total cost of \$60 million. It is expected the farm will be operational by 2020.

In addition, the province will provide greater support to solar projects, including a \$500,000 incentive program to start this year and a major potential development in Summerside over the course of the next several years.

A further \$200,000 will be provided to Island watershed groups to undertake active research initiatives on best water practices. The one million trees project, outlined during the campaign, will be undertaken to

help encourage reforestation and active woodlot management as part of carbon sequestration efforts.

PEI will participate with its neighboring provinces and the federal government on a regional clean energy roadmap to ascertain the most efficient uses of renewable and clean energy sources, their effective transmission, as well as pursuing storage innovations that will make our wind regime more effectively sustainable.

### Conclusion

What we have outlined today and will debate in the days ahead is a means to an end. The means may be financial and human resources – the priorities we identify and pursue in any given year. These are indeed important, but only inasmuch as they get us to a viable and strong end.

That end is a province where everyone has the ability to succeed, where they can see a path for themselves, their children and their grandchildren to succeed, where we don't overlook those who are struggling to succeed. Where we pitch in, come together, and work towards a shared set of goals. Where we truly try and make this province a better place – an envious place – and a place to leave better than we found it.

Our budget plan is part of a bigger plan, one that places people at the heart of everything that we do, that looks with ambition to the future while setting some strong, secure steps to realize our ambition.

Our plan today is built on the good work of the previous government and some great ideas from all parties in this Assembly.

It makes significant new investments in areas of immediate and long-term priority for our province. It achieves that while projecting a small operating surplus. It is responsive and responsible, and I look forward to our debate on how we can show our collective leadership in delivering for the people of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

*Merci.*

*Wela'lin.*

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

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

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

And I thank you, to the Minister of Finance.

However, I'm not entirely sure if I should be addressing my thanks to the Minister of Finance or to the Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank, as it would seem that he is the mastermind behind this document.

I appreciate we are still in the early days of this new administration, but I still can't help but feel disappointed to see that almost all of the budget is warmed-up, Liberal leftovers.

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

**Ms. Beaton:** Most of the so-called new spending has, in fact, come from program commitments made by the Liberals before they left government.

For example, the Premier has made much about collaborating with the official opposition and the third party over budget priorities. For us, we have been very clear that our four biggest priorities are poverty elimination, housing, climate change and good governance.

But almost all of the budget pledges in areas that are priorities of the official opposition are simply a fulfillment of commitments made by the previous administration and don't represent an expansion or improvement to existing inherited plans.

We are glad to see these commitments reaffirmed and, again, thank the former minister for having made them. But, we also know that major issues like poverty, climate change and housing will require substantially greater efforts, bold action and innovative solutions.

For example, the increase in social assistance rates in this budget is merely – to the 6% increases in food and shelter rates promised last year and in no way addresses the fact that more and more Islanders are being left behind.

Government is framing an increase in the basic personal tax exemption as a measure to support low-income Islanders when, in fact, middle class and wealthy taxpayers will benefit more by this change.

This does nothing for the most vulnerable Islanders who are already not paying taxes. There are better ways to help Islanders in need.

There's some confusion emerging around whether this government is actually moving ahead with the development of a basic income guarantee pilot, or something different that they call secure income. We very much hope that this government is serious about the basic income pilot program and we'll be looking for an ambiguous commitment to the basic income guarantee.

It is as if this new government has inherited an old house, one we all know is in need of significant renovations, and they don't quite know where to start work so they have decided to carry on with the plan of the previous owners and are conveniently ignoring the major structural repairs that need attention now.

Speaking of housing, this is another file where we wish government had gone further. The budget commits \$4.4 million to build affordable housing supply. I can't help but think that this is inadequate in the midst of a housing crisis.

There's no mention in this budget about addressing labour gaps in the skill trades – trades which are vital to the development of new housing. With an aging workforce and a demand for builds that's higher than ever, we need to be growing and maintaining our capacity to deliver this demand.

Again, in the area of climate change, there is little to no new spending. The 30 megawatt wind farm was a commitment of the previous government. The Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy has already told this House that he is tweaking the solar rebate program designed by the Liberals.

But most disappointingly –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Beaton:** – there is nothing significant here to help accelerate the shift to cleaner energy.

The half million dollars promised to support residential solar installations is completely inadequate.

For example, there are no incentives for electric vehicles and no supports for businesses that want to install charging stations.

While the commitment to develop a provincial one million tree program is a welcome step in increasing Prince Edward Island's carbon sequestration capacity, the program, to a large extent, seems like a repackaging of existing reforestation programs, including the Greening Spaces Program, and the Carbon Capture Tree Planting Program.

To more effectively combat climate change, the government should be investing in programs encouraging the conservation and cultivation of additional natural carbon sinks like wetlands.

We are pleased to see a cluster of our recommendations to support women have been picked up by the government. For example, the midwifery register and program will be a welcome addition to our health care system as well as some funding for women's shelters, but we are also concerned that the funds allocated are miniscule in comparison to the need.

In total, it only represents \$350,000.

A women's shelter is not a new need, and will not go away. A commitment to long-term operational funding is essential, but missing in this budget.

We do support this government's commitment to improving education, especially their commitment to adding 32 new teachers and 42 new educational assistants. We also appreciate that they have not cancelled the wage increase for early childhood educators that was promised by our previous government, but educators in this sector have been clear – much more funding is required if they are to reach wage parity with the educational assistants.

We also need to see the full school food program. Students who are fed achieve better educational outcomes. Student success is not something we should be kicking down the road.

With respect to postsecondary education, it is disappointing to see the government's lack of vision. While the increase to core operating funding is important and something I would encourage this government to continue, the devil is in the details. The fine print of the budget shows that total combined funding for Holland College and UPEI will decrease by \$3 million.

The people who are really hurt here are the students. While students can expect their tuition to increase, there is no announcement here about expanding student financial aid for Island students, despite a commitment in your platform to do so.

There is no announcement to invest in free textbooks, again, promised in your platform. And, as I referenced earlier, it is unclear what your strategy is to expand and enhance education in high demand areas like construction.

The government has invested a 5.4% increase in health care services – \$36 million. This sounds impressive, but is actually in line with increases made by the previous government.

In 2018, the increase was \$32.5 million or 4.8%, and in 2017, it was 5.8%.

While the commitment to provide 100 new long-term care beds across the province is welcomed and needed, the budget does not address the significant increases in public long-term care fees introduced by the previous government. Increases that will make it hard for seniors to receive the care that they need.

However, it is great to see that the province is investing in mental health; therapists, school nurses, school outreach workers, occupational therapists, and psychologists to support students and their families.

We are glad to see continued commitment to fiscal responsibility with this small surplus. Furthermore, the declining debt to GDP

ratio indicates an improving fiscal situation in the near future. We feel it is critically important that this province is governed in such a way that our finances are sustainable in the long-term, and that future generations are left better off.

Last week, my colleague, Leader of the Opposition, responded to the Speech from the Throne and said, I quote: "I agree wholeheartedly with the government's vision. I remain skeptical that there is a realistic plan to achieve that vision. In the coming weeks we will learn more about government's true intentions when it brings forward its first budget. The budget will be the much greater test of confidence of this Legislature, as it will provide clear evidence of government's priorities than the throne speech."

The speech is just words, very pretty words, but still, only words.

The budget is action, the expenditure of public funds. We on the opposition benches will be looking clearly to make sure that the actions live up to the words in the throne speech. As I stand here today, I am not entirely convinced that this government's action do live up to their words in the throne speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** That ends the debate on the motion.

Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll declare a recess until 7:00 p.m.

### Recognition of Guests II

Speaker: Just before we start, with your indulgence, I'd like to welcome F. D. MacDonald to the gallery. F. D., him and I had a great chat when we were outside and I got to know him a little better, but F. D is a brother of Andy, which Andy is a real good friend of mine. I played hockey with F. D.'s brother, and actually F. D.'s niece works in the Premier's office, so we had a great chat when we were outside, and I appreciated that stopping and chatting, F.D.

Thank you.

Orders Other Than Government

**Speaker:** Okay, on to business; the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

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

I move seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park that the – I've just forgotten which order number it is. Bill 105, what's the order number? My apologies; I need the order paper –

**Speaker:** 14.

**Ms. Bell:** – Order No. 14 be now read.

Sorry about that.

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

**Clerk:** Order No. 14, *An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Property Act*, Bill No. 105, ordered for second reading.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

**Clerk:** *An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Properties Act*, Bill No. 105, read a second time.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park that this House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration said bill.

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

I'll ask the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and the Deputy Speaker to Chair the Committee of the Whole House.

**Chair (Perry):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Property*

*Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill now be read clause by clause?

**Ms. Bell:** Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor please, Chair?

**Chair:** Permission to bring – thank you.

Could you please state your name and title please for record?

**Nathan Hood:** My name is Nathan Hood; I am the Chief Policy Advisor to the official opposition.

**Chair:** Thank you very much.

Does the promoter have an opening statement?

**Ms. Bell:** I do.

**Chair:** You may go ahead.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

There is no question that PEI is in the midst of a housing crisis. PEI has a provincial vacancy rate of 0.3 % and Charlottetown is even lower, at 0.2 %.

As we heard this afternoon, despite a comprehensive review in 2006, the *Rental of Residential Property Act* is a piece of legislation that has changed little since it was introduced decades ago.

It continues to be our caucus' belief that the act needs a full review to ensure it is offering the best possible protections and supports to Islanders, but what can we as members of the Legislative Assembly do today?

We have heard stories about some of the housing challenges in my district and in my role as critic for Department of Social Development and Housing, I frequently hear about short-term rentals.

With the lack of clear ground rules creating a regulatory quagmire, some tenants are scared by the prospect of their unit being converted to an Airbnb or “renovicted” as it's commonly known.

These are real issues.

One woman we heard from at the City of Charlottetown's recent consultation spoke about how she had been renovicted twice in just the past year.

Under the current legislation, tenants who have been sent a rental agreement termination notice have just 10 days to appeal this decision to the director of residential rental property at IRAC.

Many tenants who receive a notice are understandably panicked and it is often the case that tenants are not fully aware of the options available to them to contest such a notice in the period of time available.

To provide tenants with more time to understand their options and to support ideally a fuller exercise of their rights under the act, we are proposing to extend the time period from 10 days, to 20 days in which tenants can apply to the director of residential rental property to set aside a notice of termination.

We have heard some questions and concerns from property owners and I want to be clear about the scope of this legislation.

Under the current *Rental of Residential Property Act*, a notice of termination can be served for reasons outlined in Sections 13, 14 and 15.

Section 13 deals with the failure to pay rent, Section 14 deals with reasons like destruction of property or the failure to provide a security deposit and these sections are exempt from the scope of our legislation.

Our legislation only extends the time period for appealing a notice of termination for reasons under Section 15 which includes renovation and converting the premises to a use other than residential.

This is a simple measure to support tenants as they navigate difficult housing situations and I'd be happy to answer any questions on the bill at this time.

Thank you, Chair.

1. (1) Subsection 16(1) of the *Rental of Residential Property Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. R-13.1, is amended by the deletion of

the words "section 13, 14 or 15" and the substitution of the words "section 13 or 14". Shall this section carry?

**Mr. Fox:** Question.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you. Thanks Chair, for bringing this bill forward.

Could you give us an overview or a brief of what actually 16(1) covers?

**Ms. Bell:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Fox:** Can you explain what actually subsection 16(1) actually covers?

**Nathan Hood:** So under the legislation right now, 16(1) covers basically the idea that a tenant can basically submit an application requesting the setting aside of a notice of termination for a rental agreement. When we were developing this legislation, basically we thought well you know the simplest thing would be and the subsequent subsection to change the timeframe that's available for tenants to appeal a Notice of Termination from 10 to 20 days.

But what we realized was that in 16(1) that includes references to section 13, 14, and 15. So the effect of that change would mean that the timeframe would be extended for any reason under 13, 14, or 15.

So as the member had said in her opening remarks, 13 and 14 are obviously quite different from 15. Failure to pay rent, destruction of the premises, those aren't necessarily things or areas where we want to provide tenants with a greater time period to appeal those Notice of Termination.

Whereas, 15 deals with things like they might be – the landlord might be proposing renovations to the property, or they might be converting the property to a use other than residential, so it might be turning it into a commercial use. Those are things that we feel the tenants should have a greater time period to appeal.

Basically, what this amendment would do is that it would split up 13, 14, and 15, so 13 and 14 would remain their own subsection,

and then 15 would basically have its own subsection. Then there would be an additional subsection created later in the act that would deal with the time periods specifically for appeals under section 15.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

Question: So am I right in understanding – and I don't understand this act – so am I right in saying that if I own a building and I want to rent it, or pardon me, renovate it, I just have to give 10 days' notice or give notice to the tenant and they only have 10 days to appeal.

**Nathan Hood:** Yeah, so –

**Mr. Fox:** Me pass them out.

**Nathan Hood:** Yes. So the property owner has to give the Notice of Termination of the agreement. That can come into effect no earlier than 60 days after it's been served, and, yes, the tenant would have 10 days to appeal that under the current legislation.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** So when does the 10 days come into effect? At what point in the process?

**Ms. Bell:** From the moment that notice is filed.

So they have 60 days for it to take effect, but that appeal period begins when that filing happens. So what we find is generally, I think, anecdotally tenants who are in arrears or there's been some ongoing conversation with the landlord, they're going to know that's coming.

But tenants who are facing an eviction because the landlord has decided they want to renovate, that's a shock. But on top of that, it's a very relatively short period of time if you're going to get your ducks in a row and figure out what can you do around this.

I mean, there's a lot of education that has to happen for tenants, and we're doing – we are seeing better with that in terms of some

of the supports that have been available in the community, but there's also a great deal of these happening. There's a large number of cases that are going through the system.

So, it's actually a very short period of time to get the filing actually done.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** So two-part question: Who do they file the application with?

**Nathan Hood:** That'd be the Director of Residential Rental Property at IRAC.

**Mr. Fox:** So with IRAC?

**Nathan Hood:** Yes.

**Mr. Fox:** So do you have a plan for education following this? You've mentioned education is a problem, so do you have a plan to let the public know what's going to take place?

**Ms. Bell:** To answer the question, there's already education in place in terms of the work, for instance, that's been done with CLIA, with Community Legal Information to provide a Navigator.

What we're hearing is that – from tenants groups and from the community – is that this window of time, increasing this window of time, would provide more likely that the people could file their appeals in that timeframe.

It doesn't impact the process in any way, other than just that extension of time. So all the existing processes remain the same with IRAC and with the filing, and nothing else will change except that time period.

It's obviously a bit more complex to do in the legislation so we don't adversely affect other things, as my colleague said. We don't want to provide an extension of time to somebody who is being evicted because they haven't paid their rent. So that makes the writing of this a little more complex, but the outcome is actually quite straightforward.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

**Chair:** I'm going to finish reading this section, and then I'll entertain questions once again.

(2) Section 16 of the Act is amended

(a) by the addition of the following after subsection (1):

Application to set aside notice - section 15

(1.1) A lessee who has received notice of termination for any of the reasons set out in section 15 may apply to the Director for an order setting aside the notice.

(b) by the addition of the following after subsection (2):

Time for application

(2.1) An application under subsection (1.1) shall be made by a lessee not later than 20 days after being served with the notice.

(3) Subsection 16(4) of the Act is amended by the addition of the words "or (1.1)" after the words "subsection (1)".

**Chair:** Hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Just one quick question, so the way the legislation is today, this very day, under all three sections the time periods is 10 days, even if you're being evicted for no pay or damage to property?

**Ms. Bell:** Yes.

**Mr. Mitchell:** All of that is 10 days as we speak?

**Ms. Bell:** That is correct.

**Mr. Mitchell:** The only change then is for renoeviction, is that right?

**Nathan Hood:** Yes, so any reason under section 15 would be extended. Basically the tenant would have 20 days.

**Chair:** Hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Mr. Mitchell:** So what section is covered under eviction due to no pay or damage?

**Nathan Hood:** So failure to pay rent is Section 13 and 14 deals with breach of

statutory conditions, damage to property and things of those nature.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** So it's only 15 that we're dealing with?

**Ms. Bell:** Yes.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Okay.

**Ms. Bell:** Chair if I may, if it may help, I can give you, I can tell you what the sections are in the current legislation under Section 15 if that would help?

**Mr. Mitchell:** No I'm just trying to get my head around, there's a lot of verbiage here to do one change of 10 to 20 days. So I have to understand completely that it's in three different areas and you're only trying to get to one, so that's why, we'll say mapping your way through to one section of it.

**Nathan Hood:** So I guess the easiest way to explain this is that you're basically pulling 15 out of 16(1) and then we're recreating a separate subsection for section 15. The wording is basically the same as the current 16(1), except that it just says section 15 instead of section 13 and 14. Then we're creating an additional subsection 2.1, after subsection 2, which again is basically the same wording, just that the number of days available to appeal is extended from 10-12.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** I'm getting it a little clearer.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, that was the clear explanation.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. Hudson:** I was wondering, was there a jurisdictional scan carried out in the review in taking this forward or preparing this amendment?

**Ms. Bell:** Part of the challenge minister, with this legislation is like as we heard earlier today, it has only been reviewed once and that was in 2006. So we are significantly overdue for an overall update of this legislation and on that basis it's very

difficult to compare this legislation to much else because it is so far out of date. Saying that, we also have a relatively unique situation in P.E.I. with IRAC and the relationship between the *Rental and Residential Property Act* and the role of IRAC.

So it becomes quite challenging to find comparable scans. What we have done is extensive consultation within the community and that is partly why this legislation now as its presented is probably a little more complex than one would think for such a simple change because we actually amended it to explicitly separate those two or three different incidences based on feedback we got from landlords. We wanted to ensure that when we're doing this we are reflecting the needs of tenants, but we're also reflecting the needs of landlords and that needs to be in all legislation review and that this complexity that you see at this point is actually because of that consultation.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. Hudson:** Yes, I was wondering if you could elaborate a bit more on the consultation process and who was consulted.

**Ms. Bell:** Sure, so we work with a number of different community and advocacy groups in PEI, which includes the Community Legal Information Association, the Fight for Affordable Housing, the Tenants Rights Association and I think that's the primary ones.

As we heard earlier Community and Legal Information is the organization that has actually been tasked by the government to provide a navigation role, so they are actually getting the bulk right now of the calls of people needing assistance in navigating this legislation. So in terms of some of the people to go to, who can give us the best and direct answer as to what may be of most assistance immediately, we felt that kind of scope of feedback from those who are on the frontline – of not just experiencing the impact of this, but also navigating the impact of this was most appropriate.

We also, obviously with our policy advisor, have some pretty deep dive into how best to

work with legislation that is constructed in this way to find a way to make an impactful change that is within the scope of what we are able to do as official opposition.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. Hudson:** Just curious as well, with regard to the notice – what's the process for the serving of a notice?

**Nathan Hood:** I believe it's set out in the act or the regulations of the act. I think that's actually 16(4). I believe they give you the notice in writing with the process for (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** Okay.

**Mr. Hudson:** Oh okay but is it –

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. Hudson:** – it's in writing but is it hand delivered, registered mail, what have you? Because to me, that would have an impact on the length of time of delivery and subsequent reply and how would that response have to be made as well.

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, while it's not in scope of our legislation of the original *Rental of Residential Property Act*, it's actually, the form of notice appears in Section 18 where the notice must be provided in writing, in the form prescribed by regulations.

So it's actually the regulations of the act that set that out but in terms of the notice of eviction, it has to be received in writing which usually has to be delivered on the date in which it becomes effective.

My understanding in practical terms is that it must be physically delivered to the lessee or to their premises, but that is set out in the regulations that are enforced by the primary act.

**Mr. Hudson:** Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

I'm not against this. Did we have any consultation with IRAC on this?

**Nathan Hood:** I had a very brief call with someone from IRAC, just expressing our intention to bring forward amendments of this but not so much a very in-depth dive on this particular piece of legislation.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** And what was their thoughts?

**Nathan Hood:** A general okay, they didn't really comment on the nature of legislation, they just trusted that we were bringing forward that legislation.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Chair.

Why did you pick the 20 days?

**Nathan Hood:** I think that's a reasonable timeframe to do that, the other piece that I noticed in the legislation is that the determination can't come into effect any earlier than 60 days. So this gives 20 days to appeal to do an initial application to set aside (Indistinct) that would be heard as soon as possible by the director once a decision is delivered there is an additional 20 days in which that decision can be appealed and I'm pretty confident – and after that that appeal is made and that's (Indistinct) within 30 days but I'm pretty confident that can all be addressed within that 60 days or thereabouts.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** So if I understand IRAC right, the appeal could go to the Supreme Court –

**Nathan Hood:** Yep. But I think that would be –

**Mr. Fox:** – and you're confident that an application can be filed, notice can be given, person appeals the 20 days and the matter is going to be before the Supreme Court within 60 days?

**Nathan Hood:** No, so the Supreme Court appeal process is after. So you can file an application with the director to appeal the notice of termination, so that's the first step. Then the second step is once the director makes the decision, you can appeal that decision to the commission and once that process has been dealt with, if you want to continue to pursue that issue, you can appeal to the Supreme Court.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** I cannot see how that would all be dealt within 60 days.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities, do you have a question or?

**Mr. Fox:** No, I'm fine for now.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Mr. Hammarlund:** I think the extension from 10 to 20 days is reasonable, I was just wondering does it cut short some of the available time on the other end. Does a tenant suddenly find that he has to move out in 10 days shorter period, or does everything move forward 10 days?

**Nathan Hood:** Let me try to understand the question, I guess.

So they have extra time to appeal, but then is your question that 60-day limit, when they are expected to move out?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Yes.

Is it that 10 days there too –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Nathan Hood:** It's hard to say because it would depend on the outcome of that appeal process.

So if the tenant had appealed and the director said that we don't agree with this notice of termination and they throw it out, then there would be no difference because that person would be remaining in the premises.

If the director had said that we accept the notice of termination and you have to be out, you'll have to move out, yes, I suppose it could squeeze the time, but I think the general point is that until it's overturned, you're going to be evicted in 60 days. So that's the expectation, unless it's overturned by IRAC.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, do you have another question?

**Mr. Hammarlund:** Not really a question; just a comment that it isn't necessarily even to the benefit to get 10 extra days depends on the outcome.

**Ms. Bell:** The other thing that's important to note that this doesn't impact the other timeframes that are set out in terms of a 60 days' notice of termination remains the same, unless the appeal has an impact on the eviction notice.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you for bringing this to the floor.

I mean, it's fairly intuitive, I think, what this change is all about and the idea of giving people who are being evicted, really through no fault of their own, an extra 10 days to consider that and appeal.

But as the minister responsible for IRAC, even though they are a quasi-judicial body, I would have liked, probably, to see you consult with them a little bit more. Did you actually invite them to meet with you to discuss the bill or was it just: We're doing this bill, just want to give you a heads up kind of thing?

**Nathan Hood:** More the latter.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

I just know that IRAC, they really do take their role very, very seriously and they might have some input into this.

As we know, we found out in Question Period today, everybody heard that they are reviewing the act and I'm going to get back to you with a timeline on when they will be done with that.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you.

**Mr. Trivers:** But, it'll probably be sooner rather than later, and so I just wanted to raise that concern as a representative – you know, I'm their representative in the House.

Also, Chair – did you want to reply?

**Ms. Bell:** I'll just say, minister, and I appreciate your concern.

I would point out that we have had some challenges in having some fulsome conversations when we have asked for information or sought information, and so there has not been a very collaborative relationship for the official opposition. I think it must be quite different as a minister than it is as opposition, which perhaps you can recall.

But saying so, we also – in this context – brought forward the legislation on the basis that while we're waiting for the review, this is a very small but meaningful change that can actually address an immediate impact that's occurring because of some of the things, particularly around short-term rentals, whilst we are waiting more extensive updates that can and should come for the *Rental of Residential Property Act* and we are very much looking forward to seeing the report coming through from IRAC, but in the interim, we still need to move forward with legislation that can affect change for the concerns that are coming through for us from constituents.

**Nathan Hood:** And if I may add to that – this legislation basically just extends the timeframe. So there's no change to the processes of what IRAC has to do. They just continue with business as usual. The only difference is that people have 10 extra days to apply with IRAC.

**Chair:** I'm just going to allow the minister of fisheries for an intervention pertaining to the statement just made by the promoter.

**Ms. Bell:** Sure.

**Mr. Fox:** I'm just wondering, and maybe with the help of the minister responsible, that there could be a consultation within the next week over the bill to allow that collaboration, or between his agency and the promoter.

**Ms. Bell:** I would be very happy to meet with IRAC, but I would also point out that, as my colleague has raised; the substance of this bill does not and should not in any substantive way affect the function of IRAC. It's about allowing more time for a tenant to bring forward an appeal within the existing process at IRAC.

I think there is a bigger conversation to be had about the resources that IRAC requires to be able to fulfill its mandate and the various extensive roles that it has. We are hearing anecdotally that the workload is really extensive there. I think there were over 60 evictions that are going through that process this month. So the workload, it must be very large.

But in the interim, this bill provides some immediate relief or extension for evictions in process which may well help on the other end as well, and then that consultation absolutely would be welcome.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

Just two things.

One's very simple, and I guess the feedback was just to be consistent with the remainder of the existing text in section 16 of the act, maybe just instead of the numeral 20, the word 'twenty'. I don't know if we need to do an official formal amendment for that, but that would be a suggestion I'd have. I know it's very small, but you know, everything matters.

And, Chair, one other thing – maybe I missed this in the preamble as well, but did you consult with landlords just as a matter of completion?

**Ms. Bell:** Chair?

**Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, thank you for the question.

The advocacy groups that we work with represent both tenants and landlords. So when we speak to the community legal information, for example, association, they actually have an advocacy role for both, as does all the legislation. And this is not written solely for the support of only one advocacy group.

Certainly, the fight for affordable housing, though it does predominantly represent tenants, also has a voice for landlords and we've heard very clearly from landlords who have been emailing us to tell us how they feel about the legislation, which is why we changed it to really split the impacts, versus the impact on being able to evict tenants who are not meeting their obligations, versus tenants who need to appeal on eviction.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you for that.

That's why you consult, right?

**Ms. Bell:** That's right.

**Mr. Trivers:** So you can make changes like that.

How did they feel about the 20 days for the change you're making? I know I could see how they would be upset if you said it's 20 days and you got someone living in a rental property that's destroying the property. They would say: Come on, we've got to get them out of there as soon as possible.

But were they ambivalent or were they against? Would they have liked to see it stay at 10? Will they be begrudgingly saying: Okay, give us 20? What were their thoughts?

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, to be truthful, what landlords are looking for is an update to the *Rental of Residential Property Act*.

This is a minor consideration for them in the broader scheme of better protection for both tenants and landlords, and an update and revitalization of IRAC.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning.

**Mr. Trivers:** Well, thank you for your work on this. This is an area that, I agree, is probably overdue for review. I'm glad that IRAC is undertaking the review, but your comments about the residential act as well – that's something that needs to be reviewed as well.

So thank you and that's all the questions I have.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

Mine is more of a comment than a question. I just echo my colleague's comment there a moment ago.

I would like to thank you for your work on this and the consultation that you have carried out. So do appreciate that.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, minister.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of questions for clarification.

In terms of IRAC's involvement, does this bill in any way change IRAC's work in terms of responding to a complaint? Or is it just it happens on day 10 or day 20, is the workload exactly the same and the process exactly the same for IRAC?

**Ms. Bell:** The workload is exactly the same and the process is exactly the same.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Okay, thank you.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm interested in whether there are any statistics kept or trends emerging regarding this particular aspect of evictions is becoming more of a prevalent – you know,

we have 13, 14 and 15. Is section 15 becoming more commonly used as an eviction?

**Nathan Hood:** So in the IRAC report, the annual reports that were tabled, there is a chart of the different applications that the director receives at IRAC.

There is a section for termination notices, but they don't break it down on what the reasons for those termination notices. Certainly, anecdotally, we've been hearing a lot more concerns about this and a lot more people who are being evicted for renovations only to find out that their unit, or what was their unit, has been converted into a short-term rental.

If you believe the numbers, which is that we're seeing an increase in the number of appeals for a Notice of Termination, certainly, it's possible or likely that they are a contributor to that increase.

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

Or did you have something?

**Ms. Bell:** If I could just add to that one.

The other aspect of this, so that we are clear that this is not only about short-term rentals, but we are also hearing anecdotally, and we've heard just recently a case that was in the news, about an eviction for renovation and then the property shows up with a much higher rental beyond what is actually allowable from the mandated IRAC increases.

We know that those – part of IRAC's role is to ensure that rent is kept within mandated increases. In that case, the new tenant found that they had been overcharged by \$8,000, and were able to get that paid back.

That's another aspect of this section 15. Is that landlords can't evict so that they can jack the rent, and it's one of the other aspects that we're hearing about.

So we need to be careful what is not only seen as sort of a renoviction, but also just ensuring people are following the letter of the law in terms of what they're allowed to do with rental increases.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Just to follow on from that member, are there any inspections done prior to a renovation to determine how much work has been done, and is there a minimum number in terms of dollars that must be spent in order for somebody to have carried out a renovation?

**Nathan Hood:** I believe under the legislation, the only way you can evict someone for renovations is that the renovations can only be conducted if the person can't occupy the premises while the renovations are ongoing.

So unless they're relatively substantial or are very technical, I wouldn't suspect that there's a specific limit for the price on which you need to spend on renovations.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Flashback.

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

You mentioned that statistics are not kept; they don't parse out whether the evictions are for section 13, 14, 15. I just think it would be really useful to have that information, and just a comment, I think it would be worth asking IRAC if they do actually keep stats on that. I think that might be a very useful thing.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Yes, do you want to put it down as a question? I'll put you down as a question.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

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

When you consulted with the landlords, what was the feedback you got? You said you got a bunch of stuff in emails that caused you to make change. What kind of feedback did you get from them? What were some of the topics?

**Ms. Bell:** Go ahead.

**Nathan Hood:** So, initially when we were writing this legislation, as we'd said earlier, I think, we were looking at basically just changing the timeframe in which a person can appeal the Notice of Termination.

When we got the feedback from the landlords, a lot of the concerns were around what if I have a tenant who's not paying their rent, or what if I have a tenant who is destroying my property? Why should they have an extended time period to appeal?

Which we thought was a very valid reason. Those aren't people who should necessarily get a greater time period to appeal the eviction.

What we noticed was that those were the primary concerns about the legislation, we weren't hearing about things like people being renovicted. So we redrafted the legislation to exclude those things that landlords were concerned about, like the sections dealing with tenants not paying rent or tenants destroying the property.

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

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

So if I were to leave here tonight and call three people who I know who rent buildings professionally, not one-offs, like people who have consulting companies that do this type of thing, they're happy with what you're putting forward?

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, as far as we're aware, there doesn't seem to be as much of a coordinated landlord advocacy group as there is for tenants currently.

So, it is a little harder to feel that we have spoken to a representative or voices who are speaking on behalf of a large group. Certainly, tenants have become more organized because of the current housing situations to be honest. We certainly have heard through consultations on some of the broader things we've talked about in housing, so not only on this subject, but particularly when we have done the work on short term rentals and generally on rental availability and we've talked to a lot of my

colleagues, especially with colleagues from Summerside in particular, as well as Charlottetown. I've heard from landlords about how hard it is to be a landlord in this current market.

So we are very aware that this legislation, again, while it's really narrow in scope, there's a lot bigger conversation that we need to be having about the rights of landlords, as well as the rights of tenants and I think, honestly, in a longer-term basis, looking at legislation that looks at both of those aspects, as both groups that need to have their rights respected and protected is really critical because that's, neither of those groups feel that their rights are being protected right now.

What this does is address a really specific narrow piece but landlords overall it is not only an economic reason that landlords would be making a shift to short term rentals, it's because being a landlord is really hard. I can speak as a landlord in the past too, that's had to bear the cost and I think most landlords will tell you a horror story about what happens when you have to do the renovations after a bad tenant.

That doesn't mean that we don't still have the situation right now, so I think it's fair that the landlords may not be as organized in their voices. We have heard what they've said. In the context of this legislation it's not helping them right now; it's not hurting them either. It does just give us a little bit more space to this wait that we've got at the moment. But we absolutely are aware that we need to do something on a broader scale to look after the rights of both landlords and tenants in our current and future rental situations.

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

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

I would agree, I mean I've helped friends of mine, who are landlords, clean places out after people left them and I saw that things we're disgusting. Like you couldn't pay me to do it again, let alone volunteer to help someone do some of that stuff again, it was completely disgusting.

I think it's part of the bigger discussion that's being had about Airbnb's and whether we should allow these people to have short term rentals, which I think we should because it is very hard to be a landlord and I see in the not-so-distant future, landlords are going to organize and they're going to have their own group. Especially if we start changing legislation that's going to limited their abilities of what they're allowed to do with their own property, such as change any regulations around Airbnb's.

Do you see an issue where landlords will have to start organizing themselves so they have a bigger voice when it comes to the government table?

**Ms. Bell:** I don't know, minister. I think it's a really good question.

I think we are seeing that organization from a tenant's perspective because the situation is so desperate in terms of people literally being faced on a regular basis with homelessness, and its people who have never thought that, that was going to be their reality. It's regular people, everyday. And landlords have perhaps not been as, like I said, had a need to be as organized.

I think when we open up the space to actually do effective consultation, we will be pleasantly surprised and probably a little overwhelmed at how much people have to say and that will include landlords, as well as tenants because there is a lot here to unpack when we talk about the housing situation, the housing crisis in PEI.

There are so many factors and again, short term rentals are only one piece of a very large and complex puzzle, as is this legislation. So when we actually do meaningful consultation, which we need to do as soon as possible, I would fully expect landlords to be at the table and if they're not there, we should invite them.

It doesn't mean they need to necessarily organize, but they need to be heard as much as anyone else does.

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

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

I, by no means, saying that there's not bad landlords because there clearly is and there's bad tenants.

But neither are the majority of the respected sides of this, but I think bad either, can be enough to put a bad taste in people's mouths. I know the situation is dire out there as far as the lack of availability and the lack of places to go.

I do know that there's people – and it's happened in Montague not that long ago, where everyone was just evicted because everyone was getting their bathrooms renovated. Everyone was toast, they had nowhere to go.

If you're in Montague, Montague is no different than Charlottetown and neither is Georgetown or Cardigan or Souris. If you lose the place that you're in, there's not another spot.

**Ms. Bell:** No.

**Mr. Myers:** So there's an awful lot of discussion about what goes on in Charlottetown and what goes on in Summerside, the issue is really no different in any of the smaller towns either and it doesn't get any attention drawn on it by the local media or the politicians for that matter.

People aren't talking about the fact that – I'm really happy that the Eastern PEI Chamber of Commerce has taken it upon themselves to do their own study on the issue, they're doing a survey of people.

I talked to Paul McNeil not that awful long ago and he said that they had a lot of responses so I think they're going to have really good data and it's something that everyone should be concerned with what it says, but I also think that maybe we should be doing it for other areas.

I'm not from Alberton but I'm sure there's not a whole lot of places right in Alberton either, just like there isn't in Montague.

All of these things that are causing these changes need to be made or the fact that they're needed, because it's happening everywhere.

It talked about the need for kind of a full overhaul of this bill and I wouldn't disagree for a minute.

I'm kind of wondering, it's not that I don't support what you're doing, I do, but I wonder if we shouldn't be trying to get this going and maybe this is good work for a committee to go out and find out from people on both sides of the pendulum here, people who own buildings and people who are renting buildings and people who are trying to rent and can't find, and come up with a really good act that protects the landlords, protects the renters and opens up more opportunity for people who are having trouble finding a place to rent, to find a place.

What are your thoughts on that?

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, we are quite clear that this act does need to be revised, as I've said, the last set of recommendations were done in 2006 and they weren't implemented and so we have a very out-of-date legislation and obviously the current circumstances make it more urgent. Saying that, it's also a complex piece of legislation that includes obviously a large chunk of regulations that are implemented and managed by IRAC, which is also a large and complex organization.

Again, what we look for in terms of sort of meaningful legislation at this point was something that could have literally alleviate pressure on a pressure point that is directly related to the current circumstances, while absolutely acknowledging and recognizing that other work must also continue at the same time, they're not mutually exclusive.

It would be an extremely good use of something like a special committee to strike a special committee for housing, with a mandate to do that, that community outreach across the province.

Absolutely minister; there is no doubt that this is a crisis occurring across the entire province. I know the Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke has shared about the housing issue in her area and so it doesn't matter how large or small the community is, this is occurring.

We also need to act now, so we can do both.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm good, thanks.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

I'm interested and it may it was explained to me I didn't hear it.

If I want to evict somebody today for that reason, how long of a notice do I have to give to that individual?

**Nathan Hood:** For what reason, for like a renovation?

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

**Nathan Hood:** You have to serve them with a notice that's effective no less than 60 days after it's been received.

**Mr. Fox:** Say that again.

**Nathan Hood:** The termination of the agreement rather doesn't come into effect until the 60 days after the notice has been received. At least 60 days has to transpire.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Nathan Hood:** Don't you think that number is short? We know what the housing crisis is, we know there's not a – why don't we look at increasing the 60 days to 120?

**Ms. Bell:** Because minister, that would interfere with the work of IRAC, that could potentially change the workload. There are legal ramifications we would not be comfortable with making that kind of recommendation that fundamentally changes what is a prescribed process.

**Mr. Fox:** Can you explain that to me?

**Ms. Bell:** For instance, when he has more than 60 days how do you decide what is more – how does that affect the existing workload, what happens with cases that are currently underway, there are all sorts of ramifications to that – whereas, what we do with an appeal period, is it exists within that 60 day period.

We have to be very careful when we bring forward amendments that we think about the other potential risks and impacts and making those adjustments are never easy, as we can see with this one where's it's one word that should technically changing. You can't pull one word off is a legislation without pulling a whole jenga block down. That was certainly the case just in this case.

We looked at a number of different variations, and this was impactful within the scope of what we could do without creating potentially a whole other tangled mess of things that would have unintended consequences.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Communities.

**Mr. Fox:** My opinion: something that worries me is the fact that we're basing – we have a need out there on the street. We know that's real. We know people are being impacted. However, we have a bill on the floor that you're bringing forward, and I have – I understand the bill and I support it.

However, we have a telephone conversation with IRAC. That's all we have. I'm wondering if we should not have some kind of further consultation in person with IRAC on the bill.

**Nathan Hood:** So like I said earlier, all this piece of legislation does is it extends the time period (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** I understand that.

**Nathan Hood:** So from IRAC's perspective, nothing changes. People have a longer period in which they can apply to IRAC to review the notice of termination, but on IRAC's end, everything is business as usual.

**Mr. Fox:** I've made my point.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

I will be supporting your bill. I think it's a minor change that will go a long way. I do have a question, and I'm more curious on the process of an eviction, because you know, we get calls as MLAs that seem to

take a little longer for people to get out of a rental, and I'm wondering how that process works, I guess, if you can give me an update on it.

So after the notice is given for something like this exactly, and let's say it is a renovation, how long do they have after that to be out?

**Nathan Hood:** So the renovation is – for that reason, you have 60 days, where it can come into effect no less than 60 days after the notice has been served. So basically the time (Indistinct) goes, and then after that period, the eviction happens if no action is taken.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. MacKay:** So what happens after the 60 days if the tenant refuses to leave? What's the process after that?

**Ms. Bell:** The Sheriff is called.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. MacKay:** The reason I ask, I just run into this not too long ago in my district from a landlord which was – it's pretty well the exact same. They proceeded with a major, major renovation, gave the notice. The people went – I believe went to IRAC or threatened to go to IRAC. Anyway, they just refused to leave the house.

The time the sheriff was involved from one end to the other was a six-month period that they haven't received rent, the damage to the property and everything and there are stories like this. This is why the landlords are being upset.

It almost seems like there's no easy way to – and this was a legitimate renovation, but after the 60 days was up, they just said: we're not going anywhere, and you can't force us out.

Eventually they did, but it was a six-month ordeal. So this landlord basically went six months without getting any rent.

Now that is another property now that will no longer be a rental for that reason. I'm just curious a little bit on that from start to finish, if that's not a worry. I certainly see the 10 to 20 days, which I think is great, but is there anything we could do on the other end to make sure that 60 days is up, that it doesn't go any further?

Is there a consequence or something that could be –

**Ms. Bell:** That would be in the scope of the *Rental of Residential Property Act* –

**Mr. MacKay:** Oh, okay.

**Ms. Bell:** – and then the regulations in terms of what IRAC is able to do and its relationships with law enforcement. So it's certainly not in the scope of this legislation, and it is one of the issues that we have heard coming back to the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy on his comments around landlords.

It's certainly one of the things that happens from a landlord's perspective, when tenants, for whatever reason, whether that they're difficult or desperate or whatever – pick your poison, but that aspect of what-do-you-do-when is part of what has to be addressed from the broader context of the legislation.

But the appeal period and the notice period aren't an aspect of that. That's sort of the next step down that piece, but it's certainly a concern, and it's one of the things that we have to think about when we look at these situations that are not as straightforward as they seem. When we look at doing this review, we are going to have to talk about those kinds of instances, as well as the instances of somebody not having somewhere to live or anywhere to go.

There's always more than one story, yeah, but certainly not in this context, not in this scope.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

One more question: I believe you had said there are 60 applications with IRAC right now of people being evicted?

**Ms. Bell:** Anecdotally, that's what we've heard, is that's how many have come through so far this month.

**Mr. MacKay:** So far.

**Ms. Bell:** But we don't know that directly from IRAC, minister.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay, that's what I –

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, that's anecdotal, actually from the tenancy groups.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning and Environment, Water and Climate Change.

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

And just for thoroughness – so Jennifer Perry, who's the Director of Residential Rental Property, what did she say about the amendment?

**Nathan Hood:** She is not the one we'd spoken to. We had spoken to their General Counsel. It was just a brief conversation on the phone.

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, okay. That is the office of IRAC that you referred to, you talked to specifically.

**Nathan Hood:** I emailed her about a piece of legislation, but I hadn't heard back from her – or not the act in general –

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Nathan Hood:** – but I haven't heard back (Indistinct)

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

Like I said, I fully appreciate where you're going with this. I'm finding myself agreeing with the Minister of Fisheries and Communities, that a simple conversation with Jennifer Perry – I mean, this is the world that she lives in all the time, right? A simple conversation with her, not to unduly delay the legislation something that could happen, tomorrow kind of thing, you could bring this back on the floor, kind of idea. Just to make sure there was nothing that was overlooked. In fact – I mean, I could commit to even in setting that up for you, if you like.

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, if I can just – as my colleague has pointed out, this does not impact IRAC's role in any way. This is just literally – it is about what the tenant is allowed to do in terms of their appeal process. It doesn't change the work of IRAC in that way, and it has obviously been vetted by Legislative Counsel in terms of being an appropriate structure of legislation, which is partly why it's worded the way it is.

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

No, and I do understand that. It's unfortunate. Did you say you left a message for her and she just didn't get back to you?

**Nathan Hood:** (Indistinct) a couple of months ago. I had reached out and we haven't heard back.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Ms. Bell:** We started working on this legislation, minister, before the previous election.

**Mr. Trivers:** And my apologies, too, because this is something I could have brought up before it was on the floor tonight as well. I probably dropped the ball there.

Chair, I just wanted to find out, going back to that “20” to “twenty”, as small as it may sound, do I need to move an official amendment for that? Or is that something we can –

**Ms. Bell:** Do a friendly amendment?

**Mr. Trivers:** – we can just do?

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** We will check that, minister.

**Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Trivers:** All right.

**Ms. Bell:** Just give us a moment.

**Chair:** So you're moving that amendment (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes, I'd like to move we amend it to use the word 'twenty' instead of the numeral 20.

**Chair:** Sure. We'll take a brief recess, because it's requested that it be in writing. Until it comes back – so we'll be in a short recess until we come back with that in writing.

[Recess]

**Chair:** There was an amendment brought forward and mover of the amendment may I have you just read it out loud please?

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

I'd like to move that: Section 1(2)(b) of bill be amended to delete the word "20" and replace it with the word "twenty". The word 20 being numbers – the number "20" and replace it with the word "twenty".

**Chair:** Okay shall there be any debate on this amendment?

Shall the amendment carry? Carried.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

**Ms. Bell:** I move the title.

**Chair:** *An Act to Amend the Rental of Residential Property Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

**Ms. Bell:** I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the Chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to with amendment.

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

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

*Amend the Rental of Residential Property Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same with amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

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

I'll call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Belvedere.

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that Order No. 13 be now read.

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

**Clerk:** Order No. 13, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, Bill No. 104, ordered for second reading.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

**Clerk:** *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, Bill No. 104, read a second time.

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

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that this House do now resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

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

**Chair (Bevan-Baker):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*.

Do you wish permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

**Ms. Bell:** Permission to bring a stranger to the floor.

**Chair:** Granted?

Thank you.

Would you like to introduce yourself please?

**Nathan Hood:** Sure. I'm Nathan Hood; I am the Senior Policy Advisor to the official opposition.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Member, would you like to give an overview of the bill?

**Ms. Bell:** I would, thank you, Chair.

How do we tackle poverty?

It's a question governments have asked themselves for years. Poverty is an issue that government addressed to various levels of success.

Last week, we were all present in the Chamber to hear the Speech From the Throne and I was glad to hear the handful of references to poverty in the speech, including this sentence: In the first six months of our mandate, we will act upon key recommendations and step up efforts to eliminate poverty in our province.

Poverty is a pervasive issue here in PEI and one that expresses itself in so many different ways. We might think of the highly visible forms of poverty, Islanders panhandling on the street corner, desperately seeking money they need to feed and house themselves for the day, but there are less visible forms of poverty, ones that go more easily unnoticed, Islanders unable to secure suitable housing, Islanders unable to escape food insecurity, Islanders unable to support their children to the extent they would like, so forth.

None of these things should be a dream, a goal that one works toward. Suitable housing, food security, and happy healthy children should be available to every Islander.

The minimum wage was first introduced in Canada a century ago and was created to serve as a minimum standard of pay to

protect workers from exploitation and ensure each worker could live on the income they receive.

In other words, Islanders working on a minimum wage should not live in poverty.

It's easy to view minimum wage is an issue that really only affects youth or part-time workers but this is the wrong way to look at the issue.

According to the Atlantic Province's Economic Council report released last year, PEI has the second highest proportion of minimum wage earners, only behind Ontario.

The report also found that Atlantic Canada, 44% of minimum wage workers work full-time and workers 25 years and older are 47% of all minimum wage workers.

So this is not young people. This is regular working people who are taking care of their families and trying to live a life of comfort on a minimum wage.

So as I said in those opening remarks, minimum wage exists to protect workers and provide them with a certain standard of living.

What we're introducing today is a small but meaningful amendment to amend the *Employment Standards Act* to incorporate measures of poverty, including the low-income measure and market basket measures which are relative measures of poverty and allow the board to have a more meaningful and fulsome conversation about these measures when they consider increases to the minimum wage in their annual review.

I'd also like to share for the Chamber that we did consult with the existing Employment Standards Board earlier this year and had a good and meaningful discussion with them and they did support in principle the amendments as presented today.

**Chair:** Thank you, member.

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

Question?

Clause by clause.

1. (1) Subsection 5(2) of the *Employment Standards Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. E-6.2, is amended by the addition of the words “and, in conducting a review, shall solicit and consider written and in-person submissions from the public” after the words “Minimum Wage Order”.

(2) Subsection 5(3) of the Act is repealed and the following substituted: Criteria, report

(3) In advising the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the board shall issue a report taking into account the social and economic effects of the minimum wage rates in the province and shall consider among other matters

(a) any cost of living increase since any previous order affecting the cost to an employee of purchasing the necessities of life, including housing, food, clothing, transportation and health care and supplies;

(b) economic conditions within the province and the concept of reasonable return on private investment; and

(c) measures of poverty and the ability of an employee to maintain a suitable standard of living,

and shall make this report public on the publication of a Minimum Wage Order in the *Royal Gazette*.

**Chair:** Questions?

The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

A couple questions here and obviously you know, this is something we’re going to have to address. There is certainly a lot of people living in poverty right now, I struggle everyday to try and figure out how some of these people are surviving on the wage they do make.

So, I certainly think it needs to be looked at but my question: Is there a problem right now that this amendment is trying to solve?

**Ms. Bell:** It’s a great question minister. So, we had a really good consultation with the Employment Standard Board and they do a lot of practices they’re just sort of, best practice but they’re not actually codified. So one of the things which we see in the first aspect of the legislation is that it codifies those existing consultation practices so that it’s in legislation and that it’s required that those things happen.

The amendment is not restrictive so we’re not limiting what the board should consider, but what we’re suggesting is that measures of poverty be considered and this reflects what we’re seeing in the trend on a National basis. So with the recent passing, for instances, Bill C-97, that measures of poverty be reflected in any kind of creation of policy that is going to affect things like wages or other aspects of impact on low wage workers.

What it does is to make sure there is consistency and a public process, as well as the consideration of those different measures. And again we’re not saying which ones to use, there’s a whole different set. We’re suggesting which ones could be considered but it’s up to the board to decide what they do, as long as they consider something when they’re thinking about those and making recommendations through to Executive Council.

**Nathan Hood:** If I may add on that.

In the last piece there, one of the changes we did make is that shall make public the report.

So right now when the Employment Standards Board makes a recommendation on the minimum wage, that’s confidential, so we don’t know what’s in the report. If you go back a couple of years, you’ll see minimum wage increases and there’s no real justification for why the minimum wage increase. We don’t know what rationale was used to support that increase and business groups have piloted that as a concern that they would like to see more information on how government came to those conclusions.

So by making this public, the public would be able to basically see the analysis of the Employment Standard Board and get a better understand for that.

Nova Scotia is one example and a member tabled actually, a document that Nova Scotia had produced. So they have a minimum wage review committee that looks at increases to the minimum wage and they also have a public report that is produced so the public can go and see the reasoning of their equivalent of the Employment Standards Board.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

So how is this different from what's already happening now with the board? So the board, am I right by saying, it's got members from the private sector, as well government, they meet. Can we not do submissions (Indistinct) can that not already happen now?

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, absolutely minister, I think the call for submissions has only just come out recently, I think. I remember seeing their notification come through and there's a tradition of many recognized groups, including things like the Cooper Institute for example, of doing submissions for consideration.

What it does is this current board is very open minded to a broad range of input and consideration, but when you have a process you want to make sure is consistent, you want to ensure that that's codified in legislation so that board will continue with those measures.

In addition that openness and transparency, the requirement to make that report public is not there right now and we definitely – as my colleague said – not the member, is a really clear ask from particularly for instance, from Partnership for Growth and the associated chambers of commerce. So it really is ensuring that those measures are considered, but more just sort of putting that structure in around what is already happening currently as best practice for this board.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

So why, obviously this is all new to me over the last six weeks, why wouldn't the public have seen the report prior as a reason why?

**Nathan Hood:** It isn't required by law, I would assume that's the reason. So because it was not required, there's no obligation to put that out, this would change that.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. MacKay:** What do other provinces do? I know you referred to Nova Scotia but what do other provinces do with the public report?

**Nathan Hood:** Nova Scotia is the one I'm most familiar with. The thing with minimum wage is that each province has a different approach to changing the minimum wage. So Nova Scotia is similar to us in that there is a body that will go and review the minimum wage and then make a recommendation to the minister. There are some provinces where the minimum wage is codified in legislation so every year it's just going to change once the time comes. There are some provinces where it's up to the minister to decide. So, the minister at any point can say this is the minimum wage.

**Ms. Bell:** If I can add minister, what was really interesting with our process here is that the Employment Standards Board looks at all of the submissions and a great deal of data to make a recommendation. We can see when we look historically, we may not know why, the recommendations change and when we had the most recent one, it was quite an aggressive change.

We know how important it is that we've heard from the business community, that they have consistency in when the wage increases happen and that's also helpful for the Employment Standards Board too, that they know they're working around that structure because it takes a long time to do that consultation.

But, when they make a recommendation, that's going to Executive Council; so Executive Council are the ones that can finally decide what that will actually be and if there's a difference between what Executive Council decide and

what the recommendation was from the board, we don't know.

So there is also that aspect of transparency from a government decision-making process, which is something to be aware of, that opening up that process shows, you know, what was considered in a decision.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

**Mr. MacKay:** So, when the board meets and looks at the submissions, how do the submissions come in, like what do they currently do now?

**Ms. Bell:** Primarily by paper. I know it seems like quite a large process from what I understand. They do a call for submissions which can be sent in through email, or through paper and what they normally get is like a summary what people are asked – there's a pretty clear kind of outline of what there asked to do and if they have a summary, then they can provide additional supporting materials.

But, effectively those different organizations will make a case for why they feel there should be an increase or not, or whatever the considerations are.

I may be familiar with some of the ones working around poverty action migrate workers, you know, there's all sorts of different considerations. Then the board has to consider those and have a series of meetings around them.

**Nathan Hood:** And on top of that the Employment Standards Board has staff who conduct research on economic indicators and that also influences the end result there.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

So obviously, I'm all about making everything public, you know the more open we can be, we certainly plan on doing so.

The issue I'm having with is, it's a huge issue and we hear it all the time like I say,

I'm just amazed that people are trying to survive on the wage that they're making. I don't know how they're doing it, I really don't. I'm wondering, if this is something you would consider because I think it's an opportunity here especially being in the minority government we're in – would you ever consider taking this to committee and doing a proper scan of it through what every province is doing? I know Nova Scotia has some kind of formula, so forth, I'm just curious to see what other provinces would do. I think this is a good opportunity, possibly, for the working committee especially the way it's going to be divided up that we could really do great things for minimum wage. I understand and I hear the business side of it as well. I think at the end of the day, everybody just wants to know how it's going to unfold and the dates and they don't want surprises anymore.

Is this something you would consider putting to committee and getting our group to work on it?

**Ms. Bell:** Sure minister, I think that's a really exciting recommendation. I think that's again, a bit like we had with the previous bill, it's kind of a separation of activity.

What this bill does, it doesn't in any way impact a decision around minimum wage that sits with the Employment Standards Board. And as much as I would like to, I have many comments to make on that. That would be something that could happen in a committee.

This particular bill is specifically just to strengthen the work of the Employment Standards Board without interfering in any way with how they conduct their work or what recommendations they make. Again, by putting that into Legislation, it provides a more rigorous framework for them to work within.

Your suggestion though is really exciting, because what we do know is that the gap even between minimum wage and what people actually need to earn to live is significant. What we don't have here in PEI is actually an establishment of a benchmark is what is a living wage.

A living wage is significantly more in most instances, and that is something that a committee could work on. That would be a separate set of work from what the Employment Standards Board is mandated to do on an ongoing basis.

They're currently in consultation now to make a recommendation next spring; sorry, October – so to take effect April 1, because there has to be 6 months notice.

We're way in the process for them, but in the interim what this would do would mean that when they are done that work, their report would be public and the considerations public, and in the interim we could be working, as we talked about earlier, in parallel, potentially with committee work to talk about establishing what is the benchmark for a living wage in PEI. So I think sure (Indistinct), again, we can do both.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

So really the only amendment is, in a roundabout way, is just to make the report public, am I right in saying that?

**Ms. Bell:** It has, sorry you can speak to three aspects, yea.

**Nathan Hood:** Yes, so the first aspect is just codifying the existing constitution practices, so no change there. Measures of poverty are included as one of the factors that have to be considered in making a minimum wage increase, that's a change. And the publication of the recommendation report when the minimum wage order is issued.

**Ms. Bell:** So three pieces.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture.

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

So measures of poverty, what is it? How do you classify that?

**Ms. Bell:** Million dollar question.

There are three primary measures of poverty used in Canada. We literally just saw these come out on a national basis as well, and there is not any one that is considered the right one. They tend to use different measures depending on different circumstances.

The three primary measures are the Low-income Cut-off, also known as the LICO Score, the Low-income Measure, and the Market Basket Measure. We use, for instance, Market Basket Measure to establish social assistance rates here in the province, and Low-income Measure if often used by Stats Canada.

So we have a lot of data that we can provide on that, but you'll find the same measures used now for the national poverty strategy, and Stats Canada, it uses these three baskets in various places.

**Mr. MacKay:** Is that something that you could provide with me at some point?

**Ms. Bell:** Absolutely, and we did table this earlier last week, I tabled the three measures from Stats Canada, but I'm happy to sit down and discuss that or provide you with any supporting material, minister.

**Mr. MacKay:** Okay.

**Chair:** You good, minister?

**Mr. MacKay:** Yes, I think I'm okay for a few (Indistinct)

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yes, this is great to be able to talk to this, and I do believe that poverty is a massive, massive issue in our culture. I know people are out there working very hard.

If we are to look at future – this will probably raise the idea of future minimum wages – and I'm just a little bit concerned, and I would like to get your opinion on if we want to raise that rate in the future faster for people in poverty.

Can we look at kind of an entry level system for newcomer workers? Businesses in our community are struggling to make payments

and keep up as it is, and I look at that and say: okay if the businesses struggle will it really reduce the amount of jobs that we have in Prince Edward Island?

So I'm looking to see with you guys if you're – you know like when we're talking about two-tier minimum wage entry level 14-15 year olds entering the workforce that live at home. Do you have any comments on that?

**Nathan Hood:** There are some jurisdictions that have tried that. I know Alberta had just converted to that, and I believe Ontario has some version of that for certain industries.

One of the common critiques of that is that regardless of those conditions – because sometimes it's – I think Nova Scotia has the experience and the inexperience worker, in Alberta it's based on age – the work is the same regardless of who you are.

So there has been concerns from people that it's been a way to basically pay people less than they should normally be entitled to. Certainly that's the case in Alberta where students, especially, who need to be able to pay for their education now don't have that extra money, even though they're doing the same work as someone who's not in school.

**Ms. Bell:** But I do need to add, member, that in the context of this legislation that is not the scope.

This is legislation that makes no direction in any way on the work of the Employment Standards Board. It is the Employment Standards Board through consultation that makes the recommendation on minimum wage. All this does is provide some structure in terms of what they could consider.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Sure, yes absolutely.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-West Royalty.

**Mr. McNeilly:** I'm okay, thanks.

**Chair:** You're good?

The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

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

I do echo my colleague's comments with regard to poverty and just really the concern I'm sure that all of us in this Legislature have and the realization of the impact that it has on individuals and families, and not whether it's in our more urban centres.

Going door to door during the campaign I saw firsthand, and you really do wonder how people manage on a day-to-day basis in some situations, in some circumstances.

To follow-up with my colleague's comments with regard to measures of poverty – and I do thank the member for bringing forward the fact like that there are the three different measures – do you feel that if this did go forward, should the measures of poverty, should it be stated explicitly how that would be determined, rather than leaving it in that wording?

**Ms. Bell:** I'll give you my opinion, minister, which is –

**Mr. Hudson:** Yes, certainly.

**Ms. Bell:** – I don't feel it is the place of legislators to tell the experts in the field how to make their recommendations. You know the Employment Standards Board are there as experts and independent experts, and so we provide them with a structure through legislation, but (Indistinct) would not be appropriate, I feel, to sort of mandate how they come to those decisions.

We ask them to make those recommendations on our behalf. –

**Nathan Hood:** If I can add onto that as well, we didn't want to be prescriptive in the kinds of measures that we required them to use, because each of the measures has their own pros and cons, and they measure different things. So we didn't want to basically tie them to one measure if we felt like the full spectrum of measures might be more useful in reviewing the legislation.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. Hudson:** A concern I have with it not being more specific is, okay, if you look at – if you use the Low-income Cut-off Measure, information that I have, if that measure was used and using figures from 2017 the

incidents of low-income for PEI using that particular model was 5.5%.

If we use the government's – actions have government (Indistinct) – the Market Basket Measure, using that measure we're looking at incidents of low-income for PEI of 10.1%, substantial difference there.

So my question again would be – well I guess twofold – certainly going back to what I had said first, would there not be a benefit if this does proceed through to having it tied down more specifically?

But secondly, the fact that we're stating measures of poverty when in two of the three different measures that can be used that you see such a variation there, and it's leaving it open to such a broad interpretation if you like.

**Ms. Bell:** I was just going to say, minister, it is the reason why we have different sets of statistical data is because we've heard a lot in the House about how much variance there is in the population of PEI.

That whilst we have instances of poverty and homelessness across the province, what they look like in different areas is different, and our demographic groups vary very much across the province. So having those different measures actually becomes really important so that we can accurately reflect the different needs of different demographics.

We talked about low-income earners or minimum wage earners being in certain areas, more older people as opposed to students. The numbers are different from Charlottetown to outer Charlottetown, for example.

The measures that you need to measure help you take into account those differences of demographics and urban to rural and all those other factors which make every space unique, and that's part of the reason why the board needs to be able to consider with flexibility in the same way that they consider all the other data they have available to them as well.

They are, in the end, making a subjective decision with objective data, and the more data you have, the more you can find a path

through that; and again, we don't want to prescribe to them what is the right one. Stats Canada doesn't, and we feel that's probably a pretty good indicator.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Social Development and Housing.

**Mr. Hudson:** Yeah, you know, your point is valid, I guess, in my opinion to a certain extent; but I do have a concern when you see the tremendous difference between one being at 5.5%, the other being at 10.1% – and I think to the member's comment that with regard to sample size data collection and the like, and as I understand it, the LICO method of determination, one of the challenges right here in Prince Edward Island is the fact that in comparison to larger metropolitan areas, whether it's Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, or what have you, that our sample size is quite small here, relevant to those larger jurisdictions, and that because of that, that some of the measures of the low income are poverty because of that low sample size are not all that accurate.

So, again, just coming back to that point, I think that it leaves – it puts a lot of responsibility, if you like, and I'm not sure that there shouldn't be responsibility, but with regard to the determination of just how it's going to unfold, you put forward – I've made my point. I do certainly – I have a concern with the measures of poverty being –

**Ms. Bell:** Minister, I'll just add –

**Mr. Hudson:** – broad given the fact that there are three different ways that it can be determined –

**Ms. Bell:** And minister, if I can just add that –

**Mr. Hudson:** – and the tremendous variation between the –

**Ms. Bell:** – that, you know, as we said, we've talked that the market basket measure is the one that's used for social assistance rates here, because it looks at what you can get with your dollar.

The different statistical properties between low-income measure and low-income cutoff, low-income measure is how much

household income is distributed across a statistical group. A low-income cutoff accounts for how you actually spend that money. What is your spending power with the money that you have, and so that does account for variances and you will get a very big difference, for instance, if you have a larger senior population who have lower household expenditures than a population which includes child care costs.

That's the reason why these things matter is when we're looking at minimum wage, because unfortunately, many of our seniors are working minimum wages to be able to afford to their costs as much as a family that has two workers who are paying child care costs. So having those two different baskets really does make a difference in terms of the quality of data that we can use.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hudson:** Yes, certainly, and I'm not going to dwell on that. I've made, from my perspective, my point, my concern known.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, minister.

**Mr. Hudson:** Going to 3(b), economic conditions within the province, and again, to me, that is a very general statement.

I wonder like specifically what are you looking at there?

**Nathan Hood:** That's a good question. This is actually included in the act (Indistinct)

**Mr. Hudson:** Okay, if you could elaborate on that for me, please?

**Nathan Hood:** Part of the challenge in elaborating on what it is, is we don't actually have access to the report that the Employment Standards Board produces. So we don't actually know what factors they include under economic conditions.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah. Minister, I'm afraid I'm going to have to finish as we've finished our allotted time for the evening.

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

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

**Ms. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

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

The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that we continue debate on Motion No. 1.

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

Debate was adjourned by O'Leary-Inverness, so we'll get him to continue.

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

Just to sort of summarize, like I say, I'm a big fan of this particular motion and saying that we need to make sure we're doing better roles of health promotion and take responsibility for one's own health and I'm a big advocate for the western sports council, so I certainly urge this House to continue the good work they're doing and I will pass on my remarks at this point.

**Speaker:** Is there anyone else who'd like to debate?

The hon. Member from Tyne Valley-Sherbrooke.

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

I just wanted to speak briefly in support of this motion. I think it's very important that we have this conversation, because we throw around the idea of wellness and well-being a lot, and I think really taking this a step back and saying what do we mean when we're talking about that and what does it involve is an important step to take.

Looking at things like physical activity, as was mentioned, and health promotion are extremely important. We also need to always consider the social determinants of health and all of the pieces that go in to wellness and well-being for individuals and

families, so their physical environment, their social environment, do they have access to resources, do they have enough healthy food for their families on a regular basis.

I think that really taking this apart, bringing it to committee and having a conversation about what we mean about it, is the right thing to do. So I look forward to that discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Is there anyone else that would like to speak to the motion?

At this time, I'll ask Charlottetown- West Royalty, the mover, to close debate.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Thanks a lot for listening and being part of this important debate.

I think it's really timely that the budget did come out. I think we do have some work to do. There was an announcement today where we got a considerable amount of funding to do well-being programs. Wellness is very important, and I'll be talking further in the budget today.

But looking at this, we need to talk about this in the committee. Because in the health promotion section of the budget that just came down today, there's a reduction by over \$45,000 in spending in that particular area.

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct) over there?

**Mr. McNeilly:** So it's something that I think we need to look at, do more, and we might be moving in maybe the wrong direction in some of the different areas here and I'd like to see us talk a little more about it in committee.

At this time, I'd say I'd like to close debate and call for the question.

**Speaker:** The question has been called.

All opposed, say 'a' – 'yea' – 'nay'.

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

**Speaker:** It'll come out. 'Nay'.

All opposed, say 'nay'.

All in favour. say 'yea'.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea!

**An Hon. Member:** There we go.

**Speaker:** There we go. We got her out.

The motion has been carried.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, with unanimous consent, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank, Motion No. 27 be now read.

**Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Speaker:** We have unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Clerk:** Motion No. 27.

The hon. Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank moves, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the following motion:

**WHEREAS** the provincial economy, as measured by Gross Domestic Product, increased an average of approximately three percent per year in 2017 and 2018;

**AND WHEREAS** provincial income tax revenues from business sources have increased in recent years;

**AND WHEREAS** small business is the backbone of the Island economy;

**AND WHEREAS** Government promised to reduce the small business tax rate from 3.5 percent to 1 percent, by January 2020, in the recent General Election;

**AND WHEREAS** it is important that the newly elected Government keep faith with Islanders by honouring its election promises;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Legislative Assembly urge the

Government to keep its election commitment and reduce the small business tax rate to 1 percent effective January 1, 2020.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

**Mr. Henderson:** No, I don't think I (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Oh, I thought you were the mover.

I'll go to the Member from Cornwall-Meadowbank.

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

We brought this motion to the floor of the house in relevance to the platform of the present government.

We've looked at over the past four or five years, a relevance to the growth and the economic value to the province of Prince Edward Island, what small to medium enterprises do.

We've talked in consultations with the Chamber of Commerce over those four years and there was always a request from the Chamber to make our tax system more fair for small businesses across the province in relevance to small businesses in Atlantic Canada.

The chamber of commerce formed the partnership for growth, which we've talked about in the House, and they basically are working hard and diligently to increase the fairness and increase the awareness of the tax burdens that sometimes small businesses have on Prince Edward Island.

When I was in economic development, we created a microloan for small businesses. We created a small business investment grant of 15 percent up to \$25,000 for small businesses for capital investment.

We created the Startup Zone, which is down in lower Queen and Water Street where over close to a hundred small businesses have gone through those doors.

There's over 6,000 small businesses on Prince Edward Island. CFIB is continuously and I'll use the word lightly, pounded us, to

create a better business tax system on Prince Edward Island, and we started that trend because the economy has been good, and when the economy is good, that's the time to make those changes.

Every time we move the decimal .5 in the small business corporation tax, it costs a measly \$1.4 million.

We've had growth over \$80 million just in the CIT this past year.

It's important to note that if you give back, you can almost treat the CIT like an RRSP.

You're going to get a return on your investment. It has been proven that when the CIT goes down, the revenues of government goes up.

So it's extremely important.

We have an initiative through the Conference Board of Canada saying we're going to have growth at 3.2 percent. If that's the case, we can afford to make the changes to the small businesses.

We can have the commitments to reduce this tax. We have \$156 million in revenue and a forecast; we have an estimate of close to \$200 million. So I think it's time for this government to take another look at this.

When you do reduce the taxes, it creates jobs for students and job creation for sometimes lower paying jobs but it does create.

We are in a labour shortage, and we need every opportunity we can to continue the growth in the economic development of PEI. So, with that, I'd like to end –

**An Hon. Member:** Keep going.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** – but I think, with that, I have no further comment on the motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** I'll call on the seconder of the motion, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It is indeed a pleasure for me to second this motion that asked the assembly to urge government to keep its election commitment and reduce the small business tax rate to 1% effective January 1, 2020.

I was definitely somewhat surprised that government has chosen to delay its promise to reduce the small business tax rate to 1% by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. So were small business owners that I talked to who understood that this was a confirmed commitment by the hon. Premier for this fiscal during his recent campaign promises.

This motion provides the opportunity for this assembly to get the government back on the right track. It is important for political parties and leaders to work to keep their promises. To maintain a confidence in government requires that promises be kept and I look forward to the debate on this very motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Next speaking to the motion is the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

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

I've been around here for a few years. I remember when the previous government brought in the HST and I remember sitting from the Opposition benches and we were adamant, don't bring in the HST it was going to hurt low income Islanders, which I believe that it did.

This government said what they stood behind at the time was it was going to be great for business; it was a great opportunity for business. Immediately after introducing the HS, they took the business tax that was 1% and put it up to 4.5% to where it is today.

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

**Mr. Myers:** It was 1% before these guys came along and jacked it up to 4.5% and we talked about it for a long time in here about how we wanted the tax to be brought down and I'm proud of our government to start that downward trend.

It's funny because to have the previous government's finance minister stand up and move this motion, when his own party, when they were running in the last election as government, only promised to put it down 1% in their platform, which I have here. They promised to put it down from 4.5% to 3.5%. It's funny how they're so self-righteous today, when they no longer have the opportunity to do it. It's suddenly so great how they are to business, now that they can no longer be good to business.

When they had the chance over here they didn't do anything. When they had the opportunity to make it better for business they didn't do anything. When they had the opportunity to help Islanders they didn't do anything. Yet, every day we hear from them about platform promises.

I remember Robert Ghiz promising a doctor for every Islander, 12 years! I bet there are people here who still don't have a doctor.

**Mr. Mitchell:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** So the bottom line is, you know, it's great to hear from the former government. It's almost comical to hear the criticism from them because out of all the opportunity that they could have had to listen to the chamber themselves, when they could of, they didn't. For 10 years the chamber has been asking for this government to reverse the decision, they ignored them.

Business people on Prince Edward Island asked for a leg up on their competition because when they brought in the HST, there were businesses who sincerely thought that they were going to have the competitive edge or they were going to be at least on parallel with their counterparts in the Maritime Provinces.

What the government of the day did, is they ripped the rug out from right underneath them and they took that business tax that was at 1% and they jacked it up to 4.5%. Yet, they come in here and expect us that in

two months, to reverse 10 years of bad government. It takes a long time to erase bad government; you can't do it in two months.

To erase 10 years of bad government, look, you hear us working together here all the time. I wish you guys would get more engaged, maybe you wouldn't be at 17% of the polls if you joined what the other parties are doing here and worked together. Work with us, we're willing to work with everybody.

Our Government House Leader has worked hard to work with everybody; the Premier has worked hard to work with everybody. The Leader of the Opposition has worked hard to work with everybody. I wish you guys would get on board; I don't know what you have against working together. I don't know what you have against being collaborative.

The chance is here. The chance is now to show Islanders that you're able to work with other people to accomplish things. I know you couldn't do it for 10 years when you had a majority. I know that you didn't show that you want to work with people when we asked for all these things when we were in opposition and we really had no say because we had a minority to you guys, but what a great opportunity now to work together. I'm enjoying it. I know that my colleagues over here are enjoying it.

I'm getting some great feedback on some of the things I'm trying to do. The member from Summerside, he's helping me with a project right now. He has an expertise in an area that I don't have. I've asked for his advice, it's fantastic.

This is what working together is all about. I don't have to have all the answers if I'm willing to work with other people that do, then we can do great things. So I think we have a great opportunity here to get on the same page as the rest of us. We're not asking you to change parties. We're not asking you to come out over here.

**An Hon. Member:** You did.

**Mr. Myers:** We're just asking you to maybe come on and be a little more cooperative, be a little more understanding, work towards the common goals of Islanders that have

been set out by the Premier because he understands what everyday Islanders wants to hear. He understands what everyday Islanders want from their politicians he understands what everyday Islanders want from this Legislative Assembly –

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

**Mr. Myers:** The opportunities here, he should seize it. You really should seize it. Because like I said earlier, you can't erase ten years of bad government in two months. Give us four years, we'll turn the whole ship around and we'll make people respect government again.

We'll make people respect what it is that we do here again.

Thank you. After ten years of Islanders looking over their shoulders and wondering: What is government going to do to me next, what are they going to take from me next, how are they going to hurt me now, what are they going to take away from my community, what are they going to rip out of the heart of the very community that I live in?

They can finally breathe easy and say: We have a collaborative government here now, who's willing to work with Islanders, who's willing to work with other parties and willing to work with anybody to do what's great for Islanders.

I'm proud to be a part of this. I really, really am and I again urge the Liberals over there who don't seem to be overly engaged – maybe it's being around a long time, some of you too. That's okay. Some of you earned your keep. You got a new guy there, though. Let him at least participate. He seems to want to. Let him participate. You can cover your eyes while does he it or whatever, that's okay.

There's a really good opportunity here to work together. I'm looking forward to what the next four years brings. I'm looking forward to what members on the opposite side can help me be better at, help the department that I represent be better at, help government as a whole bring better government.

I think you're going to see, for example, when we come forward with the solar initiatives, I think you're going to see something done collaboratively, something that I'm hopeful that at least one of the critic members over there is going to speak favourably of when I bring it forward because I feel he's had a part in what we're trying to do and cease the vision and I think he understands I see his vision too for what we can do and I think that's what Islanders are looking for.

It's a lot of fun to be a part of something that's so different than what I've become accustomed to in my eight years serving in opposition where my voice was only heard if it was loud. It didn't matter if I brought any common sense to the conversation. It didn't matter if the ideas that we were bringing forward in opposition were smart ideas. They always fell on deaf ears.

Day in and day out, the ideas that we would bring and the hard work we would bring and the voice of our constituents that we would bring would be completely ignored. That day is over. 27 members with equal voice in an assembly to bring forward the concerns of their constituents that do the good work for Islanders, that's a proud day for 27 people.

I find it hard to support this motion just sheerly out of the negative part that it seems to be brought forward in the anti-collaborative party over there that doesn't seem to want to work with anybody.

I think that as our government works towards bringing the goals forward that we've set out in our platform which I call our plan over the next four years – did you want me to stop?

Call the hour?

**An Hon. Member:** Extend the hour.

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Speaker:** Hon. members, the hour has been called.

The hon. Member of Morell-Donagh.

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

I move, seconded by the Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that the House adjourn until Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.

The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.